

ECA Environmental Policy

TRAVEL

The College/Board of Governors is committed to:

- * Encouraging environmentally friendly and energy efficient travel in association with all the College's activities.
- * Reducing unnecessary car travel associated with the journey to work.
- * Developing user friendly campuses with high quality facilities for the disabled, pedestrians and cyclists.
- * Co-operating with the City of Edinburgh Council in supporting its "Moving Forward" transport strategy for the city.
- * Providing parking facilities for essential operational needs.
- * Limiting further demand for car parking through fairly administered charges which reflect the costs of parking in Central Edinburgh.
- * Utilising the income generated from parking charges to improve the environmental quality of the College campuses.

Implementation

Effective implementation of these policies depends on a more detailed exposition which addresses the administration, equity, and management issues involved.

In order to implement the policies, the following measures are proposed.

- * All relevant staff to be instructed to use rail rather than car or air travel on College business whenever possible.
- * Expenditure patterns on travel to be monitored over the next few years.
- * The annual cost for car parking spaces to be increased progressively over 2 years from the current £70/year to bring them into line with the City's charges for residents permits in the central area (currently £200/year); this being the cheapest on street parking regime and still well below charges for public off street car parks. This proposed charge level is still cheap and a much higher one could be justified on environmental grounds.

Equity Issues

- * A criticism of this charging policy is that it would disadvantage staff on lower

incomes. In order to avoid this a sliding scale of charges would be introduced linked to salary bands, while keeping the average charge in line with the above policy.

- * Should the implementation of this scale of charges fail to keep demand for parking spaces within the limits of the College's supply of spaces then the charges should be further increased to match demand to the supply. The phased introduction of higher charges, as proposed above, is to allow those staff dependent on car access at present time to make alternative arrangements if they wish to avoid the higher charges. Otherwise given that there is currently excess demand over supply when full-time and part-time staff are taken into account, and an even greater excess once student demand is taken into account, then the strict application of market economies (and the College's financial position!) might suggest an immediate move to the higher level of charges.
- * No charges or reduced charges should be levied for registered disabled drivers (staff or students) using the designated spaces. For the present no charge is suggested, but should demand increase this may need to be reconsidered. Any individual decisions on whether to charge should then be linked to ability to use other modes of access.
- * The SRC administers the student car parking which consists of only 22 spaces officially (though a few more vehicles can be accommodated after a fashion) and is faced with 150 applications for spaces. It allocates spaces at a charge of only £25, on a priority needs basis. Reasons for needing a space are provided with the application and provide the basis for selection; with health, child care and related tight schedules, and inadequate/non-existent public transport access being some of the reasons leading to the allocation of spaces. The SRC would like to see at least 30 spaces allocated to students and argues for an allocation system based on priority needs for both staff and students.

Whilst the rationing system seems to have worked tolerably well in a situation where demand far exceeds the few spaces available for allocation, its extension to cover staff cannot be recommended. Where there are many more spaces to allocate any criteria for prioritising their allocation would be complex and involve both administrative costs and the drawing of invidious, fine distinctions. It is also financially and environmentally unsound to revert to a lower charge plus rationing as the basis for allocations. Indeed it can be argued that higher charges should also be extended to student places, on the basis that students who can afford to drive a car can also afford the associated parking charges.

There appears, therefore, to be only 2 real options at present -either to continue to allow the SRC to administer the existing student car park or to bring it into a centrally managed system subject to a common pricing regime. A variation would be to allow the SRC to continue to administer the student car park but insist on higher charges being levied through a claw back on the SRC grant. It is suggested that present arrangements should continue for the time being but this may need to be reviewed.

Other Management/Administrative Issues

- * Janitors arriving for the early morning shift are a special case in that, with the absence

of public transport at that time of day, they may be deemed to require to bring a car in order to do their job. No other staff appear to be in a comparable position of need. It is proposed that janitors on the early morning shift should therefore be exempt from charges and spaces allocated for their use as at present.

- * The concession must only apply to the early morning shift and any janitor wishing to bring a car in at other times during the day would be expected to pay for a permit. In moving to higher charges it is essential that the scheme is applied even handedly to all staff without loopholes.
- * Differing management regimes apply in the Main and Grassmarket campuses. The Grassmarket regime appear to have evolved as an ad-hoc response to the move there and the later availability of parking spaces, but there seems to be little justification for the differences in management practices.
- * Currently heads of schools are involved in the management of spaces on behalf of their part-time staff and are responsible for the allocation and payment of associated charges. This has caused additional administrative difficulties and resulted in delays in payment. It is also not checked centrally whether all charges have been passed on to the staff concerned. This is unsatisfactory. Also, the allocation of spaces remains ring fenced for the 2 campuses, to the potential disadvantage of staff in the Grassmarket, and increasing the need for more intensive management of spaces for part-time staff. The ring fencing also makes it more difficult to implement environmental improvements which would require a reduction in the number of car parking spaces. It is proposed that these practices be discontinued, with all spaces centrally allocated through the designated Superintendent, and with no ring fencing of allocations. All spaces would be allocated as close as possible to the staff members work location, with no other prioritisation and no guarantees of a space in the nearest car park. Arrangements for part-time staff to share spaces could still be negotiated with the superintendent provided that the appropriate fee was jointly paid. Such arrangements already apply for some job shares.
- * Currently visitors and other spaces are sometimes allocated on an ad hoc daily or other short term basis to staff, and there have been difficulties in accommodating visitors through the lack of notice given. Spaces should only be reallocated to staff if it is known that there will be no demand from visitors, and in such instances staff who do not hold permits should be charged a daily rate and issued with a day permit. £2 is suggested as an appropriate charge to make currently.
- * There is no justification in the current financial position to subsidise minibus operations. If it is cheaper for schools to hire all minibuses commercially, perhaps at discount rates from specified suppliers as negotiated by the College, than for the College to purchase and operate its own bus, then ownership should be discontinued. The full costs of the minibus should be recovered through hire fees if this service is to be retained.
- * Instead net revenues generated from parking charges should be paid into a fund dedicated to environmental improvements on the campuses; in the absence of such a

fund little or no money is likely to be available for this purpose over the next few years. Such improvements could include seating, better litter bins, signage, cycle parking, painting etc. Linking the charges to visible improvements to the environment links elements of the College's environmental policy and should also make the policy of higher parking charges more readily acceptable to many staff.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The College regards the provision of a high quality of environment as essential to the provision of good work and study conditions. It is also vital to the external image of the College and to its continuing ability to attract high calibre students and staff.

A programme of environmental improvements will be implemented over the next few years as resources permit. Measures will be included to:

- * enhance the physical appearance of buildings and campuses
eg painting of harled buildings, repaving the quads at both campuses and improving pedestrian access in the Grassmarket.
- * improve the entrances to the College
eg the pedestrian access and appearance of the Hunter Building entrance.
- * provide and/or enhance the signage at the entrances and internally throughout the College
eg visitors to the Grassmarket campus often have difficulty in finding it in the absence of signage on the buildings to indicate its presence.
- * provide securely held litter bins
(currently litter gets scattered on windy days).
- * provide seating in the quads at both campuses
- * enhance the cycle parking facilities at both campuses.
(eg to provide greater security and weather protection)
- * generate ideas and interest in improvements through student design competitions linked to teaching programmes.
- * establish an environmental improvements fund to finance the programme. Surpluses from parking charges would provide ring fenced contributions to this fund.