

Community Council criticises parking ban consultation

A North Berwick Community Council petition has claimed a decision to ban parking in parts of its town centre was based on the interests of “refugees and Gaelic speakers” rather than local businesses.

North Berwick Community Council has launched two petitions against East Lothian Council’s parking management plan for the town which will see restrictions and charges introduced.

The council’s plan splits the town into zones and includes residents parking permits for some areas, charges for on street parking and a ban on vehicles parking on parts of the town’s narrow High Street. One petition, against the proposals to remove parking at the east end of the High Street and widen the footpath leaving a few bays for loading and blue badge holders only, says: “While most of us will agree that improvements for pedestrians are sorely needed in that area, including levelling the very uneven pavement, this decision was based on an impact assessment that considered interest groups ranging from refugees to Gaelic speakers, but astonishingly, gave no consideration to local shoppers nor, local business.”

The petition, which currently has 163 signatures, sparked a row on the community council’s Facebook page with one person commenting: “I have read that petition and I’m really upset and offended with the wording.”

Some supported the move to reduce parking and widen the footpaths at the east end of the High Street while others warned it would have a devastating impact on local traders. The community council said the petition, entitled '[No to the removal of parking from the east end of North Berwick High Street](#)' had been launched to 'gauge support or opposition' to the proposals.

An impact assessment report which was included in the papers presented to councillors before they approved the parking plan, assessed its impact on a wide range of vulnerable groups from refugees and asylum seekers to people in poverty and those with communication needs including Gaelic speakers and those who use British Sign language.

The papers also set out a wide range of community events and consultations which took place over last summer and beyond.

An East Lothian Council spokesperson said: "Extensive community consultation has been carried out regarding both parking and safety and access concerns in North Berwick town centre.

"This has included engagement with the area partnership, the 'on the move' group and representatives from the business community.

"In addition to this we also undertook a stakeholder engagement exercise which included an online survey, a public event held at the church hall on the High Street, a walk-through event where stakeholders physically walked through the proposals, internal and external stakeholder workshops, workshops with groups representing equalities and disability groups, circulations on the council's website and social media and a dedicated email address and phone number for direct enquiries.

"The final design should provide benefits by prioritising walking, wheeling (wheelchairs, prams etc.) and cycling for

everyday journeys and leisure trips while retaining access to the businesses on the High Street, allowing for loading and unloading and, thus, creating a more pleasant, safer environment.

“This in our view will make the High Street a much more welcoming environment and more importantly a safer place for all to visit.”

A second petition [against the parking charges proposal](#) has 1,185 signatures and says: “At a time of increased costs of living, a massive 7% council tax hike and a period of great uncertainty for many businesses, the council’s push to introduce damaging and unwelcome parking charges could not be more ill-timed or poorly thought out.”

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency. It is funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector (in Edinburgh that is Reach plc (the publisher behind Edinburgh Live and The Daily Record) and used by many qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover news about top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.

