

New levy could raise £19 million for roads and streets

The optional Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) could raise up to £19 million a year for investment in the city's transport infrastructure while also discouraging people from driving to work in the capital.

A new report setting out options estimates that charges could be between £450 and £650.

The council's Transport Convener said the council will work to ensure the charges did not hit those in low paid jobs or shift workers. One option might be to only impose the charge on workplaces which have more than 50 parking spaces, but none of the details are yet decided.



Transport Convener Cllr Scott Arthur PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter

Cllr Scott Arthur said they would be speaking to trade unions about the 'nuances' of the scheme – but added: “If it’s going to go ahead it’s our duty to make it work as much as possible for the city.”

Earlier this year The Scottish Government granted local authorities powers to roll out the WPL which might charge drivers hundreds of pounds to park at work – but only if the cost is passed on by employers.

Potential options for the introduction of the charge in Edinburgh will be presented to councillors next week.

It is anticipated the transport and environment committee will vote to progress plans and engagement with stakeholders on 4 November after councillors voted overwhelmingly in favour of exploring the scheme further in July.

A report has set out a range of options, which include only

enforcing the levy on 'big' workplaces with 50 or more parking bays.

Officials have estimated that up to £13.8m could be generated if the WPL boundary encompassed the entire City of Edinburgh local authority area, with businesses with fewer than 50 parking spaces exempt.

In the event of the scheme only impacting the city centre, defined by the council ward boundary, up to £1.92m could be raised.

If that boundary was expanded to include Leith Walk and Inverleith, this could increase the yield to up to £3.16m.

And according to the report the maximum amount raised by enforcing the levy on all Edinburgh workplaces with no exemptions would be £18.9m.

This could allow the council to borrow upwards of £100m for investment in Edinburgh's transport network. As the council is already facing cuts of around £80 million in their revenue budget the monies available for capital spending on projects such as roads and infrastructure are also under pressure.

The report suggests the charge could be between £450 and £650 annually.

Despite past opposition to the scheme by the minority Labour administration, which did not include proposals for a WPL in their 2022 manifesto, Cllr Arthur said the administration will "have to accept the democratic wishes of the council".

"If it's going to go ahead it's our duty to make it work as much as possible for the city," he added.

Cllr Arthur said his priorities are ensuring the WPL does not negatively impact people in low paid jobs and those who work on shifts. He added that a plan to ensure parking does not

simply displace vehicles to streets surrounding workplaces will need to be put in place.

He argued the annual base charge for workplace parking “should be higher than a bus pass” to encourage more people to use public transport.

Cllr Arthur said: “Any funding will be spent on delivering out transport strategy, so if we were to set a level for the levy it would make sense for it to be more than the current bus pass rate in Edinburgh to encourage people to make that decision.

“Over the next few days we’ll be speaking to trade unions about how we nuance this.

“It’s about making sure we can manage the negative aspects and take it forward.

“It seems likely that the opposition parties will agree to progress a workplace parking levy next week.

“What we’ll say next week is we would expect any business model, any plan going for consultation, any plan going for implementation to have due consideration about how we protect people on low pay, how we protect people working shifts and a clear plan for how we deal with displacement parking.”

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter.

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