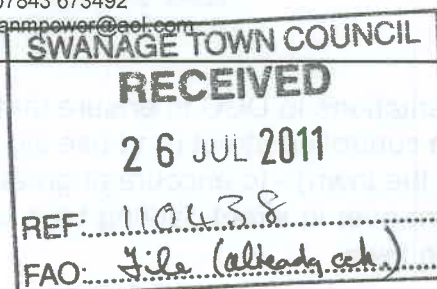




Swanage & Purbeck Hospitality Association

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**The Town Clerk
Swanage**



25th July, 2011

Dear Martin,

Car Parking

We believe that the car parking charging policy, and indeed several other policies, suffer from a distinct lack of a coherent strategy, i.e. there does not appear to be any alignment of actions with an overall vision for the future of our town and district. As a consequence it seems that some policies and actions are designed to attract people to the area while, running concurrently, there are policies designed to drive people away! The charge for parking a car is a good example: Swanage and the Isle of Purbeck are not well served by public transport and, as a result, the only sensible mode of transport for tourists is a car and, here is where the lack of alignment is well demonstrated: we invest large amounts of funds, both public and private, to attract visitors to the area, visitors who we acknowledge will need to be travelling here by car, but then they find parking arrangement for their car both difficult and extremely expensive. So much so that many threaten not to return.

We think there needs to be a complete review of the town and district councils policy towards tourism, but in the meantime we would like our views on the current proposals to be put forward to the council meeting of 1st August; I should be grateful if you would oblige, our view is as follows:

Whilst the knee-jerk reaction of many individuals is likely to be to resist the introduction of charges we believe that taken as one integral part of an overall strategy for beneficial management of car parking in the Town it may well be a sensible thing to do; partly because this is a County standardisation initiative and therefore something we at parish level are unlikely to have much influence over but, mainly, because I think that we might be able to influence parking charges in the town's car parks and it is in the balancing between all these charges that the opportunity for managing visitor stays arises.

The DCC paper posits that pay and display parking in Station and Shore roads will increase the turnover (count of) cars parking in those roads; also that more parking visits will occur in the car parks. What it does not say is that these two things mean that there will be more stopping visits to the town - which equates pretty well to the primary purpose of many of the Town Council's and of course the association's activities (get 'em in to town!). So for this alone we support the introduction of pay and display.

However it is in the wider context that greater benefits (or lesser dis-benefits) to the Town and its trading vibrancy could be realised.

At the moment charges are roughly standard across the Town's car parks. They do nothing to encourage the first time "on spec" visitor to stop and explore the town and they are harsh on evening to overnight parkers. We encourage Swanage Town Council to:



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- make representations to DCC to ensure that it is always cheaper to park in a car park than in a controlled street (and use signage to make that fact highly visible to cars entering the town) - to encourage greater use of car parks, more availability and higher turn-over in street parking bays leading to more people stopping and using shops in town
- introduce a free parking period at Victoria Avenue and Broad Street car parks. The period to be perhaps 30 minutes to an hour, enough to allow a quick look at the sea and a decision to stay longer to be taken - or for a local to walk in to a shop and pick something up. Perhaps the other charges will need flexing so that the effective take for (say) 3 hours or longer remains similar
- allow free overnight (8pm - 10am) parking (for cars only of course) in all the car parks and couple that with a cheap evening tariff - perhaps £2 from 5pm to 8pm in the large parks. This will stop parking feeling like a nasty tax on those holidaying in Swanage and should discourage fewer potential evening visitors to the town; and also alleviate some of the traffic/parking issues at the bottom end of High Street
- enforce parking charges & regulations, but with a light touch. Enforcement officers should perhaps be called something less confrontational, but more importantly should be told not to enforce minor breaches (for example a 15 minute overstay, or a few minutes before buying a ticket whilst change is obtained). If we upset visitor with pettiness they go away and do not return to the enduring dis-benefit of us all.

We might concede that street parking standardisation is inevitable and driven from elsewhere, but the active management of car parks/charges is under Council control and is exactly what ratepayers of the Town should be entitled to expect will be done for their direct benefit when possible. It is possible, though not inevitable that this might cost Swanage Town Council a little in direct revenue, but we expect that it will repay the ratepayers rather more.

Kind regards,

Alan Power, Chairman, Swanage & Purbeck Hospitality Association
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