

Discussion Paper 5 - Climate Emergency Declaration and Action Plan

1. It seems clear that our priority of providing plentiful and affordable car parking in our towns to encourage motorists to drive to town centre locations to spend time and money in town centre businesses is based upon sound research and data published by the British Parking Association. Visitors to towns want to be confident that they will find parking close to their intended destination and they have no issue with paying a fair and reasonable tariff for using that facility.
2. It is also becoming clear however that increasingly the public is more aware of our climate emergency and this Council has now committed to an action plan to play its part by seeking to reduce our local carbon footprint. This is also a priority for this Council.
3. These two priorities are therefore in conflict.
4. There is of course a far bigger debate around the use for private vehicles generally, public transport accessibility in rural areas but alongside national policy, there is an opportunity for EDDC to begin to contribute to the infrastructure for electric vehicle charging infrastructure locally. There may also be opportunities to consider whether our tariffs are currently fit for purpose and encouraging the behaviours that we need to see emerging to help us tackle this emergency. It could easily be argued that higher tariffs in the most popular and congested car parks would not only contribute revenue towards investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure but they could also “nudge” the public behaviour towards alternatives including avoiding car journeys altogether by shopping locally and abandoning unnecessary car journeys into town centres or by choosing active or public transport alternatives where these are viable.
5. Timing of any of these measures will be important and at this stage Members are being asked for their views on a direction of travel rather than any site specific decisions.
6. My recommendation would be that there should now be consideration given to a specific budget provision for the rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. A number of options are available across the industry and these are often summarised as being on a continuum between simply leasing land to a private sector operator who will lease “x” numbers of parking bays (in carefully selected locations of their choosing of course) and over the next twenty or so years will develop and operate their own services – through to a local authority controlled business venture in which Councils invest in their own infrastructure and evolve into new areas of business (usually with a private sector partner) including sustainable power generation (through photovoltaic infrastructure), on site battery storage, electric vehicle hire and car clubs and the onward sale of electricity to residents through electric vehicle charging points and other possible outlets including leisure centres and other large energy users. The latter is of course higher risk but with potentially far better long term outcomes for residents.