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What's happening?

Gunnersbury Estate (2026) CIC is planning to make changes to the way car parking on the site is managed including introducing car parking charges by early 2020. This Q&A details the proposed changes and why they are being made as well as explaining how visitors can respond.

Why are car parking charges being introduced?

We, Gunnersbury Estate (2026) CIC – the not for profit organisation that manages Gunnersbury Park and Museum – are responsible for maintaining the car parks, which is a very expensive task. To do this, we need to charge users for the service we provide. We currently receive funding each year from Ealing and Hounslow councils (who ultimately own the estate). However, this is currently not enough to fund the entire estate and it is also set to decline substantially over the coming years meaning further funding sources are required to maintain and improve the park, museum and its services. All revenue raised from car parking charges – as with all income generated by the CIC – would be ringfenced to be spent only at Gunnersbury Park and Museum.

In addition, charging for car parking and pro-actively managing the use of the car parks will mean that we can ensure that the facility is available to visitors to the estate and spaces are not taken up by commuters or unlicensed commercial users.

Why now?

We appreciate that this is a change to the way that car parking has been offered on the site for many years. The introduction of car parking charges was included within the masterplan for the site developed by the local authorities, to be implemented in line with the opening of the sports hub. With the new sports hub due to open soon, the volume of traffic in the car park (and therefore the maintenance costs) will also increase. Therefore, in line with the masterplan, we are planning to bring in the new car parking system to coincide with this change in the way that the car park is used.

Many visitors have commented on the dramatic improvement to the condition of the estate in recent years and, whilst Heritage Lottery funding kick-started this process, maintaining and improving these higher standards will mean that the cost of running the estate will be higher than it was in the past. It is worth noting that free car parking is highly unusual in London.

Can Gunnersbury not raise money another way?

We have a target to raise £2m a year in income by 2022 to meet the management and maintenance challenges at Gunnersbury. We are seeking to create a broad range of income sources in order to give the estate a firm financial footing. We already receive income from grants, the onsite café, shop, commercial tenants and by holding weddings, filming and major public events. A diverse source of income will help us weather any market changes or declines in a particular income stream.

Given that Gunnersbury is owned by Ealing and Hounslow councils, can the CIC decide to introduce charges?

We operate the estate under a lease from the councils which allows for revenue to be generated onsite from car parking charges. The proposals have been approved by the CIC's board which includes representatives from both councils. Ealing and Hounslow councils support the introduction of car parking charges at Gunnersbury and indeed charges for parking apply at council car parks across the boroughs. Comparable locations, such as Chiswick House and Gardens (which is owned by Hounslow Council) already charge for car parking.

Will there be new parking for the sports hub?

As part of the planning application for the sports hub, permission was granted to extend the car parking provision into the walled area previously occupied by Greenscene, a commercial nursery. This was intended to create one, larger car park – not separate car parks for different estate users. The sports hub construction project is being managed by Ealing Council and work has already taken place to clear the site in preparation for the creation of car parking spaces. We do not know at this time when these additional spaces will become available.

Will the existing car park be improved?

We will be carrying out some short-term remedial works to the existing car park in 2019 but more substantial repairs will not be possible until further funds have been raised.

How would the charges work?

We are responsible for setting car parking terms and conditions and tariffs. For ease of operation, we are proposing to contract a specialist parking operator to manage parking on site on a day to day basis. As well as monitoring the car parks, the operator would also manage any illegal parking elsewhere on the estate.

We are keen to hear from visitors as to how we could best implement this change and therefore have not yet decided exactly how the new car parking operation would work. We are carrying out a consultation survey which addresses many of the questions below and will help inform the final plans – please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/D5RWKJF> to submit your thoughts.

When would the charges be introduced?

We hope to introduce the new system by early 2020 but this is dependent on the eventual car parking solution selected. Further announcements and information within the car park itself would provide plenty of notice of the implementation of the changes.

What charging structure is being proposed?

Having considered how the majority of visitors use the estate, we believe that an hourly rate would be the most appropriate and a level in the region of £1 per hour would be comparable with other local charges. Charges would apply whenever the car park is open. Please share your feedback on this proposal through our survey.

We have looked at many similar venues in the local area (including council car parks, leisure centres and destinations such as Kew Gardens, Osterley Park and House, Chiswick House and Gardens) and the majority operate an hourly charge system within this range.

How would people pay?

We are speaking to a number of specialist operators to gauge the simplest and most effective system for making payments. In particular, we will be looking to see if technological solutions can be used that are convenient for visitors and offer secure payment options.

How would you enforce the charges?

We intend to contract a company that specialises in car parking management who would regularly patrol the car parks and also ensure that the mechanisms for paying for parking were in working order.

What about disabled visitors?

We are keen to ensure that within any charging structure disabled visitors with blue badges will receive free parking in the same way as is provided in the local council operated car parks. Typically, these car parks offer two hours of free parking with a paid for ticket required for any time spent beyond this. The new car parking arrangements will apply to both the main car park and the small disabled car park located next to the museum. Please share your feedback on this proposal through our survey.

Will charges apply to all users of the site?

Yes. Charges would apply to everyone using the car park including sports hub users, park and museum visitors.

Will you be offering a discount for borough residents?

Our information suggests that the vast majority of car park users are local residents and therefore the eventual fee structure will bear this in mind. It would not be financially or logistically viable to operate a separate discounted fee.

What about all day parking?

We are keen that Gunnersbury's car park is used solely by visitors to Gunnersbury and therefore are minded to have a maximum stay to discourage all day parking by commuters and businesses.

Have you thought about...?**What arrangements are being made for people who work onsite?**

We have a number of tenants who have employees onsite all day and we are talking to these companies on an individual basis to establish their needs and how we can make the new car parking system work for both parties. Employees should speak to their manager for further information on the arrangements being made for them.

Can you make it easier to get to Gunnersbury without using a car?

We are committed to operating as sustainably as possible and introducing car park charges is one way we can incentivise visitors to use green transport options when visiting. There are several public transport stops in close proximity to the park, notably Acton Town Tube, Kew Bridge railway station and various bus stops for routes E3 and H91. We are very aware that these options do not serve every sector of the two boroughs and will continue to work with Ealing and Hounslow councils to lobby Transport for London for improved services. In the meantime, we are making changes within our control, such as increasing bicycle parking provision onsite.

Will these changes have an impact on parking on the roads outside the park?

It is possible that some visitors will seek to park on surrounding roads rather than pay for parking within the estate. Parking on the roads around Gunnersbury is already tightly controlled through the use of controlled parking zones (CPZ) and red route restrictions therefore it is not anticipated that the roads will be obstructed by park visitors. We are working closely with Ealing and Hounslow councils on the implementation of our parking changes and expect that the councils will ensure that the CPZ's are being complied with. Residents who have specific concerns about a CPZ on their street should raise the matter with their respective borough council for investigation.

How can I comment?

A public consultation will run from 2 October – 4 November. During this time we are asking visitors and local residents to complete our survey which seeks views on specific elements of the proposals as well as offering 'free text' responses.

The easiest way to do this is to visit <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/D5RWKJF>

If you would like to complete the survey offline, please pick up a printed copy from the museum reception or email info@visitgunnersbury.org