

Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC

Assembly Member for Aberconwy

Aelod Cynulliad dros Aberconwy

Cynulliad
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Cymru

National
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Wales



Cabinet Members

Conwy County Borough Council

7th June 2016

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Dear Councillors,

I am writing with reference to concerns raised to me by a ni Chamber of Trade, regarding the proposals to introduce charges for car parking at the Plas Yn Dre car park in Llanrwst.

Whilst the Task and Finish Group have recommended that each car park must be financially self-sustainable, or supports the wider financial self-sustainability of a group of car parks in a particular area, I note that they have yet to consider in detail the local impacts of the proposed parking charges, to include how, and to what extent, these can be mitigated at each car park.

Following representations to myself, I hold real concerns about the potential impact of the introduction of parking charges at the Plas Yn Dre car park, as follows:

- During the undertaking of this Study, all who were consulted on such proposals were in opposition to introducing parking charges. This included Llanrwst Town Council and the Elected Members.
- Additionally, the initial Parking Strategy Study found that occupancy levels at this car park are 'very high...even out of season', with 50% of users surveyed stating that they would park elsewhere should charges be introduced. Whilst it is noted that the disposal of this car park would cause major displacement local at all times, and in the high season would leave the village short of parking spaces, I think it is important to consider that the introduction of charges would have potential to have a similar effect, given the numbers who have implied that they would go elsewhere to park.
- Further to this, it is noted in the Council Report on the Car Park Asset Strategy Review, that 'there is no guarantee of success' for such a scheme.
- Finally, concerns were expressed in the meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Committee of 19th April 2016, that "...the 5% rise of the Council Tax...had put an additional burden on households, and paying for parking would increase that burden."

[Cont.]

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Janet Finch-Saunders will treat in confidence any personal information which you may pass on to her, and she will normally allow her staff to see it, so that they can consult with relevant authorities in order to help and advise you. We may wish to write to you from time to time to keep you informed on issues which you may find of interest. Please let us know if you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose.

Mi wnaiff Janet Finch-Saunders cadw unrhyw wybodaeth bersonol yn gwbl gyfrinachol, ac fel arfer mi fydd rhaid iddi rannu'r wybodaeth 'efo aelodau o staff i'w galluogi nhw i ddelfio 'efo'r awdurdodau perthnasol er mwyn eich helpu a'ch cynorthwyo chi. Efallai mi fydd angen i rywun ysgrifennu atoch er mwyn darparu'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf o bwys. Gadwch wybod i ni os nad oes diddordeb gennych mewn cael eich cysylltu at y diben hwn.

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I understand that the Llanrwst Chamber of Trade have made representations to their Councillors, and numerous other local objections have been made directly to Conwy County Borough Council.

My primary purpose in writing is to highlight the above concerns, and to call on the County Councillors for the area, and the Council, to acknowledge and fully take into account these objections, and to ensure that they are conveyed in a timely manner to the Task and Finish Group, Joint Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for full consideration whilst they are looking into these proposals. Additionally, on a matter of such public interest, I feel that it is imperative that the final decision, should these recommendations be considered to be taken forward, is made by the full Council, so as to ensure that all those affected are able to be represented by their elected Councillor in the making of this decision.

Secondly, I am concerned that the agreement for an initial report from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be presented to Cabinet within four months, "in order to keep delay in any savings that could be realised to as short a period as possible" may be perceived as somewhat 'jumping the gun'. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my previous calls for the full and proper consultation of those locally affected by these proposals to be undertaken. Democracy must come first, and it is vital that those for whom we – as elected persons – serve, have their voices heard.

Thirdly, with concerns being raised by local businesses regarding the affect the introduction of parking charges will have on their viability, footfall and income, the impact of the potential loss of business rates must also be taken into consideration. In 2014-15, the Council raised £27,678,000 in NNDR, receiving a total of £34,104,000 from the national pool. The contribution to this pot from Llanrwst-based businesses will surely be considerable, given the town's size within the country area, and its busy tourist economy.

Lastly, I understand that the Council is seeking to make savings, and have fought hard over the year within the National Assembly for Wales to improve the Settlement the Council receives from the Welsh Government. However, the risk of cuts to other critical services has been put forward as justification for imposing these charges, yet I do not feel that such savings must necessarily be at the cost of any critical services. Rather, efficiencies can be found elsewhere – such as improving ways of working and reducing waste, strategies outlined under the 2013 KPMG Report - 'Welsh Local Authorities Administrative Cost Review.'

I trust these concerns will be taken into account.

Yours sincerely,



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