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Motorists support residents' parking schemes, despite realising they just shift the problem elsewhere

Residents' parking schemes – an increasingly common sight in out towns and cities – are creating a 'parking paradox' with nearly half of all motorists (48%) being in favour of them while six in 10 (61%) believe they just shift the problem to another area.

RAC research carried out among 1,765 motorists found there was very little opposition to residents' parking zones with only 17% of those questioned saying they were opposed to them, although – interestingly – a third (35%)

did not have an opinion on the subject either way.

There was, however, a stronger feeling that residents' parking discourages people from visiting an area for shopping and leisure purposes. Half (49%) of those surveyed felt this was a consequence, whereas a quarter (24%) did not think people were deterred from using local shops and leisure facilities.

There was also broad acceptance that in some locations, residents' parking makes it difficult for commuters to park for work with 46% believing this to be the case, while only 23% said they didn't think it affected those who go to work by car.

But when asked whether commuters should be able to use spaces vacated by residents, there was a strength of feeling that this should not be the case with half (52%) disagreeing in contrast to one in five (20%) who are happy for this to take place.

The RAC research did, however, reveal a very common misapprehension around how local authorities use the money collected from the issuing of residents' parking permits.

The vast majority (77%) wrongly believe the fees are simply another form of general local taxation and that little of the revenue is reinvested in road maintenance and development, with only 14% of those questioned thinking this was how the money was used. Asked how such income should be used, seven in 10 (70%) said they would like to see it spent on maintaining and developing roads.

Contrary to the views of those surveyed, a landmark high court judgement now prevents councils using parking charges as a way of raising revenue. In 2013 residents of the north London borough of Barnet successfully challenged their council's sharp increase in parking permit charges from £40 to £100 and vouchers for visitors from £1 to £4.

The council had put up permit costs under the 1984 Road Traffic Regulation Act, but the court ruled that this was not a fiscal measure and did not authorise the authority to use its powers to charge local residents for parking in order to raise surplus revenue for other transport purposes.

Freedom of Information request

Despite local authorities not being able to use parking revenue as a general form of taxation, an RAC Freedom of Information request has revealed that councils' revenues from residents' parking schemes range from a few thousand pounds a year to nearly £3m in the case of the London Borough of Lambeth, while others have also seen massive increases in the revenue collected in the last four years.

In London, the Borough of Haringey saw a 90% revenue rise from 2010-2011 to 2014-2015 from £1,029,240 to £1,958,319 having upped the number of schemes from 15 to 29 in that time period. Ealing was not far behind with an 84% increase from £938,988 to £1,730,063, from its 38 schemes.

Outside of London, Cambridgeshire County Council recorded an 80% rise in revenue from £254,328 to £458,387, while Carmarthenshire County Council in Wales brought in 70% more revenue – £31,820 to £53,935.

'Domino effect'

RAC spokesman Simon Williams said: "Parking is one of the most emotive motoring subjects, and residents' parking is probably the most polarising subject of all depending, of course, on where you live.

"Residents without such schemes are often angered when they can't park near their homes due to the influx of commuters, shoppers and leisure visitors, but many are also annoyed that they have to pay the council for the privilege of being able to park close to their own house or flat.

"Some commuters on the other hand find it difficult to understand why they shouldn't be able to park in a residential street for the time they're at work, knowing that they'll be gone before most residents return home from work. What can also happen as more schemes are introduced is a domino effect where commuters end up trying to park in the next nearest location to their workplace, shifting the parking problem to another area.

"While people clearly have very different opinions of residents' parking zones, local authorities need to take a common sense approach over their use and implementation."

Notes to Editors

About the RAC

With more than eight million members, the RAC is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's roadside assistance, insurance, buying a used car, vehicle inspections and checks, legal services or up-to-the-minute traffic and travel information – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK motorists at a national level, including advancing levels of road safety, supporting the needs of young drivers and voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring. The RAC's annual Report on Motoring – first published in 1989 – provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check RAC Fuel Watch or follow #racfuelwatch on Twitter. This is a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump. RAC Fuel Watch analyses how prices changed through the previous month and compares the most recent prices with those from three, six and 12 months before.

Key facts:

- RAC patrols fix four out of five vehicles at the roadside and on average within 30 minutes
- RAC vans carry more than 500 parts and tools to get members' vehicles going again
- 92% of members would recommend RAC Rescue to their friends and family

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