

# Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

**REPORT TO:** Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**DATE:** 31 July 2023

**LOCATION:** Council Chamber, Penmorfa

**TITLE:** Proposal for 2 hours free parking before 11am at Council Operated Pay and Display Car Parks.

**PURPOSE OF REPORT:** For consideration

## **REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:**

At the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10 February 2023 to consider the Fees and Charges for 2023/24, a proposal was put forward to give consideration to the option of allowing 2 hours free parking before 11am in all Ceredigion County Council Managed Pay and Display Car Parks.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### **1.1 General Car Park information**

The Council operates 21 Pay and Display Car Parks across Ceredigion at its main centres of Aberaeron, Aberystwyth, Cardigan, Lampeter, Llandysul and Tregaron. These are a mix of dedicated short stay only, short and long stay and long stay only car parks, as well as a mix of all year-round car parks which charge from 8am – 6pm and seasonal car parks which charge 8am – 10pm from 1 March to 31 October annually.

The details of these are summarised in **Appendix 1**.

The use of the Council's Pay and Display Car Parks is discretionary, with members of the public being able to choose whether to use these or alternatives which includes free on street parking or free and paid for off street parking provided by others.

In general, fees and charges at the Council's Car Parks are comparable to other local authorities offerings. To provide a flavour, the costs of some 2 hour and 24-hour tickets at what can be considered to be comparable car parks are noted below:

#### 2 hour tickets

- Cardigan / Aberaeron / Lampeter: £2.60
- Machynlleth: £2.50
- Aberystwyth and Ceredigion Seasonal (at New Quay and Aberaeron): £3.40
- Barmouth and Aberdyfi: £1.10 - £4.00
- Tenby: £2.00
- Llandudno: £1.70 - £2.70

## 24 hour tickets

- Cardigan / Aberaeron / Lampeter: £4.60
- Machynlleth: £4.00
- Aberystwyth and Ceredigion Seasonal (at New Quay and Aberaeron): £6.00
- Barmouth and Aberdyfi: £6.60 (winter) - £11.00 (summer)
- Tenby: £6.00
- Llandudno: £6.00 - £12.00

Whilst the cost of parking can often be cited by individuals or groups as a significant factor affecting footfall, with calls for free parking being made, the 2015 report commissioned by Welsh Government “Assessing the Impact of Car Parking Charges on Town Centre Footfall” (<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2018-12/150610-assessing-impact-car-parking-charges-town-centre-footfall-en.pdf>), concluded that:

- *“The literature review and primary research indicated that car parking charges are only one of a number of factors at play in influencing footfall and town centre vitality.*  
(5.1.2, p.32)
- *Overall, this research has indicated that the following parking related factors are important determinants of people’s behaviour in relation to town centres.*
  - *Availability of spaces*
  - *Restrictions on parking (i.e. how long people can park for)*
  - *Proximity of parking to intended destination*
  - *Traffic flow*
  - *Signage*
  - *Overall retail offering*
  - *Out of town retail offering*
  - *Out of town parking charges*
  - *Price of car parking*
  - *Security of car park*
  - *Incentives for parking*(5.1.2, p.32)
- *These factors are subject to ongoing changes, making it difficult to determine the extent to which they are responsible for changes in behaviour. Our survey also indicated that, while people did agree that car parking charges affect their behaviour, convenience is also a critical factor. In addition, the accessibility of spaces, the number of spaces, and the proximity of parking to the town centre were all shown to be as important as cost.”*  
(5.1.3, p.32)

## 1.2 Representative ticket sales related to vehicles under 3.5t (cars, vans and motorcycles) at CCC Operated Pay and Display Car Parks

A representative split of ticket sales across the car parks for a 12-month period is summarised in **Table 1** below. The table shows that the majority (61.39%) of all tickets sold are for periods of stay up to 2 hours with, a monetary value (net) at 2023/24 prices of £538,545 equating to 41.73% of the total income.

Ticket type	Number of Tickets sold	Percentage of all ticket sold	Monetary value (net) at 23/24 prices
1 hour	124,206	29.24%	£219,259
2 hour	136,607	32.15%	£319,287
3 hour	55,491	13.06%	£175,128
24 hour	104,398	24.57%	£517,133
Weekly	4,146	0.98%	£59,617
<b>Total</b>	<b>424,848</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£1,290,423</b>

**Table 1.** Ticket Sale breakdown (Data Period – 01/11/2021 – 31/10/22 - excluding Llandysul and Tregaron where no charges were levied during this period)

## 1.3 2023/24 Budget expectations

The budget expectation from Pay and Display car parks for 2023/24 is £1,581,000 (net). However, based on the historic representative ticket sales, it is very unlikely that the income expectation will be achieved, with a predicted income deficit in the region of almost £300,000. In 2022/23 the shortfall was £148,909 (net) based on a target income of £1,221,000 (net).

## 1.4 Current free parking offering in Pay and Display Car Parks

The Council already provides periods of free parking at its Pay and Display car parks and, whilst it could choose to do so, the Council does not currently charge:

- At all year-round car parks between 6pm and 8am
- At seasonal car parks:
  - Between 10pm and 8am
  - Between 1 November – 28/29 February each year
- For the 3 Saturdays preceding Christmas each year

As well as periods of free parking, various season tickets are available for use at the Pay and Display Car Parks.

These offer excellent value for those who wish to make regular use of these Car Parks.

The following provides an indication of the per rate cost when buying a 12 month season ticket to reflect usage on a 7 and 5 day a week basis.

Aberaeron / Cardigan / Lampeter  
£402 / 365 = £1.10  
£402 / 260 = £1.55

Aberystwyth  
£436 / 365 = £1.19  
£436 / 260 = £1.68

### **1.5 On Street Parking Provision**

The Council currently provides free time limited as well as unrestricted parking opportunities on street at all locations where it operates Pay and Display Car Parks.

This provides free parking opportunities ranging from 30 minutes, 1 hour, 2 hours, 3 hours and 4 hour limited waiting (operating generally from 8am – 6pm and which are unrestricted outside these time) to unlimited time during the day.

This is in addition to dedicated Blue Badge holder time limited bays.

### **1.6 Financial impact of providing 2 hours free parking before 11am**

**Table 2** below summarises the number of 1 hour and 2 hours tickets which were purchased before 11am across the Council's Pay and Display Car Parks during the representative period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023.

Should the proposal be implemented it could potentially result in an income loss of up to £130,000 (net) based on historic ticket sales.

However, this does not consider potential unintended impacts including:

- Those who currently make use of the car parks and pay for parking after 11am but who would alter their visiting habits so that they benefit from the free provision. This would result in additional loss of income outside of the proposed free parking periods.
- Loss of income from visitors who currently stay over 2 hours but under 4 hours who would alter their visiting habits so that they benefit from the free provision, and chose not to pay to extend their visiting times.
- Loss of income from visitors who currently stay over 2 hours but under 4 hours e.g. someone parking at 9am wanting to stay at Maesyrafon for 4 hours would currently pay for a 24 hour ticket at £6 however, under the revised proposal they would only have to purchase a 2 hour ticket (from 11am), resulting in a loss of £2.60 which would not be accounted for in the calculations
- Loss of income from visitors who currently stay over 4 hours who would alter their visiting habits so that they benefit from the free provision, and chose not to pay to extend their visiting times beyond the times noted above, resulting

in a loss of £2.60 which would not be accounted for a loss of income in the calculations in **Table 2**.

Therefore, the financial impact is expected to be even more significant.

<b>Time</b>	<b>1 hour</b>	<b>Value (net)</b>	<b>2 hours</b>	<b>Value (net)</b>	<b>Total (net)</b>
8am	3,396	£5,972.33	2,162	£4,929.00	<b>£10,901.33</b>
9am	11,140	£19,597.66	10,170	£23,091.67	<b>£42,689.33</b>
10am	18,037	£31,735.58	19,529	£45,005.50	<b>£76,741.08</b>
					<b>£130,331.75</b>

**Table 2.** Number of Tickets sold 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023 at 23/24 prices (excluding Llandysul and Tregaron where no charges were levied during this period)

Should the proposal be recommended then it would be expected that the Committee identify how the proposal will be fully financed (It should be noted that if the current arrangements at Llandysul and Tregaron were to continue then a total of up to £170,000 (net) would potentially need to be identified).

This would either need to be through:

- identified reductions in expenditure budgets for functions provided by Highways and Environmental Services, which will result in a reduction in service levels provided and/or reduction in staffing levels
- identified reductions in expenditure budgets for functions provided by other Council Services areas together with a budget realignment, which will result in a reduction in service levels provided and/or reduction in staffing levels
- an additional uplift on Council Tax of 0.325% beyond the uplift which is proposed for 24/25 to achieve up to £130,000 (net) (for the 2 hour free proposal) and 0.425% to achieve up to £170,000 (net) should the Committee also recommend retaining the free provision at Llandysul and Tregaron beyond 23/24

More generally, in the current financial climate, with acute pressures on the delivery of a wide range of statutory and front-line services, coupled with the cost-of-living crisis which has seen a dramatic increase in numbers of families reliant on food banks in all areas of the county, consideration would need to be given to the appropriateness of the use of public money to subsidise a discretionary service where there are alternatives available.

## **1.7 Practical Considerations**

In addition to the financial implications, there are some practical considerations, some of which would have financial impacts, including:

- That software for existing pay and display machines would have to be amended to facilitate the provision. There would be a cost related to this in the region of £5,000.

- Impacts on efficiencies related to enforcement of on-street and off-street parking restrictions – current patrols combine enforcement at both locations, if this proposal is implemented, visits to towns / locations before 11am would have to be repeated in the afternoon to monitor compliance of car parks resulting in:
  - Reductions in the number of monitoring instances at car parks with potential reductions in income from lower levels of compliance due to lower levels of enforcement.
  - Reductions in the number of visits to other locations without car parks.
  - Increased travel related costs to return to locations to monitor car parks.
- Depending on the detail of any proposal taken forward, it may require changes to the Off-Street Parking Order. If it is required then the process would include a formal consultation process, including public noticing and associated costs related to this. Changes to orders can take between 6 months – 18 months to introduce and can cost in the region of £5,000.
- Depending on the detail of any proposal taken forward, it may require changes to signage at the entrance to as well as within the car parks. There would be a cost associated with this which could be in the region of £15,000.

## 1.8 Other considerations

In addition to those noted already there are some other considerations in relation to the proposal which include:

Whether the proposal aligns with the Council's declaration of a Global Climate Emergency (Council declares global climate emergency [http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/cpd/Democratic\\_Services\\_Meetings\\_Public/B\\_RHYBUDD%20GYNNIG%20-%20NOTICE%20OF%20MOTION%20-%20CYNGOR%20-%20COUNCIL%2005.03.20.pdf](http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/cpd/Democratic_Services_Meetings_Public/B_RHYBUDD%20GYNNIG%20-%20NOTICE%20OF%20MOTION%20-%20CYNGOR%20-%20COUNCIL%2005.03.20.pdf)) as it could be seen as incentivising the use of private vehicles

- Current arrangements at Market Street Car Park, Lampeter provides that, patrons of Sainsbury's who spend over the qualifying amount, are refunded the cost of their parking by Sainsbury's. Any free provision provided at this car park would result in a financial saving to, and could be seen as subsidising income for a private business.

## 1.9 Potential alternative options

Other potential options which could be considered include changing the charging hours of Council Pay and Display Car Parks to commence at 9am or 10am which would effectively provide 1 or 2 hours free parking compared to the current charging arrangements. This alternative proposal would require between £11,000 (9am) and £53,500 (10am) to be identified to fund the proposal. This would be a simpler and clearer proposal to implement.

## 1.10 Conclusion

Parking can be an emotive and high-profile matter which is subject to ongoing comment and debate.

A populist view is that free parking is a positive and has benefits in generating footfall and economic prosperity.

However, it would appear that there is little tangible evidence to support this view in reality and reports (Welsh Government "*Assessing the Impact of Car Parking Charges on Town Centre Footfall*") have shown that there will be a number of factors which influence where, why and how often people will visit a location.

While providing more free parking may be well received it is less clear what tangible benefits would be derived from doing so.

The income generated from the Pay and Display Car Parks provides a significant budget contribution to the ongoing maintenance and management of the car parks, as well as the delivery of front-line and other associated services.

The financial implications of offering 2 hours free parking before 11am at CCC's Pay and Display Car Parks would be significant and would likely be in the region of £130,000 (net)per annum.

The Service is developing opportunities and options that could further optimise the Council's portfolio of Pay and Display Car Parks and will look to bring and update on these to this Committee later in 2023/24.

**Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why**

This report is provided for consideration following the request by the Committee to consider a general proposal.

**WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:**

**Summary:** NA

**Long term:** NA

**Integration:** NA

**Collaboration:** NA

**Involvement:** NA

**Prevention:** NA

**RECOMMENDATION (S):** That Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):** NA

**Contact Name:**

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**Designation:**

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## Appendix 1 – Ceredigion County Council - Pay and Display Car Park Summary

Location	Car Park Name	Type	Charging Period – days of operation	Charging Period - Hours
Aberaeron	North Beach	Short and Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
	South Beach	Short and Long Stay	1 March – 31 October	8am – 10pm
	Regent Street	Short and Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
Aberystwyth	Lower Park Avenue	Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
	Maesyrafon	Short and Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
	New Promenade	Short and Long Stay	1 March – 31 October	8am – 10pm
	North Road	Short and Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
	Park Avenue	Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
Cardigan	Bath House	Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
	Fairfield	Short and Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
	Greenfield Street	Short Stay (max 3 hours)	All days	8am – 6pm
	Mwldan	Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
	Quay Street	Short and Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
	Gloster Row / Red Lion	Short and Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
Lampeter	Cwmins	Short and Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
	Market Street	Short Stay (max 2 hours)	All days	8am – 6pm
	Rookery	Short and Long Stay	All days	8am – 6pm
Llandysul	Porth Terrace	Short and Long Stay	All days Note Currently not charging during 23/24	8am – 6pm
New Quay	Church Road	Short and Long Stay	1 March – 31 October	8am – 10pm
	Rock Street	Short and Long Stay	1 March – 31 October	8am – 10pm
Tregaron	Talbot Yard	Short and Long Stay	All days Note - Currently not charging during 23/24	8am – 6pm