

**Consultation on the proposed
NHS Parking (Scotland) Bill**

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**FREE CAR PARKING
FOR PATIENTS, VISITORS AND STAFF
AT NHS SITES IN SCOTLAND**

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FOREWORD

In January 2008 Health Boards throughout Scotland implemented new car parking policies that resulted in patients, staff and visitors paying charges for car parking on hospital sites.

Before, and following, the introduction of the charges various groups of representatives raised their concerns in connection with the financial burden these parking charges placed on everyone involved in patient care.

In my mind many of the representations were genuine and called for real action to be taken. A number of powerful contributions and complaints were made in relation to the lack of consultation and the absence of tangible evidence supporting the need for the charges to be introduced in the first place.

No recognition was taken of the serious financial impact the parking charges would place on patients at a time when they were already enduring traumatic health problems. There were also concerns raised in connection with the impact that the introduction of parking charges would have on low paid staff.

This consultation document sets out my proposal that will specifically prohibit Health Authorities from charging for car parking on all NHS sites in Scotland.

There will also be a requirement for a car parking management plan to be introduced to ensure that car parking is managed properly and that commuters who have no business on NHS sites are prohibited from parking on site.

Before finalising my proposed Bill I would like to hear your views and experiences on car parking charges, whether you are a NHS employee, patient, visitor or local resident, your views are vital to the development of this proposal.

Best regards

Paul Martin
MSP for Glasgow Springburn

TEXT OF BILL PROPOSAL

1. The text of the proposal for a Bill has been lodged as follows:

NHS Parking (Scotland) Bill

Proposal for a Bill to prohibit NHS Boards from charging patients, their visitors and NHS staff from parking at NHS sites, and to require NHS Boards to make reasonable provision for managed, free parking at NHS sites.

SUMMARY

2. I intend to legislate to prohibit the charging of patients, visitors and staff to park on all NHS sites.
3. My proposed bill would place a legal requirement on NHS Boards to ensure there is reasonable provision for **free and well managed** car parking facilities for all those who need to access NHS facilities.
4. My proposed bill would provide clarity for all who access NHS car parking facilities throughout Scotland, ensuring that this unfair indirect tax is truly abolished.
5. My proposed bill would place a legal obligation on NHS Boards to manage car parks and maintain them to a reasonable standard and ensure that only those who have legitimate reason for being on an NHS site will have access to free parking.
6. My proposed bill would prohibit NHS Boards from limiting the time that legitimate users of the car parks can park on NHS sites.
7. This consultation paper sets out the background to this issue, makes the case for change and explains the way forward. After reading it, you are invited to respond to a series of questions to assist me in finalising the approach I will then take. I hope you will take this opportunity to make your views heard.

BACKGROUND

Current Position

8. There is no legal requirement prohibiting an NHS board from charging for parking at any of its sites.
9. The introduction of car park charging, or the revision of existing car parking arrangements, is a matter for local NHS boards. The Scottish Government publish guidance for NHS boards which the boards should have regard to.
10. In January 2008 the Scottish Government published guidance that car parking charges at some hospitals in Scotland should be temporarily capped at £3 while it carried out a review: that review has now been completed.

11. On 2nd September 2008 the Scottish Government announced that it was issuing guidance to end car parking charges at 14 NHS hospitals across Scotland on 31 December 2008. This guidance is now in place¹.
12. Three of the biggest hospitals in Scotland will continue to charge for parking. The Scottish Government say this is because they operate car park charging schemes under a contract with a private company. These are: the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Ninewells Hospital Dundee, Glasgow Royal Infirmary. The NHS boards were **not** asked to review their contracts as part of the Scottish Government's recent review into hospital car park charging schemes, rather they were asked to provide factual information and views.
13. Many who travel to NHS sites by car do so by necessity rather than personal choice. The very nature of healthcare requires flexibility with travel plans. The provision of safe and accessible car parking is an important element of both providing and receiving healthcare.
14. The availability of public transport to and from NHS sites does not meet the varying requirements and diverse needs of those who provide and receive healthcare. The current public transport infrastructure fails to meet the demands of a modern day health service and many people have no choice but to drive to NHS services.
15. The users of car parking facilities come into three main categories; patients, visitors, and staff. They each face different challenges when commuting to NHS facilities.

The Patients' Experience

16. Patients traveling to NHS facilities by car will do so to attend an outpatient or emergency appointment. Generally, travelling by car is considered more convenient and relatives will frequently provide assistance by accompanying the patient. The nature of healthcare can be unpredictable and cannot always be carried out within the timescale that may have been advised to the patient beforehand.
17. On 31st January 2008 NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGCC) introduced a new car parking policy limiting the time that patients and visitors can park without charge on specific sites to a maximum of 4 hours. This has presented many challenges for those patients who due to the nature of their care find that their care experience expires beyond the 4 hour period.
18. Patients face difficulties on many sites accessing parking provision due to the inadequate provision of car spaces. Concerns have been expressed that charges remain on the three hospital sites managed by private operators at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Dundee's Ninewells.

¹ hospitals where the Scottish Government say charging should be abolished are: Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Dr Gray's Hospital, Elgin, Gartnavel General Hospital and Gartnavel Royal Hospital, Glasgow, Southern General Hospital, Glasgow, Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow, Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow, Western Infirmary and Yorkhill Hospital, Glasgow, Raigmore Hospital in Inverness, The Lauriston Building, Edinburgh, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh, St John's Hospital in West Lothian, Perth Royal Infirmary

19. Many patients have found accessing public transport to NHS sites to be inconsistent and unreliable; transport providers have failed to meet the needs of patients for many years. Despite representations made by various representatives in recent years providers have not significantly improved transport provision.

The Visitors' Experience

20. Visitors are often very concerned family and friends of patients. They often travel long distances to visit loved ones receiving NHS patient care. The extra worry about where to park and how much it is going to cost is the last thing they need.

21. Visitors also aid a patient's recovery. Having people visit you in hospital or other NHS care facilities is a positive experience for both patients and visitors. It can make a huge difference to a patient's state of mind.

22. Visitors often find it difficult to park as they are restricted to set visiting times when there is a surge of people looking for parking. Parking at visiting times needs to be properly managed.

23. The value of visitors to the NHS should also be recognised as they often save the NHS time and money by collecting and transporting patients to and from NHS sites. As with patients, visitors do not know how long they may have to wait for patients to be seen, admitted or discharged from hospitals or other NHS facilities.

The Staff Experience

24. Staff working in the health service generally work long hours with unpredictable shift patterns, their work requires them to travel to their place of work by car.

25. Many staff do not live in areas that are within a sensible or safe public transport commute to their place of work. It is not reasonable to 'expect' them to move nearer their place of work simply because NHS Boards no longer want them to use their cars to travel to work and cannot/ will not meet their obligation to develop sensible and practical transport alternatives.

26. Union representatives have also raised concerns that not all NHS sites would have access to free parking. Charges will remain at three big hospitals: Glasgow Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Ninewells.

27. Many staff representatives have complained that health authorities have failed to consult with them on how to allocate staff permits at NHS following the Government's announcement to abolish car parking charges at 14 NHS sites.

28. In Glasgow, concerns have been raised in connection with the proposal to introduce vehicle registration number plate recognition cameras at specific sites. The proposal is that a camera be installed at each entrance/exit; when a vehicle enters or leaves the car park the number plate is 'captured' and time recorded. Drivers who enter and exit within maximum stay time (or pre-authorized staff cars such as permit holders) go onto a 'white list'. Vehicles parked longer than maximum stay time, go onto a 'black list' and the 'overstay' is flagged resulting in a penalty charge.

The Local Residents' Experience

29. Lastly, badly managed parking at NHS sites has a negative impact on the surrounding local community. This is especially true at bigger hospitals around visiting time. Charging for parking only encourages people to park out with NHS sites. NHS boards must be mindful of this too when setting up and managing car parking at all NHS sites.

MY PROPOSALS FOR MOVING FORWARD

30. There are four main reasons why I believe we need to legislate to abolish car parking charges and ensure reasonable, managed, free car parking facilities:

- Some hospitals and NHS sites do not provide adequate areas for parking.
- There is no consistency in the interpretation of Scottish Government guidance issued in September 2008.
- Three of Scotland's biggest hospitals will still charge for patients, visitors and staff to park.
- Many important NHS services are not 'hospitals' but people need to travel to them by car.

Adequate Car Parking Facilities

31. There is concern that some hospitals, particularly larger city hospitals, do not have enough areas for people to park. Some of the hospitals in the Glasgow area, in particular, have problems. Abolishing car parking charges is not going to assist patients, visitors and staff if there is no parking available.

32. My bill will require that NHS Boards make reasonable provision for managed, free parking at all NHS sites.

NHS Boards' Inconsistent Interpretation of Scottish Government Guidance

33. There is also concern that NHS Boards will interpret Scottish Government Guidance in different ways, for example, provide free parking for a limited time. Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board have said they propose to provide free parking for a limited time of four hours. They have said: *'We plan to manage our car parks with a range of measures including consideration of a maximum parking period for patient and visitor car parks, this will deter commuters and shoppers from taking spaces needed by patients and at busy visiting times'*². This will mean that anyone who exceeds this time will face a penalty charge.

Parking charges still to apply in three of Scotland's biggest hospitals and many other NHS sites

34. I also believe we need to ensure equality of access for all patients, visitors and staff across Scotland. The Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing also announced that charges will still apply at three of the country's biggest hospitals.

² Evening Times Wednesday December 3 2008 p.11

35. The ongoing centralisation of acute services means that transport to NHS sites will continue to be a major issue. More patients, visitors and staff will be required to travel further to access NHS care. Adequate public transport links and improved parking facilities must be part any future NHS care.

36. **CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

I want to hear your views on the following:

1. Do you agree with my proposal that NHS Boards should be under a legal duty to make reasonable provision for the free parking of motor vehicles at NHS sites in Scotland?
2. Since the Scottish Government have issued guidance to 'abolish' parking charges at 14 of Scotland's hospitals, have you been subject to parking restrictions at any of these hospitals? If so, how have these restrictions adversely affected you?
3. In what ways have parking restrictions adversely affected your ability to visit patients in NHS hospitals?
4. From a patient's perspective, in what ways have parking restrictions impacted on your ability to access patient care?
5. From a staff perspective, what impact have parking restrictions had on your ability to access your place of work?
6. Any other comments that you would like to make on my proposal?

HOW YOU CAN TAKE PART

You are invited to read these proposals and comment on any issues that you feel may be relevant. Responses must be submitted by 6 April 2009, and should be sent to the following address:

Scottish Parliament:

Paul Martin MSP
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

or email Paul at: Paul.Martin.msp@scottish.parliament.uk

You can also contact Paul Martin MSP on:

Telephone: 0141 564 1364 RNID TypeTalk calls welcome

Constituency Office
604 Alexandra Parade
Glasgow
G31 3BS

Further details about my bill can be accessed on my website:
<http://www.paulmartinmsp.org.uk>

In addition, please pass this consultation document to any other interested parties that you may be aware of.

Additional copies of the paper, or alternative formats, can be requested using the contact details above, and calls via TYPETALK are welcome. Further copies of this consultation paper are available from the above address. It can also be downloaded from the Scottish Parliament website at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/MembersBills/index.htm>

To help inform debate on the matters covered by this paper, and in the interests of openness, it is intended that all the responses submitted on this consultation document will be made public. You should therefore be aware that by submitting this response you are indicating consent to the publication of all the material contained in your response. Unless you indicate otherwise this will include your name and address and any other biographical information you have provided about yourself.

You should note that personal data referring to third parties included in the response cannot be accepted without explicit written consent from the third party. This consent should be provided with your response.

We are not entitled to process your personal data by publication without your consent. If therefore you want parts of your response to remain confidential please indicate which parts

are not for publication. Similarly, if you wish all of the contents of your response to be treated in confidence and not made public then please indicate so.

All responses will be included in any summary or statistical analysis, which does not identify individual responses.