

Highways Committee

20th February 2024

SEAHAM OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES

Parking & Waiting Restrictions, Traffic Regulation Order 2024

Ordinary Decision/Key Decision No.



Report of Corporate Management Team

Amy Harhoff Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy & Growth

Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Economy, and Growth.

Electoral division(s) affected:

Seaham / Dawdon

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise Members of objections received to the consultation concerning proposed changes to the Off-Street Parking Places Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in six coastal car parks within Seaham.
- 1.2 To request that members consider the objections made during the informal and formal consultation period.
- 1.3 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Members are asked to decide, in principle only, whether the TRO should be made, which will then guide the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth in the exercise of delegated decision making. The final decision is therefore one for the Corporate Director, under delegated powers.

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 Strategic Corporate Management Team (CMT) approved a report in September 2023 which included proposals to introduce parking controls in Seaham. The measures proposed will address the availability of parking space to encourage the use of alternative, more sustainable

transport modes, as well as generating a financial contribution, to the ongoing management and maintenance costs of the car parks, from the end user.

2.2 The County Council consider that there is a need for a revised parking strategy that recognises that the availability of spaces together with the price point is the major determinant of modal shift. The objective is to develop a strategy that recognises the difference between work and leisure trips and adopts measures that seek to achieve a balance between the needs of residents to park, access to local employment and local retail and service providers, the need to reduce trips by conventional cars, and the requirement to address the funding deficit in managing and maintaining parking facilities.

2.3 With the above in mind, it is proposed that pay and display parking (Monday – Sunday, 8am-6pm) and terms & conditions be introduced within the six car parks listed below within Seaham.

- Seaham Hall Beach
- Vane Tempest
- Terrace Green
- Seaham Marina
- Dock Top
- Noses Point

2.4 Officers have determined that the changes listed below would be of benefit in terms of facilitating the turnover of vehicles in the identified locations. It is therefore proposed to introduce a new Seaham Off-Street Parking Places (Parking and Waiting Restrictions) Traffic Regulation Order to allow the identified changes to be implemented.

2.5 All Local Members and Durham Constabulary have been consulted on this proposal.

2.6 Consultation Period:

	From	To
Statutory Consultees	20-10-23	10-11-23
Informal Consultation	23-10-23	13-11-23
Formal Consultation	07-12-23	28-12-23

The informal consultation exercise for this proposal took the form of an online questionnaire which invited comments on the proposed amendments.

3 Recommendation(s)

3.1 Committee is recommended to:

Endorse the proposal, in principle, to introduce the Seaham Off-Street Parking Places (Parking and Waiting Restrictions) Traffic Regulation Order 2024, with the final decision to be made by the Corporate Director under delegated powers.

4 Proposal, Objections & Responses

4.1 It is proposed that Pay and Display parking (Monday – Sunday, 8am-6pm) and Terms & Conditions be introduced at:

- Seaham Hall Beach
- Vane Tempest
- Terrace Green
- Seaham Marina
- Dock Top
- Noses Point

4.2 Proposal Background

Durham County Council currently charge for on and off-street parking in numerous locations across the County where demand for parking space outstrips the available capacity.

All off-street parking in Seaham is currently free and there are no designated maximum lengths of stay in car parks adjacent to the coast.

The area is recognised as having a high demand for parking and the Council has looked to tailor its approach to parking outlined within this proposal accordingly. It is anticipated that the proposed measures will promote the efficient use of car parks at this location and address the growing management and maintenance costs.

Within the parking sector, 85% occupancy is considered to be the figure whereby operational capacity has been reached within a parking area. Beyond this level of usage people find some difficulty locating a vacant space and either continuously circulate the car park, queue within the car park, or leave to go to another destination. This affects future decision making by visitors and could deter them from returning to the area at a later date. With this in mind, the County Council therefore monitor their parking assets and amend restrictions and tariffs where necessary to manage occupancy, increase turnover and increase the expectation of a space being available for visitors.

It is also important to note that these proposed measures also tie in with the County Council’s long term environmental objectives. Durham County Council declared a climate emergency in February 2019, and it is expected that these changes will assist in the delivery of the Council’s Climate Change Strategy by reducing emissions and encouraging modal shift.

It is therefore proposed a charge of £1/hour, £3/all day be introduced pay between Monday – Sunday, 8am-6pm within the listed car parks.

Transport emissions accounts for 33% of all emissions in County Durham. Free or cheap parking makes car travel a more attractive option when residents are deciding by which mode of transport to travel. By incentivising people to drive on these journeys, this increases both congestion and transport emissions.

Government guidance says that local authority parking enforcement should be self-financing and that authorities need to bear in mind that if their scheme is not self-financing, then they need to be certain that they can afford to pay for it from within existing funding. The Secretary of State does not expect either national or local taxpayers to meet any deficit.

Income from parking is therefore ringfenced to provide the service and maintain facilities to a good standard. Any surplus from parking enforcement activities, must be used in accordance with the legislative restrictions in Section 55 of the RTRA 1984.

4.3 Statutory Consultation:

Consultation dates	Expressions in favour	Expressions against
20/10/23 to 10/11/23	0	7

4.4 Informal Consultation:

A questionnaire was hosted online to invite comments from residents and visitors to the area where changes are proposed.

Total Properties consulted	Number in favour	Number opposed
N/A	53	2614

4.5 Formal Consultation:

30 notices were posted and maintained on site across the affected areas and a formal advert was placed on the County Council's website as well as in East Durham Life. The proposals were also provided in Seaham and Murton Library for the public to view them.

Consultation dates	Expressions in favour	Expressions against
07/12/23 to 28/12/23	0	27

4.6 **Summarised objections & responses:**

Owing to the scale of the consultation exercise undertaken for this proposal the objections have been summarised into categories and are listed below:

4.7 **Objection Reason 1:**

"These changes will have a negative effect on businesses within the area".

1120 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.8 DCC Response:

- Within the parking sector 85% occupancy is considered to be the figure whereby operational capacity of a parking area has been reached. Beyond this level of usage people find some difficulty locating a vacant space and either continuously circulate the car park, queue within the car park, or leave to go to another destination. This affects future decision making whereby people choose to go to a destination where there is an expectation of easily finding a space. By effectively managing available parking space through the introduction of pay and display parking, we should help visitors access Seaham and make trips more attractive, encouraging future visits.
- Pay and Display parking is typically introduced in town centre locations where commuters occupy spaces that ideally would be used by visitors.
- The introduction of pay and display parking is intended to support the commercial viability of town centres and attractions by increasing parking availability for visitors and therefore increasing footfall.
- In the simplest form of illustration, if a space turns over 5 times a day, and the occupants of each vehicle spend £10 in the local economy:

= £50 per space per day

= £18,100 per space per annum (362 days excluding public holidays)

- Whilst visitors to facilities such as local care homes and playgroups noted that parking charges would massively inconvenience their visits to such places, raising the suggestion as to whether the first hour could be free, such visitors could still park for free in any of the parking bays and car parks not affected by this scheme.

4.9 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.10 Objection Reason 2:

“These changes will make me / others visit the area less”.

1009 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.11 DCC Response:

- Charging for parking helps regulate the demand for parking spaces, preventing overuse, and ensuring a fair distribution of available spots. This can be particularly important in busy areas, such as Seaham, where free parking can lead to congestion, limited availability, and difficulties for both visitors and local businesses.
- There will still be a number of car parks away from the immediate seafront that will be free to park in for visitors.
- A number of residents noted that they often call into town when running errands or using local businesses/services and, charges would deter them from doing this. Whilst a number of these respondents will be encouraged to use other, more sustainable modes, which is one of the aims of the proposal, others could continue to do this whilst using one of the many remaining free car parking areas within the town.
- Suggestions were received relating to the introduction of a disc parking system within the town. Such schemes are used in other areas of the UK, but it is confirmed that there is no plan to introduce them within Seaham at this time. Parking surveys will be undertaken within the town should pay and display be introduced to ascertain whether further measures such as permit parking are required.
- Seasonal charging was also suggested with respondents stating that pay and display should only be applicable in the busier, warmer months of the year. Whilst there are numerous ways to manage parking and an endless

combination of tariff arrangements and exemptions the parking management proposals are for Pay and Display parking which apply over the full year in line with Pay and Display car parks elsewhere in the county/region.

- A number of responses stated that they do voluntary or charity work within the town and that they would be less likely to attend should charges be introduced. As mentioned previously it is advised that they could continue to do this whilst using one of the remaining free car parking areas within the town.
- Other responses noted that they visit the area regularly and do not believe the area gets busy enough to justify the introduction of parking charges. Following the government announcement of their “Living with Covid” plan in February 2022, the County Council arranged for a series of surveys to be carried out around the county to understand parking trends and demands. The surveys in Seaham confirmed anecdotal evidence that car parks on the heritage coast experienced capacity issues at numerous times per day, even whilst still in a national state of recovery from the pandemic.

4.12 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.13 Objection Reason 3:

“These changes will cause parked vehicles to be displaced, leading to congestion and road safety issues in the surrounding residential areas”.

465 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.14 DCC Response:

- Some level of parking displacement is unfortunately inevitable when parking controls are introduced. If the controls were introduced, we would be monitoring the nearby adjacent residential streets and areas to determine any effects. The results of this exercise would determine if additional restrictions or alternative measures such as permit parking areas would be beneficial.
- Any new measures would be introduced in line with the relevant individual policies outlined in the County Council’s Parking Policies document.
- Some residents of the town have also suggested that a permit system be introduced. The reasoning behind this suggestion appears to be two-fold with some people requesting residents be given a nominal time of free parking and others who live close to the sea front concerned that they will

not be able to park on street close to their home. Whilst a free parking period is not being considered, permits for residents may be introduced at a later date but would be dependent on the results of the surveys mentioned above.

4.15 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.16 Objection Reason 4:

“There is currently a cost-of-living crisis, and it is wrong to ask people to pay more”.

332 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.17 DCC Response:

- Parking charges only apply to those people who own a car and choose to park in a car park that has a parking tariff in force. All DCC car parks are managed and maintained at a cost. Unfortunately, the service can no longer absorb the increasing costs associated with managing and maintain these facilities, it is therefore proposed that these costs should be borne by the end user.

4.18 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.19 Objection Reason 5:

“Free parking is one of the main reasons people visit the area”.

255 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.20 DCC Response:

- There are numerous occasions over the course of a year where the coastal car parking areas within Seaham have been operating over-capacity. This has led to congestion during these periods and one purpose of these proposals is to manage demand in the busier areas when necessary.
- A number of responses mentioned volunteers using the area to offer their services to the betterment of the town. In addition to this some objections stated that there were not enough amenities to attract people to the town if free parking was removed.
- There will still be a number of car parks away from the immediate seafront that will be free to park in for visitors as well as all parking to the west of

the B1287 & A182 being free for an unlimited length of time on all days of the week.

4.21 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.22 Objection Reason 6:

“People will not use sustainable travel methods instead of their car. The sustainable travel offer in the area is inadequate”.

334 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.23 DCC Response:

- It is anticipated that the introduction of charges will assist people in making reasoned choices about their mode of transport when planning their journey.
- Transport emissions accounts for 33% of all emissions in County Durham and unfortunately free parking makes car travel a more attractive option than public transport or walking / cycling to the areas of interest.
- Some respondents were concerned that no details were provided as to what improvement were to be made to the existing sustainable travel offer supplying the town. They were also concerned that the existing cycle routes on the coast are hilly and unsafe, and people would be reluctant to use them. The County Council are committed to monitoring, reviewing and where possible improving our sustainable transport offer. Income from parking is ringfenced to provide the service and maintain facilities to a good standard. Any surplus from parking enforcement activities, must be used for transport measures including subsidising bus services.
- Objectors also noted that traditional beach trips by families involved transporting a lot of items to the area to entertain members of the group. If such visitors were reluctant to use the pay and display areas they could pick up and drop off at any place near the coast which is safe and legal before parking their vehicle in one of the many free parking spaces, a slight walking distance from the sea front.

4.24 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.25 Objection Reason 7:

“These charges will have a negative effect on peoples physical and mental health”.

209 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.26 DCC Response:

- It is recognised that many people visit the coastal areas for exercise and to maintain and improve their mental health.
- There are over 1000 designated car parking bays within Seaham which can be used by the general public. These parking areas are of mixed private and public ownership.
- These proposals will see charges added to the car parks at Seaham Hall Beach, Vane Tempest, Terrace Green, Seaham Marina, Dock Top and Noses Point. These car parks contain approximately 630 spaces. All other car parking within the town will remain free.
- The charges will only apply on the area most conveniently located for access to the coast. Free access to the area can still be obtained but will require the visitors to walk for approximately 5/10 minutes to the sea front. There are two formal zebra crossings linking the eastern and western sides of North Road / North Terrace. There are also several other crossing points available to use in the near vicinity.

4.27 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.28 **Objection Reason 8:**

“The money made from this proposal will not be reinvested within the town”.

59 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.29 DCC Response:

- Government guidance says that local authority parking enforcement should be self-financing and that authorities need to bear in mind. If their scheme is not self-financing, then they need to be certain that they can afford to pay for it from within existing funding. The Secretary of State does not expect either national or local taxpayers to meet any deficit.
- Income from parking is therefore ringfenced to provide the service and maintain facilities to a good standard. Any surplus from parking charges or enforcement activities, must be used in accordance with the legislative restrictions in Section 55 of the RTRA 1984.
- Whilst it is inevitable that the introduction of parking tariffs will be unpopular with many car owners, it should be recognised that any changes will potentially lead to a positive impact for those who rely on other modes such as public transport, walking or cycling, as any surplus

income generated from parking is ringfenced for transport measures county wide, including Seaham.

4.30 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.31 Objection Reason 9:

“These proposals will have a negative effect on workers within the town”.

26 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.32 DCC Response:

- Commuters parking within this area for prolonged periods are effectively sterilising the parking asset and ultimately reducing the opportunities for potential customers visiting the town. Each parking space is potentially a source of income for the local economy, and it is anticipated that the introduction of a charging regime will encourage a turnover of vehicles, thus maximising income potential for the local area.

4.33 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.34 Objection Reason 10:

“There isn’t enough parking within this area”.

16 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.35 DCC Response:

- There are over 1000 designated car parking bays within Seaham which can be used by the general public. These parking areas fall under a mix of private and public ownership.
- These proposals will see charges added to the car parks at Seaham Hall Beach, Vane Tempest, Terrace Green, Seaham Marina, Dock Top and Noses Point. These car parks contain approximately 630 spaces. All other car parking within the town will remain free.
- The current parking provision, with the addition of Dock Top, is considered to be adequate, and a charging regime will manage occupancy levels better in the more desirable locations.

4.36 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.37 Objection Reason 11:

“These proposals will not be cost effective”.

5 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.38 DCC Response:

- It is anticipated that these amendments will assist the service in managing and maintaining their parking asset(s) whilst managing demand within the area and assisting the environmental goals of the Authority.
- Some comments suggested that different price points and seasonal tariffs should be considered with dispensation given to those who live locally. Other comments suggested introducing a maximum time limit instead of pay and display. The management of a tiered charging regime would be confusing for the end user and incredibly difficult to manage with administration costs negating any cost savings. Such a scheme would also not enable the Council to manage parking occupancy and could lead to capacity problems within the parking area. A maximum stay could assist in managing capacity but would potentially deter people from visiting the area for a prolonged period.
- Objectors mentioned that if people had paid to park all day they would be more likely to stay longer. Survey data indicates that capacity issues do occur in these areas during busier periods. The introduction of the charging regime will assist people in making more informed decisions about the manner of their journey and the length of their stay at the destination.

4.39 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

4.40 Objection Reason 12:

No specific reason was given but those responding simply were opposed to the proposal.

536 No. of respondents mentioned this reason.

4.41 See appendix 3 for objection chart.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 Having considered the objections to the proposals, Officers remain of the view that it is necessary to introduce the proposals in order to manage parking occupancy levels and encourage sustainable transport methods as well as ensuring that the parking service is self-financing. Accordingly, it is recommended that Members agree in principle to endorse the proposal to proceed with the implementation of the Seaham Off-street Parking Places (Parking & Waiting Restrictions) Traffic Regulation Order 2024, with the final decision to be made by the Corporate Director under delegated powers.

6 Background papers

- 6.1 Correspondence and documentation in Traffic Office File:

L:\TRAFPROJ\06 REGULATION DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION\Proposed
Tariff and Duration Changes\Seaham (Off-Street)

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Imposing charges under the powers of section 35 of the 1984 Road Traffic Regulation Act, section 32 or 33(4) requires a Traffic Regulation Order.

Increases in parking charges introduced by Order can be made either by Amendment Order or, under section 35C or 46A of the 1984 Act (as appropriate), by Notice. Making changes by Notice means that objections to the changes need not be entertained, as would be the case if an amendment order was advertised. Changes can thus be made more quickly.

Finance

LTP Budget.

Consultation

Is in accordance with SI:2489.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

It is considered that there are no Equality and Diversity issues to be addressed.

Climate Change

It is considered that proposals will have a positive impact with regard to climate change by encouraging modal shift, reducing congestion and vehicle emissions in line with the Councils declared climate emergency.

Human Rights

Any interference with human rights is considered to be necessary in accordance with the law and proportionate in order to address highway safety issues.

Crime and Disorder

This TRO will allow effective management of traffic to reduce congestion and improve road safety.

Staffing

Carried out by Strategic Traffic.

Accommodation

No impact.

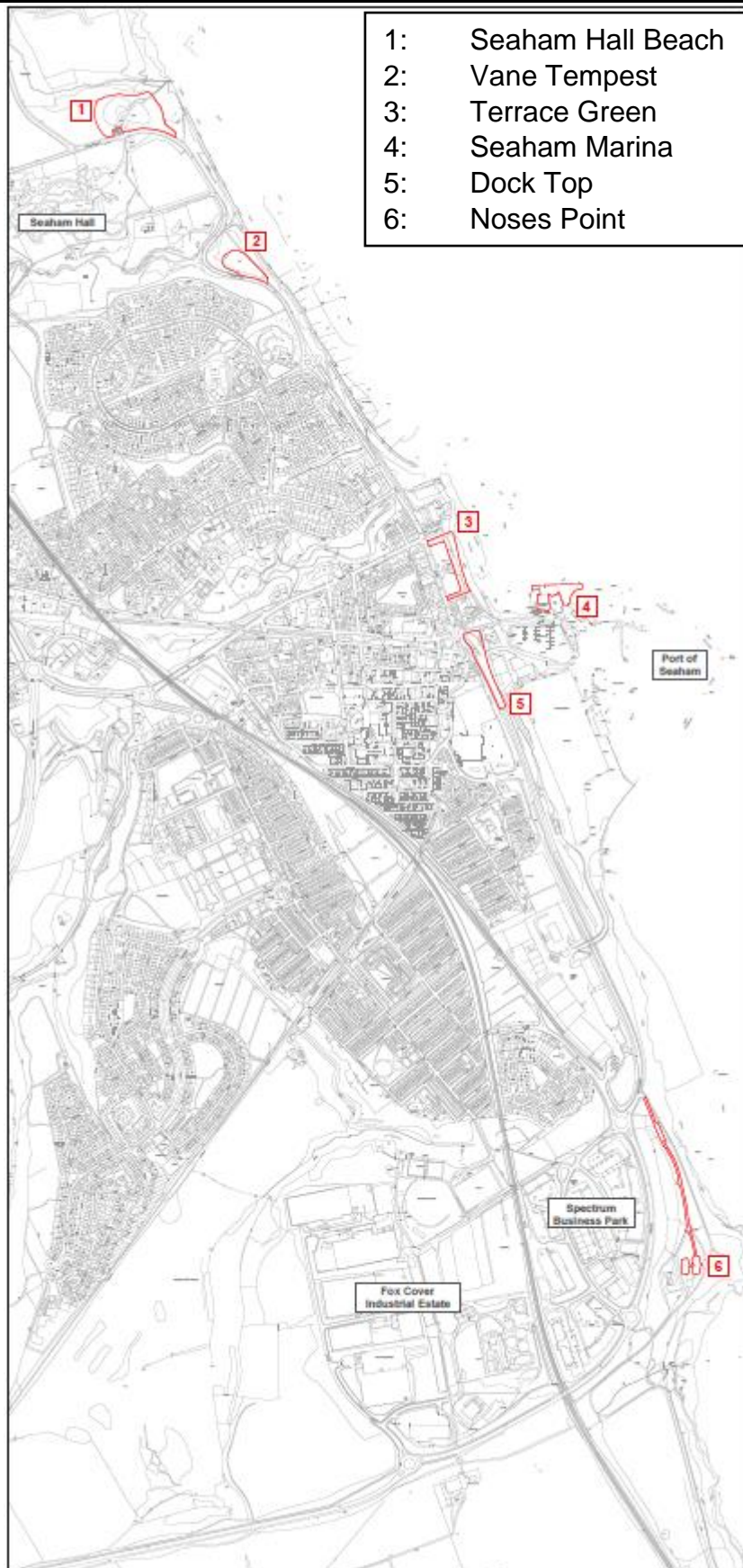
Risk

Not Applicable.

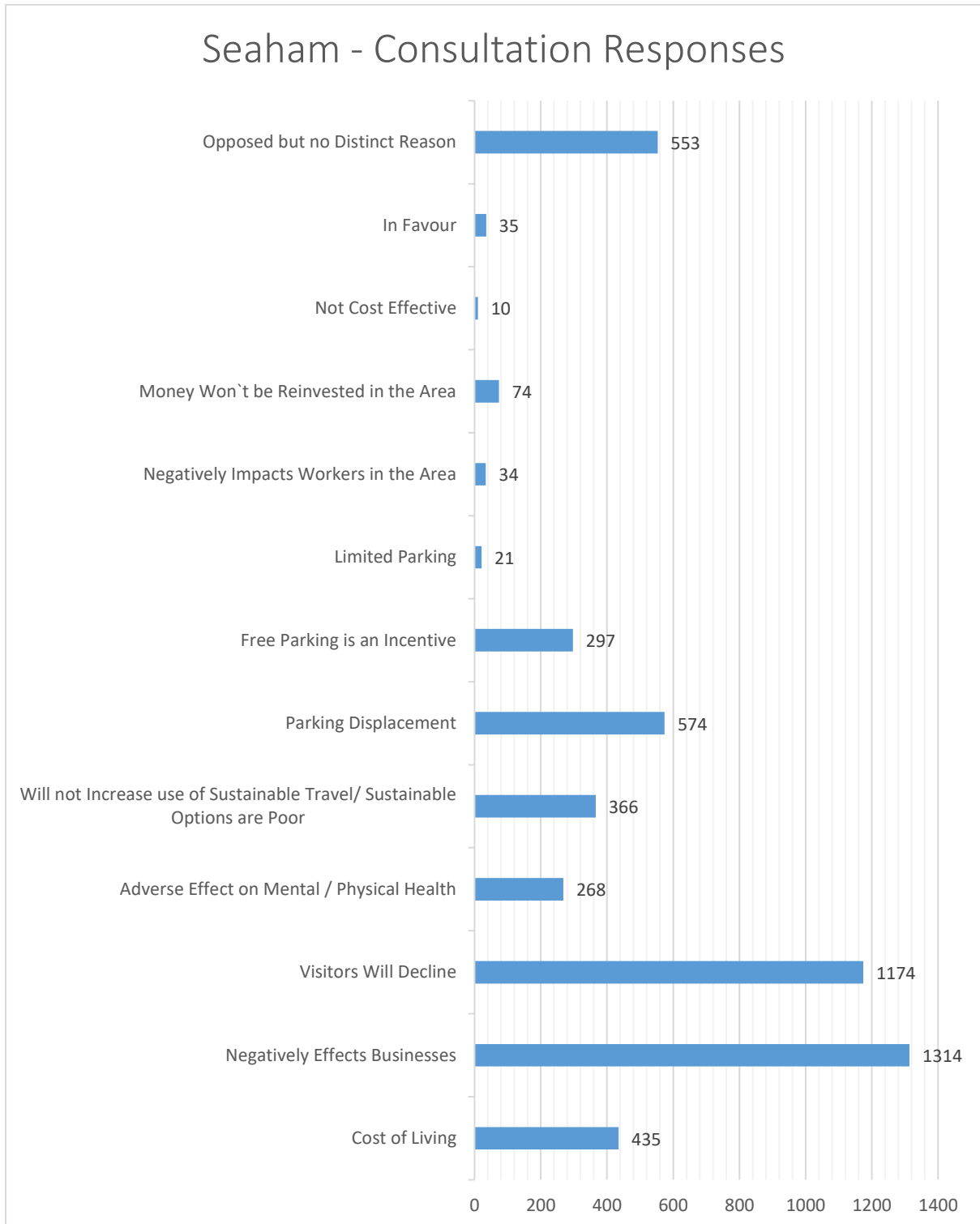
Procurement

Operations, DCC.

Appendix 2: Location of Proposals



Appendix 3: Combined Consultation Responses



**Data shown represents all responses from all stages of consultation*

Appendix 4: Statutory Consultation Responses

Durham Constabulary

From a Police perspective the consequences of charging for parking is the main consideration relative to potential displacement and obstruction rather than the charge itself.

My concern has to be that, while some will be displaced into other car parking areas, introducing charges may displace more vehicles, especially at peak times e.g. weekends and nice summer evenings, into residential areas where we already get concerns around non-residential parking and obstruction.

In consequence, it is the view that a wider consideration of parking restrictions in the Town area is undertaken to ensure key junctions/routes are covered by parking restrictions to reduce the effect of displacement from the outset for blue lights, general road safety and residents.

Local MP

To Whom It May Concern,

Subject: Response to Traffic Management Order

I am writing to express my opposition to the implementation of car parking charges at Crimdon Dene, Seaham, and East Shore Village. These charges have not been discussed with or sought from elected representatives in East Durham. I am unaware of any support for these proposals from Parish or Town Councils, County Councillors, Community Councillors, or the broader public.

In the absence of local demand, these proposals are seen as a money grab by Durham County Council to cover budget shortfalls rather than a measure to support the local economy, the community, or traffic management.

As a Member of Parliament, I have consistently raised concerns about traffic issues in and around O'Neill Drive and Peterlee Hospital which impacts on the local community. Unfortunately, there has been limited action from Durham County Council, which now seems to be due to your inability to generate revenue from addressing these concerns.

I am concerned that, instead of using traffic management orders to address local issues, Durham County Council is using them to plug financial failings, irrespective of any problems they create or harm to the local economy.

Displacement of vehicles is a significant concern. The introduction of parking charges will lead to visitors parking on residential streets or occupying free parking spaces meant for businesses like Aldi, Asda, and the Byron Shopping Centre. This would exacerbate traffic issues as visitors first check these sites for available free parking, unlike the current situation where visitors park in the most convenient location depending on the purpose of their visit.

During busy times, it's common for people to use residential streets like Dene House Road and Hawthorn Square for parking. The introduction of charges will make this behaviour an everyday occurrence in order to avoid parking charges.

I am pleased that Crimdon Dene and Seaham are increasingly popular destinations, primarily for local visitors within County Durham. The absence of parking charges and easy access to the coastline make these areas appealing. Imposing charges will eliminate the incentive for local visitors to choose Seaham and Crimdon Dene over neighbouring spots like Roker, Seaburn, and Seaton Carew. While this may raise revenues for Durham County Council, it will come at the expense of local businesses.

Visitors to the East Durham Coastline often resort to driving due to the lack of frequent and reliable public transport options. Rather than penalising these individuals, improving public transport would enhance traffic management across all communities.

Unfortunately, private operators Arriva and Go North East have failed to provide effective public transport, despite receiving Durham County Council subsidies. These failing services damage the local economy, employment and the community. Durham County Council should take a more robust approach in relation to delivering public transport rather than imposing charges on those wanting to visit our community.

The local business community has shown great resilience amidst the challenges posed by COVID, the government's economic downturn, and a cost-of-living crisis. It is surprising that the Department of Regeneration, Economy, and Growth at Durham County Council would propose a traffic management order that could harm local businesses, the economy and growth. The various parking options in Seaham cater to the diverse needs of visitors, and the introduction of parking charges is an unnecessary disruption to traffic management and the local economy.

Many businesses along the seafront benefit from short-stay visitors, especially during quieter trading times. Feedback suggests that parking charges would discourage casual visits, leading people to visit Seaham only for specific reasons. The revenue gains for Durham County Council would come at the expense of lost business revenues, potential closures and a fall in business rate revenues.

These charges contradict the goals of a department with the remit of Regeneration, Economy, and Growth at Durham County Council.

The parking challenges at Crimdon Dene have arisen due to the popularity of the Dunes Café. Rather than resorting to parking charges to curb demand, Durham County Council should seize the opportunity to build on this success by implementing development projects and proposals that will draw even more people to our region.

It's expected that there will be some level of displacement, where drivers might opt to use highway spaces for parking, and others may choose not to visit at all.

Durham County Council should explore ways to expand or establish additional parking facilities, rather than implementing measures that could restrict and hinder the number of visitors to the area.

The East Durham Coastline stands out as the only area on the North East coast that offers free parking. Instead of viewing this as a disadvantage or a potential source of revenue, Durham County Council should leverage this unique feature to promote the area and encourage more visitors.

I acknowledge the financial failings of Durham County Council. However, the most effective strategy is to take proactive steps to boost the local economy, making our communities the most appealing destinations in the North East for both visitors and businesses, raising revenues through new business rate receipts.

Attempting to extract every last penny from the community through ill-conceived parking charges is a counterproductive approach that undermines the long-term success of our local economy.

In conclusion, I have serious concerns about the management of Durham County Council, particularly the Department for Regeneration, Economy, and Growth. These traffic management orders lack support from local elected representatives and the wider community. They appear to be motivated by financial concerns rather than genuine traffic management needs.

The department should focus on delivering positive change and investment within our community, addressing issues like public transport and supporting the local economy. There should be a clear plan for growing the coastline economy and creating employment opportunities.

Our communities seek support from Durham County Council to address various concerns, and it is frustrating to see time and effort devoted to proposals that lack community support. The public deserves accountability for these proposals and should be informed who initiated them.

I oppose the imposition of parking charges, which, if implemented, would affect our communities without their consent or the support of elected representatives in East Durham.

Kind regards,

Local Members

We write in response to the consultation on the proposed introduction of car parking charges particularly in Seaham.

As regular visitors to Seaham we feel we must register our opposition to these proposals which will surely have a negative impact on businesses and local residents.

These proposals will push motorists who are looking to avoid parking charges into taking up resident parking in nearby streets as well as taking up vital spaces in local supermarkets such as Aldi and ASDA. Seaham is a booming tourist town which has battled through adversity to maintain its popularity after covid and during a cost-of-living crisis.

We fail to see how these proposals can be for the benefit of the local area and will do nothing to increase visitor number or help businesses to maintain their success or increase trade.

We wholeheartedly oppose these proposals and trust you will take these comments into consideration along with all other comments submitted during this consultation.

Kind regards,

Subject: Objection to Parking Charges Seaham,

I am writing to object to Durham County Councils proposals to introduce car parking charges at Seaham Hall Beach and the Vane tempest car park. As elected members we have never been consulted or our opinions considered regarding this outrageous proposal, I have never once received a complaint about parking issues in these locations. The main concern in relation to Seaham Hall Beach was and is camper vans stopping overnight . While signage has been in place there has never been any enforcement. If DCC wished to impose charges on these camper vans stopping over I would be supportive of such a measure.

There are no parking issues at Seaham Hall Beach or Vane Tempest, introducing parking charges is simply a means of generating revenues for Durham County Council. This will come at the expense of businesses such as North Beach Coffee Bar, which is dependent on visitors.

In relation to the Vane Tempest Car Park, visitors will instead park on residential streets, creating unnecessary problems and tension between the community and visitors. I am perplexed at why DCC would attack our local economy and undermine tourism. The comments about boosting visitors and spending are nonsensical , as there is already significant available parking across Seaham.

I have already spoken to people about these charges, with visitors advising they will go elsewhere, such as Dalton Park, Rainton Meadows or Castle Eden, free parking is a significant attraction for encouraging people to visit Seaham and distinguishes our area from Sunderland and Hartlepool.

The argument that these plans have anything to do with active travel, environment, and traffic management are disingenuous , and it is clear to everyone that these proposals are a means of creating an income stream for Durham County Council.

While I acknowledge Durham will raise revenues, this will come at the expense of business, employment and promoting Seaham as a tourist destination. There is no public or political support for these proposals and should be withdrawn.

Seaham Division

Town Council

At the recent meeting of Seaham Town Council's Planning Committee held on Tuesday, 31st October, the proposed parking charges were discussed. Town Councillors unanimously agreed to object to Durham County Council's consultation proposals to charge for car parking on Seaham's seafront. During discussions, Councillors raised concerns as to why the proposals should be opposed, these included but were not limited to:

- Monies raised will not specifically be utilised for Seaham improvements.
- Seaham has a history of free parking which is utilised by many aspects of the community.
- There is potential for local businesses to receive lower footfall with customers not wanting to pay parking charges.
- Car parking charges would negatively impact workers from the seafront bars, cafes, and shops.
- There is potential for vehicles avoiding paid zones which could cause additional pressures on local residents who live in the surrounding streets, some of which already find it difficult to park