

# **Car Parking Review Panel Minority Report On Charging for Car Parking**

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The recommendations in the official report of the Car Parking Review Panel are presented in two sections, 3.1 Car Parking Matrix (recommendations 1-22) and 3.2 Car Parking Arrangements (recommendations 23-46). The authors of this minority report accept recommendations 11, 12, 14, 15, 17-19, and 22 in 3.1 Car Parking Matrix, and all the recommendations except 45 in 3.2 Car Parking Arrangements.

This minority report proposes three alternative recommendations to replace recommendations 1 and 2, and therefore cannot support recommendations 1-10, 13, 16, 20 and 21.

## Summary of the issues

1. Diversity and fairness
  - The East Riding of Yorkshire has settlements which are widely diverse in both size and nature and therefore have differing needs.
  - For the current priorities of the East Riding Council, and the ambitions of the Local Strategic Partnership to be realised, the Review Panel recommendations on car parking charging must allow for such variation across the East Riding.
  - To be equitable, whether to charge for car parking and how much to charge should depend on the individual characteristics of each area.
2. Public Consultation
  - The strength and volume of genuine concern expressed by the public at the Road Shows should not be ignored.
3. Cost benefit analysis
  - Because of the cost of introduction and enforcement, the financial benefits of introducing charging in areas where parking is currently free would be negligible.
  - Introducing parking charges into new areas would create problems rather than solve them. It would have a negative impact on local shops where there are out of town supermarkets with free car parking within easy reach.
  - It would be highly likely to lead to residents paying for Controlled Parking Zones around the local shopping area.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations deal with the issues of fairness and cost benefit and take into account the concerns of the residents.

1. Areas that already have car parking charges should retain them in the car parks that have them now, but consideration be given to reducing the maximum charge and allowing free car parking in certain car parks (e.g. Moorfields, Bridlington). Each area should be looked at individually, with charging and long, medium and short stay designation being applied as appropriate, in the best interests of the vitality and viability of those areas.
2. Areas that do not have charging should retain free car parking. With the introduction of civil enforcement, car parks should be designated long, medium and short stay as appropriate and in the best interests of the vitality and viability of those areas. The cost of civil enforcement is an East Riding issue and should be paid for from the ERYC budget.
3. In those areas with Council-owned car parks, and where there are no charges, the actual cost of maintaining those car parks should be passed to the local population as part of Council Tax through special expenses.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The East Riding of Yorkshire is a very large area with no major city within its boundaries. It has settlements diverse in both size and nature: rural villages, market towns, coastal towns, a port and more urban areas in the Haltemprice settlements.

1.2 The existence of Council owned car parks, and where they are, seems to be fairly haphazard. Some are in tourist areas, some in local shopping areas, some attached to local recreational facilities.

1.3 There is also variation between settlements according to whether there is non-council-owned alternative free parking, and whether this free parking is in the centre of a settlement or outside it in an out-of-town shopping centre.

1.4 Because of this diversity, it is only in some areas, and in some of the car parks in those areas, that drivers have to pay to park. It seems that the rationale behind the already existing charging regimes was based on tourism ( Bridlington, Hornsea and Beverley), and encouraging turnover in car parks because of demand (Beverley, Driffield, Howden, Goole).

1.5 So, historically there has been variation across the East Riding, and charging has been introduced in a particular area only to solve a parking problem in that area. What will be best for each settlement has been assessed according to the needs of that settlement and the appropriate decision then made.

1.6 This situation still stands. What may solve a problem in one settlement, may create problems if applied to another settlement. Both whether to charge and how much to charge must depend on the individual characteristics of each area.

## 2. Council Priorities

2.1 For the current priorities of the East Riding Council, (“local problem solving, revitalising our communities and retaining the East Riding’s character”), and the ambitions of the Local Strategic Partnership, (“communities are thriving, prosperous and safe; we value and care for the diverse character of the area”), to be realised, the Review Panel recommendations on car parking charging must allow for variation across the East Riding, not just on the amount charged for parking, but also whether to charge for parking. The vitality and viability of each individual area has to be supported within the context of the surrounding competing facilities.

## 3. Effects on Communities

3.1 A major problem of introducing new parking charges is the effect this will have on the town and village centres. These centres are used for local shopping, socialising, and essential services such as bank, post office and doctor. They are the centre of the community. Many of the shops have a precarious existence due to competition from out of town shopping centres, particularly where there is no major supermarket in the village centre. The introduction of any measure that tips the balance and reduces the footfall in these areas could be disastrous for their vitality and viability and possibly threaten the social structures and cohesion of the community.

3.2 The very fact that East Riding Council has allowed free parking on all the December weekends leading up to Christmas, in order to encourage shoppers to do their shopping in the local shopping centres, shows that they acknowledge that parking charges can deter people from coming into these areas.

3.3 Most of the areas where the Review Panel is proposing to introduce charging do not have a problem with parking at present that would be alleviated by charging. What few problems there are could be lessened by having designated long, medium and short term parking areas. As civil enforcement is coming in anyway in about eighteen months time, this could be considered at that time in the areas where it would help.

3.4 There is also the question of the amount that is charged to local residents for parking in the areas that already have a charging regime. Much of the pressure to spread the grief of car parking charges across the East Riding has arisen in these areas after the Council raised their charges significantly about a year ago. It can cost as much as £1.30 per hour to park in some car parks in Beverley and Bridlington. In comparison with York, Lincoln, Scarborough and Hull, the East Riding charge is equivalent or higher for local residents than in those larger cities. Under the Review Panel proposals, some of the charges in these areas have been slightly reduced, but again this is an issue that needs further discussion and perhaps some car parks used only by local residents should be taken out of the charging regime entirely.

## 4. Consultation

4.1 The Council sent out a questionnaire in the summer of 2008 and about 1,400 responses were received, 80% being from East Riding residents. A majority, 85%, of the respondents to the relevant question said that they would prefer to pay increased charges rather than increased Council Tax. This was 74.65% of respondents to the whole questionnaire. The questionnaire did not make clear that the East Riding was considering introducing charges in places where there were none at present. Had respondents known this, it might have altered their response.

4.2 When ERYC sent the questionnaires to Parish and Town Councils, the letters were addressed to the clerks by name only. They did not realise that the letter was a consultation with the Parish/Town Council and replied as an individual resident. As a result, when the initial proposals of the Panel were publicised, the Parish and Town Councils demanded to be consulted on an issue that would seriously affect their communities. In response to the outcry, the Council held nine Road Shows across the East Riding over the summer of 2009. Another questionnaire was placed on the website, in East Riding News and handed out at the Road Shows. About 1,700 responses were received. Of these, in contrast to the earlier questionnaire, in answer to a similar but different question, a majority, 64%, of respondents to the relevant question preferred car parking charges, if they were to be paid at all, to be paid as a part of Council Tax.

4.3 A total of 877 residents came to the Road Shows, the largest attendance being at Cottingham (254) and the smallest in Drifffield (13). The feelings at these meetings were very clear. Those who did not already have charges were extremely worried by their proposed introduction because of the effect this could have on the local communities. Those who did have charges mainly expressed their concerns about the level of charging and the problems that have arisen in controlled parking zones.

4.4 At some of the Road Shows petitions against the introduction of charging, or asking for charges to be removed, were handed in. A total of 40,630 signatures were on the petitions. Approximately half the adult population of Cottingham (7,284 signatures) had signed petitions, 27,036 signatures came from Anlaby, Willerby and Hessle combined, and others were received from Mappleton, Stamford Bridge, Goole, Hedon, Bridlington and Pocklington. This strength and volume of genuine concern should not be ignored by the Council.

## 5. Financial Issues

5.1 The Car Parking Review Panel proposes that the introduction of charges is to be cost neutral, the new charges paying for the cost of introducing and enforcing them. The money raised from charging would be used to pay for staff to enforce the charging, for the new equipment needed for each car park, for staff to empty the pay stations, for maintenance of the car parks and to pay the business rates that are imposed on each car park. Any “profit” would be put into the general highways pot.

5.2 However, based on the financial estimates in the Review Panel report, the finance raised over and above the cost of introduction by charging in areas that do not now have charges, would be very small. (see Appendix 1) So the residents of these areas are being forced to pay for the implementation of a new tax which will have no benefits to them or to the Council.

5.3 Not only would there be no benefit, there would be added problems. Drivers avoiding paying the parking charges will park on the neighbouring roads, many of which have terraced housing with no off road parking for the residents. The residents would then have to pay for controlled parking zone introduction and enforcement, again paying for a service that is worse than they have now. A double whammy. This has already been seen in Beverley, Bridlington and Howden, with residents complaining of many new problems that have been created.

5.4 Besides cost neutrality, the Car Parking Review Panel is basing its recommendations on the assumption that charging should be introduced across the East Riding. The rationale behind this is that it would be “fair” to the residents living in the areas where charging is now enforced, because at present the residents of those areas are said to be subsidising the car parks of other areas.

5.5 The residents of Beverley and Bridlington and the other areas which have car parking charges, feel that it is unfair that they are, in effect, paying not only for their own car parks, but also for those in other East Riding settlements. If the existing charges are to be retained and no new charges are introduced, perhaps a fairer way of paying for the cost of car parks would be to ask those settlements with free car parks to pay for the upkeep of their own car parks through special expenses as a part of Council Tax.

5.6 Special expenses are already paid by many settlements for services, mainly grounds maintenance, provided by the East Riding Council in that particular settlement. The 2009-10 special expenses for Anlaby, Cottingham and Hessle, were £25,860, £38,540 and £30,810 respectively.

5.7 To estimate what the likely cost of special expenses for car parks would be, both the maintenance costs and business rates on each car park need to be taken into account. The East Riding Council has been unable to provide exact figures for the maintenance costs of the

individual car parks. It has been possible to obtain approximate figures for only three settlements, Cottingham, Hessle and Pocklington. (see Appendix 2)

5.8 The major cost of running the car parks is business rates. Figures for business rates, provided by the Council, have been used in Appendix 2. However, the figures for business rates do not appear to be consistent with the number of car parking spaces in each settlement. This variation may be due to rates varying according to where the car parks are. It has not been possible to obtain confirmation of these figures, or the rationale behind them, from the Council.

5.9 Given the uncertain nature of the figures, a guess at the additional cost to the residents is all that can be made. This is, that the additional cost would be about £1 or less per annum per person except in Mappleton, where, because of the very small population, it would be about £2. It should be possible, given the small amounts involved, to keep the cost to Mappleton residents down to the same level as other settlements.

## 6. Recommendations

The following recommendations deal with the issues of fairness and cost benefit and take into account the concerns of the residents.

6.1 Areas that already have car parking charges should retain them in the car parks that have them now, but consideration be given to reducing the maximum charge and allowing free car parking in certain car parks (e.g. Moorfields, Bridlington). Each area should be looked at individually, with charging and long, medium and short stay designation being applied as appropriate, in the best interests of the vitality and viability of those areas.

6.2 Areas that do not have charging should retain free car parking. With the introduction of civil enforcement, car parks should be designated long, medium and short stay as appropriate and in the best interests of the vitality and viability of those areas. The cost of civil enforcement is an East Riding issue and should be paid for from the ERYC budget.

6.3 In those areas with Council-owned car parks, and where there are no charges, the actual cost of maintaining those car parks should be passed to the local population as part of Council Tax through special expenses.