

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

Living Streets' response to the Right to Challenge Parking Policies

Introduction

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk. We started life in 1929 as the Pedestrians Association and have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30 mph speed limits. Eighty five years on, we continue to influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk more, and provide specialist consultancy services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, and improve public health. We want to make sure that every community can enjoy the benefits of walking.

We are responding to the proposals in the Government's discussion paper on The Right to Challenge Parking Policies. We disagreed in our response to the Technical Consultation on Planning with the way Government is privileging motorists and intervening in local matters on their behalf. We see these proposals as continued, unwarranted interference in what is a local matter, under the mistaken belief that removing parking restrictions will somehow transform the vitality of high streets and town centres. Parking controls are not put in place for the purpose of picking on particular members of the community. Parking controls help local authorities to keep traffic flowing safely, for the benefit of all road users, by tackling inconsiderate parking, removing obstructions and managing competing demands for limited kerbside space.

High streets and town centres

Living Streets' report 'The Pedestrian Pound' identified that there are many factors involved in the decline of our high streets, town and city centres – not least, out-of-town developments and now the move to online retail. Encouraging short-stay, fleeting visits to local shops by curbing parking controls pays lip service to businesses' fears for the future, but is unlikely to 'fuel' their recovery. Cars have become an intrinsic part of the way many people shop, to a great extent because successive Governments have systematically failed to halt the growth of extensive, car dependent, out of town developments which take business away from city and town centres.

Proposals for a new parking review mechanism?

This proposal was first made in the Department for Transport's consultation on local authority parking, earlier this year. At the time we responded that:

"Local residents and businesses are already able to require councils to review yellow lines, parking provision, parking charges or any other issue of local concern through existing democratic processes. For example, e-petitions requiring a minimum number of signatures enable a strong show of local support. Alternatively, individuals can contact council officers or their local councillors directly. It is unclear why parking should be prioritised over other local services or why the Government is seeking to create an additional, costly, bureaucratic burden for cash strapped councils."

Parking control measures have to be tested against local transport plan objectives, the availability and demand for kerb space, visitor parking pressures, possible effects on the surrounding area and costs of implementation. We believe that local authorities are best placed (localism in action)

1

Living Streets
4th Floor, Universal House, 88–94 Wentworth Street E1 7SA
Tel 020 7377 4900
info@livingstreets.org.uk www.livingstreets.org.uk

Living Streets (The Pedestrians Association) is a Registered Charity No. 1108448 (England and Wales) and SC039808 (Scotland), Company Limited by Guarantee (England & Wales), Company Registration No. 5368409



Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

to decide which parking policies and measures should be implemented for their communities. Imposing formal procedures on councils to review parking policies in a 'one size fits all' type model is not going to benefit anybody.

Who should have the ability to petition for a review?

Many parking controls, for instance, residents' parking schemes, are implemented at the request of residents and businesses. Controlled parking zones help to increase the turnover of parking spaces and can make it easier for residents to park closer to their homes. However, this can also displace a parking problem from one street to another or within a wider neighbourhood. So the question of who can challenge parking policies completely misses the potential conflict of interests – and the need for compromise – between adjacent residents and businesses (as opposed to implied conflict with the local authority).

The discussion paper suggests that the minimum requirement to have the ability to challenge parking policies is that residents should be council tax payers or local electors and businesses registered to pay business rates in the area. However, this does not take into account *all* the road users, such as visitors to local shops and services, employees commuting from outwith the area, students travelling to local colleges, businesses servicing the local economy, bus operators and so on. Local authorities have a network management duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004 to ensure all traffic (including people walking and cycling) is kept moving and roads are safe for everybody. The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2009 specifies that all objections to a proposed Traffic Order or variation to an Order must be addressed. Limiting the right to challenge parking policies to local residents and businesses could place local authorities in breach of their network management duty.

What should they be able to challenge and how?

We do not believe that a new mechanism is needed to enable residents and businesses to engage effectively with their local authority on parking. Would the Government then consider requests for similar mechanisms to challenge, for example, local health and education policies? The law already requires local councils to publish their parking accounts and the use of surplus income is strictly controlled. Both local authority representatives the Local Government Technical Advisors Group (TAG) and the British Parking Association also encourage their members to produce annual parking reports because they agree with government that it is important for local authorities to be transparent about their parking programmes. It would be more useful to update statutory guidance to encourage regular reviews of all parking controls to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose.

Note: Living Streets fully supports the joint response of the British Parking Association and Local Government Technical Advisors Group.

For more details please contact:

Dr Rachel Lee – Policy and Research Coordinator
Email: Rachel.lee@livingstreets.org.uk
Telephone: 020 7377 4919