

Review of Parking in Torbay

Report

March 2016

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1. Introduction

1.1. In considering the Mayor's budget and savings proposals for 2015/2016, the Overview and Scrutiny Board recommended that a review of car parking be undertaken. The Mayor, in his response to the Board's report, supported the recommendation and indicated that he would be asking officers to undertake a full review covering the main issues raised by the Board. The Executive Head – Business Services was tasked with undertaking that review and this Needs Assessment sets out the findings of the review.

1.2. The objective of the review was:

"To review parking in Torbay to ensure that there is a collective understanding and consensus for the fair delivery of parking in Torbay."

and the scope of the review was:

1. *To review all parking tariffs (including seasonal rates, special promotions, and seasonal and annual permits) and to investigate how to make payment for permits easier.*
2. *To undertake an analysis of each car park in Torbay including its usage, repair and maintenance requirements, income generation opportunities and possible future alternative use.*
3. *To analyse the effectiveness of a mobile enforcement vehicle and its likely benefit to road safety.*
4. *To review the productivity of all aspects of parking services in terms of direct income and the wider economic impact and to identify opportunities for improvement.*
5. *To understand the parking issues within communities including the impact on residential parking.*
6. *To investigate the use of technology (including the merits of pay-on-exit car parks).*
7. *To collate existing policies and strategies in relation to parking and develop a single strategy for the future of parking services in Torbay.*

1.3. The review has involved a mixture of consultation, benchmarking and desk-top research. The appropriate Executive Lead and Overview and Scrutiny Lead have been kept informed of progress throughout with regular updates to and input from the Joint Operations Policy Development Group. The Report of the Review will now be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Mayor. It will be used to inform the production of an updated Parking Strategy which sits beneath the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan (2011-2026). Furthermore, the review will be used to help determine future parking tariffs.

2. Consultation

2.1. A consultation questionnaire was available online and at Council offices between 1 October and 13 November 2015. 1600 responses were received which, whilst a good response rate

for Council consultations, only represents 1.5% of the driving age population in Torbay¹. A copy of the Consultation Report is attached at Appendix 1.

- 2.2. Representatives of Community Partnerships and the business and tourism sector were also invited to attend Listening Panels and were encouraged to share their views on how they felt parking services in Torbay could be improved.
- 2.3. In addition, views were sought from schools, Council officers within the parking and highways teams and from council staff generally.
- 2.4. The views expressed during the whole of the consultation are reflected throughout this report.
- 2.5. The Council wishes to thank all those who gave their time in providing feedback to how parking services in Torbay could be improved.
- 2.6. The revised Parking Strategy which will be prepared as a result of this review will be subject to a further six week consultation prior to consideration by the Council. It is expected that the Strategy will cover a five year period (2016-2021) and will form part of the Council's Policy Framework, which the Executive Head of Business Services will operationalise.

Recommendation

Develop a single high level strategy for the delivery of parking services in Torbay with clear aims and objectives, which will form part of the Council's Policy Framework.

Create a single operational policy document and action plan that will deliver the agreed parking strategy and will include clear guidance and protocols to cover parking arrangements during events and parking for volunteers.

3. Context

- 3.1. Torbay Council operates 39 car parks across Torbay containing 7,580 car parking spaces. In addition 830 spaces on the highway are serviced by parking meters. Each year, 1.8 million pay-and-display tickets are issued for Torbay's car parks and 630,000 for on-street parking. Cash collection is undertaken daily from up to 79 out of the 205 parking machines and on-street meters.
- 3.2. Torbay Council enforces the parking regulations for both on-street and off-street parking, including the development of enforcement patrols and the provision of the appeals process. Approximately 30,000 parking penalties are processed annually.
- 3.3. The Council also manages and administers parking permits, residents parking schemes and controlled parking zones.
- 3.4. In 2014/2015, the total expenditure for Parking Services was £2,693,000 with total income of £6,314,000². Staff costs were £710,000 and £275,000 was spent on repairs and maintenance (which includes £107,000 of maintenance on pay and display machines).

¹ Based on 2013 Office of National Statistics mid-year estimates

² Source: Torbay Council Revenue Budget Digest 2014/2015

4. Parking Tariffs

- 4.1. Parking charges apply in Torbay Council’s car parks and at on-street pay and display meters on every day of the year except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year’s Day.
- 4.2. The Council has three classifications of car parks: Beach, Town Centre and Leisure. Each type of car park has a different tariff regime. In addition, a different set of tariffs apply during the summer and winter periods.
- 4.3. The current parking tariffs in force in Torbay Council off-street car parks are shown in Table 1.

Daily off street parking charges					
	22nd March to 30th November (inclusive)			2nd November to 21st March (inclusive)	All year round
Time Period	Beach	Leisure	Town Centre	All areas off Street Parking	Commercial Vehicle Charges
Up to 30 minutes*		70p	70p	50p	£2.00
Up to 1 hour	£1.50	£1.30	£1.30		
Up to 1.5 hours	£2.00	£1.80	£1.80		
Up to 2 hours	£2.50	£2.30	£2.30		
Up to 3 hours	£4.00	£3.30	£3.30		
Up to 4 hours	£4.50	£4.00	£4.00	£2.00	£6.00
Up to 5 hours	£5.50	£5.00	£5.00		
Up to 24 hours	£8.00	£8.00	£8.00	£3.00	£10.00
Night time charge (6 p.m. – 8 a.m.) **	£2.20	£2.20	£2.20	£3.00	
Weekly					£38.00

*Summer 30 minute tariff only available in Brixham Central, Colin Road, Great Western, Preston Gardens, Brunswick Square, Chilcote Close, Princes Street, Shoppers and St Marychurch.

Winter 30 minute tariff only available Brixham Central, Broadsands, Great Western, Roundham, Victoria, Youngs Park, Abbey Park, Brunswick Square, Chilcote Close, Hampton Avenue, Harbour, Lower Union Lane Shoppers, Meadfoot Road, Princes Street, St Marychurch and Union Square.

** Overnight charge is only available in Brixham Central, Great Western, and Lower Union Lane Shoppers car parks (available from 5pm in Lower Union Lane Shoppers).

Table 1: Off-street parking tariffs

- 4.4. Tickets purchased in long stay car parks are transferrable to other long stay car parks on the day of purchase. (The only short stay car parks in Torbay are Lower Union Lane Shoppers in Torquay, Great Western in Paignton and Brixham Central.)
- 4.5. A further set of tariffs is in force for on-street pay and display parking with a different structure depending on whether the parking bays are classed as Prime Sites, Town Centre or Commuter and whether the summer or winter fees apply.

- 4.6. The current parking tariffs in force in Torbay Council on-street pay and display parking are shown in Table 2.

Daily On Street Parking Charges							
	23rd March to 2nd November (inclusive)		3rd November to 22nd March (inclusive)		All year round		
Time Period	Prime Sites	Town Centre	Prime Sites	Town Centre	Commuter		
					Newton Road	Magdalene Road	Lymington Road/Sands Road/ Steartfield Road
Up to 30 minutes	£1.00	£0.70	£0.20	£0.50			
Up to 1 hour	£1.50	£1.30	£0.50	£1.00			
Up to 1.5 hours	£2.20	£2.00	£1.00	£1.50			
Up to 2 hours	£3.00	£2.50	£1.50	£2.00			
Up to 3 hours	£4.00	£3.50	£2.00	£3.00			
Up to 4 hours	£5.00	£4.50	£2.50	£4.00	£1.00		£1.00
Up to 8 hours						£1.00	£2.00
Up to 10 hours					£2.00		
All day	£10.00	£10.00	£10.00	£10.00			
Night time charge*	£2.50		£1.50				

* Only available at Eastern Esplanade, Rock Walk and Torre Abbey Meadow and Sands

Table 2: On Street Parking Tariffs

Charging Regime

- 4.7. Whilst it would appear that Torbay currently has a complicated structure of parking charges, as part of this review benchmarking was undertaken with other local authorities and it became evident that Torbay is not alone in charging different rates in different car parks. The rate charged in car parks in other local authorities depends on a number of factors, not just whether the car park is classified as long or short stay.
- 4.8. 34% of those who responded to the consultation felt that one set of parking charges should apply to every paid parking place in Torbay. Whilst the comments made during the consultation indicated support for the reduced level of charging in the winter months, there were requests for more flexibility about the length of time that could be purchased in the winter.

Level of Charges

- 4.9. A comparison of off-street parking charges with neighbouring local authorities, the privately operated car parks at Princesshay, Exeter and Drake Circus, Plymouth shopping centres and

with similar local authorities in other parts of England was undertaken and the results are shown in Appendix 2.

- 4.10. Using the information gathered during the benchmarking, Figure 1 compares Torbay’s minimum and maximum summer charges and the winter charges in its car parks with the average charges from other authorities. Whilst the maximum summer charge is above the average in all cases, the minimum summer charge is at a similar level to the tariffs in the other authorities and the winter charges are lower.

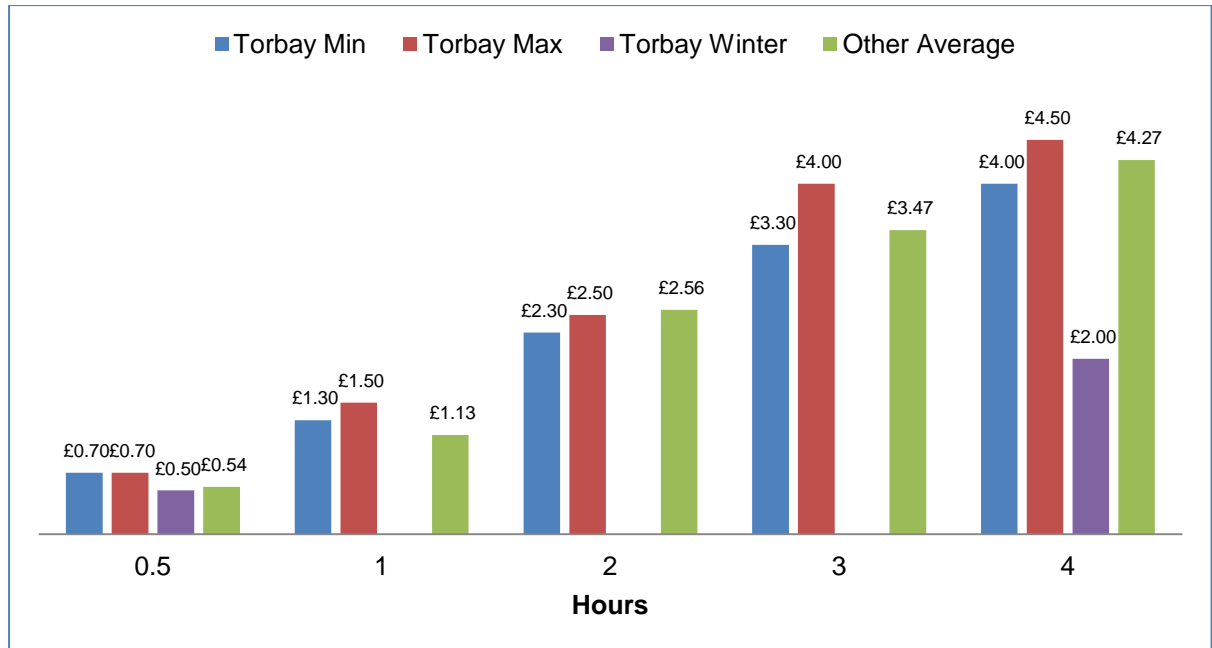


Figure 1: Comparison of car park charges

- 4.11. The overwhelming majority of respondents to the consultation questionnaire felt that both the summer and winter charges for parking in Torbay were too high (79% and 71% respectively). This is not an unexpected result. 17% felt that the summer charges were “about right” and 23% felt this way about the winter charges. The comments about parking charges were, as expected, numerous and varied. They ranged from making all parking free to providing residents with reduced parking charges. There were requests to have a scheme of charges which would make long stay parking attractive in car parks with shorter stay on-street parking more attractive. There were also a range of suggestions about how to make charges more flexible to benefit local people – both in the summer and the winter.
- 4.12. In discussing parking charges with the trade organisations during the review, there was feedback from the English Riviera Tourism Company that there were very few complaints about the level of parking charges from tourists and visitors. A representative of the business community made recommendations that charges should be based on a 50p multiplier as per the scheme operated by East Devon District Council.
- 4.13. The business representatives also highlighted the need for parking charges to be equitable across Torbay especially in being seen to support local businesses. The example was given of the different level of charges at Torquay and Brixham seafronts in the winter for residents wishing to have a coffee in the area – on-street parking at Torre Abbey Sands for an hour costs 50p whilst at Breakwater car park in Brixham it would cost £2.00 to park for one hour (although you would be able to stay for the maximum length of four hours). This is because

one area is classified as off-street (Breakwater) and the other area is an on-street area (Torre Abbey). On-street parking opportunities are limited in Brixham.

Recommendation

Off-street parking charges should be simplified and the classification of Beach, Leisure & Town Centre car parks should be replaced with either Long Stay or Short Stay.

A schedule of parking tariffs should be agreed that reflect the Council's need to grow income by 3% year on year. Consideration should be given to achieving income growth through increased use resulting from lower tariffs rather than simply increasing the charges.

Consideration should be given to fixing the schedule of parking tariffs for off-street and on-street for a number of years to create certainty, avoid public confusion and save on the cost of frequent Traffic Regulation Orders.

The policy of promotional winter parking charges should be continued between the beginning of November and the third week of March.

A selection of revised parking tariff options can be found in Appendix 3.

Methods of paying for car parking

- 4.14. Tickets for both on-street and off-street parking are purchased from ticket machines all of which currently only accept coins. As new ticket machines are bought, they are being replaced with those that require customers to enter their registration number in order to stop the loss of parking income from the transfer of tickets.
- 4.15. Off-street parking can also be paid for using the Park Mobile service allowing customers to park and either phone or use a mobile app to register where they are parked and for how long. Parking times can be extended without returning to the parked vehicle. Payment is made via the method set up when the customer first registers with the service. There is an additional charge of 30p per transaction for using the Park Mobile service which goes direct to Park Mobile (i.e. Torbay Council does not receive any additional income if customers use Park Mobile). There is no charge to the Council for the provision of the service.
- 4.16. Feedback from the consultation was that the ticket machines should be able to give out change, that the fee structure could be simplified so that finding change was easier, and that paying for longer periods of time (in particular all day parking) was inconvenient because of the need to pay with coins rather than notes or cards.
- 4.17. Pay-on-exit is available for all customers at the Harbour and Lower Union Lane car parks both located in Torquay. Pay-on-exit is effectively available in all other car parks via the Park Mobile service. Pay-on-exit was frequently requested throughout the consultation period with 60% of respondents preferring that system. However, 77% of respondents do not or will not use the Park Mobile service even though this would address the points raised about pay-on-exit and the need to find the correct change to purchase a ticket.
- 4.18. Views on the Park Mobile service ranged from not wanting to pay the transaction fee on top of the car parking fee to people not being aware of the service to not trusting technology. Those who had used the service felt that it enabled them to only pay for the time used and that it allowed flexibility over the length of stay. There were also requests that the service should be available at each pay machine both on-street and off-street (as the service is currently only provided at off-street car parks).

Recommendation

All new ticket machines should provide a facility to input vehicle registration number details to avoid the transfer of tickets. The specification of all new machines will be reviewed to ensure that card payment options are available where needed.

Pay on Exit car parks are popular and consideration should be given to providing this option at other sites such as Brixham Central, Victoria, Sheddon Hill and Beacon Quay (middle deck).

Public awareness of the Park Mobile option should be improved through better promotional activity.

Permits

- 4.19. Torbay Council currently offers ten different types of permit for its pay and display car parks as set out in Table 3. In accordance with the Council's current Parking Policy, parking permits are provided at a concessionary rate to encourage the use of off street parking when compared to the standard daily parking charge. Currently, a further 10% discount is offered for vehicles in Vehicle Excise Duty Bands A, B and C – evidence from the customer is required and a refund is then provided.

Permit Type	Coverage	Cost
Annual	Covers use in all Torbay Council car parks	£510.00
Monthly	Covers use in all Torbay Council car parks except the Harbour and Lower Union Lane	£40.00
Annual Commuter	Available for use in all of the following car parks: Shedden Hill, Torre Valley, Union Square, Colin Road, Roundham, Victoria, Breakwater and Shoalstone	£480.00
Monthly Commuter		£40.00
Annual Site Specific	Can be used in one specified Long Stay car park only (with the exception of Town Hall, Beacon Quay, Station Lane and Brixham Central)	£450.00
Monthly Site Specific		£37.50
Weekly	Covers use in all Torbay Council Car Parks except The Harbour and Lower Union Lane	£33.00
Three Day		£20.00
Off Peak	Valid 3.00 p.m. to 10.00 a.m. and covers use in all Torbay Council car parks except pay-on-exit (i.e. The Harbour and Lower Union Lane).	£50.00
Commercial Weekly	Covers use in Clennon Valley, Lymington Road, Oxen Cove, Victoria and Shedden Hill	£38.00

Table 3: Off-street Car Park Permits and Prices

4.20. Permits are also available for on-street parking as per Table 4 below:

Permit Type	Coverage	Cost
Annual	Covers use in all on-street pay and display bays	£850.00
Monthly		£80.00
Monthly Commuter	Covers use in on-street pay and display bays in Lymington Road, Newton Road, Sands Road and Steartfield Road (Not available for Magdalene Road)	£38.00

Table 4: On-street Parking Permits and Prices

Recommendation

The charges for reserved parking bays should be set on an area-by-area basis to reflect supply and demand.

The 10% discount for vehicles in Vehicle Excise Duty Bands A, B and C be discontinued.

A selection of revised parking permit tariff options can be found in Appendix 4.

4.21. The number of each type of permit sold in 2014/2015 financial year is shown in Table 5.

Permit Type	Numbers Sold
Annual – Off-street	698
Annual – Off street site specific	258
Off Peak	485
Monthly – Off street	634 (average 52 per month)
Monthly – Off street site specific	181 (average 15 per month)
Annual – On street	0
Monthly – On street	6

Table 5: Number of permits sold (2014/2015)

4.22. Permits can be purchased via the Council’s online portal or by cheque with completed application form (by person or via post). Permits are then processed and permits posted within 14 days. Weekly and three day permits are available immediately from the Connections and Harbour Offices in Torquay, Paignton and Brixham, the Tourist Information Centre in Torquay, HobNobs in Brixham , Torbay Bookshop in Paignton. The off peak permit is available at these locations as well.

Recommendation

The Executive Head of Business Services should review the points of sale for parking permits, where commission is paid to third party operators, so as to maximise the Council’s income.

- 4.23. Some guest house and hotel operators purchase permits which they then provide, at a cost, to their guests. This option is possible for any guest house or hotel although feedback from the consultation would suggest that it is not widely known about. Requests have also been made for this option to be available as “sale or return” which would move the financial risk to the Council. The monthly permits were introduced to allow annual users to spread the cost over the year. Some accommodation providers make use of the monthly permits for their visitors. This arrangement has two faults for the Council: (1) it offers an uneconomic parking rate to visitors [£1.25 to £1.33 per day compared with £4.71 per day at the weekly rate, £6.66 per day at the 3-day rate and £8.00 per day at the daily rate]; and (2) the very attractive rate allows for a mark-up or administration charge to be made.

Recommendation

Monthly permits should be discontinued once the Direct Debit option is available with weekly or 3-day permits serving the visitor market.

Parking Services should consult with tourism industry leaders to keep under review the parking needs of visitors and the availability of suitable parking permits.

- 4.24. Permits are valid for up to four vehicles which can lead to an abuse of the system. The Annual permits are paper with a hologram and monthly, weekly and three-day permits are scratch-cards. The administration of permits (including the printing and posting of permits) is through the Parking Services Team. The resources to manage this service are limited within the current budget and the process lends itself to using smarter technology and/or a multi-skilled workforce/ shared service.
- 4.25. Torbay Council has worked with local district authorities throughout Devon on procuring services jointly. There are a number of services, equipment, uniform etc. where working to procure together may result in cost efficiencies due to joint buying power. This could include permit stationery and notice and permit processing systems.

Recommendation

Only one vehicle registration number to be allowed on any permits and an administration fee to be charged to change any details on a permit.

The Executive Head of Business Services will review the options to deliver a more efficient parking permit system, including the potential for shared services and the use of smarter technology.

In addition, Torbay should continue to work with neighbouring local authorities to undertake joint tendering and procurement of parking systems, equipment and other appropriate acquisitions.

- 4.26. 233 people who responded to the consultation questionnaire said that they had a permit and gave their views. Around a third of those people were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the cost, application process, renewal process and choice of permit. Between 10% and 15% were fairly or very dissatisfied with these aspects of permits.
- 4.27. The consultation questionnaire also sought views on why people did not have a parking permit. This included the costs of the permits, the requirement to pay for permits upfront, lack of awareness of the different permits available and the restrictions on the times when permits can be used.

Recommendation

The Executive Head of Business Services will implement different marketing techniques, including the use of social media, to promote the availability of different parking permits in Torbay.

Consideration should be given to investment in vehicle branding and advertisement to promote a positive message of the parking service as a whole (including parking enforcement).

- 4.28. The English Riviera Tourism Company (ERTC) felt that the Council's parking permits represented good value compared to other seaside resorts. However, there was some confusion amongst visitors about where they could be used as it was not always obvious who operated which car park. For example, Council car park permits are not valid in Fleet Walk or the Pavilion car parks in Torbay given that they are not Council car parks. Neither are they valid in the car parks operated by Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust. It was suggested that an integrated car park pass could be developed along the lines of the integrated Attractions and Heritage Pass. It was also requested that the current three day permit be amended to allow for the permit to be used on three non-consecutive days which would provide visitors with more flexibility when visiting Torbay and the surrounding area.

Recommendation

The Executive Head of Business Services should work with other parking providers within Torbay to explore the opportunity to introduce an integrated/transerable car park pass.

The existing 3-day permit be amended to allow it to be used on three non-consecutive days.

- 4.29. The ERTC also highlighted the general move towards a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week culture whereby customers wished to be able to purchase permits when they wanted to (probably via an online portal) rather than when a particular premises was open. In undertaking comparisons with other local authorities (especially those tourist areas elsewhere in England) there is the ability to purchase up to week long parking tickets from the machines in long stay car parks. This system is available in Torbay but only via the Park Mobile service.

Recommendation

The Council should become more commercially astute with the online sales of parking services. Available services should be easy to identify and to understand. The tariff system needs to be straightforward and the website functionality should facilitate quick payment options with the ability to follow up active interest by capturing data in the early stages of any online enquiry.

- 4.30. Torbay Council does not currently allow for annual or monthly permits to be purchased via Direct Debit whereas Isle of Wight Council, Lancaster City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council are three examples of local authorities which do enable this payment method. Torbay Council does however allow for the payment of Council Tax, National Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates) and harbour mooring fees via monthly Direct Debits and, in theory, other annual invoices (such as parking permits) could be paid for using this method so long as it was covered within the Terms and Conditions and the value was such that it covered the additional administration costs and the risks of non-payment.

Recommendation

The Council should introduce the direct debit option as soon as possible to allow customers to pay for annual permits and spread their costs. A small surcharge should be applicable for this service.

Other dispensations

- 4.31. The Council run a Healthcare Emergency Badge Scheme which is for those who administer care to people in need of medical or other care services in their own homes. Services such as GPs, district nurses, midwives, meals on wheels and care workers may apply for a badge and clock (similar to the current disabled blue badge) which permits the holder to park on a yellow line restriction for up to an hour providing there is no loading/unloading ban in place at the location. Charges related to this scheme do not adequately cover the cost of administration and enforcement.
- 4.32. Parking Dispensation Notices are available for those who are carrying out work who require constant access to their vehicle and/or tools and who need to park for longer than the permitted stay in a limited waiting bay or on a yellow line. The cost of the Notice is £5.00 per day up to a maximum of five days plus a £5.00 administration fee. Applications can be made online using a debit or credit card and a minimum of one day's notice (Monday-Friday) is required.

5. Car Parks in Torbay (Off-street Parking)

- 5.1. As one respondent to the consultation noted:

“The simple car park is one of the main gateways into our towns and suburbs. It’s the first touch point for visitors, residents, workers and potential investors and the last touch point and experience as they leave. First impressions are critical, final impressions are lasting.”

- 5.2. Off street parking is parking that is provided in car parks. Torbay Council operates 39 car parks within Torbay – 33 are surface car parks and 6 are multi-storey. Two car parks – Lower Union Lane and the Harbour are pay-on-exit car parks. A complete list of the car parks operated by Torbay Council is shown in Appendix 5.
- 5.3. As part of this review, consideration has been given to the numbers of tickets sold in each car park, the income at each car park, the current condition survey for the car park and potential future use and/or site value.

Income

- 5.4. The total income from car parks in 2014/2015 (the last complete financial year) was £3,254,119. The detail of the split of that income between each of the car parks in Torbay is shown in Appendix 5 and on the graph in Figure 2.

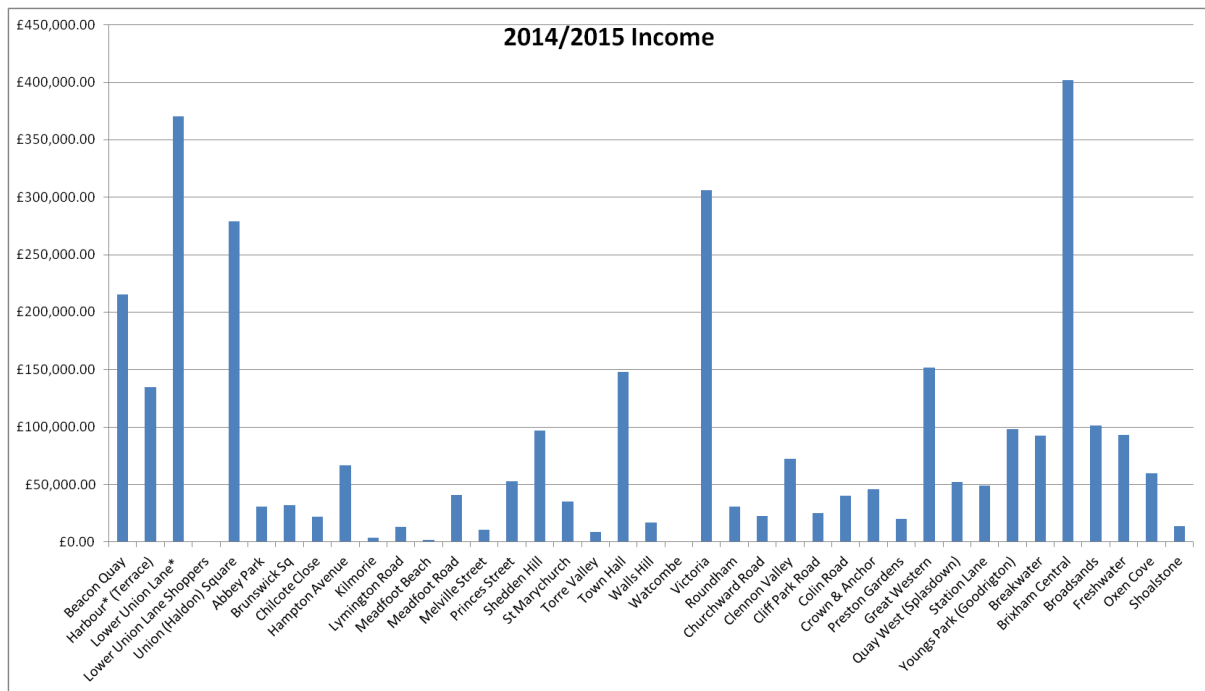


Figure 2: Car Park Income 2014/2015

(It should be noted that the income for Lower Union Lane and Lower Union Lane Shoppers have been combined; as has the income for Victoria and Victoria Coach. Watcombe car park is the only Council-operated car park which is free to use. Meadfoot Beach car park was closed for a large proportion of the year due to beach hut development work and hence the shown income level is not for the full year.)

Condition

- 5.5. As set out in the Council’s Corporate Asset Management Plan, the Council undertakes a rolling five year programme of condition surveys of all of its assets including the car parks. The condition survey identifies works based on a priority rating of 1 (urgent work to prevent immediate closure) through to 4 (long term work to prevent deterioration). Repairs and maintenance work is prioritised across all Council assets based on the condition surveys. However, the resources to undertake repairs and maintenance do not necessarily enable all works to be undertaken. One of the risks identified in the Car Parking Service Review is that there is a backlog of repairs in car parks and that this may eventually lead to a loss of income as sections within car parks, or entire car parks, may close if they are deemed unsafe for public use.
- 5.6. Responses to the consultation questionnaire showed that, in terms of the condition of the car parks, most people said that they were “neither satisfied or dissatisfied” with the cleanliness, lighting, provision of lifts and surfacing/state of repair with “fairly satisfied” being the next highest response to these points.
- 5.7. Those that were dissatisfied with Torbay Council run car parks cited the cleanliness of stairwells in the multi-storey car parks, anti-social behaviour both in surface and multi-storey car parks, reliability of the lifts and the poor signage and line marking as areas of concern. It was felt that the car parks needed cleaning and painting in order to create an environment to which people were happy to return. Comments were also made about the cost of the parking compared to the service received: *“If I’m forced to pay to park a car in a car park, I expect the facility to at least be in good repair.”*

Recommendation

The Council should set aside funding to tackle the priority repairs within car parks and embark on a programme of investment in key areas such as painting, lighting, upgraded ticket machines and line marking where appropriate to ensure that the offer remains both safe and attractive.

- 5.8. The trade organisations who took part in the consultation highlighted the poor state of the signage in the car parks and provided examples of signage in car parks operated by other Councils. Examples are shown in Appendix 6. It was felt that there needed to be a simple, clear and consistent signage. Respondents to the consultation felt that facilities could be made more attractive and claimed this would increase the use of the car parks and potentially increase income and reduce enforcement costs.

Recommendation

The signage at all car parks needs to be simplified and refreshed as soon as possible. In particular the backboards behind the ticket machines represent the point of sale and they need to be both informative and attractive so that the service is seen to represent value for money.

Security

- 5.9. Just over a third of consultation respondents were satisfied with the security within car parks with just under a quarter dissatisfied.
- 5.10. The Park Mark[®] Safer Parking Scheme is an initiative of the Associations of Chief Police Officers and is aimed at reducing both crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities. It is a national standard for UK car parks that have low levels of crime and measures in place to ensure the safety of people and vehicles. Seven of Torbay Council's car park have been awarded a Park Mark[®]. Whilst car parks undergo an assessment to determine whether they qualify for a Park Mark[®], the Council is also required to pay a membership and registration fee of £1300 per year. However, only 7% of respondents said that the scheme influenced their decision of where to park and 67% had not heard of the scheme.

Recommendation

The Executive Head of Business Services should cancel the Council's membership of the Park Mark[®] Safer Parking Scheme as a budget saving measure.

Other income opportunities and alternative uses

- 5.11. As part of the previous Productivity Improvement Programme (2010/2011), a number of income opportunities for the parking service were identified. Some of these suggestions have been considered again and residents and the business community were asked as part of the consultation for their suggestions for additional income.
- 5.12. In particular, a question was included in the consultation on whether having car washing, advertising and vendors and other business opportunities would be a good idea. The percentage of people who thought these would be a good idea ranged from 21% to 39%. But the percentage of those who said they would use these facilities only ranged from 5% to 16%.
- 5.13. Suggestions from the business community on potential alternative income streams from the car parks included the provision of 4G mobile telephone and DAB radio masts which would

also improve the services available in Torbay. The addition of solar panels was also proposed. Income is already derived from the lease of car park sites to telecommunication providers.

- 5.14. The Local Government Association's recent Corporate Peer Challenge sets out the need for the Council to drive further revenues for the Council and therefore the opportunities for further income generation within the Council's car parks will need to be part of the holistic approach to identifying income streams.
- 5.15. As part of the review, the TDA have been asked to provide its opinion on development opportunities for each of the car parks. This is a very high level position with regard to potential future use and land disposal value. It should be noted that the figures are subjective and the future viability of any scheme would affect the ultimate value of the land. These views are summarised in Appendix 5.

Recommendation

The Executive Head of Business Services should explore all opportunities for further income generation within the Council's car parks as part of wider holistic approach to identifying new income streams.

Kilmorie, Meadfoot Beach and Torre Valley car parks earn very little income and could be considered surplus to service requirements. The Council should consider alternative and/or additional use of these assets to maximise potential income.

Coach parking

- 5.16. A review of coach parking in Torbay was reported to the Transport Working Party in 2012. At that stage, it was agreed to put six coach parking spaces at Sheddon Hill Car Park in Torquay. This decision was never fully implemented and there are currently three coach parking spaces in that car park. A single representation on behalf of the Coach Drivers Information Pack indicated that the coach drivers would like to see the original decision fully implemented given the proximity of that car park to the central hotel district.
- 5.17. Income at Sheddon Hill car park has now increased (by approximately £50,000 per annum) as a result of the redevelopment of the Palm Court area. The earning capacity in that car park would benefit from the removal of the existing coach parking spaces. This would also facilitate the introduction of pay on exit (see 4.18). Lymington Road coach station has spare capacity and can provide a perfectly adequate alternative to Sheddon Hill.

Recommendation

The existing coach parking spaces in Sheddon Hill car park should be removed and converted to car parking bays so as to maximise income to the Council.

- 5.18. Feedback from the English Riviera Tourism Company in relation to coach parking was fewer coach drivers were buying permits from their outlets and that they often heard comments that they take their guests to locations where they do not have to pay parking charges.
- 5.19. Representations from the Coach Drivers Information Pack and the English Riviera Tourism Company were made about coach drop off and pick up points. These requests have been referred to the Council's highways section. Additional coach drop off and pick up points were introduced in 2012 but additional sites can still be considered.

6. On-street parking

- 6.1. Torbay Council introduced on-street pay and display machines in the town centre areas of Torquay and Paignton during September and October 2008. The locations of on-street pay and display locations are shown in Appendix 7.
- 6.2. The total income from on-street parking in 2014/2015 was £1,367,427. The detail of the split of that income between each on-street parking pay and display location is shown in Appendix 7 and on the graph in Figure 3.

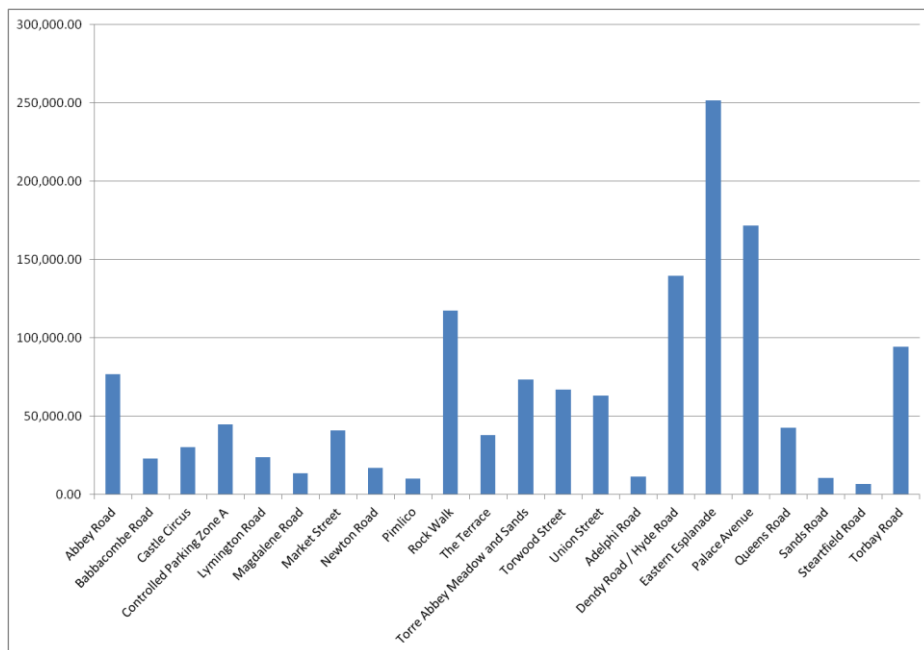


Figure 3: On-street Pay-and-Display Income 2014/2015

- 6.3. When the proposals for on-street pay and display meters were considered in 2007/2008, it was agreed that a phased approach would be put in place. Subsequently, the Council's Productivity Improvement Programme (2010/2011) identified further locations for on-street pay and display meters. It is entirely appropriate to keep these locations under review, to re-visit sites that were not pursued and to identify any new locations.
- 6.4. Likewise, decisions in the past have meant that Eastern Esplanade at Paignton is classed as highway but is shut to traffic for six weeks in the summer. This is not consistent with other areas in Torbay.

Recommendation

The Executive Head of Business Services should review all of the on-street parking meter sites that were not pursued and also identify any new locations. If appropriate and subject to any necessary consultation, additional on-street parking meter sites should be implemented.

The reasons for closing the Eastern Esplanade during the summer months have been reviewed and it is recommended that this entire site should remain open for parking.

Paignton Community Partnership should be consulted on a proposal to change the status of the Eastern Esplanade at Paignton such that it is no longer classified as a highway.

7. Mobile Enforcement Vehicle

- 7.1. The use of a mobile enforcement vehicle to enforce parking restrictions at schools and bus stops and to improve safety was agreed by the Mayor in October 2011. This was part of a range of actions resulting from the business case which was prepared following the review of parking services as part of the Council's previous Productivity Improvement Programme. However, in January 2014, it was reported to the Transport Working Party that the Mayor wished to remove the mobile enforcement vehicle from service.
- 7.2. The Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan 2011-2016 explains that "parking enforcement has successfully helped to combat delay on the transport network for all modes of transport. However, some enforcement has become difficult to solve as it requires a significant amount of resources to prevent re-offending. Three areas in particular stand out. Parking outside schools on zigzag lines, parking in loading bays and parking on bus stops. These types of infringement pose serious safety issues to school children and public transport users, forcing them into the road or to cross in front of parked vehicles. The most effective way to eliminate this kind of contravention is by using mobile camera enforcement." The Implementation Plan included as a (then) proposed scheme the purchase of a camera car to assist in the enforcement of illegal parking outside schools, in loading bays, where loading is banned and on bus clearways. (The legislation has since changed and mobile enforcement vehicles can now only be used outside schools and on bus clearways.)

Parking outside schools

- 7.3. Whilst the enforcement vehicle was not in operation for long enough to provide reliable information about collision statistics, anecdotal feedback from School Crossing Patrols has been that the vehicle provided an invaluable deterrent to poor parental parking around school entrances, especially on school zigzag markings. It is highlighted that drivers park on school zigzags and double yellow lines knowing that, unless there is a Civil Enforcement Officer in attendance, they will not be caught. The enforcement vehicle could visit more sites in a shorter time and therefore was able to enforce at more schools than any foot patrol is able.
- 7.4. The Road Safety Team state that there has been a noticeable increase in illegal and/or unsafe parking outside schools since the enforcement vehicle was removed from service and the number of complaints from School Crossing Patrols and parents regarding parking on zigzags and double yellow lines have increased. Such parking has a detrimental effect on the safety of the school crossing patrol staff, the reduced visibility meaning that they are less able to see / be seen by approaching drivers.
- 7.5. The 38 schools and academies in Torbay were invited to give their views on parking in their area with 18 schools responding. Of those, only two felt that there was not an issue with parking at their schools during drop off and pick up times with the reason given that the majority of their pupils arrived by school bus or taxi due to their needs.
- 7.6. Those schools and academies who responded to say that there were parking issues at the school cited a lack of nearby car parks, inconsiderate parking by parents/guardians and parents/guardians disregarding road restrictions. In identifying possible solutions, all those schools with parking issues felt that having a Civil Enforcement Officer or Police Community Support Officer in attendance would improve the situation. Around half of those schools also felt that a letter sent to parents/guardians reminding them of the road restrictions and the reinstatement of the mobile enforcement vehicle would help.

- 7.7. Within the general consultation, traffic and parking problems at school pick up times was the second highest (after parking charges being too high) cause of problems with on-street parking where people live, work, spend leisure time or shop. Suggestions for solutions to this issue ranged from compulsory school buses, fine people who park illegally at school gates or putting bollards on the pavement.

Parking in bus lanes and at bus stops

- 7.8. A representation was received from Stagecoach South West highlighting the effective enforcement of bus lanes and bus stops was vital to ensure the continued success of public transport in the area. The needs of people with mobility difficulties who rely on buses being able to pull up to the kerb in order to get on were also referenced. The investment in fully accessible buses is worthless if the bus can't get to the kerb. Stagecoach would support the deployment of mobile enforcement vehicles to help enforce bus stop bays, particularly in the town centres where there is the greatest volume of people and pressure on space.

Recommendation

A mobile camera enforcement vehicle should be reintroduced in Torbay to improve road safety for children outside school entrances and to reduce the road safety risks presented to public transport users. Strict operating procedures should be applied to any mobile camera enforcement vehicle to ensure that the law abiding motorist is not penalised.

8. Economic Impact of Parking

- 8.1. In March 2015, mruk research (now Breaking Blue Research) published their report which was prepared for the Welsh Government entitled "Assessing the Impact of Car Parking Charges on Town Centre Footfall". The Welsh Government had been looking to understand the evidence on the relationship between car parking charges and town centre footfall. In summary, the key findings and conclusions are:

- Parking charges are only one aspect of a complex array of factors influencing activity in town centres and it is very difficult to separate parking charges from the other factors.
- Car park charges are often perceived as the key determinant for changes in footfall levels in town centres but the available evidence is almost entirely anecdotal.
- While parking charges impact on how long people remain in the town centre, the availability of spaces is felt by visitors to be more important than cost in their overall decision about visiting.
- A "blanket" free parking strategy was generally found to not benefit the target visitors and therefore had an unexpected negative impact on footfall.
- Town centre economies are highly localised and are hyper-specific. Towns are very different economically with different factors at play across locations. Therefore parking strategies need to be tailored to local areas to maximise the impact on footfall.

- 8.2. The Portus Review on the future of our high streets (December 2011) highlighted that parking restrictions were one of the critical issues (alongside business rates, rents, planning,

delivery curfews and use classes) to be addressed in order to make doing business on the high street a more attractive and economically viable option.

- 8.3. Ms Portus observed that “in many town centres I have visited for [my] review parking has been run-down, in an inconvenient place, and most significantly really expensive.” Whilst the Portus Review recommended free parking in town centres, it also recognised that more free car parking spaces should be the privilege of local shoppers rather than workers.
- 8.4. Torbay’s Economic Strategy for 2013-2018 prioritises town centre regeneration with “Market led master-planning, dovetailing with Local and Neighbourhood Plans, to identify appropriate town centre regeneration projects for Torquay and Paignton Town Centre”. The Local Transport Plan also says that Torquay, Paignton and Brixham town centres will be “supported in their function as successful retail and leisure centres by providing a quality transport system and offering a choice of transport modes”.
- 8.5. In terms of the consultation which formed part of this review, there was an acceptance amongst some of the business community that the level of car park charges was not always out of line with charges in other local areas. It was felt that there was a perception amongst the public and some businesses that, not only were charges higher in Torbay, but that they had an adverse impact on the local economy. There was recognition from the Torbay Business Forum that the higher charges may be viewed as acceptable in Plymouth and Exeter but, given its more limited choice and range of shops and leisure facilities, they were not acceptable in Torbay. The Business Forum and the Federation of Small Businesses acknowledged that the town centres and high streets are facing a number of challenges not just the level of parking charges. Car parking is, however, part of the “offer”.

Brixham Town Centre

- 8.6. Torbay’s Adopted Local Plan (December 2015) sets out the proposals for Brixham Town Centre including the redevelopment of Brixham Central car park to provide food retail, car parking to serve the town, smaller unit shops, residential units and an improved public realm. The Plan also makes reference to an enhanced Park and Ride facility as outlined in the Local Transport Plan and the regeneration of the harbourside and waterfront areas promoted in the Tor Bay Harbour Authority Port Masterplan.
- 8.7. The Neighbour Forum is continuing its development of the Neighbourhood Plan recognising the need to balance the need to encourage trade in the town centre with creating a welcoming environment for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

Recommendation

Existing arrangements and future options for a Park & Ride facility at Brixham should be reviewed given the uncertain future of the Brixham Central car park and the intended strategic land use of Freshwater Quarry and Oxen Cove.

9. Community Parking Issues

- 9.1. The Council operates a number of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) in Torbay (including Resident Parking bays). These are areas where parking is restricted or reserved for permit holders only. The current CPZs (excluding the Resident Parking bays) are shown in Table 6.

Zone	Description	Roads Covered	Other Eligible Properties
A	Torquay Harbour	Meadfoot Lane, Road off Meadfoot Lane, Parkhill Road, South Hill Road, Torwood Close, Torwood Gardens Road, Trinity Hill.	Babbacombe Road (531, 533, 535, 537, 539, 543, 545, 551 and 553 only) Torwood Street (37,46,48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64 and 66 only) Park Lane
B	Glenmore Road and Parkham Road	Glenmore Road Parkham Road	Bolton Street (only those properties whose only means of access to the property is via Glenmore Road).
C	Preston	Locarno Avenue Langs Road 21 – 58 Orient Road	Torquay Road – (238, 243c, 245a, 261 and 344 only)
D	Ellacombe	Chatsworth Road Ellacombe Road Highbury Road Pembroke Road Princes Road (1 – 33 only) Queen Street Waterloo Road Wellesley Road Wellington Place Wellington Road Clifton Terrace (Braddons Hill Road East)	Berachah Road – all properties Bethel Terrace – all properties Cavern Road (2 only) Ellacombe Church Road (odd numbers 1 – 31 and even numbers 2 – 34 only) Hatfield Road (odd numbers 15 – 37 and even numbers 2 – 36 only) Princes Road (34 – 66 and Pembroke Villa only) Stentiford Hill Road (Nos. 10 & 16 only) Victoria Road (1, 5a, 5b, 61 and even numbers from 48 – 92 only) Warberry Road West (1 only) Windsor Road (3, 5 and 13 only)
E	Shiphay	Banbury Park Berkeley Avenue Berkeley Rise Cadewell Crescent Cadewell Lane (Newton Road to Water Lane) Cadewell Park Road Grosvenor Avenue Grosvenor Close Higher Cadewell Lane Littlefield Close Lloyd Avenue Oak Park Avenue Oak Park Close Rougemont Avenue Shiphay Lane Shiphay Park Road Summerfield Road	
F	Adelphi Road	Adelphi Road	

Table 6: Controlled Parking Zones in Torbay

- 9.2. Residents eligible to park within one of the CPZs can buy a resident's parking permit if they meet the following eligibility criteria:
- The usual place of residence is within the Controlled Parking Zone or the Applicant must spend at least four days and nights living and sleeping at the address for a minimum period of 13 consecutive weeks.
 - Full Council Tax must be paid on the property (with the single occupancy discount included as full Council Tax) – i.e. no discount for a second home.
 - The Applicant must be the registered keeper of the vehicle.
 - The vehicle registration document must be in the name and address of the applicant within the controlled parking zone.
 - The height of the vehicle must not exceed six feet ten inches (208.28 centimetres) and length must not exceed eighteen feet (548.64 centimetres)
- 9.3. The cost of each permit is £30 (except where 9.6 applies) with the charge being reviewed annually. This charge has never been increased. Initially up to two permits per household will be issued with a separate application form for each permit being completed. Applications for permits can be made online, in person or by post with renewals made online or by post, following the issuing of a reminder.
- 9.4. Visitors wishing to park within the CPZ are required to display a visitor permit if they wish to park during the enforcement period of the CPZ. The cost of these permits is £10.00 for a book of 10 and they are available to residents within the zone for issue to their visitors. A maximum of 10 books (100 permits) a year is provided to each property.
- 9.5. In 2009, as a result of reductions in the Council's revenue budget, a moratorium was put in place on the implementation of new, or revisions to, existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) unless they are funded through capital schemes within the Local Transport Plan or by Section 106 development monies. This has led to a current backlog of over 150 requests for new or changed TROs, plus over 50 additional requests relating to CPZs. In 2012, the moratorium was temporarily lifted and a sum of £15,000 allocated as a one off to enable the Highways Service to process a number of parking restriction requests and to reduce the backlog.
- 9.6. A scheme is now in place whereby residents groups can apply for a self-funded CPZ which has a higher cost per permit for the first three years to cover the cost of implementation.
- 9.7. When established, it was expected that residents groups carry out consultation in their area, agree a scheme and gain the support of their ward councillors. The permit costs have been calculated assuming that all of the permits would be sold. However, in practice, the Highways Services have been drawn into lengthy and drawn out discussions with residents, especially in areas where one group of residents is in favour of a CPZ and another group is against it. And whilst the Council tries to manage residents' expectation in terms of enforcement of the CPZ, residents' aspirations are always much higher than what is possible especially where resources are greatly reduced and enforcement priorities change.
- 9.8. In terms of on-street parking, comments suggested that there were too many restrictions and this was particularly highlighted in relation to the roads around Torbay Hospital where it was a common misconception that on-street parking was restricted to residents only. However, the CPZ for this area is such that you only require a Parking Permit to park

between 10.00 a.m. and 11.00 a.m. – this was put in place to prevent all-day on-street parking by those working at the hospital.

Recommendation

A set of revised criteria should be introduced to cover the promotion and implementation of a CPZ (including Residents Parking bays). The Council needs to properly manage the realistic expectations of residents who do not benefit from their own off-street parking. Controlled Parking Zones should only be recommended for implementation by professional Council officers. Charging for CPZ parking permits should reflect the whole life cost of any scheme and should aim for full cost recovery (administration, design (including any costs where works may be undertaken by a third party), signs, lines, enforcement, etc.)

All existing CPZs should be reviewed and any inappropriate schemes should be revoked.