

Authorities powers to chase up past tickets when vehicles are clamped or impounded and also vehicles being occupied while causing a nuisance on street and being driven off whenever a parking attendant appears. All these ways in which enforcement is made very difficult are particular issues that need further attention.

9. *Other Issues*

Some other issues were touched in the first three paragraphs of the Committee's press notice. We are aware that some authorities do make substantial surpluses on car parking particularly Metropolitan Authorities where most of the parking and problems are in the central area. This may be a different Authority to outer areas. More transparency by Local Authorities as to exactly where the surpluses go could, we believe, help in assuaging resistance from some members of the public. Central London Authorities, particularly, are the Authorities with large surpluses and it is notable that such Authorities do have a generally higher standard of traffic and environmental management in their areas—a significant element of which is funded from parking surpluses.

We also concur with the comment in the third paragraph of the Committee's press notice that there is a risk that public perception of parking may deteriorate if action is not taken to promote the legitimacy of parking control. We would strongly support any efforts on this front that can be made. This is covered in the second point above.

Wheel clamping can potentially generate conflict on street, and is often a difficult activity for a Local Authority. Fairly few Local Authorities use wheel clamping. It is however a very visible deterrent to others and it is a punishment that generally fits the crime very well. The non-compliant driver parks in an unsuitable place for their own convenience, so inconveniencing others. To be inconvenienced by the length of time to get their vehicle back is often a more powerful deterrent than a fine which for some people is a very small part of their overall income. Vehicle removal has similar benefits in terms of those where the payment is not a large part of their income but is not so effective a deterrent when the vehicle is no longer visible to the next non-compliant parker.

We do not generally support wheel clamping or tow away for small overstays at pay and display, however there may be a case for gradation of the penalty charge for overstaying at meters.

Many of the issues to be discussed at the Transport Committee have been raised recently in reviews of parking carried out by others; we trust that the evidence from these other reviews will be put before the Transport Committee.

We hope the information above will be useful to the Committee. We would be pleased to give oral evidence if required. Any questions on our evidence should in the first instance be directed to our Transport Committee Secretary John Elliott obtainable on 01227 765626, 07810 204400 or e-mail johnrelliott@btinternet.com.

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Memorandum submitted by Living Streets

1. Living Streets is pleased to submit its comments to the above inquiry. Living Streets is a national charity, established in 1929, which campaigns for better streets and public spaces for people on foot. We work to persuade both national and local governments to improve policy and practice for pedestrians, including through our network of local branches; we are joint organisers of the National Walk to School Campaign; and we undertake "Community Street Audits", which evaluate the quality of public space from the viewpoints of those on foot.

2. We believe that streets are more than simply traffic corridors—they are important for the vibrancy, economic health, and safety of neighbourhoods; they can help to improve community cohesion by bringing people of different ages and backgrounds together in a shared space; they are outdoor "gyms" which people can use to get fit through walking and cycling; and they are potential playgrounds for all children but especially those who do not live close to parks and playing fields. However, with some 25 million cars on our streets (24 million of them parked at any one time), many streets have become little more than car parks. Living Streets believes that the different uses of our streets need to be better balanced—and parking policy is an essential tool in developing this.

THE LARGER CONTEXT OF PARKING POLICY

3. The larger policy direction, which requires joining up transport, planning, health, economic development and community strategy, should be to reduce the number and length of car journeys, to make streets and public space more attractive for walking, cycling and using public transport, to reduce deaths and injuries on the road, and to find a balance between the different uses streets have. Parking policy has a

role to play as part of this, and Living Streets believes that more can be done to win public confidence in parking policies by working with local people to implement a parking strategy as part of wider measures to improve their neighbourhoods, including the ODPM's cleaner, safer, greener programme.

4. Research shows that people associate the appearance of their neighbourhoods, and the management of their roads in terms of traffic, cleanliness and anti-social behaviour, as key to their quality of life.²⁰ CABI has suggested that while people want to park their cars directly outside their homes, they are willing to make compromises when other benefits such as safe playing areas for children, and the provision of shops, services and public transport links in walking distance, are offered.²¹

5. Likewise, people have voted with their feet by surging into shopping centres like Norwich and Nottingham where parking has been removed from key shopping streets and the walking environment has been improved. Once parking is placed in this positive context of improving quality of life, the public can make informed choices with their various "hats" on—as drivers and as pedestrians, residents, parents etc.

THE IMPORTANCE, FOR PEDESTRIANS, OF EFFECTIVE AND STRICT ENFORCEMENT OF PARKING RESTRICTIONS

6. Parking restrictions are not new—they began about 80 years ago—around the same time that mass car ownership began to grow. As the number of vehicles has grown, so have the number of parking restrictions. In broad terms, Living Streets strongly favours the strict enforcement of parking restrictions, by local authorities, for the following four reasons:

1st. *Accessibility for pedestrians*

7. A major hazard for pedestrians is the parking of cars on pavements. Through our audit work, we come across many examples where pedestrians have to squeeze past vehicles, or must dangerously make a detour into the carriageway because there isn't enough room to pass. This is a particular problem for those in wheelchairs, pushing buggies, or with young children—but it is a problem for a far wider group of pedestrians, for example, those carrying shopping bags. Vehicles parked on the carriageway at the corner of junctions, or across pedestrian crossings, also restrict accessibility for pedestrians. This is especially true if the vehicle is parked next to a dropped kerb intended for step-free access for those with mobility difficulties.

8. Whilst the majority of drivers blocking access for pedestrians are probably unaware of the problems they are causing—and may only be parking for a few minutes to deliver or collect something—this is still a serious problem for pedestrians, and a deterrent to walking, which should be tackled through strict parking enforcement.

2nd. *Encouragement of active travel and alternatives to private car use (eg public transport/car clubs), and the role of parking policy in demand management*

9. According to the 2004 National Travel Survey, some 20% of journeys under 1 mile and 58% of journeys between 1 and 2 miles are undertaken in a car or van. A high proportion of these journeys could be undertaken on foot, or cycled. If they were, there would be considerable benefits to the local environment and to personal health. A "push-pull" approach, to encourage people to walk and cycle more, is needed—promotion of the benefits of active travel and steps to make it easier to walk/cycle, coupled with measures which make it less attractive to use the car for short journeys. Restrictions on the availability of parking, coupled with increased cycle parking and improved walking routes, can help to encourage people to consider more active methods of travel. This needs to be supported with strict parking enforcement. When streets are seen as places which have multiple users and uses, the benefits of getting a better balance between car use and other uses can be appreciated by the public.

10. Planned reductions in parking spaces in city and town centres can help to reduce traffic, and increase street vibrancy. Over a period of 35 years in Copenhagen, parking spaces were reduced by 2–3% per year in order to free up public spaces from car parking, for other uses. The result has been a four-fold increase in public life since the 1960s in the centre of Copenhagen.

11. The Government's Planning Policy Guidance 13 (Transport) states, "reducing the amount of parking in new development is essential . . . to promote sustainable travel choices" (para 49). One way of achieving this is through the use of car clubs—providing preferential parking locations for car club members. Effective enforcement of parking controls can reduce the attractiveness of private ownership of cars, and increase the viability of car sharing.

12. Living Streets believes that the controlled reduction and management of parking provision—balanced with enforcement against illegal parking—is a key tool in the management of traffic levels, and can help to alter the balance of our streets to make them more pedestrian and cycle friendly. It can also help the Government to achieve its targets for reduction in the levels of obesity.

²⁰ Physical Capital Index, MORI June 2005.

²¹ What home buyers want: attitudes and decision making among consumers, CABI March 2005.

3rd. Reduction in street clutter

13. Ineffective enforcement of parking restrictions can lead to more street clutter in the form of railings and bollards. Indeed, the Department for Transport Traffic Advisory Leaflet, *Pavement Parking*²², even suggests the use of guard railing as a method for controlling illegal parking.

“Standard guard rails can be used to prevent pavement parking. Their disadvantage is that they limit where pedestrians can cross a road or where people from parked vehicles can get onto the pavement. They are not generally suitable unless for safety reasons the aim is to channel pedestrians to particular crossing points. Costs of guard railing can vary considerably, being from £45 per metre upwards. In some areas drivers have driven up onto the pavement inside the guard railing. This is dangerous and illegal and local authorities may wish to consider liaising with the police on measures which could be used to prevent it. Local authorities could erect bollards on the pavement close to dropped kerbs to stop drivers using it. Gaps between the bollards should not be less than 1.2m to allow wheelchair users or people with double buggies to pass.”

14. The above advice can be seen to have been put into effect across the country: guard rails making it difficult for pedestrians to cross the road and making the street less safe (because drivers are more likely to forget pedestrians), followed by bollards to stop drivers from driving up onto the pavement behind the guard railing. The result has been streets clogged with clutter which would be unnecessary if parking restrictions were enforced.

4th. Road safety for pedestrians

15. Although speed reduction is far more important for pedestrian safety, the evidence suggests that where parking restrictions are enforced, conditions for pedestrians are safer. An ALG study of metered controlled zones showed that the number of parked vehicles was reduced by half, and traffic accidents decreased by 21% in the zone, but in similar uncontrolled areas the number of accidents rose by 22%.²³

16. Inappropriate parking is a particular safety issue where there are likely to be more vulnerable pedestrians—eg in residential areas and around schools and hospitals. The Government’s School Travel Advisory Group (STAG) reported in January 2000 on recommendations to give children greater travel choices and on improving safety on the journey to and from school. These recommendations included the enforcement of parking and other traffic restrictions.²⁴ Our experience as organisers of the National Walk to School Campaign is that the illegal parking of cars on the yellow “zig-zags” outside schools is a significant issue for many school communities, causing a lot of tension and daily arguments as well as a chaotic and dangerous place for children to cross the road, and that schools are seeking help from their local authorities and police forces to enforce the law.

ACHIEVING PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE

17. Living Streets understands that parking enforcement has grown in controversy as the number of Penalty Charge Notices being issued has increased. In large part this is to be expected, as parking offences which were previously ignored are now being detected and the perpetrators penalised. Studies in the 1980s showed that in London, only one illegal parking act in 100 was penalised and more than 50% of those Fixed Penalty Notices issued did not result in the penalty being paid. It is not surprising that a tightening up of enforcement will lead to complaints.

18. However, parking regulation has become complicated, and the public need to be kept on board as an increasingly sophisticated regime is introduced, especially in built-up urban areas where residential streets, shopping centres, facilities like hospitals, and commuter stations are crammed together. The regime is there to make life tolerable for everyone, but if it is not explained properly to drivers, they can feel they are being unfairly penalised. Public awareness campaigns to explain to drivers what to look for when they park, and why the different kinds of restrictions are in place, are needed.

19. The independent review of decriminalised parking commissioned by the British Parking Association, just published²⁵, has recommended that councils should spell out how much money they have collected from parking fines and how it is being spent. It has also recommended that the Department for Transport carries out research in to how far parking controls are achieving their aims. Living Streets supports these recommendations and makes the further recommendation that the aims are revised to explicitly encompass the needs of pedestrians and the needs to design and manage streets and roads to meet all their uses, not just vehicular carriage. It is also important that local authorities tighten up on appeals procedures and information provided to offenders, so that justice is seen to be done.

²² Traffic Advisory Leaflet 04/93.

²³ ALG written evidence to the London Assembly Transport Committee Inquiry, Parking Enforcement in London, June 2005.

²⁴ Tomorrow’s Roads: Safer for Everyone.

²⁵ A Review of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement for the British Parking Association, 2005.

20. Despite the frustration of some drivers, we believe the vast majority of parking notices are issued legitimately. Living Streets urges the Government, and local authorities, to stand their ground and ensure that parking regulations are enforced. Despite the furore, there is widespread “silent” support for restrictions on traffic and for improvements in the quality of streets:

- The 2004 ALG Survey of Londoners found that 67% of Londoners thought that action against illegal parking in London should remain the same or get stronger, while 75% said the same or more action should be taken against people illegally using bus lanes.
- A survey by MORI, *Physical Capital Liveability in 2005*, found that “road and pavement repairs” was the third biggest issue that people reported as needing improvement in their local area, and “low levels of traffic congestion” was the seventh.

21. We also support the retention of fines by local authorities, as long as that money is used to improve streets and public spaces for everyone, and a proportion is spent on improving the pavement infrastructure, which has been sadly neglected. Much of the damage done to pavements is as a consequence of pavement parking—it seems only just that the bill for this should rest with those who are parking illegally. We doubt whether some of the most innovative improvement schemes for pedestrians—for example, the Boulevard Project in Camden—would happen were it not for the additional revenue raised through parking enforcement.

22. “How the money is spent” provides an opportunity for local authorities to work with communities to win support for parking controls as part of wider measures to improve neighbourhoods. Living Streets recommends that councils pool the income and hypothecate it to street and public space improvements—according to need based on deprivation indices and casualty rates rather than connected to the wards where the money was raised—and that communities have a say in how that money is spent. Improvements like the introduction of 20 mph zones, wider pavements, provision of children’s play facilities, tree-planting, free public toilets, more benches and litter bins, and ground-level pedestrian crossings would be appropriate.

23. We would like to see the possibility explored of parking attendants taking on a range of responsibilities. They could be the eyes and ears of the council on the street. They could also be responsible for reporting pot-holes, broken paving slabs, abandoned cars, litter, and other street issues. They could be trained in the powers of the new Clean Neighbourhoods Act and be given the power to issue Penalty Charge Notices for dropping litter, dog fouling, etc.

IMPROVEMENTS TO PARKING ENFORCEMENT

24. Living Streets would propose two changes to the current situation:

i. *Speed up the process of parking decriminalisation.*

25. Living Streets does not believe that the police are the best agency to carry out standard parking enforcement. Not surprisingly, police forces see parking as a very low priority. Parking is an integral part of transport planning, and its operation should thus be a duty of local authorities. Local authorities are best placed to integrate parking policy with other transport and neighbourhood policies, and to respond to local need. At present, 135 applications for decriminalisation have been approved outside of London. We would like a deadline set by when parking will have been decriminalised across the whole of England and Wales.

ii. *Pavement parking should become a parking offence, in all areas except where it is specifically allowed.*

26. This would bring the rest of the country into line with London, and would help to ensure that the needs of pedestrians are adequately addressed. Pavement parking is a huge problem in all parts of the country except London. It causes damage to paving and grass verges, and is a serious problem for pedestrians—particularly blind and disabled pedestrians. In London, prohibition of parking on footways was introduced under the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1974. Streets can be exempt from these footway parking regulations (for example, because they are too narrow or pavements are very wide). As a consequence, in general, pavement parking is not a serious issue in London. The situation outside of London is the reverse—pavement parking is not a specific offence unless there are double yellow lines, or unless specific traffic regulation orders have been applied. The result is that pavement parking is a huge issue in many parts of the country.

CONCLUSION

27. Parking space is a limited resource, and its allocation will therefore be highly controversial. It is unsurprising many local authority councillors report that many people get more upset about parking than virtually any other issue. However, effective parking restrictions are an essential component of more walkable streets. They are therefore important in delivering a range of government objectives including

increases in the exercise levels for adults and children; reductions in the levels of obesity and coronary heart disease; promotion of active travel and reduction in car dependency; and cleaner, safer, greener neighbourhoods.

Tom Franklin
Chief Executive

Witnesses: **Mr Mike Link**, Assistant Head of Highways and Transport, West Sussex County Council, Institution of Highways and Transportation, **Mr John Elliott**, Secretary to TAG Transportation Committee, **Mr Seamus Adams**, Assistant Director of Transportation, London Borough of Hackney, Technical Advisers Group, and **Mr Tom Franklin**, Chief Executive, Living Streets, gave evidence.

Q141 Chairman: Good afternoon, gentlemen. The last should be first and the first last, so can I say I am delighted to see you here. Could I ask you to identify yourselves.

Mr Link: I am Mike Link representing the Institution of Highways and Transportation.

Mr Elliott: I am John Elliott representing the Technical Advisors Group of local government.

Mr Adams: Seamus Adams, Assistant Director of Transportation for the London Borough of Hackney.

Mr Franklin: I am the Chief Executive of the national charity Living Streets.

Q142 Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. I am able to go straight to questions, am I, or did anyone want to say anything? No? Fine. Can I ask you all, are the links being made between parking policy, traffic management and street management?

Mr Link: Not strongly enough would be the Institution's opinion. I think the recognition that parking is one of the building blocks is in fact insufficiently recognised. There was reference earlier to the fact that it is enshrined in local transport plans, the requirement for it. That is actually weakened in the second round of local transport plans, which is regrettable.

Q143 Chairman: Weakened?

Mr Link: Yes.

Q144 Chairman: Have you got clear evidence of that?

Mr Link: My understanding is that it is no longer a requirement of the second round of local transport plans.

Q145 Chairman: Well, now we do have an immediate difference of view.

Mr Link: In any event, there is very little emphasis placed upon it by Government through the Department for Transport. Their eyes now seem to be focused on Transport Innovation Funds and road charging, and the like, and yet for the vast majority of local authorities for many years to come parking management will represent a very valuable tool in managing traffic and making transport more sustainable and there is a danger that it will be overlooked. So the Institution would not agree with earlier comments that there is sufficient integration of parking strategies into transport policy at a local level.

Q146 Chairman: That is interesting. Can I ask you, Mr Elliott, you have suggested there should be leadership on explaining the reasons for parking control, but who should that come from?

Mr Elliott: I think it needs to come from central government first. To reiterate some of the things, there is not enough emphasis on parking control. For 95% of the time a vehicle is stationary. Far more attention is given to the time it is moving than the time it is stationary in Government policy and at all levels.

Q147 Chairman: So you do not really think that either the Government or local authorities give sufficient attention to the consultation with the residents and the businesses?

Mr Link: I would not like to suggest on behalf of the Institution that local authorities do not give attention to those things when they are introducing schemes.

Q148 Chairman: No, but I was just wondering if you thought there was sufficient requirement on councils to take note of the demands of their local residents?

Mr Link: I believe there is. Without wishing to advertise, the Institution produced this document earlier in the year. I was on the working group.

Q149 Chairman: It is a very good document. I spent my August reading it. I just did decide halfway through August I was a sad person!

Mr Link: Well, that makes two of us! To a large extent, we felt we were making the best of a bad job. It is so difficult to do what you are suggesting in the current circumstances. The policy lead from DfT is insufficient. The signing, as we heard earlier, is a disaster area. Police enforcement in most of the country has been non-existent for years, leading to parking regulations being ignored. Local authorities are coming in and in many cases re-establishing controls. Quite often the motives for doing that become confused. You have quite rightly identified that whilst some authorities might not set a target for income, once a budget forecast is made it is as good as a target and the original objectives for introducing schemes, which are about traffic management, free-flow and turnover, are often lost. If I may say so, the preponderance of thought given to enforcement and making that effective and fair ignores the reasons why the schemes were introduced. I think somebody said earlier the key thing is compliance and yet nowhere do we see performance being measured in terms of the compliance which is being achieved, the original objective for the scheme. I think to a certain