

# Consultation on the proposed NHS Parking (Scotland) Bill

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**IS PROPOSING A BILL TO ENSURE  
  
FREE CAR PARKING  
FOR PATIENTS, VISITORS AND STAFF  
AT ALL NHS SITES IN SCOTLAND**

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# Consultation on the proposed NHS Parking (Scotland) Bill

## 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, and for connected purposes.**

## SUMMARY

2. I intend to legislate to prohibit NHS boards from charging patients visitors and staff to park on all NHS sites.
3. My bill will place a legal requirement on NHS boards to ensure there is reasonable **free and well managed** car parking facilities for all those who need to access NHS facilities.
4. My bill will provide clarity for all who access NHS car parking facilities throughout Scotland, ensuring that this unfair indirect tax is truly abolished.
5. My bill will 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 bill will prohibit NHS Boards from limiting the time that legitimate users of the car parks can park on an 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

8. Many who travel to NHS sites by 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.
9. 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 a modern day health service and many people have no choice but to drive to NHS services.
10. The users of car parking facilities come into three main categories patients, visitors, and staff they each face very different challenges when commuting to NHS facilities.

## The Patient Experience

11. 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.
12. On the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008 NHSGCC introduced a new car parking policy limiting the time that patients and visitors can park 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.
13. Patients face difficulties on many sites accessing car parking provision due to the inadequate provision of car spaces. But many patients have raised the fact that many shopping centres have managed to provide high quality free parking facilities.
14. Concerns have been raised that charges remain on the three hospital sites managed by private operators at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Ninewells.
15. 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

16. Visitors experience many of the same parking issues as patients. Often visitors are concerned and stressed family and close friends of patients and worrying about where to park and how much it is going to cost is the last thing they need. They often travel from all over the country to be with loved ones who are receiving NHS care.
17. Visitors also aid a patients recovery. Having people visit you in hospital or other NHS care facility is a positive experience for both patients and visitors and can make a huge difference to both the patients and visitors state of mind. It is important that they have access to parking facilities if they need them.
18. Visitors often find it difficult to park as they to be restricted to set visiting times when there is a surge of people looking for parking. Parking at visiting times needs to be properly managed.
19. Visitors also must be supported as they often save the NHS time and money by collecting and transporting patients to and from NHS services. When doing so, like patients, they do not know how long they may have to wait around for patients to be seen by, or admitted to, or discharged from, hospitals or other NHS services.

## **The Staff Experience**

20. 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.
21. Many staff are faced 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 NHSGGC 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.
22. 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.
23. 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 announcement abolish car parking charges at 14 NHS sites.
24. Concerns have also been raised in connection the NHSGCC proposal to introduce vehicle registration number plate recognition cameras at specific sites. The proposal is where a camera is 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-authorised 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**

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

# **CURRENT POSITION**

## **Recent Changes - NHS Board Guidance**

26. There is no legal requirement stopping an NHS board from charging for parking at any of its sites.
27. 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 have regard to.
28. 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 and it published guidance for NHS boards car parking while the review was ongoing. This review has now been completed.

29. On 2 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 policy is now in place<sup>1</sup>.
30. 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 they were asked to provide factual information and views.

## MY PROPOSALS FOR GOING FORWARD

31. There are four main reasons why I believe we need to legislate to abolish car parking charges and to ensure there are reasonable car parking facilities:
- Some Hospitals and NHS sites do not provide adequate areas for parking.
  - Some NHS boards will try and get around Scottish Government Guidance by e.g providing fixed
  - Three of the 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. This will become more of an issue

### Adequate Car Parking facilities

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

### NHS boards getting around the guidance

34. There is also concern that some NHS Boards will not follow the spirit of the guidance, by for example by providing free parking for a limited time. Glasgow and Clyde NHS board have said that *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,*

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<sup>1</sup> 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

*this will deter commuters and shoppers from taking spaces needed by patients and at busy visiting times'<sup>2</sup>*

35. I believe Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board are planning to defy the will of parliament and by planning to limit free parking for four hours, meaning that any one who exceeds that parking time will face a fine.

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

36. I also believe we need to ensure equality of access for all patients, visitors and staff across Scotland. The Scottish Secretary for Health and Well being also announced that charges will still apply at three of the country's biggest hospitals. She said the cost of early termination of car park contracts for PFI car parks would be "prohibitive."

37. There are many other NHS sites providing vital services for patients who also need to access adequate free parking

38. Over the coming years transport to NHS sites will continue to be a major issue with the general centralisation agenda which is ongoing with the general location of acute sites means that more people will need adequate public transport links and improved parking facilities.

## **CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

39. I want to hear your views:

- **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?** Do you agree they should be legally prohibited from charging people to park. And why do you agree/not agree with me?
- **I want to hear of your experiences of traveling to and from NHS sites as a patient, or as a visitor or staff member?** Have you been charged, have you had penalty charges, do you good or bad of parking at all NHS sites?
- **Have I covered everything?** who should have the right to park free at NHS sites? what sites should be covered? How do we stop people who have no business at a hospital parking there and abusing the system? How do we ensure those who are in most need are ensured parking facilities will be available? How do we maintain parking facilities at hospitals?

## **HOW YOU CAN TAKE PART**

40. I am want to hear from organisations who represent patients, visitors and staff. I also want to hear from people who manage NHS sites. But I am particularly interested in hearing from individuals and members of the 'public', and I would particularly

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<sup>2</sup> Evening Times Wednesday December 3 2008 p.11

encourage people who have experience of using parking facilities to tell us about them.  
You can write to or email me see below for details.

41. Further details about my bill can be accessed at my Website: <http://www.paulmartinmsp.org.uk>

Please send your consultation responses to Paul Martin MSP to:

**Scottish Parliament:**

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or email Paul at: [Paul.Martin.msp@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:Paul.Martin.msp@scottish.parliament.uk)

**You can also contact Paul Martin MSP on:**

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