



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

RR8676

Ms Katie Wilby
Chief Officer of Streetscene and Transportation
Flintshire County Council
County Hall
Mold
CH7 6NB

September 2021

Dear Katie,

Re: Reinstatement of Parking Charges in Flintshire

I trust that this letter finds you well.

I am writing to you following the decision of Flintshire County Council to reinstate parking charges in off-street car parks from 1 October 2021.

I welcomed the initial suspension of car parking charges in Flintshire from March 2020, as this decision seemed to successfully encourage shoppers to visit their local town centres and increase footfall for businesses. The support that the high streets have received from local communities because of this has been invaluable and credit must go to the council for taking this step to support the retailers who have seen impossibly difficult conditions push them to the brink of collapse – in some cases sadly past that point.

Whilst it may be the case that parking charges cannot be indefinitely suspended (not necessarily a given), their imminent re-introduction doesn't immediately seem to consider wider issues, nor does it seem to consider alternative options that may be more appropriate.

Given that restrictions for businesses and retailers in Wales have only just reached a point where businesses can trade with some degree of coherence following the extended restrictive measures of the Welsh Government, our town centres still desperately need as much support as they can get.

Re-introducing parking charges will adversely affect businesses in our town centres. Parking charges will serve as a deterrent to people who either don't want to pay the charges or more crucially cannot afford to do so, and footfall is consequently likely to decrease, especially when considering that people can instead visit out of town retail parks that offer free parking.

As we are now in the run-up to the festive-period – the busiest and most profitable period for retailers – we should be encouraging local residents to shop in their town centres and support their local businesses. I wonder then whether the decision to re-introduce parking charges might instead be put off until at least early 2022 to get the festive period out of the way.

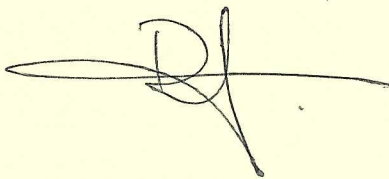
There seem to be various alternative options that would be better suited and have less impact on our town centres. Just one example of a compromise would be to re-introduce charges on a part-time basis. For example, introducing charges only at peak times such as on market days where footfall in town centres is greatly increased regardless of parking options, while on a day-to-day basis have no charge so that shoppers can be encouraged to visit their town centres. Alternatively, the opposite could also be implemented, charging on weekdays but not on weekends when the vast majority of people would tend to visit their local high streets.

I understand that one of the main reasonings behind reintroducing parking charges, was to ease potential congestion. I'd be interested to see the evidence that shows that the current fee-free parking has led to any congestion problems in the county. A more appropriate resolution to easing congestion may be to instead improve public transport links to and from our towns. This would solve the issue of too many cars and at the same time ensure local people still can visit their local town centres, helping the businesses that rely on footfall.

Data from a transport survey that I am running supports the idea that residents want better public transport connections and that this would be an appropriate alternative to easing congestion. More than half the respondents stated that bus connections in Delyn are poorly connected and a large proportion of respondents cited 'more frequent buses' as their suggestion to how transport needs to improve within the constituency.

In a year where businesses have had to take on debt to survive and the public have already had to absorb another year of above-inflation council tax increases whilst experiencing a reduction in service levels, I hope that you can give some consideration to other options that may be far more beneficial to both businesses and residents.

Yours Ede,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rob Roberts', written over a horizontal line.

Rob Roberts MP

cc Cllr Glyn Banks, Cabinet Member for Streetscene