

P-06-1409 Cease all further planning for road charging in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 10 Mehefin 2024
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Reference: SR24/8458-1

Petition Number: P-06-1409

Petition title: Cease all further planning for road charging in Wales.

Text of petition: The National transport plan 2022-2027 indicates the Welsh government are planning to introduce road charging in Wales. We the Welsh public do not support such a strategy and would like the Welsh government to cease all further planning for such a strategy.

1. Background

The introduction of road user charging as tool to increase modal shift away from private cars has been discussed extensively. The [Wales Transport Strategy](#) commits to developing a “fair and equitable road user charging” framework with the [National Transport Delivery Plan](#) (NTDP) giving a timescale of 2022-2026 for this work.



The Welsh Government previously commissioned an [independent review of road user charging in Wales](#), which considered the case for and against.

In its 2020 report, '[Covid-19 Recovery: Renewing the Transport System](#)', Campaign for Better Transport calls for “new sources of raising revenue such as workplace parking levies and road use charges to support the shift to sustainable transport”. More recently, the Centre for Cities 2023 report on [Understanding transport in Wales' cities](#) recommends the use of a congestion charge or workplace parking levy in Cardiff, and a workplace parking levy in Swansea, Newport and Wrexham to encourage modal shift.

Welsh Government powers

The Welsh Government currently has powers under the [Transport Act 2000](#) (the 2000 Act) to introduce charging schemes on the [trunk road and motorway network](#) in very limited circumstances. [The Environment \(Air Quality and Soundscapes\) \(Wales\) Act](#) (the Act), passed [by the Senedd](#) in November 2023 amends the 2000 Act to enable schemes to be introduced for the purpose of reducing or limiting air pollution.

The [Explanatory Memorandum](#) (the EM) to the Act also outlines the Welsh Government's intention to commence relevant provisions under the 2000 Act to enable local authorities (either by themselves, or in a regional partnership) to fully implement charging schemes on local roads.

Clean Air Zones

The EM refers to the powers being used to create charging Clean Air Zones (CAZs) where drivers of certain vehicles could be charged for entering a defined zone. During the [stage four debate on the Act](#), the then Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS stated:

...any such schemes would provide a measure of last resort to tackle localised air-quality issues ... Such zones will only be introduced where evidence makes a sufficiently compelling case for schemes to address persistent air pollution problems, and where other means have not been sufficient to deliver compliance.

There are currently [seven CAZs in England](#) and four Low Emission Zones (LEZs) (where access to a certain area is restricted for the most polluting vehicles) [in Scotland](#).

Most breaches of statutory air quality limits within the UK are a result of roadside NO₂, 80% of which comes from road transport. The burden of poor air in the UK is estimated to be the equivalent of between 29,000 and 43,000 deaths per year.

In 2018, the Welsh Government was taken to court for breaches of NO₂ and has subsequently introduced 50mph speed limits at five sites on the trunk road and motorway network. It's previously been reported in the media that CAZs could be introduced at two of these sites (the M4 in Newport and the A740 in Pontypridd) if the reduced speed limit does not lower pollution.

Plans in Cardiff

There are plans in Cardiff to consider the introduction of a road user payment scheme. Cardiff Council says it “wants to look at a range of schemes including, but not limited to, road user payments, congestion zones, clean air zones and workplace parking levies”. It suggests any such scheme could be implemented from around 2027.

Plans for road user charging were initially proposed in the Council's 2020 Transport White Paper. The proposals prompted the Welsh Government to commission it's independent review of road user charging discussed earlier.

2. Welsh Government action

In his letter to the Chair dated 10 May 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport, Ken Skates MS says the Welsh Government “have no plans to introduce road user charging on the strategic trunk road network”.

Although a matter for local authorities, the Cabinet Secretary does not refer to the potential introduction of road user charging on local roads.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The use of road user charging has been discussed in the Senedd on many occasions, including during scrutiny of the *Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act* as discussed above.

In November 2023 Andrew R.T. Davies MS asked whether the Welsh Government had plans to adopt any of the Centre for Cities report recommendations (outlined earlier in this brief). The Welsh Government responded it had “no plans to take

forward its recommendations on congestion charging, road user charging, speed limits for buses or workplace parking levies”.

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