

CYNGOR SIR CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to: Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 11 July 2024

Title: On-street Charged for Parking Proposals – Aberystwyth Promenade

Purpose of the report: To set out proposals to introduce on-street charged for parking proposals along sections of Aberystwyth promenade as requested by members of the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Reason Scrutiny have requested the information:

To establish proposals to introduce on-street charged for parking proposals along sections of Aberystwyth promenade.

Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member:

Cllr Keith Henson - Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services and Carbon Management

Background

On-street parking along the sections of Aberystwyth seafront designated as part of this proposed scheme is currently regulated by the County Council with parking generally limited to specified hours, with designated bays for disabled parking, deliveries and certain vehicle classes (coaches and taxis) at various locations.

The origins of the proposed scheme lie in various studies and reports undertaken over a considerable number of years including the Aberystwyth Masterplan: Transportation Statement (October 2006) and the Capita Report (April 2016) (Appendix 1), preceded by stakeholder engagement.

As identified in previous reports, any scheme along the seafront in Aberystwyth to introduce fees for on-street parking where none currently exist, should attempt to strike a balance between the needs of local residents accessing local services and where they live/their homes; local businesses (particularly the year-round hospitality industry, seasonal visitor economy); University students (accessing seafront halls of residence); and visitors to the town (accessing day-to-day services, retail offer or for leisure and recreation purposes).

The review of existing arrangements considers the wider parking context within the town and does not treat the seafront in isolation, considering the wider context of parking supply and demand.

Parking (both on-street and off-street) must be available in the right places and for the right purposes. The section of Aberystwyth seafront which is the subject of this proposed scheme is considered to be a 'premium', high demand location due to its proximity to both the town centre (day-to-day services, retail, and hospitality trade) and being situated along the seafront (supporting the hospitality trade and visitor attractions).

The enabling legislation for the proposed scheme is the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA 1984). Sections 45 and 46 of the RTRA 1984 enable a local authority to designate parking places on highways and charge for the use of them. The changes will require the making of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) including provision for a full public consultation as prescribed by the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

It is anticipated that the public consultation will take place in the weeks immediately following consideration of the report and proposals by the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Exemptions for Disabled Persons) (Wales) Regulations 2000 requires that Blue Badge holders displaying their badge in the prescribed manner are exempt from the requirement to pay for on-street charging and are exempt from any limit on maximum period of stay.

The County Council, under Section 55 of the RTRA 1984 is required to keep account of income and expenditure related to any on street charging scheme it may introduce. This would form part of the parking account that is already operated in relation to Civil Parking Enforcement activity which, is governed in the same way. The use of any surplus in the account from the proposed scheme would, in the same way as any surplus from Civil Parking Enforcement activities, be governed by Section 55(4) of the RTRA 1984. This provides that any *surplus may be used for*:

- (a) Making good any deficits in the parking account i.e., where expenditure related to on-street parking activities and Civil Parking Enforcement activities in a year have exceeded income – this is limited to the making good of any deficits that have occurred in the 4 years immediately preceding the financial year in question.
- (b) meeting all or any part of the cost of provision and maintenance of off-street parking.
- (c) if it is deemed that further off-street parking provision is unnecessary or undesirable, for the following purposes:
 - meeting costs incurred in the provision or operation of, or of facilities for, public bus services.
 - the purposes of a highway improvement project.
 - A highway improvement project is one within the meaning of the Highways Act 1980.
 - the purposes of environmental improvement which has the meaning of:
 - the reduction of environmental pollution (as defined in the Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999 (c. 24); see section 1(2) and (3) of that Act);
 - improving or maintaining the appearance or amenity of:
 - (i) a road or land in the vicinity of a road, or
 - (ii) open land or water to which the general public has access.
 - the provision of outdoor recreational facilities available to the general public without charge.

Support for a proposed scheme is founded on its potential contribution to supporting the County Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 and its Corporate Well-being Objectives <https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/strategies-plans-policies/corporate-strategy/> , particularly with regard to:

- Boosting the Economy, Supporting Businesses and Enabling Employment

and

- Creating Sustainable, Green and Well-connected Communities

The proposal will seek to provide greater availability of vehicle parking on the seafront by increasing parking turn-over without having a negative impact on the economy of the town and well-being of its residents.

Based on examples of similar coastal towns elsewhere in Wales and across the UK, charged-for on-street parking schemes have been in place for many years, accepted by residents and visitors alike and have not in themselves been proven to be detrimental to the continued viability or prosperity of these towns as places to live, work or visit. Examples include Llandudno, Rhyl, Cromer (Norfolk), Great Yarmouth, Rhos-on-Sea, Weston-Super-Mare which are of similar size to Aberystwyth and are seaside towns that continue to function with on-street parking charges on the seafront.

It is recognised that the principle for charging for a service such as parking is not necessarily popular or accepted by all, but it is generally accepted that an appropriate charging structure – as proposed for this scheme - is required to cover the cost of administering the scheme, manage demand and achieve the outcomes desired outlined below.

The Case for Change – Proposed Scheme Benefits

Whilst changes to existing parking arrangements will always be regarded with caution, based on previous stakeholder engagement as part of studies undertaken to date and experience from elsewhere in Wales and the UK, there are a number of potential positive outcomes of the proposed scheme and there is little or no evidence that the proposed scheme in itself will have a detrimental impact on the town or its range of businesses, local residents or visitors. These studies include the *WG/MRUK - Assessing the Impact of Car Parking Charges on Town Centre Footfall*, *RAC Foundation - Spaced Out - Perspectives on Parking Policy* and the Capita report already referenced plus experience from Officers of the impact of both on street and off-street charges for parking on tourism/business. For instance, the free parking in off-street car parks during Safe Zones which did not lead to a significant increase in either footfall or turnover.

The introduction of on-street parking charges will sustain the costs of operation of the proposed scheme. Should any surplus income be achieved, as outlined above, it would be used to support funding of other essential public services provided by Ceredigion County Council which fall within the scope of what is permitted under Section 55 of the RTRA 1984.

The scheme is designed to better manage parking demand within Aberystwyth and encourage use of the Council's off-street car parks for parking demand that would be more appropriately met through off-street car park provision. This will be achieved by a balance of adjusting existing parking policy in respect of the location, availability and relative cost of parking between on street and off-street provision.

The full list of available County Council car parks and schedule of fees is available to view at: <https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/resident/travel-roads-parking/parking-civil-parking-enforcement/>. Also see paper of today - **Off Street Pay and Display Car Park Review proposals June 2024**

As confirmed by the Capita Study (2016) sufficient spare parking capacity exists within County Council and private off-street car parks and other regulated on-street locations and the displacement of parking is therefore not anticipated as a potential negative outcome of this scheme.

Increased on-street parking turnover:

Alongside time-based waiting restrictions the introduction of parking charges is intended to create a higher turnover of on-street parking spaces along the seafront during peak times to support footfall and facilitate access to businesses, facilities, and services.

Current parking behaviors do not actively support turnover of spaces or footfall within the town centre with available spaces often occupied by commuters and vehicles parked for extended periods of time. Parking needs for these vehicles would be most appropriate met by off street parking provision whether Council or private sector operated.

It is anticipated that charges will act as a deterrent to commuter and long-term parking related traffic from circulating the seafront in search of available free spaces and, encourage them to seek more appropriate off street parking provision to meet their parking needs. More generally, the relative cost of parking on the seafront being higher compared to off-street parking provision will also incentivise use of off-street parking provision and further reduce unnecessary traffic movements circulating the seafront / town opportunistically in the hope of finding a space.

Anticipated increased trade:

Evidence from across Wales and the UK where charges have been successfully introduced suggests that a higher turnover of spaces may encourage more people to visit Aberystwyth knowing that they would have somewhere convenient and available to park on the Seafront for shorter term visits.

In addition to the increased turnover and footfall that is anticipated in the direct area of the scheme, it is anticipated that increased use of off-street parking provision will have a positive impact on footfall on a wider area than just the Promenade and immediate town centre, as occupants of vehicles parked in off-street car parks will pass along more secondary retail locations / streets to reach the town centre locations / promenade. Introducing charges will allow the Council to invest more in enforcement which should increase the turnover as people are more likely to comply with the road traffic restriction in force across the whole of Aberystwyth. This increase in turnover increases availability and therefore footfall and trade.

Parking will be free after 20:00 hours and before 08:00 hours the following morning, supporting trading during the evening and the night-time economy. Free overnight parking is also available in County Council-managed off-street car parks, at other regulated town centre on-street locations and in some private car parks subject to individual car park terms and conditions of use.

Greater use of public transport and interchange between travel modes

Aberystwyth is served by local and longer distance (TrawsCymru) public bus services from across the County and further afield as well as regular rail passenger services, taxis and community transport services. Where services are available, public transport offers a viable low cost, low carbon and convenient alternative to accessing the town centre and seafront. Charging for parking forms part of wider measures to incentivise the use of more sustainable transport which might

include public transport (for all or part of a journey) and car sharing and it can contribute positively to managing demand for limited numbers of spaces.

Reduction in traffic congestion and improved traffic flow around traffic sensitive areas of the town centre

Unnecessary vehicle movements will be removed from the town centre and seafront area as drivers choose to utilise convenient nearby longer stay off-street car parks that are priced at a lower rate than premium / high demand on-street parking.

Promote greater levels of active travel:

For those that can walk or cycle to/ from the town centre and seafront from home, work or from either private or Council-managed off-street car parks, the scheme proposal will encourage a reduction in town centre and seafront traffic (as mentioned above) and encourage the take-up of low carbon travel alternatives such as use of local bus services and active travel (walking and cycling).

Improvements along the southern section of the seafront and public safety improvements to footway width and traffic flow made permanent following the Covid-19 Pandemic have helped to create a safer and more pedestrian-friendly environment and for those able to walk or cycle into Aberystwyth over longer distances from neighbouring communities, there is an expanding network of active travel infrastructure to support this.

Arrangements for blue badge holders:

Under the proposed scheme, Blue Badge holders would be exempt from charges and any time restrictions when parking in a charged for space subject to them displaying their Blue Badge in the prescribed manner. This exemption already applies in respect of limited waiting bays and therefore there would be no effective change or detrimental impact from the scheme in relation to on-street parking for blue badge holders.

Charging Structure:

It is recommended that the Prom charging model should be:

2hrs	£3.50
4hrs	£5.00

and it is proposed that charging is introduced between Castle Point and Constitution Hill, meaning that charging will occur in all parking bays (excluding the dedicated Blue Badge holder only bays) along New Promenade (outside the Old College, King Street, Marine Terrace, and Victoria Terrace).

Maps showing the proposed locations are provided in **Appendix 2**.

This would result in 985m of available charged for parking to be created, amounting to some 179 spaces based on an average length of 5.5m (a breakdown is provided in **Appendix 3**)

The following assumptions have been made in relation to the proposal:

- charging will be introduced from Castle Point to Constitution Hill
- charging period 8am – 8pm Mon - Sun
- charging options will be 2hr and 4hr
- payment will be by app/phone or by cashless Pay & Display machines

Charging at these proposed rates will mean that the ‘premium’ parking spaces along the Promenade would be slightly more expensive than the proposed charging structure within the Council’s Off-street Pay & Display Car Parks, thereby enabling the Council to better manage its on-street parking provision along the Promenade by increasing turnover and availability of space; discourage unnecessary vehicle journeys looking for free parking spaces; support critical Council services through any surplus income being redirected to support those services as allowed by legislation.

Another outcome/benefit of charging will be to reduce the amount of commuter parking on the promenade making it more available for visitors to use and reducing pollution through reduced vehicle movements.

Wellbeing of Future Generations:

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

Yes

Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment:

- Long term:** The proposal is seen as a means of ensuring the availability of parking, including turnover of spaces, in close proximity to many of the assets and attractions available within the retail and tourist areas of Aberystwyth.
- Collaboration:** The proposal will be the subject of consultation with other stakeholders in order to shape the final proposals put forward for public consultation.
- Involvement:** The proposal has been through relevant Budget Scrutiny Committees, as well as the Cabinet process, and will be the subject of public consultation and a further Cabinet resolution before any implementation is considered.
- Prevention:** On-street parking is not a preventative service.
- Integration:** It is not considered possible to include the integration of the service with activities undertaken by other stakeholders and/or partners.

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee supports the proposals put forward in relation to the introduction of charged for parking along the Promenade in Aberystwyth.

Reasons for decision:

To allow the Council to better manage the parking provision along the Promenade in Aberystwyth with a view to increasing parking availability and turnover.

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Date of Report: 18 June 2024

Acronyms:

TRO – Traffic Regulation Order

RTRA – Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984