

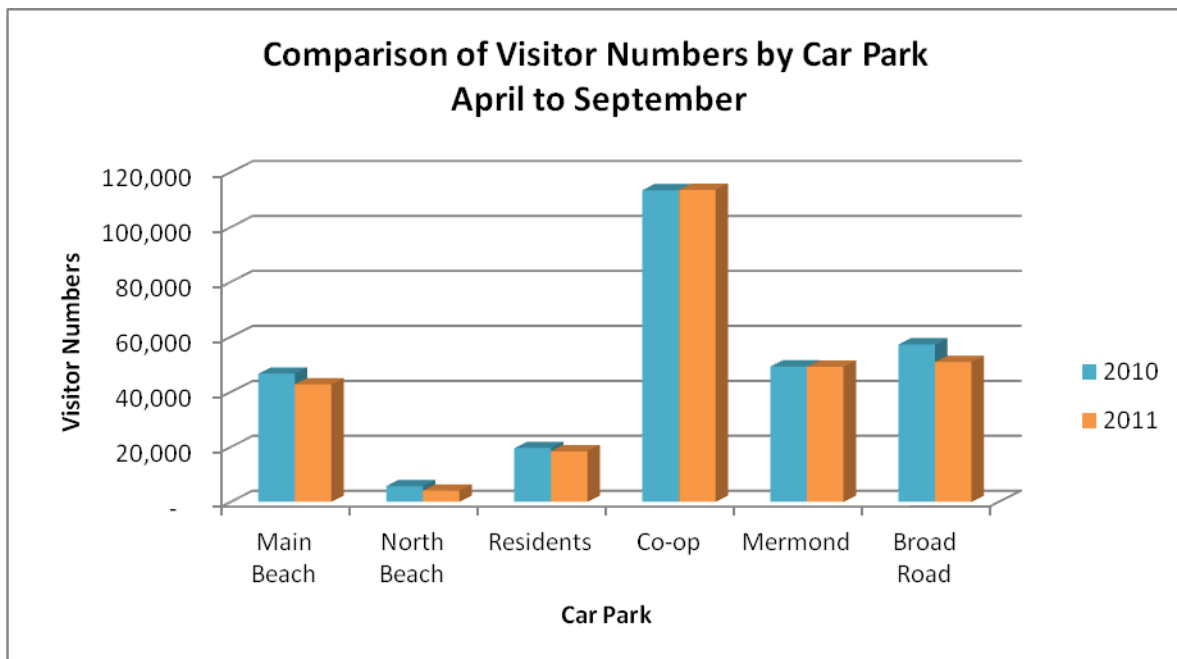
Consideration of Car Park Tariffs for 2012/13

Prior to the setting of the scale of charges for 2012/13, the Transport Committee needs to consider the structure of its car park tariffs. The Council has two types of car parks; short stay (Shoppers’) and long stay (Beach and Downs). The current car park tariffs and usage for April to September in 2010 and 2011 are detailed below:

Short Stay Car Parks

2011/12 Tariff & Charge		Co-op		Mermond		Residents	
		2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
Cars up to 1 hour	£1.20/£0.60	79,706	83,288	15,192	16,750	9,142	10,626
Cars up to 2 hours	£2.10/£1.20	27,146	23,033	32,705	31,225	8,011	6,117
Cars up to 3 hours	£3.10/£1.50	152	231	499	465	129	132
Overnight parking	free	331	469	140	231	90	246
8 am to 10 am	free	6,071	6,596	693	789	1,214	1,296
		113,406	113,617	49,229	49,460	18,586	18,417

A year on year comparison shows that there has been little movement in the overall usage in these car parks, which can be clearly seen in graph 1, although usage between tariffs has generally shifted from 2 hour to 1 hour. There was a small increase in the 2 hour and 3 hour charges in 2011/12 to account for the increase in VAT. Members should also note that the revenue received from the Co-operative car park is payable to them and not the Council.



Graph 1-Comparison of Visitor Numbers by Car Park

The shoppers' car parks operate a charging period between 08:00 and 22:00, with a 2 hour maximum stay from 08:00 to 19:00 and 3 hour maximum stay from 19:00 to 22:00. Overnight parking from 10:00 to 08:00 is free. The Council currently has an anomalous tariff in its shoppers' car parks. This is a 2 hours free parking period from 08:00 to 10:00 within the 2 hour maximum stay period, for which a free ticket must be obtained. This is a rather cumbersome tariff to administer, particularly in terms of enabling payment (or not) through RingGo.

Options available are:

- Remove the free period and charge from 08:00;
- Start the 2 hour limit at 10:00 (this would however allow cars to be parked until 12:00, which has led to abuse and is the reason why the 2 hour limit was introduced at 08:00);
- Allow Residents permit holders to park free of charge for this period. Any part period after 10:00 would incur the full charge;
- Leave as it is.

The majority of shoppers' car parks in other areas have a charging period from 08:00 to 18:00, covering the period when the vast majority of shops are open for business. Looking at the tariff usage above, any changes to the charging period to align with other authorities i.e. apply parking charges 08:00 to 18:00, would affect a large number of customers using the Co-op car park; however, refunds are available through the supermarket. There would on the other hand be free parking for those who had previously paid after 18:00. The introduction of a small charge for overnight parking could also be considered.

Long Stay Car Parks

2011/12 Tariff & Charge		Main Beach		Broad Road		North Beach	
		2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
Cars up to 1 hour	£1.80	6,828	6,653	11,858	10,469	525	558
Cars up to 2 hours	£3.40	16,897	16,463	25,839	24,505	1,805	1,516
Cars up to 4 hours	£6.40	*15,746	13,016	13,769	12,694	n/a	1,310
Cars up to 24 hours	£9.00	*6,895	4,885	5,716	4,327	3,102	517
Weekly - Cars	£33.00	97	78	82	100	7	22
4 hours - Coaches	£6.50	n/a	2,420	n/a	n/a	157	235
Daily - Coaches	£9.50	n/a	178	n/a	n/a	42	43
		46,463	43,693	57,264	52,095	5,638	4,201

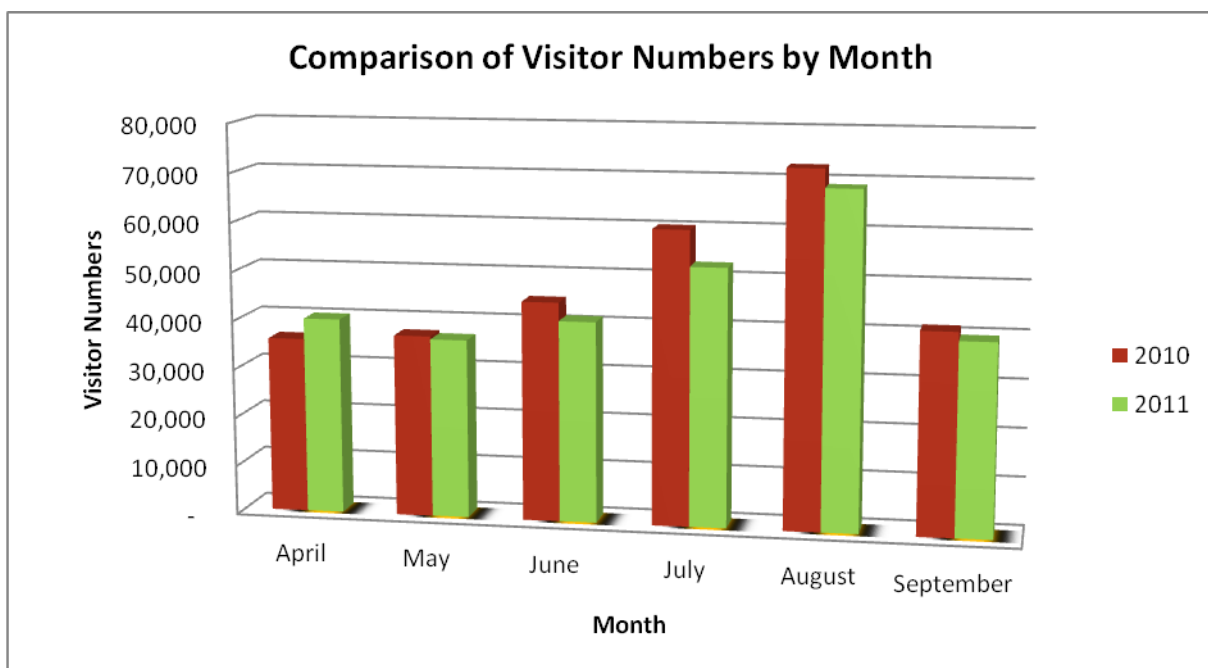
*These figures include both cars and coaches. Coaches and cars had the same tariff in Main Beach in 2010 and therefore a split in usage is not possible

Over the last two summers there has been decline in usage in the long stay car parks, as shown in Graph 1. This may be due to the negative impact of price increases; however, looking at usage figures as shown in Graph 2 below, the period of good weather seen in April meant that usage increased year on year despite the price increase.

The 1 and 2 hour tariff usage has remained relatively stable in long stay car parks. In percentage terms the 4 and 24 hour tariffs show the biggest decrease, possibly resistance against tariff charges.

Members may wish to consider introducing a standard hourly rate in the long stay car parks. In Poole the main beach car parks have an hourly charge up to a maximum of 10 hours, at £1.50 per hour. This structure necessitates a lower value for the hour tariff, currently £1.80 in Swanage; otherwise the long stay pricing becomes too expensive. These car parks show that the 2 and 4 hour tariffs are the most popular. As can be seen in North Beach a large percentage of customers have used the 4 hour charge when it was introduced in 2011, rather than the 24 hour charge, with a decrease in revenue. If a 3 hour tariff was introduced there would undoubtedly be a shift downwards from 4 to 3 hours with a significant financial impact. The 2 or 3 hour tariff is generally the most popular tariff. However, introducing more options beyond 4 hours, other than 24 hours, may see a positive move with customers purchasing a more favourably priced tariff and staying for longer. Given the importance of car parking revenue to the Town Council's income, the consequences of any such decision will have a significant impact on the Council's overall financial performance.

Members may also wish to review the pricing of North Beach car park due to the decrease in usage following the streamlining of this car park with the other beach car parks.



Graph 2 – Comparison of Visitor Numbers by Month (all car parks)

Other Matters

The usage of the weekly tariff through the machines has caused some problems due to incorrect usage by customers. The issuing of refunds is a nuisance to both the customer and the Council and has been highlighted as needing attention by the internal auditor. It is therefore suggested that all long term tickets are made available on RingGo, pay by phone, only. This should cut down on the administration incurred in issuing refunds. The customer also has no ticket to lose and could purchase this in advance.

Alison Spencer
Finance Officer

October 2011