



Says...

# KEEP TRADE LOCAL

FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES

## Parking

*Policies for sustainable communities*





## The Keep Trade Local Campaign

Small shops are struggling to survive because of local, regional and national government policies, together with the failure of the competition authorities to deal with the aggressive policies of supermarkets.

The loss of the UK's independent retailers has far reaching socio-economic and environmental implications for the whole community. 42% of English towns and villages no longer have a shop of any kind<sup>1</sup>. By 2010 many local communities will have no shops or services.

The Keep Trade Local campaign was launched in March 2008 and has since been taken up by local communities across the UK. In addition to its grassroots campaign activities, the FSB is gathering signatures to the Keep Trade Local petition at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/keeptradelocal/> which calls for the Prime Minister to secure the future of small shops across the UK and safeguard the choice and competition that people expect in the market place.

This is the first in a series of documents which highlight the policy areas where the FSB believes that local, national and regional government policies are undermining the competitiveness of the local high street.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Nightmare on every street' Report by NIIRTA (Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association) 2008

# Parking

## Introduction

*Businesses in towns with insufficient car parking lose customers to other destinations. Studies demonstrate that the quality of and access to parking provision within a five minute walk of main shopping streets has a significant impact on store performance<sup>2</sup>.*

Independent retailers in town centres are the engines of local economies and parking policy must take account of the needs of small businesses if town centres are to thrive. Businesses rely on the movement of goods and people and on their ability to stop at their desired destination. Parking is vital therefore, not just for business owners and their employees, but also for deliveries and customers.

Small market towns and their outlying rural communities are hit particularly hard by the imposition of parking charges. In these car dependent communities, free access to the town centre is essential not only for the purposes of shopping but also for social interaction.

The dependence of independent retailers on sensible parking policies is being undermined by local councils who treat parking as a means of generating revenue as opposed to a way of managing traffic and benefitting the local community. Local authorities are said to have made £1.6 billion from public parking charges and fines in 2005, up from £628 million in 1997<sup>3</sup>. The Federation of Small Businesses believes that local authorities need a new attitude to parking provision - parking should be seen as a vital service not as a short term revenue grab.

Too many town centres across the country bear the scars of poorly thought out parking policy. The dramatic decline of Paisley town centre in Scotland is testament to how detrimental the failure to base parking provision on local circumstances can be. Yet the success of FSB campaigning in small towns like Harleston, in South Norfolk, shows what can be achieved when local pressure is put on politicians to recognise that parking is an essential element for successful local economies.

Parking provision in town centres should be seen as a service that is bespoke, smart and a fundamental part of an area's transport strategy if we are going to keep trade local.

### **Key recommendations:**

- *Local authorities should view parking as an essential service and not as a short term revenue grab*
- *Parking policy should be seen as an integral part of transport strategy with local authorities including it in their Local Transport Plans*
- *Parking policy must be tailored to the individual locality with the necessary balance and adaptability to reflect the needs of the individual locality*
- *Where appropriate alternative parking strategies such as 'park & ride' schemes should be considered as well as the innovative use of real time charging structures*

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<sup>2</sup> Alliance Boots, Car Parking – A Retailer's View

<sup>3</sup> Federation of Master Builders



# 1

## Parking policy must be seen as a fundamental part of transport policy if our town centres are to survive

### Key facts:

- *Car ownership is predicted to rise by 45% by 2030<sup>4</sup>.*
- *60% of people have driven further to an out of town shopping centre because parking is easier<sup>5</sup>.*

Parking is an essential element of transport policy both at a national and local level. Parking provision can determine where we choose to live, work, shop and play. Sensible, well thought out parking policy can help build a strong and vibrant economy supported by an efficient transport system that benefits the whole community.

Joined up parking and transport strategies can benefit whole communities by making them accessible and creating economic growth. With a predicted increase in car ownership of 45% by 2030 it is essential that national and local government give greater weight to parking policies in their transport strategies.

All too often conflicting pressures such as planning guidance, pressure to raise revenue and the sale of land for development hinder the formulation of well thought out parking policies in our town centres. The lack of adequate parking provision encourages car users to shop elsewhere and threatens the viability of our high streets across the country.

The FSB believe that local authorities must include parking policy when formulating their Local Transport Plans (LTPs) with a requirement to consult with local people, businesses and other organisations.

### Case study:

The lack of adequate parking provision was one of the key reasons for the decline of Paisley town centre in Scotland. The lack of sufficient parking in the town centre, coupled with the opening of the out-of-town Braehead shopping development, has led to many retailers abandoning Paisley's high street.

<sup>4</sup> RAC Data

<sup>5</sup> RAC Data

# 2

## Parking is a service not a source of revenue

### Key facts:

- *Local authority revenue from parking charges and fines has reached almost £1.6 billion in England<sup>6</sup>.*
- *Local authorities raise £350 million surplus from parking income per year in England<sup>7</sup>.*
- *Only £29 million of capital funds was spent on parking in the UK in 2005, compared to £48 million on cycling and £75 million on pedestrian facilities<sup>8</sup>.*

The Federation of Master Builders believes that local authority revenue from parking charges and fines has reached almost £1.6 billion in England. Too many local authorities are viewing parking as a revenue raiser and not an essential element of transport policy that can immensely benefit local communities.

The Federation of Small Businesses was particularly concerned to hear the Minister responsible for Local Government<sup>9</sup> urging councils to charge more for parking services. Research shows that car drivers are highly responsive to increases in parking charges and it is therefore essential that ministers and local authorities realise that getting parking policy right is crucial for a sustainable town centre.

The FSB is concerned that evidence suggests that revenue generated from parking charges is not primarily being used by local authorities to provide improved parking provision, with the majority of it being spent on other transport areas<sup>10</sup>. The FSB believes that there should be a duty on local authorities to use the revenue generated by parking charges first and foremost to improve parking provision in their localities.

The FSB feels there should also be a requirement for local authorities to publish annual statistics on parking provision and enforcement accompanied by a breakdown on how revenue generated by parking charges is spent.

### Case study:

In spring 2008 South Norfolk Council recommended that Harleston's town centre car parks should introduce charges. The dramatic effect that the introduction of charges would have on the town centre and on local shops was all too evident to Harleston's residents. The FSB threw its weight behind a local residents' campaign to urge the district authority to rethink the introduction of charges. The campaign focused attention on how damaging these charges would be to local shops and the economic vibrancy of the town centre itself. When the case was made for the crucial relationship between parking policy and a successful town centre South Norfolk Council decided to rethink the introduction of car park charges.

<sup>6</sup> Federation of Master Builders

<sup>7</sup> Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Research

<sup>8</sup> Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Research

<sup>9</sup> John Healey MP, Local Government Minister, speech to the Local Government Association August 2008

<sup>10</sup> Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Research



**Have you  
paid and  
displayed?**



Out campaigning against increased parking charges

# 3

## Parking policy must be tailored to the individual locality

### Key facts:

- *28% of people have searched for more than 20 minutes for a parking space at their intended destination<sup>11</sup>.*
- *29% of motorists have abandoned their journeys due to the lack of available parking<sup>12</sup>.*

The key to a successful parking strategy must be to tailor policy to the individual locality. There is no one size fits all solution.

Not only should parking policy be an integrated part of Local Transport Plans (LTPs) it must be formulated on a bespoke basis. Parking policies must recognise that each town centre is unique and face differing forms of competition; parking provision must be flexible enough to meet the needs of local car users if the town centre is to remain viable.

Where charging is appropriate there needs to be a balance between free or inexpensive short term parking and more expensive long term provision in order to give car users the ability to stop and shop, using independent retailers in our town centres. Local authorities should have a 'one stop to shop' facility, coupled with adequate enforcement, in town centres that does not put car users off coming into town to shop with independent retailers. Commuters should be discouraged from occupying town centre parking all day at the expense of several short stay car using consumers.

Fresh thinking is also needed about the day time use of residential parking spaces that are often unused by their owners during the day. The FSB proposes that to maximize the use of the few 'on-street' parking bays in town centres they should be available to non-residents at appropriate times during the day via some form of pay & display system.

Along with flexibility between long/short term stay and the use of residential parking spaces in the daytime, parking provision must be adaptable between day and night use. Whilst it is the shops that attract people during the day, it is places such as theatres and restaurants that keep a town alive at night. Parking policy needs to reflect this change of use by allowing people to park closer and longer to the places they are frequenting. This change of use by night needs to be catered for if small businesses are to succeed. The appropriate mix between day and night usage would depend on the individual locality.

### Case study:

Suffolk Coastal District Council recently decided to implement car park charges based around a pay & display system in Wickham Market village centre. Residents and local businesses were opposed to such a scheme since they believed one of the key characteristics of the village centre was people feeling free to socialize and pop in and out of local shops. The implementation of charges has led to people no longer taking the time to browse through what the shops have to offer and many businesses report a loss in takings. In the space of just a few months Wickham Market's residents have noticed the vibrancy of the village diminish significantly with people no longer enjoying the community cohesion that shopping there once provided.

<sup>11</sup> RAC Data

<sup>12</sup> RAC Data

# 4

## Smarter Parking

### Key facts:

- *Car ownership is predicted to rise by 45% by 2030 whilst local authority parking provision is only predicted to increase by 30% within the same period<sup>13</sup>.*

The growing pressure on parking provision in our urban centres means that we need to explore alternative parking strategies if our high streets are to remain viable.

'Park & Ride' schemes that cater for journeys made partly by car and partly by public transport can make a significant contribution to combating road congestion in urban areas. The availability of adequate parking provision at transport interchanges such as railway and bus stations is essential to the success of such schemes. The FSB is concerned that the lack of adequate parking for such schemes is limiting the growth of integrated transport schemes.

The FSB also believes that using the latest technology such as sat nav systems to provide info on where parking facilities are situated, directions to them and real time available capacity would also significantly reduce congestion.

But above all where some form of parking charge is needed there is real scope for innovative thinking in real time charging structures. Westminster Council in London has recently introduced a radical charging system that reflects the need for balance and adaptability that is so crucial if parking provision is going to help keep trade local.

### Case study:

Westminster Council is introducing a new pricing scheme based on easyJet-style pricing, whereby tickets are sold at flexible prices depending on the number of available spaces. Unlike booking flights, the price to park is advertised by a digital sign at the entrance barrier of the car park. Motorists are charged as little as £4.80 for a whole day of parking because the authority hopes to have at least 30% more cars parked. When the car park is empty, the lowest hourly rate will be charged (as low as 20p per hour). As the car park fills up, the hourly rate increases. There is a minimum charge of 1 hour, and all stays will be rounded up to the nearest hour for pricing purposes. The hourly rate shown when you enter the car park is the rate you will pay for the entire duration of your stay, irrespective of how the rate changes during the time you are parked in the car park, or your length of stay.

<sup>13</sup> RAC Data

## How can you help Keep Trade Local?

This campaign can only succeed if people like YOU get involved.

The Keep Trade Local campaign was inspired by FSB members, adopted by members at annual conference in March 2008, and is now being delivered by members in local communities across the country.

The campaign seeks to unite communities, businesses and residents associations across the country that find themselves under threat from the range of problems currently driving small independent retailers out of our high streets.



Says...

**KEEP TRADE  
LOCAL**

### *Things you can do to make a difference:*

- Write to your local MP ensuring that they understand the problems small businesses are facing
- Write to your local newspaper
- Sign the Keep Trade Local petition: <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/keeptradelocal/>
- Join your FSB's Keep Trade Local network
- Ensure that FSB posters and campaign materials are in the windows of small shops on your local high street
- Run a local campaign in your branch/region

### *And last but not least,*

- Shop local and use your local businesses – if we don't use our local shops and tradespeople we will lose them

Keep Trade Local has already been endorsed by leading political figures from across the political spectrum. It has achieved celebrity endorsement and has struck a chord with people up and down the UK.

We now need your support to carry the campaign forward. Our local communities deserve nothing less.

We will follow up this document with more information on each campaigning area.

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For more information about the campaign please contact Aviva Bresky: [aviva.bresky@fsb.org.uk](mailto:aviva.bresky@fsb.org.uk)

ISBN Number 978-0-906779-84-2

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*Printed on recycled paper. Published September 2008*