

No easy fix to Linlithgow parking problems

Police have warned there is only so much they can do to enforce parking in a West Lothian town plagued by problems.

There are only 400 parking spaces in Linlithgow town centre, and the town's Local Area Committee accepted there would never be enough room to serve the number of visitors.

And even with broad agreement that the police and council should work together until the council takes over parking fines – there's no promise of a quick fix when it does.

Sgt Lee Brodie said while nine Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued in the last three months of last year, the numbers issued since the New Year so far were into "double digits" given blitzes on Blackness Road and the town centre.

Police also cracked down on bad driving in the early winter months and issued 15 Fixed Penalty Notices for careless driving in the last three months of the year – a 200% increase on the same period in 2023.

But it was clear from opening remarks made by chair of the committee Lib Dem, Sally Pattie that there was underlying tension on the subject when she called for a more co-operative approach between the council and Police Scotland, and with less criticism of the police.

Labour's Tom Conn, who had at the last meeting passed on photographs to the police of illegal parking around Linlithgow

Cross said: "I totally understand where police activities need to be. But equally to put it into context, the reason I have been persistent on the parking issue is because that's what constituents are saying to me. That we need to do something.

"At the moment because we don't have Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) so it is a police responsibility. I accept that is the situation. I would like to see that change come quicker."

Sgt Brodie pointed out that he and his officers had to prioritise their activities.

Sgt Brodie said he had checked on parking space website Parkopedia which identifies 400 spaces in the centre of Linlithgow. This had to be compared to the "absolutely huge" footprint of businesses in the town.

He added: "Whilst is unacceptable the reality is there are a lot of attractions and only 400 spaces. People are probably going to park in ways they should not. I put a £30 ticket on one of the most expensive cars I've ever seen. I'm not really sure that a £30 ticket is going to have a massive impact on that individual.

"We use the powers we can where we can, but I think we have to accept that it's an ongoing problem. We can take as much enforcement activity as we like but there's only so much impact that is going to be able to have. There's only so much enforcement we can carry out."

Councillor Conn said he welcomed the news in the report about the increased police activity.

"The things you have detailed in your paper is what I want the public to know; that you are there, that you are doing that. I welcome the progress we have made.

"I don't want to criticise but there's a situation where

because residents have given photographs etc they don't see an improvement, so they think nobody's doing anything, where actually the truth is the opposite, that things are happening but it's not up front in your face every day. I do welcome what you have been reporting. I genuinely know that the police have bigger things to do. I am very supportive of the police."

Councillor Conn said the most effective deterrent was that people did not know if a police officer was going to come around the corner when they parked the car. He highlighted that as in the past if people knew the police were going to patrol the high street they'd park elsewhere.

Councillor Pattle said that the council had been looking at ways to prevent parking at the Cross and also looking at ways of stopping taxis using the double yellow lines at the Cross as an unofficial taxi rank. Photos of both illegal parking had been passed to police at the last meeting.

She added: "It's the people who park their car illegally, they're the ones breaking the law. We need to do something to change that mindset."

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter