



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

Paid parking to continue at Punakaiki, Franz Josef and at Aoraki carparks

The Department of Conservation (DOC) has decided to continue paid parking at the three sites where paid parking has been piloted since December 2025. The sites are:

- Punakaiki Pancake Rocks, Paparoa National Park;
- Franz Josef Glacier, Westland Tai Poutini National Park; and
- White Horse Hill, Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park.

During the pilot we monitored each site to see how paid parking performed against expected benefits.

The benefits:

It creates a way for visitors to help fund the visitor network

Paid parking met revenue goals.

All sites achieved higher than expected financial benefits, showing it is a viable way to support the visitor network.

Visitor management and experience

The goal was that paid parking would not significantly impact visitor numbers or visitors' experience. While some people have said they don't want to pay, this hasn't reduced the number of visitors or how they rated their experience.

Thank you for your feedback

Locals, stakeholders and users of paid parking gave feedback on how we could improve the parking experience. These include changes to the pricing structure, how people can top up their payment and signage improvements to make sure people have the information they need.

Further details are provided on the next page.



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

Changes to paid parking in response to feedback

The table below outlines suggestions raised about paid parking, what site they are relevant for and what the changes will be. Some changes will be effective from 1 July 2026, and all signage changes will be completed by 1 September 2026.

What we heard	Site	Change we are making to paid parking
Paying for an hour at a time, when people might not stay for a full hour or a full second hour.	All three sites	Payment is now available in 30-minute increments making it fair and flexible for people to pay only for the time they plan to stay.
Local requests about the \$10 local permit: - Wanting to include more than one vehicle. - Increase awareness of the local permit. - Having one local permit for both Franz Josef and Punakaiki.	All three sites	A local permit now can be used for two vehicles. There will be information on signs at the site about the local permit. A local permit for either Punakaiki or Franz Josef will now allow access to both sites. When existing permit holders are invited to renew their permit at the end of the year, there will not be any additional cost, i.e. the initial \$10 payment will be a one-off cost.
People aren't aware they can top up their payment if they stay longer than the time they initially paid for.	All three sites	Improve signage onsite.
People aren't aware if they pay for a day, they can come and go as they want all day.	All three sites	Improve signage to clarify that multiple entries and exits are allowed if you pay for the day.
People don't know the length of time of the experiences in the area.	All three sites	Improve signage about the location and duration of experiences.
PO Box holders at Punakaiki should be free.	Punakaiki	PO Box holders can apply to get an exemption from having to pay for parking.
Electric Vehicle drivers unsure if they have to pay while charging.	Punakaiki	Existing signage is clear that electric vehicle chargers are in a paid parking area and need to pay. A reduction in payment from per hour to per 30 minutes means they can pay in smaller increments closer to the time they need. An extra parking payment sign adjacent to the chargers is proposed to reinforce that parking payment is required.
People are rushing to get around the track in the free period.	Punakaiki Franz Josef	The 20-minute free period has been reduced to 10 minutes to clarify it is for pick-up and drop-offs only. This change will be implemented on 1 September.
Hard to see the payment screens sometimes due to weather.	Punakaiki	Covers have been added to the machines to reduce glare.

New payment structure for Punakaiki and Franz Josef

New Parking Fees	
	Up to 10 minutes.....Free
	30 minutes.....\$2.50
	Daily fee (unlimited in/out).....\$20

The 10 min free period will be implemented on 1 September 2026.

Payment structure for White Horse Hill

New Parking Fees	
	Up to 20 minutes.....Free
	30 minutes.....\$2.50
	Daily fee (unlimited in/out).....\$25

Overview of annual permits

Annual permits remain; details are outlined below which include the changes effective from 1 July 2026:

- Local permit – an annual permit costing \$10:
 - The local permit now allows two vehicles per permit.
 - For Punakaiki and Franz Josef car parks, this is available for those within the Buller Westland and Grey District Council boundaries.
 - For White Horse Hill car park, this is available for those based within Mackenzie District Council boundaries.
 - There is now no cost to renew the local permit each 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.
- Concessionaire's permit – commercial tourism operators who hold a valid concession are able to apply for a parking fee exemption.

All permits will allow unlimited access to the car parks based on vehicle number plates.

Even with a permit, camping overnight in the car park is not allowed.

For concession holders who had a permit during the pilot, these will be extended to 30 June 2027. Remember to keep your vehicle registrations up to date.



Cars and campervans parked at Franz Josef. Photo: Department of Conservation

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 has done this and is now continuing paid parking at these three sites.

- Who will be enforcing the charges?

Cameras 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?

Concession-holding tourism operators can apply for a parking fee exemption, allowing DOC time to assess how parking and the coming access charges at some sites align with Crown activity fees.

The application process requires operators to provide evidence of a concession. For more information please visit: [Paid car parking: Know before you go](#)

- I operate a commercial transport or tourism business that visits the car park. How do I apply for a concession?

Commercial tourism operators without a concession must apply for one from DOC. For more information, visit doc.govt.nz/other-permissions-activities.

- Is it legal to charge for access to public conservation land?

The Conservation Act allows DOC to charge users fair and reasonable fees to use their facilities, which include campsites, backcountry huts and car parks. Facility charges are not access charges.

- If I have a permit for Punakaiki, from when will it also include Franz Josef?

This will be effective from 1 July. The permits for each site will be consolidated into one permit from 1 July 2026.

- When can I renew my annual permit?

Permit holders will be invited via email to renew their permit. They will not need to pay the \$10 charge again.

- How often will paid parking be reviewed by DOC?

Following the paid parking pilot (including all the feedback from the engagement process) the decision has been made to continue paid parking at the three sites. Pricing and other settings at these sites will be reviewed periodically.

- Will paid parking be implemented at any other DOC sites?

DOC will investigate a programme of paid carparking investment at some busy DOC carparks and implement at feasible sites.