

## CYNGOR GWYNEDD COUNCIL

**PARKING DISCUSSION PAPER****Introduction****Overview**

1. It is widely recognised that parking is an issue which received considerable attention when the future of commercial centres, market towns and rural communities are considered. It could be argued that the availability of adequate parking apart, many issues relating to parking get more attention than their influence on the viability of town centres possibly warrants.
2. Dealing with existing and future parking problems, such as a lack of parking supply at peak times or parked cars in sensitive locations, is an important factor in both achieving wider transport objectives and local town centre regeneration objectives. However, experience shows that overcoming them can, initially at least, appear difficult.
3. What is generally accepted is that appropriate management of parking can enhance public spaces, making towns more attractive to residents and visitors, thereby improving their economic viability. This is particularly pertinent in areas and centres benefiting from tourism, but also applies on a wider basis due to the significant growth of online and out of town shopping, where town centres experience higher levels of comparison shopping and competition. Most town centres looking at these issues put the emphasis on providing a wider and uniquely appealing offer on behalf of the town to offset these factors.

**Parking is not the primary factor affecting economic performance and vitality.**

4. The availability of adequate parking which meets community and customer needs is important but it is one element only in the economic vitality of a service/town centre; What an area, centre or town has to offer, as an overall product/attraction is of much more significance when it comes to consumer spending behaviour.
5. There has always been an ongoing risk that a community's trust in its parking management system, and in particular enforcement and revenue allocation, can become eroded. This is currently being experienced across Wales and the UK. Factors which can contribute to this may include poor communication ('pro-active transparency and engagement') on behalf of an authority, and vested interests being played out in public, for example, journalistic or political participants quick to leverage this potentially emotive area. Wider economic pressures, reduced Council budgets and the challenges experienced by the High Street, create fertile ground for such damaging responses and reactions.

**An opportunity exists for communities to work together to utilise parking demand in an informed and structured manner for the benefit of all.**

6. Actual impacts of parking management will depend on the status of the individual area, centre or town and its parking supply.
7. Gwynedd Council has always and continues to take a structured and considered approach in assessing both the opportunities and threats associated with parking demand throughout the County.
8. As such, the Council has recently undertaken a review of relevant parking research, including existing thinking and evidence with regard to parking management. It is considered that this is one important step in helping to maintain a clear view of the options available to decision makers, interest groups and the communities within Gwynedd
9. The overall message from the work undertaken is a positive one. If done properly, managing parking effectively would benefit an area or town centres. The advantages of a well managed parking system are potentially numerous and significant and include helping reduce the dominance of cars, while at the same time enhancing, not reducing, access. There is also real evidence to suggest that continuing to develop efficient and effective managed parking can benefit the overall quality of living and economy, and not damage them.
10. The following document aims to build upon the parking research review and provide a proposal framework for developing Gwynedd's parking strategy and policy making.

### **Gwynedd Parking Research Review**

11. The recent Gwynedd Parking Research Review has assessed evidence regarding the strategic and operational approaches to parking management and control in the UK and Wales. It also references various relevant national and regional strategic plans and associated objectives relating to travel, environment and economy.
12. In summary, the conclusions of the parking research review are:
  - Effective parking policy should exist within the wider and structured framework of existing national and local transport strategy.
  - Transport planning, whether on a national or local level should be suitably integrated and harmonised with associated environmental and business planning.
  - Transport strategy and parking policy therein will always exist to some extent within the context of 'tensions' between social, environmental and economic considerations.
  - Parking policy formulation, implementation and evaluation should adhere to a national and local area strategy approach, whilst also aim to understand and deliver as much as possible against differing specific community requirements and objectives.

- Parking policy should be formulated within the wider transport strategy approach of 'demand management' rather than merely responding to existing or predicted future demand.
- There is a responsibility on policy makers to utilise effective tools at their disposal to ensure that potential social, environmental and economic benefits are maximised. There is sufficient evidence to refute the suggestions that the impact of parking control and charging as a negative contributor to the economic vitality of a town centre.
- Parking charges should therefore be utilised as one of many important tools to enable a balanced and tailored approach to demand managed parking policy implementation.
- Creative and flexible parking policy development, including some degree of tailoring of policy implementation to differing needs is highly beneficial.
- There are significant advantages to ongoing strategy, policy development, implementation and evaluation being clearly communicated to all key stakeholders. Appropriate levels of consultation, transparency and community involvement within the decision making process can lead to more effective policy development, implementation and future evaluation.”

### **Overview of Aims & Objectives of Gwynedd’s parking strategy**

13. Gwynedd Council’s parking strategy aims to find a balance between supporting economic growth and being an effective demand management tool to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives.
14. There is consensus that Gwynedd's parking strategy in dealing with the supply and management of car parking can be one of the most useful tools available to the local authority and community in helping it achieve economic, social and environmental objectives.
15. Examples of key aims and objectives for Gwynedd could be to:
  - I. Support the local economy (e.g. by making it easy for shoppers and tourists to visit Gwynedd's market towns) and facilitate development growth (e.g. by enabling the planned housing, redevelopment and employment growth in Gwynedd).
  - II. Meet residents’ needs for car parking near their homes (e.g. by introducing Residents’ Parking Zones if appropriate and requested).
  - III. Provide access to key services and facilities for special needs groups and the mobility impaired (e.g. by providing appropriate Blue Badge car parking spaces).

- IV. Improve access and journey time reliability for road users (e.g. by designing and managing on-street parking facilities to reduce traffic conflicts and delays).
- V. Encourage sustainable travel modes and help reduce reliance on the private car (e.g. by setting parking charges at appropriate levels).
- VI. Enhance the built and natural environment (e.g. by reducing the amount of land required for parking and by improving the look of street scenes through the enforcement of parking contraventions).
- VII. Make Gwynedd a safer place (e.g. by effectively enforcing parking policy).
- VIII. Raise revenue for the council to reinvest in transport services and measures (e.g. by using surplus parking revenues to subsidise expensive rural route bus services).

## **Overview of Opportunities**

16. It is considered that the review of parking in Gwynedd offers a series of opportunities for its town centres, villages and it can contribute towards achieving many of the authority's strategic objectives. It could also provide a clean future strategy which, if reviewed regularly, could provide clarity in terms of parking management and a basis for efficient working in the future including the process of reviewing fees and responding to and opportunities.
  - To create a proactive policy framework
  - To provide structure and impetus for integrated policy and decision making
  - To support wider social, economic and environmental initiatives and targets
  - To engage the community across Gwynedd and help change the perception of parking management from one of 'restrictions and penalties' to one of 'shared opportunities and rewards'.

## **Enforcement - “Keeping traffic moving and people safe”**

17. Following the successful introduction of CPE throughout Gwynedd since 2007, this proposed framework for strategy and policy making is being developed in the knowledge that any restrictions introduced will be effectively enforced.
18. This process also involves investigating requests received for parking controls from residents, town councils and other interested organisations, and the

formulation of proposals to deal with safety or obstruction problems, which are progressed through the traffic regulation order process.

19. Communication of the purpose of enforcement is important and is probably an area where more could be done.
20. Effective 'enforcement' should be given the proper public context as representing **only one vital element** of parking management. Both the benefits of CPE and the Council's 'light touch' approach need to be reiterated and properly communicated to ensure high confidence levels are maintained. In addition, the distinctions between the source and allocation of revenues raised via parking charges and the revenues derived from enforcement need to be clearly communicated and transparent in nature.

### **Overview of the regional policy context for parking management in Gwynedd:**

21. There are numerous references in National Transport Strategy to the need for parking management policy making and its implementation as part of achieving wider transport objectives.
22. The regional transport plans relevant to Gwynedd only have limited references specific to parking management. They do appear to fully recognise that this is an important element to an integrated demand management approach to achieving transport objectives.
23. It is recognised at both national, regional and local level that parking management can have a significant impact on wider social, economic and environmental initiatives. In particular with regard to maintaining and developing the access to and confidence in town centres.

### **Gwynedd Parking Policies**

24. Any future Gwynedd Car Parking Strategy will need to balance a range of economic, social and environmental objectives and exist within the wider demand management approach to transport. Any proposed policies will have to seek to strike such a balance and aim to recognise Gwynedd's particular circumstances.
25. The public parking stock both on and off road is an important existing community asset. The demand for use of this asset represents both a threat and an opportunity to the community. It is the Council's responsibility to properly manage the impact of this parking demand by minimising threats and maximising opportunities. In terms of maximising benefits, it is imperative to take a customer service perspective towards the communication and provision of the 'parking offer'.

### **Proposed Parking Strategy 1 – General Principle:**

26. The overall parking stock will be efficiently and effectively managed through the implementation of appropriate supply, maintenance, charging and enforcement measures to help achieve relevant local objectives.

## Consistency and Tailoring

27. In order to facilitate efficient and effective parking management, a balanced approach is needed. This should reflect the range of economic, social and environmental differences found in Gwynedd, but has to provide a workable and consistent framework. Given this, the management of car parking will probably need to be focused on a number of aggregated 'spatial areas' and 'land-use zones'.
28. It is proposed that the settlements of Gwynedd be divided into four spatial areas (see Table below) based on a hierarchy which considers the role and function of settlements, their level of facilities and services, population levels, the availability of sustainable transport alternatives and operational parking issues. A model could be:
29. **Table 3.1 Spatial Areas**

BAND	SPATIAL AREA
1	City of Bangor
2	Major Market Towns
3	Seasonally Impacted Towns &Centres
4	Smaller Towns & Villages

30. The 'Market Towns' (Band 2) could be: Caernarfon, Porthmadog, Pwllheli
31. The 'Seasonally Impacted Towns & Centres' could be: Barmouth, Dolgellau, Llanberis, Abersoch, Bala, Tywyn, Aberdyfi, Harlech.
32. Within these settlements, each car park could be categorised in accordance to the uses of primary services:
33. **Table 3.2 Land- Use Zones**

BAND	LAND-USE ZONE
A	Regional Shopping & Commercial Zone
B	Employment Centre / Area
C	Residential Area
D	Seasonally Impacted / Tourism Area

## Benefits:

34. A standardised approach across towns can provide consistency, greater understanding and confidence from users.
35. It can also provide scope for flexibility and partial tailoring to specific needs of centres and towns, whilst remaining workable, manageable and cost effective.

36. This balanced solution allows flexibility to reflect different needs or different places at different times of the day, week or year. Regular review will allow this tailoring to develop and change over time.

