

Parking charges for West Lothian streets by 2027

Parking charges will come to the streets and car parks of West Lothian by 2027, councillors heard this week.

Drivers could face a minimum £1 an hour to park on streets or £1 for two hours in off- street carparks.

There were fears that on-street parking charges could destroy the fragile high streets and criticism that commuters could face an extra £25 a week on top of “extortionate” rail fares to park at stations.

Roads officers argued that no decriminalised parking enforcement plan could work by solely relying on off-street charging. The proposed two-hour limit for on street parking would also encourage greater movement and more use of town centres.

A report to the Environment and Sustainability PDSP this week said: “Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) would result in enforcement powers being managed by the council and would cover the whole of West Lothian.

“Police Scotland would no longer be responsible for the enforcement of road parking offences on these roads and this responsibility would pass to the council. Police Scotland would retain enforcement duties on all roads in relation to moving traffic offences such as speed limits, prohibitions and turning manoeuvres.”

A total of 22 Scottish councils including neighbouring Falkirk, Edinburgh and North Lanarkshire already have schemes.

The proposed on-street parking is free for the first 30 minutes, with a charge of £1 for up to an hour and £2.50 for a maximum of two hours.

Off-street parking charges have been proposed for Bathgate, Linlithgow and Broxburn of £1 an hour to £6 for a day; in Livingston £1 an hour to £4 a day and in other towns free for the first hour, £2 for two hours and £4 for a day.

Gordon Brown, Roads and Transportation Manager, told councillors the favoured option was to manage the enforcement in-house which would mean hiring traffic wardens. This would give the council control of pricing and a return that would otherwise go to a private company.

This would be the most expensive option, costing £560,575 in revenue costs in 2027/28. The total set up costs of £364,027 will come from the Scottish Government. The expected surplus would be £343,185 and it will take this option two years, eleven months to pay back to the council.

Pippa Plevin, representing the Joint Forum of Community Councils said: "Back in 2023 when the consultation was published, we were assured that high streets would be safeguarded to encourage shopping locally. There would be no charging on the high streets, just time limited bays and all that was required was enforcement of illegal parking."

Mr Brown said that when enforcement officers would address waiting restrictions as well as parking on double and single yellow lines.

He added: "On-street parking charges will encourage turnaround in high streets by providing minimal charging in towns and villages outside businesses on high streets and high-density

areas where people want to go shopping.”

Union rep Pat Tedford asked: “Is this new parking initiative to stop illegal parking or to raise revenue?”

He added: “What I can see here is, particularly with the train stations, these car parks are filled with people commuting to Glasgow and Edinburgh. The train fares are already extortionate. To ask them to pay an extra £25 a week is just going beyond the pale.

“Enforcement’s great. Stop illegal parking, get folk in and out to shops. But it looks like people are being punished by paying parking fees to fund enforcement officers to stop illegal parking. That’s unfair, especially at the train stations.”

Conservative Councillor Alison Adamson, said she disagreed with the hefty £7 a hour charges of central Edinburgh and its seven-day controls and urged the council not to work with Edinburgh but instead with Falkirk which, she suggested, was performing better: “ I think we could learn a lot from Falkirk and their model. I do welcome anything that would get non-bluebadge people out of disabled bays.”

The SNP’s Veronica Smith gave cautious welcome to the plans. “I’m pleased that this committee is finally discussing this, but I am a bit concerned about the option of outsourcing off-street parking as you’ll have no control of external charging. I do think we could have considered options for fines only.”

Chair of the committee Councillor Tom Conn said: “We are trying to deal with what is happening on our streets. The paper says the parking regime will be Monday to Friday, not seven days a week. That would suggest we’re not trying to use it as a money raiser.

“I realise that people are not happy about it . We are looking to solve problems in our high streets.”

He suggested in house management and enforcement of on-street parking was the way ahead that should be recommended to the Executive.

As the plan develops it will be brought back to council committees as well as going to Local Area Committees which include community group representatives.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter