

# Petitioner submission of 26 October 2023

## PE2042/B: Abolish car parking charges for all Forestry and Land Scotland sites

We appreciate the rationale behind Forestry and Land Scotland's response; however, it in no way addresses the main issues raised by our petition, i.e.: that parking charges differentially impact the well-being of the most vulnerable and least affluent in society locally and nationally.

Charges have and are being put in place in sites such as Fearnoch Forest and Sutherlands Grove where there are no additional facilities to justify these charges.

We, the public already own the forest and are *de facto* being charged to access when we should have a right to access free of charge.

The car parking charge is a stealth tax that cannot be avoided as many sites, including Fearnoch Forest and Sutherlands Grove, are in reality only accessible by private car.

The moneysaving option is a poor response aimed at placating middle-class more affluent users but is still an unacceptable financial burden on those who could best benefit from access to the forest and do not have the disposable income to do so.

To our knowledge, the Equality Impact Assessments that have been undertaken have not been released into the public domain. If they have been then they have not been advertised as such and thus have been obscured from public scrutiny.

Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) is a successful profitable organisation, and this is to be commended. As the public could be considered as the owners of FLS then it would be appropriate for FLS to reconsider their financial model and ensure that the owners have appropriate benefits, including free access to car parking.