



Cars and campervans parked at White Horse Hill. Photo: DOC

# We want your feedback

## Proposed car park pricing for White Horse Hill, Aoraki / Mount Cook

We would like to thank those who provided initial feedback on the paid car park pilot concept during June and July 2025. We received over 150 submissions for the three relevant sites, which has helped shape our proposed pricing strategy.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) is now seeking feedback on the proposed pricing strategy for the site at White Horse Hill in Aoraki / Mount Cook National Park. This car park provides access to several popular day and overnight walks and facilities, such as Hooker Valley Track, Kea Point Track, and Mueller and Hooker Huts. The White Horse Hill Campground next to the car park is DOC's most visited campground.

The introduction of car park charges will allow visitors to contribute to the facilities and nature they enjoy.

The pilot period is planned to begin in December 2025 and will continue until the end of June 2026, giving us information on both the peak and off-peak seasons.

### Tell us what you think by 22 October 2025

We want to hear what you think about the proposed pricing strategy. Email your feedback to the project team at [paidcarparking@doc.govt.nz](mailto:paidcarparking@doc.govt.nz) or come along to our drop-in session.

### Drop-in session on 29 September

Drop in to talk to the team at DOC's Aoraki / Mount Cook Office, 66 Bowen Drive, Aoraki, anytime from 2 pm to 3 pm and provide your feedback.

For more information, visit [doc.govt.nz/paid-parking](https://doc.govt.nz/paid-parking).



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*



**Te Kāwanatanga  
o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government



## What we heard during the first phase of engagement

- We received 158 submissions from Treaty partners, stakeholders, businesses, concessionaires and the community across the three sites (Dolomite Point/Punakaiki, Franz Josef/Waiau and White Horse Hill/Aoraki). Of those, 7 were on White Horse Hill and 47 were about all three sites.
- Most people submitting on White Horse Hill were stakeholder groups who would like free parking for drop-offs and pick-ups and for locals to be exempt.
- Stakeholders also identified the need for considering longer term stays for those hunting or doing multi-day hikes, with the suggestion of a permit.
- Safety concerns were raised around people parking on the access road to avoid parking fees, and it was acknowledged that this is already an issue on Hooker Valley Road.
- Most people who submitted on all three sites opposed car park charges and thought that we should fund conservation needs using the money DOC already has access to.

## Proposed pricing strategy

The proposed pricing strategy was developed after considering information from stakeholders, reviewing all the submissions, doing market research and analysing how the car parks are currently used. The market research included a variety of topics, including fee structures and techniques,




both nationally and internationally. It evaluated over 40 car parks around the world, including 16 sites in Aotearoa New Zealand. The market research helped us understand typical rates and fee structures for paid parking at similar sites, and one finding was that the average hourly charge for car parking internationally is NZ\$6.40 per hour. The closest benchmark for this project was the car park in Milford Sound/Piopiotahi, which charges \$10 per hour.

**After reviewing all the research and the submissions, the charge for White Horse Hill was set at a lower rate than Milford Sound/Piopiotahi.**

The proposed pricing strategy aims to answer submitters' calls for:

- an initial free period
- special consideration for locals
- a parking fee exemption for concessionaires during the period of the pilot
- a fair and reasonable price for both regular users and occasional visitors.

The strategy aims to be simple and easy to understand and provides different fee options tailored to the different users of the car park.

FEES		
	Up to 20 minutes .....	Free
	Hourly Fee .....	\$5 per hour
	Daily Fee (Till 11.59 PM) .....	\$25 per day

Proposed pricing strategy for the White Horse Hill car park

## Annual permit

We listened to the feedback from regular users of the site and have incorporated three annual permit options:

- **Local permit** – We will offer an annual permit for locals (based on Mackenzie District Council boundaries) for \$10 per year.
- **Annual permit** – Recognising that some regular users come from further afield, we will offer an annual permit to any private vehicle owner for \$60 per year.

- **Concessionaires permit** – During the pilot, commercial tourism operators who hold a valid concession will be able to apply for a parking fee exemption.

All permits are per vehicle per year. They will allow unlimited access to the White Horse Hill car park based on vehicle number plates.

Camping overnight in the car park using a permit is not allowed.



## How the feedback influenced the proposed pricing strategy

What you wanted	Proposed pricing strategy	Our thinking so far
<p>Free parking period for vehicles making drop-offs/ pick-ups or staying a short time.</p> <p>There were different suggestions on the length of the free period.</p>	<p>A free period for 20 minutes.</p>	<p>This free period will be sufficient for private passenger drop-offs or pick-ups and will allow visitors to get out of the car and stretch their legs without incurring a charge.</p> <p>The duration of the free period also needs to provide for short stays without encouraging people to rush. We want to enable a positive visitor experience.</p> <p>Let us know if this works for you.</p>
<p>Different options for different needs.</p>	<p>The fee structure includes an hourly rate and a daily rate.</p> <p>It also includes permit options for regular users and concession-holding tourism operators.</p>	<p>Different options are provided for different user requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying hourly means people can be flexible in how long they stay.</li> <li>• The daily fee offers an affordable option for those walking longer tracks.</li> </ul> <p>We are keen to hear if this price structure meets the needs of current users.</p>
<p>Locals should be exempt from parking charges.</p>	<p>There is a short free period that allows people to do pick-ups and drop-offs.</p> <p>Locals can also purchase an annual pass for \$10, which allows unlimited access during that year. ('Locals' are residents in the Mackenzie District.)</p> <p>Other regular visitors can buy an annual pass for \$60.</p>	<p>The cost of the local permit is set low to acknowledge the special relationship residents have with their whenua (landscape).</p>
<p>Multi-day pass for hunters and trampers who are frequent visitors.</p>	<p>Recognising that some regular users come from further afield, we will offer an annual permit to any private vehicle owner for \$60 per year.</p>	<p>The annual permit allows users to visit an unlimited number of times while still helping to improve the visitor experience and biodiversity.</p> <p>The annual permit allows for vehicles to be parked overnight. No camping is permitted.</p>
<p>Different categories of vehicles (for example, campervans/ motorcycles/ cars) should have different rates.</p>	<p>All vehicles will be charged the same parking fee, although emergency vehicles will be exempt.</p>	<p>Each vehicle will be charged the same to keep the process simple.</p>
<p>Prices need to be reasonable.</p>	<p>The rate is \$5 per hour.</p>	<p>\$5 per hour is <b>half</b> the hourly rate charged for parking at Milford Sound/ Piopiotahi, which is a similar site.</p> <p>\$5 per hour is consistent across all three sites and gives the user a choice around how long they will stay.</p>
<p>Prices should be cheaper/ free in winter/ during off-peak times.</p>	<p>Prices will be the same year round.</p>	<p>The value of the site remains throughout the year.</p> <p>The pilot aims to track parking demand and revenue in both peak and off-peak times.</p>



## Proposed infrastructure changes

### Short-term improvements

The attached concept layout (on the last page) shows minor signage and upgrades in the existing White Horse Hill car park. These upgrades aim to improve the flow of traffic within the car park and help visitors safely find a parking space. DOC ranger and compliance staff will be available on site during busy times to help with parking.

The layout also shows the indicative locations of parking pay stations and cameras that will record the entry and exit times of vehicles. Paid parking starts at the existing White Horse Hill car park entrance.

### Hooker Valley Road impacts

Parking demand exceeds the existing capacity of White Horse Hill car park during the summer season, so vehicles often park along Hooker Valley Road, creating congestion. This diminishes the overall visitor experience due to pedestrian safety issues.

The introduction of paid parking at the existing White Horse Hill car park is expected to change parking behaviour. Vehicles may start parking on Hooker Valley Road earlier to avoid parking fees, leading to more people following this behaviour. To manage variable demand and unknown behaviours, DOC is proposing to put temporary traffic management in place on Hooker Valley Road operated by DOC rangers. This will include reduced speed limits and boards with messaging about parking availability and traffic issues.

### Longer term improvements

DOC is aware that the White Horse Hill car park is often over capacity, with vehicles parking along Hooker Valley Road during peak periods. We acknowledge that running a paid parking pilot this coming summer will not immediately solve this issue. We will use this pilot opportunity to investigate a range of options designed to improve the long-term car parking experience, such as:

- managing travel demand, including providing improved real-time visitor information and marketing
- maximising the capacity of the existing car park
- identifying possible locations for park-and-ride solutions
- making operational improvements to restrict parking.

Additional details on longer term options and DOC's preferred approach will be provided in the future. The delivery of these options is dependent on available funding and investment priorities.

## Project timeline

Action	Date
Undertake initial stakeholder engagement for all three sites	Complete
Finalise pricing strategy for Punakaiki and Franz Josef	Complete
<b>Advise stakeholders of pricing decision for Punakaiki and Franz Josef</b>	<b>September 2025</b>
<b>Seek stakeholder feedback on proposed pricing strategy for White Horse Hill</b>	<b>October 2025</b>
Finalise paid car park pricing and advise stakeholders at White Horse Hill	November 2025
Implement paid parking	December 2025
Seek stakeholder feedback during paid parking pilot	Time to be confirmed
Assess pilot and decide if paid parking services will continue at the three pilot sites and be introduced at other busy DOC sites	July 2026



## Frequently asked questions

- **Why is DOC doing this?**

Last year, the Minister of Conservation directed DOC to pilot the introduction of car parking charges at some busy sites. DOC is now engaging with local communities on the best way to achieve this.

- **Who will be enforcing the charges?**

Cameras will record the number plates of vehicles as they enter and exit the car parks. The company providing paid parking hardware will issue breach notices to vehicles for non-payment.

- **Will concessionaires need to pay?**

DOC is currently designing the exemption process with its preferred hardware supplier. In November, we will invite commercial operators with a valid concession for one of the three paid parking sites to register for a permit system where they will be able to get a parking exemption for their vehicles. If any concession holders do not receive this information by the start of the trial, they should contact us at [paidparking@doc.govt.nz](mailto:paidparking@doc.govt.nz).

- **I operate a commercial transport or tourism business that visits the car park. How do I get a concession parking permit?**

DOC plans to send out parking permit details to all current concession holders with a concession at one of the three paid parking sites prior to the start of the trial in mid-December. For other business operators, a paid car parking permit page containing the necessary details will be set up on the DOC website in November 2025.

Commercial tourism operators without a concession can apply for a permit from DOC – for more information, visit [doc.govt.nz/other-permissions-activities](https://doc.govt.nz/other-permissions-activities).

- **Will campground users have to pay for parking?**

No. A number plate recognition camera located on pay station 2 will identify overnight stays in the campground. Paid campground users will be exempt from paying parking fees.

- **Will Wyn Irwin Lodge and Thar Lodge users have to pay for parking?**

No. An electronic kiosk is planned to be installed in the huts to allow users to enter their vehicle number plate and be exempt from parking fees.

- **Is the trial potentially going to be expanded to include Great Walk car parks?**

Once the pilot is completed and the outcomes have been reviewed, a decision will be made around whether car parking charges should be extended to other busy sites. However, we do not anticipate that charging for DOC car parks will be widespread in the future.

### **Is it legal to charge for access to conservation land?**

Legislation does allow us to charge users fair and reasonable fees to use our facilities, which includes campsites, huts and car parks. Facility charges are not access charges.

In a separate initiative, which is not linked to the paid parking pilot, the Government has proposed changes that would make it legal for DOC to charge international visitors access fees at four iconic tourism sites. The Conservation Acts (Land Management) Amendment Bill will now be drafted and introduced to Parliament during this term. This process will include further public consultation on the draft Bill as part of the select committee process.



Overflow parking on Hooker Valley Road. Photo: DOC





# White Horse Hill car park improvements

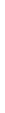
Campsite users exempt from parking fees



Mueller Hut Route

Public shelter & toilets  
Potential location of DOC kiosk

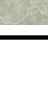
Pay station by others



Lodge users exempt from parking fees



Requirements for parking zone signs confirmed after design review



A3 SCALE 1:1000  
A1 SCALE 1:500



WHITE HORSE HILL PAID CAR PARKING AND OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

PLAN SIZE : A3  
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