

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

WPL Advice Note 2 – Nottingham City Council’s WPL: Description and impacts of the scheme

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1) Nottingham Characteristics

1.1. Nottingham City is a unitary authority of approx. 330,000 inhabitants, while the Greater Nottingham area comprises some 750,000 people. It is a Core City, with a student population of over 37,000¹.

1.2. Nottingham City Council started operating a WPL scheme in 2012, the first of its kind in Europe, covering the whole City Council administrative area. This has been successful both in achieving the desired outcomes and in the ease and smoothness of operation².

2) Background

2.1. The main justification for the Nottingham WPL scheme was congestion management - by increasing the costs of commuting and improving public transport alternatives. During the WPL preparation period (2000-2012), congestion in Nottingham was mainly experienced Monday to Friday at peak times – in other words it was due to commuter cars. Although significant work had been carried out with employers on travel plans, this issue was proving intractable without additional incentives for commuters to change modes³.

2.2. The City Council considered that a step-change to local public transport alongside financial disincentives would create the changes needed. Consequently the WPL proposal was developed alongside the development of Lines 2 and 3 of the NET (Nottingham Express Transit) tram network.

2.3. The proposals were strongly objected to by employers and the Chamber of Commerce. The Council worked alongside the employers, looking at what options there were and what public transport improvements needed to be made. Although the objections were still made, considerable progress was made in gaining agreement on the overall transport strategy to be followed⁴.

3) Scheme Description

3.1. The Nottingham WPL scheme is covered by legislation in the Transport Act 2000⁵, the Workplace Parking Levy (England) Regulations 2009⁶ and the Nottingham Workplace Parking Levy Scheme Order 2008⁷.

¹ <https://nottinghaminsight.org.uk/population/>

² <https://bettertransport.org.uk/blog/better-transport/winning-policy-nottinghams-workplace-parking-levy>

³ <https://bettertransport.org.uk/blog/better-transport/winning-policy-nottinghams-workplace-parking-levy>

⁴ <https://bettertransport.org.uk/blog/better-transport/winning-policy-nottinghams-workplace-parking-levy>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/38/contents>



3.2. There are approximately 25,000 liable spaces⁸ in fewer than 500 liable workplaces (out of the total of nearly 3,000 workplaces in the city).⁹

3.3. Nottingham City Council included the following exemptions and 100% discounts in the WPL scheme:

- Small businesses with 10 or fewer liable parking places (included both for policy reasons, to support small businesses and pragmatism, to avoid enforcement issues with a large number of micro businesses)
- Blue Badge holder parking places
- Front-line NHS
- Occasional business visitors
- Motorbikes
- Fleet and delivery vehicles¹⁰

3.4. The WPL charge started at £288 p.a. per liable space and was increased each year by inflation and was also subject to a three-year accelerator¹¹. The charge is £415 p.a. per liable space in 2019/20¹².

3.5. The WPL scheme now raises approximately £10m p.a., which is spent on Lines 2 and 3 of the NET tram network; the City Council's subsidised bus system (LinkBuses, now all electric); and the refurbishment of the main railway station in the city¹³.

3.6. During the life of the scheme, Nottingham City Council expects to raise £12m p.a.

4) Scheme implementation

4.1. Details of the operation of the Nottingham scheme are in the Scheme Order and Nottingham Employers Handbook.¹⁴ The Council has simplified operational details, to make the whole experience easier for employers, and officers provide a support service.

4.2. All employers in the city have to license their car parking annually but only the larger employers actually have to pay a charge. The licensing system is a simple online form. Liable spaces are self-declared by the employer and then checked against existing knowledge.

4.3. Licences are provided for a one-year period or less. If circumstances change, the licence can be amended.

⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2009/2085/contents/made>

⁷ <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/closed/workplaceparkinglevy/decisionletter.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.wvf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-12/nottingham%20case%20study%20-%20Workplace%20parking%20levy.pdf>

⁹ http://www.historictownsforum.org/files/documents/presentations/winchester_09/Tom_Henderson.pdf

¹⁰ <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/closed/workplaceparkinglevy/decisionletter.pdf>

¹¹ <https://bettertransport.org.uk/blog/better-transport/why-other-cities-should-copy-nottinghams-revolutionary-parking-levy>

¹² <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/information-for-residents/transport-parking-and-streets/parking-and-permits/workplace-parking-levy>

¹³ <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/information-for-residents/transport-parking-and-streets/parking-and-permits/workplace-parking-levy>

¹⁴ https://secure.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/wpl/common/Employer_handbook.pdf



- 4.4. Officers have a right of access to premises and enforcement is done on a non-confrontational and helpful basis. If there is a discrepancy between what is licensed and what has been recorded, this is discussed with the employer and normally a resolution is reached. So far, no penalty charge notices have been served, but if and when they are, the employer has the same right of appeal as any other PCN served on a highway.
- 4.5. PCNs could be served for persistent non-compliance (i.e. failure to have a WPL licence or breach of licence conditions). Nottingham's PCN charge is for 50% of the annual charge per unlicensed place for each day a contravention occurs. There are also two criminal offences, intentionally providing false information and obstructing an officer's powers of entry, which are prosecuted in the Magistrates or Crown Courts.
- 4.6. Business support services are also provided to encourage employers to manage their parking and to implement travel plans. The number of employers with travel plans has doubled since 2012 – one third of larger employers now have travel plans¹⁵.

5) Travel demand and mode choice impacts

- 5.1. Evidence on the specific impact of WPL on travel demand is extremely difficult to identify and it was always expected in Nottingham that the overall impact of the levy by itself would not be significant. But when measured as part of the wider strategy then the impact can be discerned. For example, in Nottingham the public transport share in the AM peak rose in Autumn 2015 to over 40% for the first time¹⁶.
- 5.2. WPL affects travel demand and mode choice in the following ways:
- If the employer pays the levy, they have an incentive to reduce the number of parking spaces they provide. Nottingham has found that liable parking numbers reduced by 25% initially and then levelled out¹⁷.
 - If the employee pays the levy, they have a financial disincentive to drive to work. Nottingham has a relatively low level of charge and it is not thought that this on its own has a significant effect. 8 out of the 10 largest employers now pass the levy charge on to employees – covering 53% of liable spaces¹⁸.
 - The public transport improvements paid for by the levy create better alternatives to the car. This is known to be the most significant impact on mode choice, with traffic in Nottingham City having declined 9% since 2004. 1,270 workplaces are served by the tram (about 40%) and 55,000 employees use it to commute to work¹⁹.
 - Reducing car parking demand leads to redevelopment potential on brownfield sites, which reduces demand on greenfield sites which are normally more difficult to serve by sustainable modes. This has been very important for some large employers such as the two universities²⁰.
- 5.3. There is no evidence of any significant negative economic impact in Nottingham²¹.

¹⁵ <https://www.fleetnews.co.uk/fleet-management/workplace-parking-levies>

¹⁶ <https://www.fleetnews.co.uk/fleet-management/workplace-parking-levies>

¹⁷ <https://www.fleetnews.co.uk/fleet-management/workplace-parking-levies>

¹⁸ <https://www.fleetnews.co.uk/fleet-management/workplace-parking-levies>

¹⁹ <https://www.thetram.net/about-phase-two.aspx/>

²⁰ <https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/workplace-parking-levy-answer-cities-transport-congestion-problems/>

²¹ <https://www.lgcplus.com/idea-exchange/how-nottingham-created-the-uks-first-workplace-parking-levy/7022862.article>



- 5.4. There is no evidence of the impact on air quality although Nottingham has recently demonstrated that current measures including cleaner buses and taxis, largely funded by or complementary to WPL, will take it under national limits for air pollution.²²
- 5.5. Nottingham City Council recently gave evidence on the scheme and its impacts to the Scottish Parliament, as part of its consideration of the Transport (Scotland) Bill²³. This sets out in some detail a description of the scheme and how it was developed, and a summary of the evaluation undertaken.

²² <https://www.fleetnews.co.uk/fleet-management/workplace-parking-levies>

²³ <https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/111886.aspx>

