

RESIDENTS' PARKING SCHEMES

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO INTRODUCE RESIDENTS' PARKING SCHEMES IN NORTHERN IRELAND



An Agency within the Department for

**Regional
Development**

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1.0 Background

In common with many areas in Great Britain, all-day commuter parking is causing problems for some residents in parts of Northern Ireland who wish to park vehicles near their homes. While Residents' Parking schemes have been introduced in Great Britain to help alleviate this problem, there are currently no such schemes in Northern Ireland.

The Department took powers, through the Road Traffic Regulation (NI) Order 1997, to permit the introduction of Residents' Parking schemes in Northern Ireland. Roads Service has not, however, used these powers to date, as the Police Service for Northern Ireland indicated that they could not provide effective enforcement support. As Residents' Parking schemes will not operate effectively without proper enforcement, it was decided that they should not be introduced until Roads Service had assumed responsibility for parking enforcement and was in a position to enforce Residents' Parking Schemes. Roads Service assumed responsibility for the enforcement of on-street parking on 30 October 2006.

2.0 The Consultation

A consultation on a Residents' Parking Policy commenced on 17 November 2006. Advertisements were placed in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and News Letter to publicise the consultation. The consultation document was also published on the Roads Service website. It was issued directly to 280 consultees whose details are contained either on the OFMDFM Machinery of Government Statutory Consultee list or the DRD Equality Unit Section 75 Consultation list.

The document was also sent to:

- All 26 District Councils
- All Northern Ireland:
 - Political Parties
 - Members of the House of Lords
 - Members of Parliament (MPs)
 - Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)
- All Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly (MLAs)
- The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee
- All Northern Ireland Government Departments
- 107 copies of the consultation document were also sent on request to 59 individuals/groups who requested it.

The consultation period ended on 9 February 2007.

The purpose of the consultation paper was to:

- **provide information** about the Department's intention to introduce Residents' Parking Schemes in Northern Ireland;
- **explain** the way schemes would be introduced and how they would operate;
- **seek views on the proposed policy**, particularly on the level or charge proposed and the degree of local support required to introduce such schemes; and
- **present the findings of and seek views on the Equality of Opportunity screening and other impact assessments.**

3.0 Response to the Consultation

63 written responses were received. Also, over 500 pre-printed postcards distributed by Cllr. Bob Stoker within his electoral area were also received. These simply objected to the proposed charge and have been treated as a single issue response, although each respondent will receive an individual reply. The 63 substantive responses received represent a 10.5% response rate.

Responses were assigned to the following 5 interest groups.

- ‘Central Government Bodies’ - Central Government, Boards, Non-Departmental Public Bodies, public corporations and political parties/representatives;
- ‘Local Government Bodies’ - local authorities/Councils;
- ‘Voluntary/Community sector’ - established voluntary organisations and registered community associations/ groups;
- ‘Business Sector’ - ‘umbrella’ business representative organisations; and,
- Private individuals / residents.

Of the 63 substantive responses received;

- 11 were from Central Government Bodies;
- 12 were from Local Government Bodies;
- 12 were from the Voluntary/Community Sector;
- 3 were from the Business Sector; and,
- 25 were from individuals / residents / elected representatives.

A full list of respondents including their interest grouping is attached at Appendix 1. All respondents agreed to their comments being made publicly available and copies of responses can be obtained by making a request in writing to:

Transportation and Engineering Unit
Roads Service Headquarters
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8GB

4.0 Key Findings and Roads Service Response

The responses received in relation to this consultation have been categorised into the followings policy areas;

- General Policy Issues;
- Proposed Charges;
- Residents' Permits;
- Visitors' Permits;
- Business Permits;
- Health Carers' Permits;
- Special Permits and Exemptions; and
- Implementation Issues.

4.1. General Policy Issues

Only 2 of the responses received, both submitted by members of the public, indicated outright rejection of the policy in its entirety. One response indicated a preference to use 'other methods' to discourage commuter parking, while the other viewed the charges proposed in the policy as simply another tax.

The remainder of the comments received either indicated discontent with, or sought clarification on, specific aspects of the policy. Otherwise, these responses were broadly supportive of the policy and its primary objective - the control of on-street parking for the benefit of residents.

Although the Consultation Document specifically requested comment on a draft Section 75 Equality of Opportunity screening analysis, none of the responses received commented on this analysis.

4.1.1. Two Thirds Majority

The consultation document specifically asked for comment on the 2/3 majority required before a scheme could be introduced within an area. Very few respondents offered a view on this figure and, from those who did respond, some thought the figure was just right, while others thought it was either too high or too low. The question of who would be asked for an opinion was also raised.

Roads Service Response

Very few respondents made any mention of the 2/3 majority threshold highlighted in the consultation document. It has therefore been assumed that they have no strong objection to this issue. Investigation of the introduction of Residents' Parking schemes in Great Britain has indicated that there is no common rationale defining the level of support required, which in some instances has been as low as 51% in favour of introduction. Since no definitive view was expressed either way, it is felt that a 2 to 1 majority of respondents is acceptable and would let local democracy prevail, preventing a minority view ruling out a scheme. **It has therefore been decided to retain this 2/3 majority threshold within the policy but clarified to state that only one response per residence will be accepted, preventing houses of multiple occupancy unduly influencing any overall decision. Also, in order to ensure that residents views are properly considered, Roads Service will actively seek to ensure that a response rate of at least 50% of households is obtained – this has been included in the policy.**

4.1.2. Introduction of Schemes for Transportation Reasons

Within the draft policy Roads Service indicated that it would introduce schemes for two main reasons; firstly in response to public demand in areas where residents have difficulty parking, and secondly for transportation reasons. The second reason is required to cover the situation when a Local Transport Plan stipulates that commuter parking needs to be controlled and recommends Residents' Parking schemes as one of the tools available to achieve this control. It is also required for areas where Roads Service is implementing an area-wide parking strategy that could potentially displace parkers to adjacent areas. The introduction of limited waiting and/or pay and display could have this effect. This reason has, however, received an amount of criticism from respondents to the policy consultation, mainly because it is seen as a back door method for Roads Service to impose schemes.

Roads Service Response

Roads Service needs to have the ability to be able to identify and introduce schemes to meet its commitments to implementing local transport plans and to improving parking provision. Should local residents have concerns about a scheme they would still have the opportunity to voice these during the consultation exercise undertaken for statutory purposes. **It has therefore been decided to retain this aspect of the policy.**

4.1.3. Guaranteed Parking Spaces

A number of respondents indicated that they thought it unfair to have to pay when a parking place is not guaranteed and that a parking place should in fact be reserved at their front door.

Roads Service Response

*Roads Service cannot reserve a parking place for any individual and any of the specific bays that we will provide can be used by anyone from the designated grouping, (for example, an accessible parking bay provided in response to an individual request can be used by any blue badge holder and not just the applicant). However, it should be remembered that once the influence of parking by those from outside of the area is reduced or removed, the opportunity for residents to park will be greatly increased. This combined with limiting the number of permits issued per residence and designing schemes with the optimum geographical coverage, means that the chance of a resident parking close to their house should increase significantly. **It has therefore been decided to retain this aspect of the policy.***

4.1.4. Houses of Multiple Occupancy

One of the recurring issues that arose from the responses was how the policy would apply to Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). Generally residents were concerned for two main reasons. Firstly, the effect that HMOs have on the number of cars parking in a street reducing capacity and, secondly, the potential negative influence that an HMO could have on public support for a scheme - particularly if residents are only going to be eligible for one permit per residence.

Roads Service Response

Paragraph 1.3.6 of the consultation document defines a residence as “a domestic or non-domestic property listed in the Valuation and Lands Agency valuation list”. This definition incorrectly includes non-domestic property and this has been corrected. Where a house has been converted into a number of separate flats or apartments, each of which is listed separately in the VLA register, then these will, (for the purposes of determining the eligibility to apply for residents’ or visitors’ permits), be treated as separate residences. However, where one house has been converted to contain a number of habitable rooms, (but still only

*counts as one property in the VLA list), this will be treated as a single residence. **It has therefore been decided that the approach proposed in the policy of one permit per residence will remain, but that a clearer explanation of the position with regard HMOs is provided.***

4.1.5. Footway Parking

The issue of footway parking was mentioned in a number of responses with the overwhelming view that this should be disallowed in any proposed scheme.

Roads Service Response

*The draft policy states that where streets are narrow and residential density is high, partial parking on the footway may be permitted, provided this does not cause an unacceptable level of obstruction to pedestrians. The alternative is to mark bays on one side of the road only, halving the capacity for parking in the area. An example of partial footway parking was observed in Croydon where parking bays were marked out partially on the carriageway and partially on the footway. This does not seem to have caused any problem as vehicles must park within the limits of the designated bay, thereby reducing the possibility of causing an obstruction. The designers there indicated that, while not being ideal, the solution was necessary to ensure sufficient parking capacity for all the residences in the street. A consequence of marking bays partially on footways is that it regulates and controls an existing and common practice in many areas. The marked bay which can be enforced ensures that cars do not park on the footway in such a way as to cause an obstruction to the free passage of pedestrians. **It has therefore been decided to retain this aspect of the policy subject to a minimum width of footway being maintained.***

4.1.6. Application of Policy to Areas with Off-Street Parking

Paragraph 1.6.11 states that, “schemes will not be introduced where residential parking is primarily off-street.” A number of responses to the consultation document challenged this stipulation, citing nuisance parking (where access to private off street space is obstructed by vehicles parking on the road without due consideration) as being a serious problem in their area.

Roads Service Response

*The main reason for introducing Residents' Parking schemes is to remove long stay on-street parking from residential areas where it has an adverse impact on the ability of residents to park in close proximity to their homes. In areas with off-street parking available, this impact is much less significant, as residents can use their driveways to park their vehicles. In areas where there is a mixture of on-street and off-street parking, residents with off-street parking will still be eligible for a residents permit after the initial distribution of permits to those without driveways. This is described within the policy. **It has therefore been decided that this restriction remain in the policy.***

4.1.7. Consultation

Good, early and continued consultation with residents and local representatives was recommended by some respondents.

Roads Service Response

*Roads Service intends to engage fully with residents throughout the process and in particular, the scheme design will be informed by residents' surveys. Initial questionnaires will be accompanied by public information leaflets containing information about schemes and Roads Service contact details. Residents will have the opportunity to informally influence scheme design throughout the process, and more formally during the publication of the statutory notices. Experience from elsewhere, and particularly Croydon, indicates that good informal consultation (when plans are presented in advance of the public notices) minimises the number of formal objections at the public notice stage. **It has therefore been decided that no change be made to policy in respect of detailing consultation requirements.***

4.2. Proposed Charges

Without doubt, the most contentious aspect surrounding the introduction of residents' parking schemes as described in the consultation document is the issue of charging.

From the responses received, 2 out of 11 from Central Government, 10 out of 12 from Local Government, 9 out of 12 from the Voluntary Sector and 12 out of 24 from the Residents Sector objected either to the policy of charging or to the level of charge indicated. The majority of all objectors also indicated that a reduced charge should be considered for

residents on low or fixed incomes, pensioners, or those who are otherwise disadvantaged to the extent that they would find it difficult to afford the charges indicated in the consultation document.

Roads Service Response

The level of charge for permits detailed in the consultation document was calculated on a full cost recovery basis. This is in line with Government direction that requires that Departments operate within set financial limits. Any new initiative has therefore to be financed at the expense of other projects or be self financing.

Taking cognisance of the level of concern about the charge, it has been decided that a reduced charge should be set for those on low or fixed incomes. This charge is to be £40 (half the standard charge) and the cost of providing the concession will be partially offset by revenue raised from mixed schemes. To assist with scheme administration, the reduction will only be applied to schemes within Neighbourhood Renewal Areas as defined by the Department for Social Development.

4.3. Residents' Permits

4.3.1. Number of Permits to be Issued

Many responses received during the consultation expressed concern over the number of residents' permits that would be issued on the introduction of a scheme. Views were very mixed, with some responses stating that the number of permits should be restricted to allow the best chance for residents to park near their homes. On the other hand, some responses stated that permits should be available for all vehicles belonging to residents within an area.

Roads Service Response

Paragraph 1.17.1 of the consultation document states that;

“Where parking demand exceeds availability, up to 1.2 permits (combined resident and business permits) may be issued per available parking space. In issuing permits, the guiding principle will be to initially allocate one permit per residence or business premises and then to consider what scope exists for the issue of further permits. Where this is possible, further permits will only be issued where they can be made available to all eligible applicants, rather than issue a limited number on a first come first served basis.”

This proposed ratio has been established following consultation with a number of Local Authorities in GB and is seen as the best compromise between the needs of those households with more than one vehicle and the desire for residents generally to be able to park near their homes. It has therefore been decided that the limit of 1.2 permits per available parking space is retained within the policy.

4.4. Visitors' Permits

4.4.1. Duration for Visitors Permits

A number of respondents raised concerns that the 4 hour limit on Visitors' permits would be restrictive, particularly if residents were having visitors staying overnight or for a few days.

Roads Service Response

*Recent visits to both Glasgow and Croydon have revealed that their visitor permits are valid for one full day regardless of the length of operation of any restriction within a scheme. The permits are available in books of 5 and the visitor simply scratches off a panel on the permit to indicate the current day. The proposal in the draft policy that visitors' permits should only be valid for up to 4 hours would mean that the start time as well as the day would need to be displayed on the permit and this could lead to confusion and may be difficult to enforce successfully. **It has therefore been decided to amend the policy to indicate that visitors' permits would be valid for a full day of operation.***

4.4.2. Number of Visitors' Permits to be Issued

Concerns were also expressed about the number of permits that would be made available. Respondents argue that the number of permits issued per quarter (25 per quarter and increasing to 50 for those over 65 years of age) could be socially restrictive.

Roads Service Response

Advice also received during the visits to Great Britain is that numbers have to be restricted, primarily to control access, and that allowing unlimited visitor access may well defeat the purpose of the scheme. Glasgow issues 35 visitor permits per year with an option to purchase additional permits on request, provided applicants can justify the additional need.

*In both Glasgow and Croydon, mixed use parking schemes are used extensively - that is, residents' parking mixed with pay and display. This reduces the need for visitor's permits, as the visitor pays for their own parking. It also lessens the burden on the resident. Low tariffs are set for the first hour so that the short term casual visitor is not deterred. **It has therefore been decided that the number of visitors permits issued to residents will remain as indicated in the draft policy.***

4.4.3. Charge for Visitors' Permits

The need for a charge for visitors' permits was also questioned together with the level of charge, particularly for those residents on low or fixed incomes.

Roads Service Response

*The need for charging for the operation residents' parking schemes is explained in section 4.2. Additionally, paragraph 4.4.2 provides detail on how the use of mixed schemes (residents' parking in combination with pay and display) should reduce the burden on residents having to provide for short term visitors. The level of charge of £12.50 provides visitor parking at fifty pence per day and this is considered low compared to other parking charges. **It has therefore been decided that the cost of visitors' permits remains unchanged at the level indicated in the draft policy.***

4.5. Business Permits

4.5.1. Number of Business Permits available per Business

One respondent stated that the allocation of 1 or 2 business permits per business was too restrictive and takes no account of business size, number of employees or the nature of the business.

Roads Service Response

Residents' parking schemes will be introduced primarily to benefit residents in an area that suffers from the effects of long stay parking, often (but not exclusively) due to commuters. Business permits are being provided to allow businesses to continue operating in the same manner as they did before residents' parking, in that vehicles which would have normally

*have frequent access on a daily basis would still have this degree of access. The provision of mixed use schemes which provide a pay and display alternative to a permit, will cater for clients visiting on an irregular basis. Where pay and display is not used, then local arrangements, alluded to in the policy, may have to be investigated. However, it is worth remembering that businesses would also be eligible for the same number of visitor permits as private residences. The provision of permits for employee parking would be contrary to the principal aim of the policy which is to discourage all day commuter parking in the areas concerned. **It has therefore been decided that no change is made to the policy with regard to the issue of business permits.***

4.5.2. Hotels B&Bs etc.

One Local Authority argued that if Hotels and B&Bs are treated like any other business, this would be disadvantageous, as they often have a number of long stay visitors.

Roads Service Response

*Roads Service appreciates that the number of visitors using Hotels and Bed and Breakfast establishments is probably greater than other businesses. However, it is felt that the combined availability of pay and display facilities and visitors permits will provide enough provision for this. Experience from elsewhere indicates that this should be so. The policy is, however, flexible enough to allow for provision of additional visitors permits where, in the light of experience, there is a clear and identifiable demand. However, as the main purpose of the policy is to control parking, this would be largely dependent on the total number of permits issued and the available kerbside space. **It has therefore been decided that no further provision should be made for the issue of business permits for hotels and B&Bs.***

4.6. Health Carers' Permits

4.6.1. Health Carers' Permits or Visitors' Permits

Paragraph 1.15.1 of the consultation document indicated that the parking needs of Health Carers could be accommodated either by the use of visitor's permits, purchased by residents, or by the use of Health Carers' permits, issued through the local Health & Personal Social Services Trust. A number of respondents expressed the view that the parking needs of Health

Carers should not place an additional burden on residents, but rather that they should use a Health Carers' permit issued by their local trust.

Roads Service Response

*The policy indicates that health caring can be accommodated by either Health Carers' or Visitors' Permits. However, it is recognised that the emphasis should be on the use of the Health Carers' Permit in order to reduce the burden on the resident. A Special Permit is also available for non-resident family members or friends who care for elderly or disabled relatives on an unpaid daily basis. Experience from both Glasgow and Croydon is that Health Trusts are not issued with Health Carers' Permits as Carers generally pay and display, and claim the cost back with their travel expenses. It is felt that the policy is flexible enough not to warrant any change at this stage. **It has therefore been decided that no change should be made to the arrangements for health carer permits.***

4.7. Special Permits and Exemptions

4.7.1. Special Permits

A number of respondents queried, or sought clarification on the use of Special Permits. One respondent also questioned the charge for a Builders' Special Permit of £50/space/week as being excessive. It was suggested that this charge would be passed onto the residents and put an additional burden onto them. Another respondent questioned the efficiency of issuing one-off permits.

Roads Service Response

The consultation document indicated that Special Permits could be issued for special one-off events free of charge, to builders carrying out works to a property within a scheme at a cost of £50 per week, or where other circumstances prevail and a strong case can be made.

Whereas this element of the policy is less well defined, it is essential the Roads Service has the flexibility to issue permits for reasons which cannot be pre-determined. However, it felt that the combination of Visitor's Permits and the possibility of mixed use schemes, there is sufficient flexibility within the existing arrangements without having to alter them at this stage. It is recognised that the cost for a Special Builder's Permit is high, but this has been done deliberately in attempt to get builders to think differently about the way they conduct

*their business and prevent them from tying up parking space with vans and skips for long periods. If a builder is working for a resident, their parking needs could be accommodated using a Visitor's Permit which would equate to a weekly cost of £2.50 rather than £50. **It has therefore been decided that no change is made to the arrangements for Special Permits.***

4.7.2. Exempt Vehicles

A number of respondents queried, or sought clarification on, what vehicles are exempt from needing permit to park in a residents' parking scheme area.

Roads Service Response

*Para 1.8.1c of the consultation document lists those vehicles which are exempt from the requirement to display a permit provided they are actively and essentially engaged in the pursuance of statutory powers or duties. A number of other vehicle types have been suggested by respondents. As a result this list will need to be examined to make sure that it includes all vehicle types. As a general guide, only liveried vehicles should be exempt as unmarked vehicles cannot easily be identified as providing an essential service. Again, the use of shared schemes would alleviate a considerable part of this difficulty with the agent expected to pay. **The list of exempt vehicles contained within the Draft Policy will be examined to ensure completeness.***

4.8. Implementation Issues

4.8.1. Local Schemes

One respondent queried why there was no indication of where the first schemes would be implemented.

Roads Service Response

The consultation document merely presents Roads Service's draft policy for implementing residents' parking scheme. It therefore did not set out a program of potential schemes. Until the policy, and the parameters for selecting schemes within it, are finalised Roads Service

can not provide a definitive listing. It is therefore confirmed that a listing of possible schemes can not be provided at this time.

4.8.2. Consultation

Another respondent asked whether schemes would go ahead regardless of the views of residents and at what stage would it be necessary to hold a public inquiry.

Roads Service Response

Local support for any scheme is vital for it to be implemented. The two thirds majority requirement, as discussed in 4.1.1, refers. At a local level residents will have the opportunity to comment on the draft orders which will be published either in local newspapers or made available on street furniture in the area. If there are objections then Roads Service will deal with the issues raised through its normal processes. It has therefore been concluded that no further provision is required within the policy.

ROADS SERVICE

January 2008

Details of Respondents

No.	Individual/Company Details	Category
1	Paula O'Sullivan	R
2	Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission	C
3	Keith Jeffery	R
4	DHSSPS	C
5	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	C
6	Limavady Borough Council	L
7	Morton Community Centre	V
8	John Crooks	R
9	David Gibson	R
10	Andrew Nesbitt Architects	B
11	North Down District Policing Partnership	C
12	HSENI - Jim King	C
13	Alan Meban	R
14	Gail Crawley	R
15	David Thompson	R
16	Antrim Borough Council	L
17	Federation Of The Licensed Retail Trade NI	B
18	Eastern Health and Social Services Board	C
19	Northern Ireland Housing Executive - S Cuddy	C
20	Mr D, Mrs G and Mr B Morgan	R
21	Mrs S I Brann	R
22	Down District Council, Norman Stewart	L
23	Freight Transport Association, Tom Wright	B
24	Armagh City and District Council	L
25	Northern Ireland Tourist Board	A
26	Dr Esmond McBirnie MLA	R
27	Mrs Anne McClenahan	R
28	Cllr Stephen Farry (Alliance Party)	R
29	Daniel Cezar	R
30	Lower Malone Residents' Association	V
31	Mr Evan Connolly	R
32	South Belfast Partnership Board	V
33	DFP Valuation and Lands Agency	C
34	Padraig Walsh	R
35	Ards Council	L
36	Translink	C
37	Ballymena Borough Council	L
38	Iris Ewing	R
39	Mr V Alan Hewitt	R
40	Market's Development Association	V

41	Park Avenue Bangor Residents	V
42	Mr G Sherwood Hobson	R
43	Fermanagh District Council	L
44	West Belfast Partnership	V
45	IMTAC	C
46	Craigavon Borough Council	L
47	Belfast City Council	L
48	Institution of Highways and Transportation - Northern Ireland Branch	V
49	Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group	V
50	Donegall Pass Community Forum	V
51	Lisburn City Council	L
52	Stranmillis Residents' Association	V
53	Carmel Hanna (SDLP)	R
54	DCAL	A
55	Brendan McMorrow	R
56	Helen McPhillips	R
57	Rugby Residents' Association	V
58	South Belfast DUP	R
59	Councillor Bob Stoker	R
60	Queen's University Belfast	B
61	Banbridge District Council	L
62	Mencap	V
63	Ms Fiona Walls	R

Key to Categories

C	Central Government Bodies
L	Local Government
V	Voluntary/Community Sector
B	Business Sector
R	Residents / Individuals / Elected Representatives