

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Transport (Scotland) Bill: Workplace Parking Levy

Key themes arising from the online survey

Introduction

On Friday 10 May 2019, John Finnie MSP introduced a series of amendments to the Transport (Scotland) Bill that would allow Scottish local authorities to introduce a workplace parking levy (WPL), if they think it appropriate.

The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee launched an online survey that day, which offered a convenient way for people to make their views known to the Committee about the WPL proposals within very tight timescales. The survey asked respondents whether they supported or opposed the proposed introduction of the WPL and to briefly explain the reasoning behind their answer. The survey was open for responses until Monday 20 May 2019. This briefing highlights the key themes emerging from the survey responses.

Understanding this Analysis

There are several issues that should be considered when reading this analysis:

- **Respondents were self-selecting:** This survey did not seek views on the WPL from a representative sample of the Scottish population, as happens in public opinion polling. This means that the results reported in this analysis are unlikely to reflect the true distribution of opinions on the WPL held by individuals and organisations across Scotland and should not be read as such.
- **Complexity:** The proposed introduction of a WPL would involve amendments to a complex system of legislation. This complexity may have acted as a barrier to responses from individuals and organisations that do not have access to technical expertise. SPICe [produced a blog](#) on the proposals, but this was viewed by less than a quarter of survey respondents.
- **Stakeholders:** The WPL proposals are of interest to a wide range of stakeholders, with often competing priorities and views. Unanimity of views on the possible introduction of the WPL was always unlikely, which is reflected in the analysis.
- **Timescales:** Respondents had a very limited time, just 10 days, to complete the survey – which may have limited the number of responses and the level of detail supplied. In addition, the time available to SPICe to analyse the large number of responses was extremely short and has limited the scope of this analysis.

What are “key themes”?

In addition to presenting a graphical summary of responses to the survey questions, this analysis highlights key issues and concerns about the WPL proposals raised by multiple respondents to the online survey. It is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of every issue raised, but to outline matters of concern to several survey respondents.

It is worth noting that this is only one strand of evidence gathering on the WPL proposals being undertaken by the Committee, with views also being gathered through written submissions and oral evidence sessions.

Who responded?

A total of 4598 responses were received, 98.25% of which were submitted by individuals. A more detailed breakdown of responses by category of respondent is set out in the table below.

Category of respondent	Number of responses
Individual	4491
Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)	17
Business	50
Public transport operator	2
Local authority	2
Other public sector	2
Political party	1

The NGO category includes a range of bodies, principally local and national campaign groups and several membership organisations and professional bodies.

Support for the WPL broken down by category of respondent

The survey asked “Should Scottish local authorities have the power to introduce a workplace parking levy within their area?”. Responses to this question, broken down by category of respondent, were:

- **Individuals:** 58.94% of individuals who responded to the survey supported the introduction of the WPL, while 41.06% were opposed.
- **Businesses:** 80% of businesses that responded to the survey were opposed to the introduction of the WPL, while 20% were in favour¹.

¹ This figure has been calculated to take account of the fact that representatives from one business submitted 18 individual responses, accounting for 32% of all business responses - all of which were opposed to the introduction of the WPL. These multiple responses were counted as a single company response in calculating the above figures.

- **NGOs:** 94% of NGOs that responded to the survey were in favour of the introduction of the WPL, while 6% were opposed.
- **Local authorities, other public sector bodies, public transport operators and political parties:** No separate analysis of the views expressed by local authorities, other public sector bodies, public transport operators or political parties has been produced, as the response rates were too low to provide any meaningful overview of opinions within these sectors.

Again, it must be reiterated that all the figures outlined above relate solely to the views of those who responded to the survey. They should not be read as representing the distribution of pro and anti WPL views held by individuals, businesses or NGOs across Scotland.

Views on the proposed Workplace Parking Levy

The following sections explore more detailed views on the proposed WPL, expressed by all survey respondents.

The first question asked respondents whether they supported or opposed giving Scottish local authorities the power to introduce a WPL, if they considered it appropriate. The pie-chart below shows there is a clear majority in favour of local authorities being given this power, with 58.5% in favour as opposed to 41.5% against.



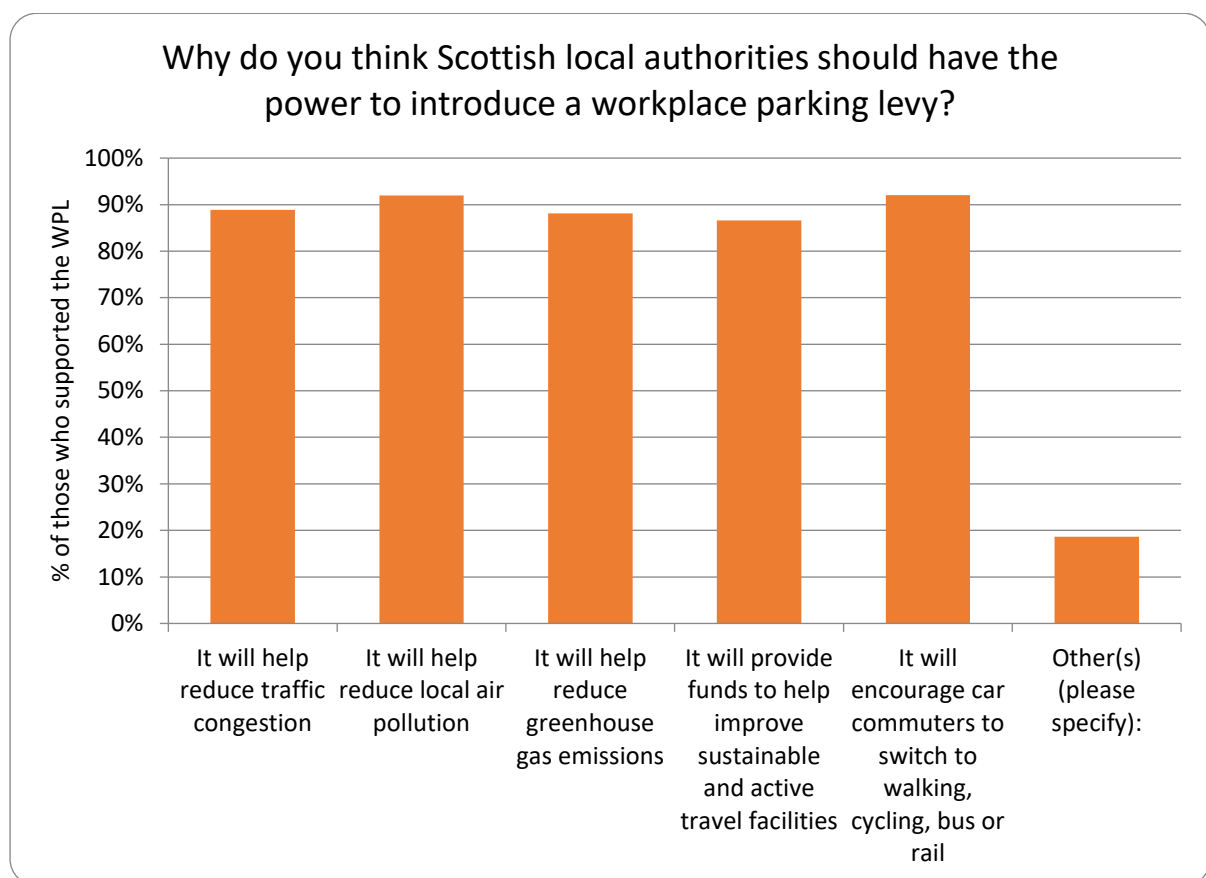
Why did respondents support giving local authorities the power to introduce a WPL?

Respondents who supported granting local authorities the power to introduce a WPL were asked why they supported this idea. They were presented with five reasons for such support that had previously been suggested by those in favour of the WPL and

asked to indicate which (if any) they thought the WPL would help deliver. The options were:

- It will help reduce traffic congestion
- It will help reduce local air pollution
- It will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- It will provide funds to help improve sustainable and active travel facilities
- It will encourage car commuters to switch to walking, cycling, bus or rail

In addition, respondents were also asked to briefly set out any additional reasons for supporting the introduction of the WPL. Support for each option is set out in the chart below:



The most popular options given under the “other” category, excluding those already listed above, include:

- It will help reduce single occupancy car trips, by encouraging car commuters to share trips or to switch from driving to walking, cycling or public transport
- It will encourage employers to incentivise active and sustainable travel for their staff
- Reductions in car commuting attributable to the WPL will help make streets safer and more pleasant, in turn encouraging yet more people to make trips on foot or by bike

- Reduced congestion attributable to the WPL will help improve the reliability of bus services
- Increased walking and cycling attributable to the WPL will help tackle the underlying causes of many physical and mental health issues, particularly obesity and physical inactivity, helping to reduce pressure on NHS resources
- It will provide greater financial autonomy for Scottish local authorities, allowing them to raise revenue locally – a power already available to local authorities in England and Wales
- Developers and property owners may consider whether large workplace car parks are necessary or could be, at least partly, converted to more productive uses.

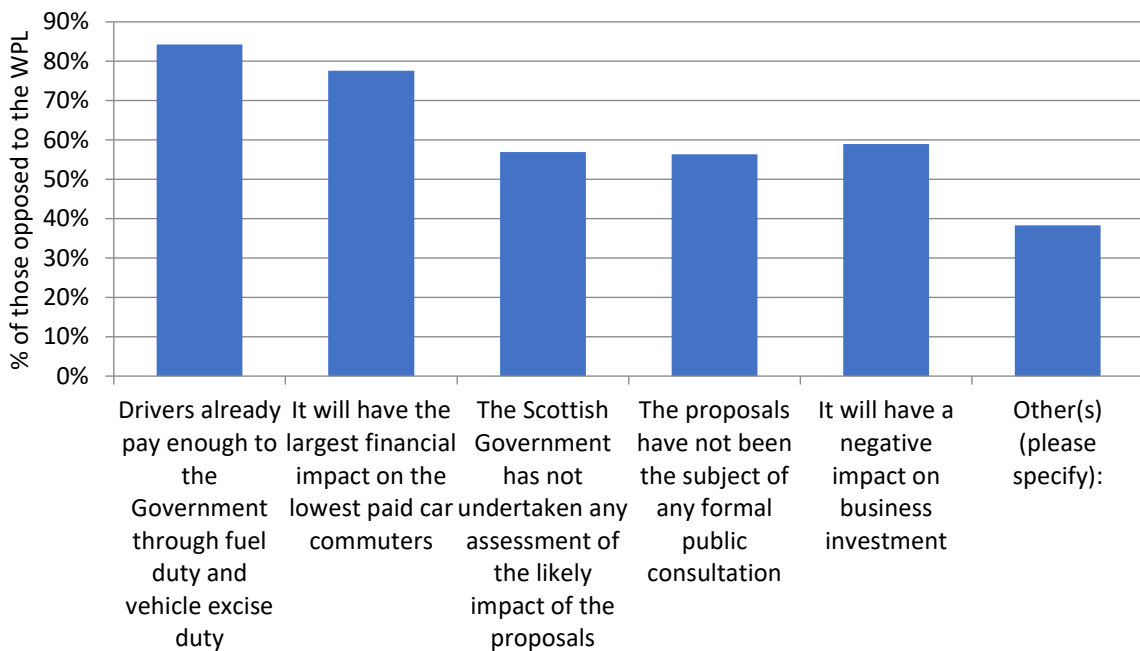
Why did respondents oppose giving local authorities the power to introduce a WPL?

Respondents who opposed granting local authorities the power to introduce a WPL were asked why they rejected this idea. They were presented with five reasons for opposing the introduction of the WPL that had previously been suggested by those against the WPL and asked to indicate which (if any) they agreed with. The options were:

- Drivers already pay enough to the Government through fuel duty and vehicle excise duty
- It will have the largest financial impact on the lowest paid car commuters
- The Scottish Government has not undertaken any assessment of the likely impact of the proposals
- The proposals have not been the subject of any formal public consultation
- It will have a negative impact on business investment

In addition, respondents were also asked to briefly set out any additional reasons for opposing the introduction of the WPL. Support for each option is set out in the chart below:

Why do you think Scottish local authorities should not have the power to introduce a workplace parking levy



The most popular options given under the “other” category, excluding those already listed above, include:

- It will penalise workers who do not have access to adequate public transport alternatives to car commuting, particularly those in rural areas and/or shift workers
- Some workers need to use a car/van as part of their job and should not be penalised for doing so
- Car commuters will avoid using workplace car parks and choose to park in residential streets that are not subject to parking controls, causing congestion and access problems for residents
- Public transport infrastructure/services and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists need to be significantly enhanced before any WPL is introduced
- Scottish workers are being subject to an increasingly unfair tax burden, of which the WPL is just the latest addition
- Workplace car parks are already subject to business rates, the WPL is effectively double taxation

Other comments

Finally, respondents were asked if there was anything else they wanted raise about the proposed WPL. 2235 comments were made, 1271 by those in favour of the WPL and 964 by those opposed to its introduction. Most comments simply reiterated views that had already been expressed in previous answers. The following section outlines the main additional issues raised in these comments.

Key issues raised by those in favour of the WPL, excluding comments already highlighted above, include:

- The Nottingham WPL has helped to reduce congestion and vehicle emissions while raising funds that have been invested in projects that have encouraged some car commuters to switch to bus, tram, walking and cycling without any detriment to the city economy
- The proposals should be extended to include other non-domestic premises, such as out-of-town shopping centres and supermarkets
- The WPL is a useful step in ensuring drivers pay the full costs of motoring, including costs associated with externalities such as noise and air pollution
- Consideration should be given to exempting shift workers, emergency service workers, teaching staff and some other public sector workers from paying the WPL

Key issues raised by those opposed to the introduction of the WPL, excluding comments already highlighted above, include:

- It does not take account of the travel needs of parents and others who must make multiple stops on journeys to and from work, or need to transport heavy or bulky equipment/goods
- It will negatively affect Scotland's economic competitiveness
- It is another example of an anti-motorist policy from the Scottish Government
- It is a regressive tax on hard working people who already contribute enough to the exchequer

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