

Plans to introduce parking charges in East Lothian town criticised

Plans to introduce parking charges in a second East Lothian town have been criticised amid claims the views of the public are being 'ignored'.

East Lothian Council has launched a public consultation on proposals to tackle parking issues in Tranent which include restricting the amount of time people can park for free, residents permits and greater enforcement in the town centre.

The move comes after a similar consultation was held in North Berwick with councillors going on to approve on and off street charging, restrictions and residents parking zones, despite hundreds of objections.

And it has sparked anger from local residents who took to social media to vent frustration at the proposals.

East Lothian MSP Craig Hoy accused the council of 'wasting resources' launching a consultation which he said would have its outcomes 'ignored'.

However launching the consultation, East Lothian Provost John McMillan said the proposals were in the early stages and 'no decisions' have been made.

Among the proposals put out for consultation are the introduction of parking charges in short, medium or long stay

areas with an initial free period allowed.

The introduction of residents permits with annual fees and increased enforcement.

The council says the parking management scheme would aim to create better turnover of parking spaces in the town which it says will help local businesses.

On social media news of the consultation sparked anger from some who claimed the council was planning to push ahead with its plans regardless of public response.

Craig Hoy, Conservatives, MSP said the concerns were justified pointing to North Berwick as an example and he criticised the local authority for spending resources on the project.

He said: "I am extremely disappointed that East Lothian Council has once again chosen to waste limited resources on pushing forward another parking charges consultation which will no doubt be ignored.

"Experience from North Berwick shows that, regardless of the level of public opposition, the council presses ahead with damaging plans anyway.

"The Conservative Group on East Lothian Council stood alone in opposing parking charges before, and we will strongly oppose these latest proposals which will have a detrimental impact on businesses and residents of Tranent.

"It is frankly disgraceful that Labour and SNP councillors are ignoring residents and pressing ahead with plans rightly opposed by retailers and the public."

Councillor McMillan, however, insisted the views of the public would be considered.

He said: "We are keen to address challenges associated with parking in many of our town centres. Demand for parking can be

high, particularly during peak periods.

“We want to work with the local community to explore solutions which increase the availability of parking spaces in the town centre, making it easier for people to access local shops and businesses.

“While no decisions on these measures have been taken, consulting on possible ways forward will help us address the current problems we face with parking whilst supporting the local economy and enhancing the environment. I would encourage as many people as possible to have their say on the proposals.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter