

GREEN TRAVEL PLANNING FOR AN OFFICE MOVE: PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE - THE HALCROW CITY PARK TRAVEL PLAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper outlines the approach undertaken by Halcrow's Glasgow office in developing a Travel Plan as an integral part of a move to new premises at City Park in November 2006.

Green Travel Plans tend to leave the contentious issue of car parking space allocation to the medium/long term. However, due to the office move, the opportunity was taken to address this issue at the outset. Based on the results of a staff travel survey the allocation of car parking spaces was split between operational need and commuters. Car parking spaces for commuters were allocated using a weighted scoring system based on car sharing, public transport accessibility and journey time to work. Staff with allocated commuter car parking spaces pay a monthly charge that is ring-fenced for the purposes of a Green Travel Fund. The fund is administered by a Staff Travel Plan Forum and is contributing to initiatives aimed at encouraging sustainable modes of travel to work and thus towards overall Travel Plan objectives.

The paper highlights the process adopted, lessons learnt and current progress in meeting the targets set out in the Travel Plan.

2. Background

Halcrow Group Limited's Glasgow office was based at the Octagon, Baird Street, Glasgow for over 10 years, however sustained growth prompted the decision in late 2005 to move to new premises within City Park, Alexandra Parade, a distance of 1.5kms from the Octagon. A key requirement was for single floor, open plan office accommodation and City Park met this requirement. City Park is a new office development in the Dennistoun area of Glasgow to the east of Glasgow City Centre, with a combined total of just under 2,000 staff currently based at the development.

Halcrow is committed to minimising environmental impact, both in delivery of clients' projects, and in the running of the business. The company has ISO 14001 accreditation for environmental management and is registered under the EU's Eco Management and Audit Scheme – EMAS. Across business groups and sectors environmental services and skills are provided to clients. Hence in addition to the commitment to minimise environmental impact of the office move and to promote travel choice for all staff there is also the fundamental issue of trying to “practice what is preached” with regard to the development and implementation of the Travel Plan.

A Travel Plan was developed for the Octagon site and accordingly a number of initiatives were already in place to encourage and facilitate more sustainable forms of travel. Through its commitment to Environmental Improvement and Sustainability, Halcrow already offer a number of incentives for sustainable travel, including:

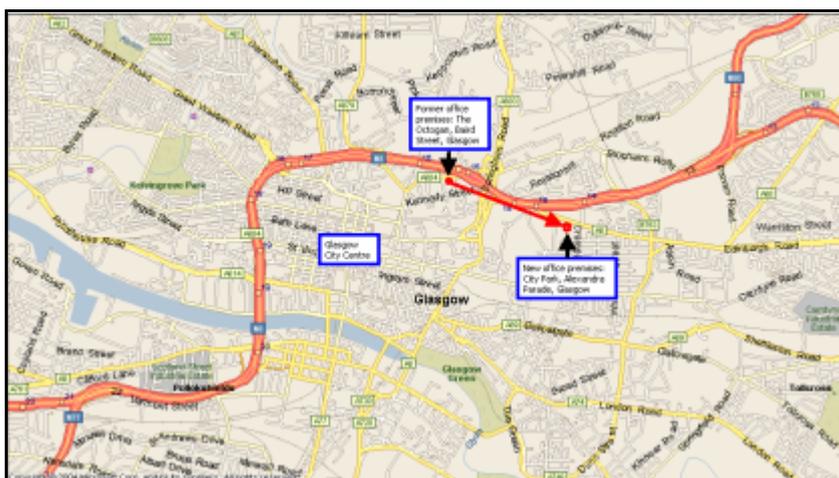
- Interest free loans for public transport season tickets and bicycles;
- Flexi-time;
- Home-working;
- Tele-conferencing;
- Video-conferencing; and,
- Travel allowances for cycle travel on business.

The key objectives of the Octagon Travel Plan were as follows:

- to encourage and enable greater use of sustainable transport modes for staff and visitors travelling to and from the Octagon;
- to effectively manage and reduce the use of the private car, particularly single car occupancy;
- to create a healthier and safer environment for all users of the Octagon;
- to introduce an effective and efficient car park management system;
- increase awareness of the different modes of travel to all those accessing the Octagon; and,
- in partnership with Glasgow City Council, SPT and others as appropriate, investigate further opportunities to improve facilities for walking, cycling and public transport users.

Following the decision to relocate there was increased focus and support to develop the Travel Plan to ensure that its aims and objectives were integral to the office move process.

Figure 1: Location Plan



3. PROCESS

To ensure staff ownership and input into the development of the Travel Plan a Staff Travel Forum was formed within the Glasgow office to co-ordinate the implementation of measures to encourage sustainable transport to the new office. The Travel Forum comprises members of staff from all business groups within the Halcrow Glasgow Office and is attended and supported by the Regional Director.

In addition to representatives from each business group within Halcrow, the Forum ensures that at each meeting there is at least one representative present who has the perspective of travelling to work by car, bus, train, cycle or walk. The Forum holds meetings on a 6 weekly basis with the chair of the meeting rotating between members. The composition of the Forum ensures that all sustainable travel matters are communicated by staff to their representatives prior to the meeting and that staff are informed as to any decisions taken at each meeting.

To ensure that the aims and objectives of the Travel Plan were enshrined into planning for the office move, the process commenced in March 2006 with a Travel Survey. The subsequent sections outline the key elements of the process in more detail.

i) Staff Travel Surveys

To commence the process of ensuring that the aims and objectives of the Travel Plan were enshrined into the office move process, a travel survey was issued to staff by email in March 2006. The survey aimed to elicit from staff the following information:

- the likely choice of travel mode to the new office;
- whether staff currently car share or would wish to join a car sharing scheme;
- suggested measures that would serve to encourage use of public transport, walking or cycling; and,
- opinions as to the priority that should be adopted for the allocation of car parking spaces in the new office.

To encourage responses prizes were offered including a one month SPT Zonecard, a one month FirstCard (both kindly donated by SPT and First respectively) and book tokens.

Importantly, the survey introduced the concept of charging staff for car parking to raise revenue for a Green Travel Fund, with the funds to be administered by the Travel Forum.

The concept of a Green Travel Fund and its potential role in developing the travel plan had been discussed and agreed by the Travel Forum and importantly had senior management buy-in. At the outset it was agreed that:

- any funds generated through parking charges should be ring-fenced for the purpose of funding measures that would encourage staff to use more sustainable modes of transport to work;

- charges for staff parking would be deducted on a monthly basis from salary; and,
- there should be a clear decision making process and staff consultation in the use of the Fund.

To gauge staff opinion on this potentially contentious measure the travel survey ascertained whether staff agreed with parking revenue being ring-fenced for the purposes of a Green Travel Fund and also as to the level of any charge.

A total of 196 staff responded to the March 2006 survey representing a response rate of 75%.

In respect of the Green Travel fund:

- 74% of staff stated that a charge for car parking was reasonable;
- 65% of staff who intended to drive to the new office stated that a car parking charge was reasonable; and most significantly;
- 61% of staff who wanted a parking space at the new office also stated that a car parking charge was reasonable.

With regard to the level of the weekly car parking charge, 40% of all staff stated that the weekly contribution should be upto £5 and 35% stated over £5, whereas of those staff who stated that they would require a car parking space 43% thought that the weekly contribution should be upto £5, with 18% stating over £5.

Staff were also asked to rank potential criteria that should be adopted to allocate car parking spaces at the new office if demand should exceed supply. Respondents to the staff travel survey ranked the following in order of importance:

- operational need;
- staff who have poor public transport provision from home to work;
- car sharers; and,
- staff whose journey time to work was longest.

Following analysis of the results of the survey, the Travel Forum agreed to fix the level of Green Travel Fund parking charge at £5 per car parking space per week and that the criteria for the allocation of car parking spaces should be in line with the above priorities agreed by the majority of staff.

A car parking application form was issued in July 2006 in which the level of Green Travel Fund parking charge was confirmed and also that in the likelihood that should demand exceed supply, the car parking spaces would be allocated as determined by the responses to the travel surveys in order to provide a fair and equitable allocation.

ii) Staff travel clinics and personalised travel planning

To ensure that staff were as well-informed as possible of the potential travel options to the new office, a series of travel clinics were held in the months leading up to the office move at 3 key stages in the process:

- i) whilst staff were completing their travel questionnaires;

- ii) during the application period for a car parking space at the new office; and,
- iii) once the allocation of car parking spaces had been announced.

The travel clinics, attended by over 60 staff, involved the provision of a personalised journey planning service by Halcrow transport planning staff utilising Transport Direct¹, public transport journey and ticketing advice from a representative of First Group plc and the provision of walking and cycle route information. Mapping to illustrate the locations of staff who expressed an interest in car sharing was also displayed, with the clinics offering an opportunity for staff to meet and to discuss potential car sharing options.

iii) Information Provision

The provision of clear, unambiguous transport information is fundamental towards achieving modal shift targets contained in a Travel Plan. In addition to the provision of public transport timetables, fare/route information and Glasgow City Council Cycle Maps both at the travel clinics and on staff noticeboards, additional information to assist staff was also produced.

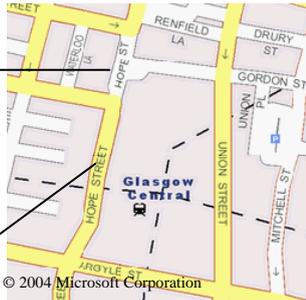
The aim was to provide clear and unambiguous information as to the location of bus stops, the cycle parking area, walking routes to the office from the City Centre, Buchanan Street Bus Stations and the nearby Bellgrove and Alexandra Parade rail stations. Furthermore, information as to the location of nearby car parking areas was also provided, with the intention of encouraging staff to walk the last leg of their journey to gain the associated health benefits of walking even a mile a day.

Figure 2: Clear information as to where to catch a bus to City Park from Glasgow City Centre using photographs and mapping.

Bus Stops: Central Station to City Park



38a, 213 – outside Toby Jug



© 2004 Microsoft Corporation



38 – outside News Express

First Glasgow
 38 0739 0745 0749 0751 0757 0814 0824 0841 0843
 38a 0735 0756 0809 0828 0836 0848 0852
 213 0719 0742 0844

Journey Time: 15 mins
Fare: £1.15

Figure 3: Detailed mapping highlighting location of dedicated Halcrow cycle/motorcycle area

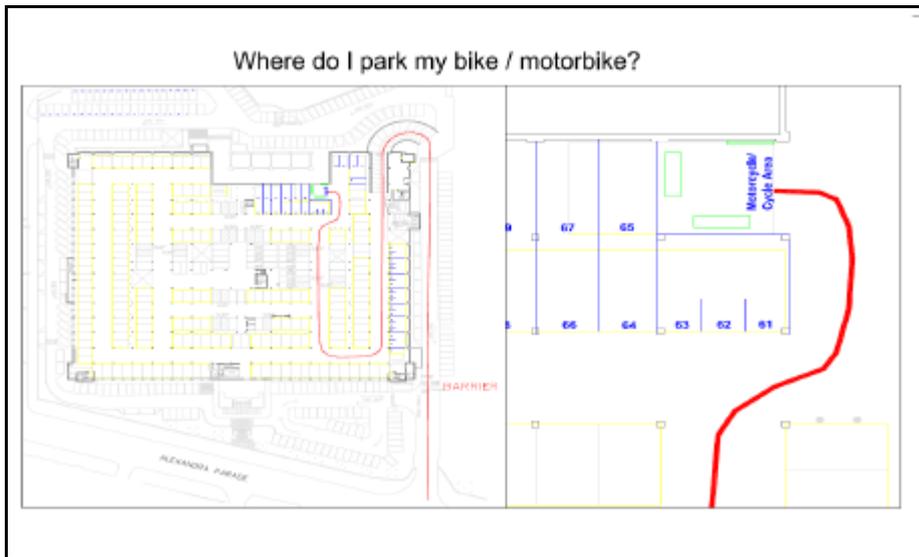


Figure 4: Alternative car parking locations with walking routes and potential weekly mileages

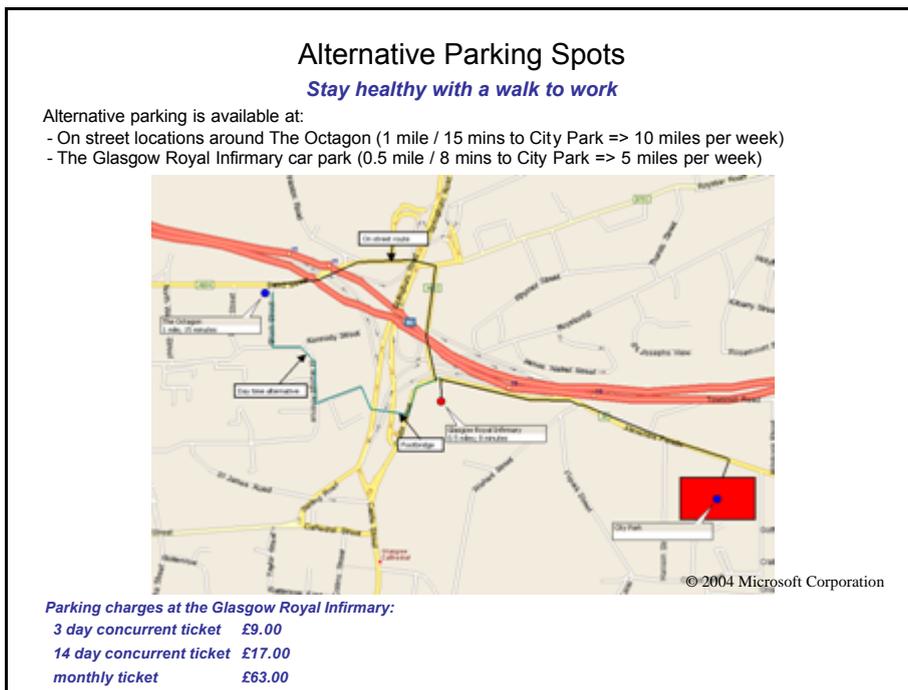
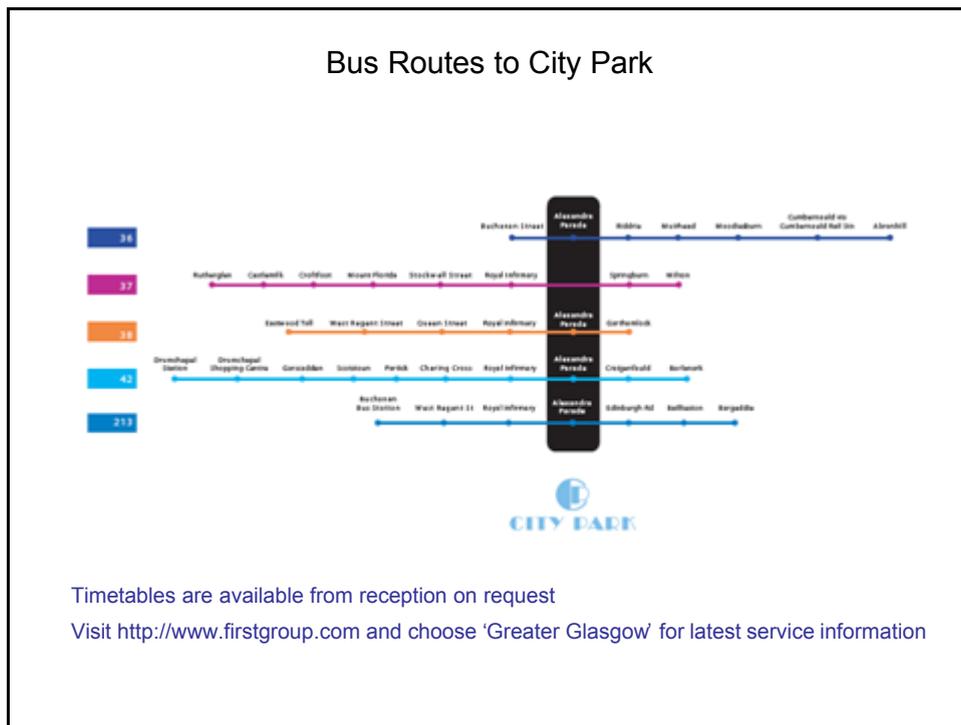


Figure 5: Clear information on bus routes serving City Park



The above information was also contained in a 'City Park Welcome Pack' that was placed on each staff member's desk on their first day at work in the new office.

4. CAR PARKING SPACE ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY

As expected the demand for car parking spaces exceeded supply with a total of 130 members of staff (out of a possible 285) applying for a car parking space at City Park.

The allocation of car parking spaces is an emotive, contentious and difficult issue. Whilst the applications were being collated there was a perception detected that there could be foul play during the allocation process. Hence, to ensure complete independence and to help alleviate these concerns, assistance was sought from the Energy Savings Trust to provide support in the development of the scoring system and subsequent postcode analysis of results. As such an independent transport consultant was appointed in this regard.

Car parking spaces were allocated by utilising a scoring system, reflecting the priorities suggested by staff in the staff travel survey as follows:

- Points were allocated on the basis of public transport accessibility. Points were awarded for journey time (in bands of 15 minutes, up to 60 points) and the number of changes required (up to 10 points). This element was given a 40% weighting;
- Points were allocated on the basis of willingness to car share and car parking space share (up to 70 points) with reference to the March 2006 staff travel survey. This element was given a 35% weighting; and,

- Points were allocated on the basis on the difference between car and public transport journey time (in bands of 10 minutes, up to 50 points). This element was given a 25% weighting.

The postcodes of staff who requested a car parking space in July 2006 were matched with responses to the March 2006 survey. To ensure consistency Transport Direct¹ was interrogated to provide details of public transport journey times and estimated car journey times to the new office. From the analysis a prioritised list of staff postcodes was produced, with the final stage being the matching of names to postcodes once the analysis was complete. This matching of names to postcodes was only undertaken once the data had been checked for errors.

5. CAR PARKING MANAGEMENT

Following the car parking allocation analysis, staff were informed as to whether they had been successful in their application or whether they had been placed on a prioritised waiting list. Staff were given an opportunity to examine their own score and to query their individual points allocation if necessary. However, to protect the anonymity of responses to the staff travel survey, a league table of scores was not published, rather a waiting list containing names only.

Spaces in the car park were split as follows:

- a total of 30 commuter car parking spaces that were allocated on the basis of the analysis outlined in section 4 above; and,
- business (operational) need spaces – of which there are 45 spaces.

i) Commuter car parking spaces

The 30 commuter car parking spaces are 'owned' by individual members of staff for a period of 1 year for which the £5 a week Green Travel Fund charge applies. Owners of the spaces agree to inform their relevant business group administration support staff when they will not be using their space in order that the next person on the prioritised waiting list is offered the opportunity of using the space. However, the parking charge applies to the owner of the space only.

ii) Business Group Operational need spaces

The Travel Plan recognises that the car is essential for some journeys. A total of 45 car parking spaces are apportioned between and managed by Halcrow's six business groups. These spaces are pre-bookable and are allocated on the basis of business need. The definition of business need is one of the most problematic aspects of the car parking management system, but priority for these spaces is given to:

- company car owners who allow their car to be used as a 'pool' car for use by any member of staff; and,
- staff who are attending client meetings or who require a car for site visits.

If spaces are unallocated then priority is given to staff on the prioritised waiting list described below.

iii) Prioritised waiting list

Staff who were unsuccessful in their application are placed on a prioritised waiting list. Staff on the list are offered the opportunity of a commuter or operational need space if one becomes available.

If a member of staff changes their travel habits change during the year (for example if they commence car sharing) then, at present, they would only move up the priority list or be offered a car parking space following the annual review of the allocation of car parking spaces in each year.

The system is monitored to ensure that the spaces are being used correctly and will be reviewed on an annual basis, or sooner if deemed necessary. A review of the car parking space methodology will commence in April 2007, during which staff will be fully consulted on both the methodology and timetable prior to the commencement of the car parking application process in August/September 2007.

6. MEASURES INTRODUCED TO ENCOURAGE CYCLING AND WALKING

Following analysis of the staff travel surveys and through discussion at the Travel Forum, it was decided that 2 of Halcrow's car parking spaces would be used for a dedicated cycle/motorcycle parking area for Halcrow staff and visitors. Hence, in November 2006, prior to the office move, 10 Sheffield Stands were installed in a dedicated area that also allows the option for increased parking in the future.

The area chosen benefits from CCTV coverage, is under cover in the basement car park and is adjacent to the lifts. Furthermore, to benefit staff who cycle or walk to work, showers and changing areas were installed in the office along with lockers for the storage of clothes and equipment.



7. MEASURES INTRODUCED UTILISING THE GREEN TRAVEL FUND

A key concern amongst staff was the additional 10-15 minutes walk time to the new offices from the main City Centre rail stations, Argyll Street and Central Station and Buchanan Street Bus Station. Staff expressed the concern that the additional walk time from these transport hubs as a result of the office move would be a disincentive to public transport use and serve to increase levels of commuting to the new office by private car.

Dell are a major employer based at City Park and offer a 20 minute frequency morning and evening dedicated peak hour shuttle bus service from Central Station to City Park for their staff. Hence, an agreement was reached with Dell to offer the service to Halcrow staff from day one in the new office for a trial period in the run up to Christmas 2006.

The service was promoted to staff through email, noticeboards and in the City Park welcome packs referred to in section 3 of this paper. Following monitoring of the use of the Dell Shuttle bus by Halcrow staff, the cost per head was excessive, significantly outweighing the benefits, hence the Travel Forum were tasked with examining further options.

Trial bus token scheme

City Park benefits from a 5 minute bus frequency from the City Centre and to further encourage bus use, the Halcrow City Park Travel Forum agreed to introduce a trial bus token scheme to benefit all Halcrow employees who are based at City Park. The primary aim of the bus token scheme is to provide discounted bus travel on buses operated by First Group plc to staff for journeys to City Park to/from Glasgow City Centre.

In particular, the use of bus tokens by staff removes the requirement to having the exact fare. Bus tokens are purchased from First Group and offered to staff at a discounted rate through use of the Green Travel Fund. The key conditions for use of the tokens are that staff cannot utilise a car parking space on the day on which they plan to use the bus token and that upto a maximum of 10 tokens may be purchased per person per week.

The staff travel survey undertaken in February 2007 indicated that an overwhelming majority of staff (79%) thought that the subsidised bus token scheme was a good use of the Green Travel Fund. However, the main criticism of the scheme was that it offers no benefit to monthly travel pass holders; staff who choose this option are able to benefit from interest free annual public transport season ticket loans as part of the wider Halcrow staff benefit package. The bus token scheme is being monitored to ascertain whether it is encouraging increased bus use or if it is providing subsidised travel for existing bus users. Following completion of the trial a decision will be taken by the Green Travel Forum as to whether the scheme should be continued.

8. MODAL SPLIT

To monitor progress of the Travel Plan, staff travel surveys have and will continue to be undertaken. Table 1 illustrates the modal split data that has been gained from travel surveys undertaken in July 2005, July 2006 and February 2007. Modal split targets that were set whilst the Glasgow Halcrow office was based in the Octagon are also presented.

Table 1: Staff Travel Survey Modal Split Data

	% modal split travel surveys			% modal split targets (based on former office)	
Date	July 2005	July 2006	February 2007	2009 Target	2014 Target
Mode	Actual travel to Octagon	Anticipated mode of travel to City Park	Actual mode of travel to City Park		
Walk	14	12	12	15	16
Cycle	1	2	3	2	3
Bus	14	15	15	16	18
Train	15	17	13	17	20
Motorcycle	3	1	1	4	4
Car Passenger	4	3	6	7	10
Car Driver with Passenger	11	13	14	13	15
Car Driver Alone	38	34	35	26	14
Subway	0	3	1	-	-
Total	100	100	100	-	-
Sample size	251	196	183	-	-

There were fears amongst staff that moving further away from the City Centre would result in increased number of drive alone commuting car trips to the new office, however, from the above table it is clear that the move to City Park has not increased the number of these trips, which represents a real achievement for the Travel Plan. There has been a discernable increase in the level of 2+ occupancy car trips, with the number of trips by cycle to the new office also increasing. The level of trips by train has decreased, which is somewhat expected due to the greater distance from the City Centre.

The February 2007 staff travel survey will be utilised to refine and establish modal split targets and to prioritise and focus efforts upon achieving these targets.

10. FUTURE WORK

A Travel Plan is an evolving document and importantly a process to achieve sustainable transport objectives. Work will continue with the aim of encouraging sustainable transport and sustainable modes of transport to the journey to work with emphasis on the following:

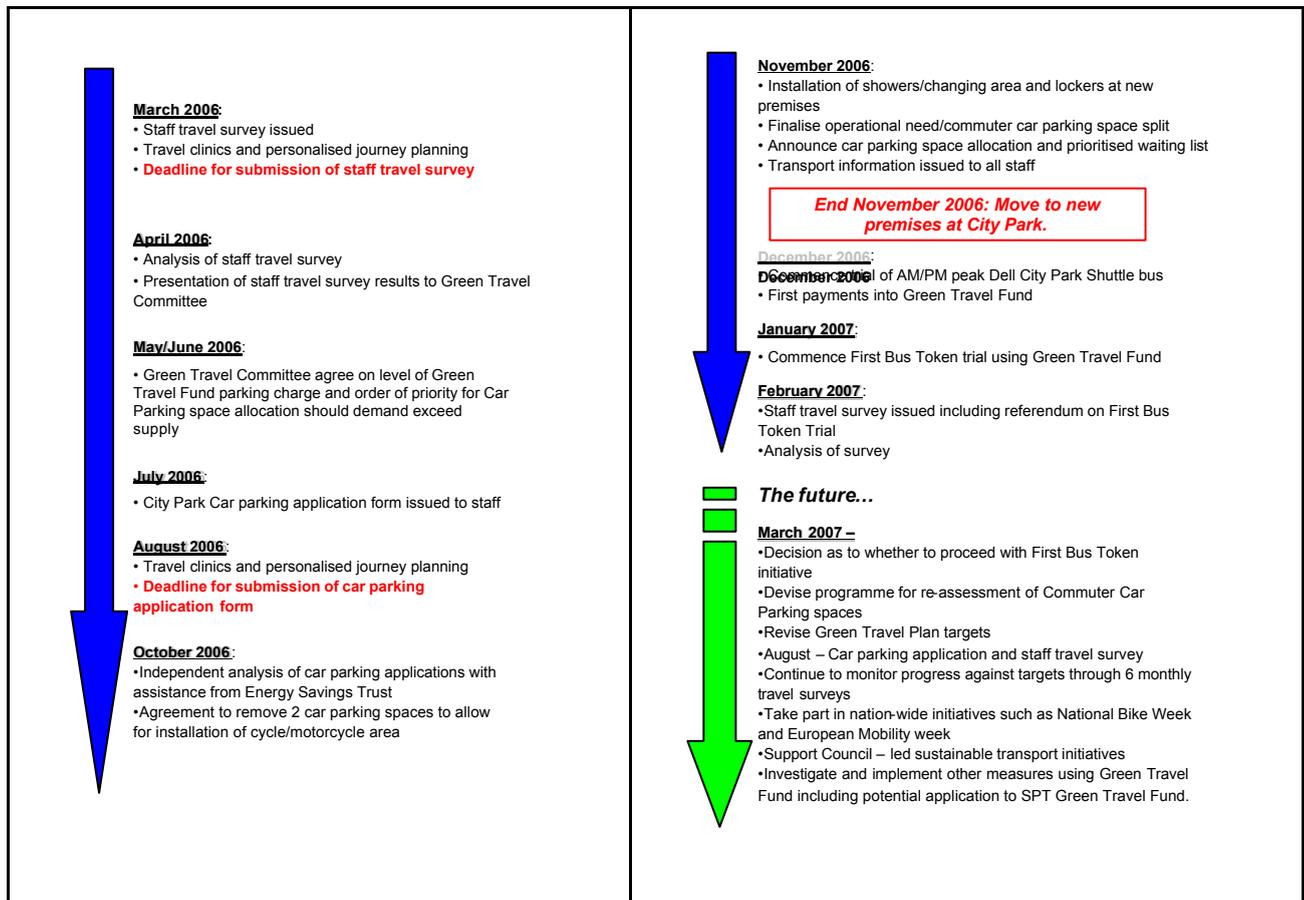
- A key focus will be to engage with other employers based at the City Park office development, with the aim of developing a City Park wide travel forum. There are excellent opportunities for joint working particularly with regard to car sharing

initiatives, economies of scale for funding green travel measures and joint promotional activities.

- The car parking management measures will continue to be monitored to ensure their effectiveness. In particular, awareness of the Travel Plan will be maintained through the annual review of the commuter car parking space allocation and the wider car parking management strategy. A programme for the reallocation of commuter car parking spaces will be devised, drawing upon key lessons learnt from the process prior to the office move.
- Targets for the Travel Plan will be revised with progress against these targets continually monitored through bi-annual staff travel surveys.
- Opportunities will be taken to take part in nation-wide sustainable transport initiatives such as National Bike Week, European Mobility Week and In Town Without My Car Day.

The table below summarises the development of the Travel Plan from March 2006, to the date of the move of the Glasgow office to City Park in November 2006 and developments subsequent to the office move to the present day.

Figure 6: Developing Travel Plan aims and objectives for an office move – timeline



11. KEY CONCLUSIONS

The ring-fencing of parking revenue for sustainable travel measures can be accepted by a majority of those who pay the charge if the use of the revenue generated remains clear and equitable. It is advisable to survey staff opinion prior to the introduction of any measures that utilise the revenue raised or to introduce any measures on a trial basis in order that their effectiveness can be fully appraised.

Communication throughout the process is crucial, though it has to be recognised that for many people any car parking space allocation methodology only tends to be questioned once the process has been completed. Transparency in the car parking space allocation process is fundamental and this will be built upon in future annual reviews. The use of travel clinics and personalised travel planning serves to promote travel awareness and allows a fully informed choice to be made prior to a car parking allocation process.

A vibrant and proactive staff travel forum, in addition to senior management support and representation at meetings where key decisions are taken increases the potential for a successful travel plan. Without widespread staff or management support, there is little chance of progress towards Travel Plan targets and the Travel Plan will swiftly become a document gathering dust on a shelf.

Furthermore, an annual review of car parking space allocation based on green travel principles ensures that a Travel Plan remains in the consciousness of both staff and an organisation. For example, car sharing has increased since the move to City Park due to the high priority being seen to be given to car sharers, yet this highlights a potential failing in the current strategy in that staff who commence car sharing during the year have to wait for this to be reflected in the car parking allocation analysis.

To avoid any perception of bias in the car parking space allocation process, it is essential that any analysis is undertaken independently to the organisation. Whilst not making the issue any less emotive, independent advice and support does assist in promoting a feeling of fairness.

The issue of car parking space allocation remains a contentious issue for any Travel Plan, however it is possible for Green Travel objectives and principles to be applied to an office car parking management strategy within a Travel Plan. It should also be appreciated that the issue of car parking is often a minority issue, in the case of the office move to City Park for example, less than 50% of staff applied for a car parking space and in future years, with encouragement given to car sharing, public transport, walking and cycling, it is hoped that this number will further decrease.

Notes

1. Transport Direct (www.transport-direct.info).