

Demand for wardens to be reintroduced to Bathgate streets

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Just weeks after West Lothian Council unveiled proposals for new parking regulations – which includes plans to charge for parking on town streets in the county – Bathgate Community Council has launched a petition to scrap the move, raising fears it could hit local businesses.

The community council said this week that the charges “betrayed” townspeople.

Detailed plans, including maps of the streets which would be affected in the council’s DPE roll-out will soon go before the nine West Lothian Council local area committees on which councillors sit, and the community councils serve.

Bathgate will be among the first communities to have new parking regulations including metered on street parking which is planned to be introduced within the next three years.

But they are now calling for public support to stop the

proposals – and are encouraging other local communities in West Lothian to join the fight.

This week Bathgate CC laid down three key changes it wants to see: –

- No parking charges in car parks
- Traffic warden enforcement of illegal parking
- Parking discs to manage time limits on high streets.

A spokesperson said: “The Council’s proposed parking charges for High Street and train station parking have betrayed previous assurances and could negatively impact local shopping and public transport use.”

A report presented to West Lothian’s Environment and Sustainability PDSP outlined three options. However, the proposed £5 daily charge at Council-owned railway stations (Linlithgow, Livingston North, Livingston South and Uphall Station) has been criticised as it appears to contradict their Active Travel objectives of encouraging alternative transportation and reducing car dependency.

Others have pointed out that station car parks owned by Network Rail are free for train users

The spokesperson added: “The proposed parking charges prioritise revenue generation over addressing community concerns and exploring effective parking solutions. The proposals also fail to consider utilising existing parking revenue, such as that from contracted car parks, to offset implementation costs.”

Bathgate CC says any surplus revenue from fines would be

allocated to Town Centre improvement schemes. "This alternative model could be considered as a potential fourth option", said the spokesperson.

The Joint Forum has backed Bathgate Community Council and urged all community councils in West Lothian to review the proposals and consider expressing their support.

A petition on Change.org, which has so far garnered 231 signatures, says: "The town that we cherish and live in is gradually turning into an obstacle course because cars are frequently parked on both double and single yellow lines against the regulations. This brazen flouting of the rules makes it nearly impossible to drive through town and poses a considerable and unnecessary risk to our community's safety.

The petition adds: "Rather than charging for car parks, which is counterproductive and unfair, efforts should be directed towards enforcing penalties for illegal parking. This would not only alleviate the chaos on our streets but would incentivise responsible parking and allow for better flow of traffic through our town and pay for the parking wardens we need. We want the council to consider our option when they make the decision on parking which would keep our car park free to use."

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter