

Council writes off £2.1m of unpaid parking tickets

The City of Edinburgh Council writes off millions in unpaid parking fees.

Transport chiefs at City Chambers have been forced to write off more than £2.1m in unpaid parking tickets over the last two years.

The City of Edinburgh Council wrote off £960,000 in the 2018/19 financial year – around 16 per cent of the total of £6m issued for parking and bus lane fines. In the 2017/18 financial year, £1.2m was written off by the authority for the same reason.

The money has been written off as the council says it is unable to trace offenders and has problems collecting revenue from foreign drivers.

Green finance spokesperson, Cllr Gavin Corbett, said: “The thing that jumps out in terms of volume is unpaid parking and bus lane debt. It’s about 15 per cent of the total but not huge. But almost 13,000 people have been charged for a breach of parking or bus lane regulations and not paying – I know that’s a difficult area to collect.

“It feels unfair that such a significant number of people are causing inconvenience to other people who are using the city responsibly and not paying what’s regarded as a reasonable penalty for that.”

The council has tightened its rules on enforcing parking and

will now prioritise towing away “persistent offenders” who regularly flout parking restrictions in a bid to force them to cough up money for penalty notices. Some see the fine as the price worth paying to park in the city, but the authority cannot increase parking fine charges.

The council’s Transport and Environment Convener, Cllr Lesley Macinnes, said: “Parking inconsiderately and without adhering to the rules can block access to other road users and residents and lead to extremely dangerous situations. “The council’s parking restrictions are in place to deter this kind of poor behaviour and we pursue drivers who flout their responsibility by not paying for parking fines. Persistent offenders will be towed away.”

Council finance chiefs also wrote off £2.7m for non-domestic rates payments in 2018/19, as well as £1.5m relating to council tax and almost £740,000 which is an apparent overpayment of housing benefits. Another £410,000 was written off during the last financial year, classed as miscellaneous which included accommodation charges, court fees and trade waste.

A council spokesperson said: “In Edinburgh, we have a very low annual write off for debt at less than one per cent of the payments we collect.

“Debts are only written off when all possible methods of recovery have been exhausted and if formal legal action wouldn’t be deemed appropriate.”

David Bol is the Local Democracy Reporter covering Edinburgh. The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency : funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector, and used by qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.