MANAGING CONGESTION: EVALUATING THE NOTTINGHAM WORKPLACE PARKING LEVY

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Words: 7,212 + 1 table
ABSTRACT

Congestion is a significant cost to society, amounting to somewhere between 1 and 2% of GDP according to an EU-wide survey. Accordingly, in 2000 the UK government enacted legislation that enabled local authorities to introduce new policy instruments to address this - a Road User Charge and/or a Workplace Parking Levy (WPL). Interestingly however, to date only one local authority, Nottingham City Council, has decided to introduce a WPL. The WPL in Nottingham is a charge placed on employers in the city with 11 or more employee parking spaces with all the revenue hypothecated for local transport improvements. The purpose of this paper is to present the results of a post-implementation study of the Nottingham WPL. Specifically it seeks to understand the reasons why and the factors that allowed Nottingham to introduce a WPL. It aims to highlight the issues, the short term and anticipated long term impact, as well as the likelihood of a WPL being implemented by other authorities in the UK. It achieves this through a document review and thirty semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. It was found that although for some the cost of the levy is not sufficient enough to deter car use and/or the alternatives are not adequate, it is expected that some people will change travel behaviour over the life of the scheme. Thus such schemes can have a positive impact on congestion and are able to deliver many wider benefits if integrated as part of a long term strategy.
INTRODUCTION

Congestion is a significant cost to society, amounting to somewhere between 1 and 2% of national GDP according to an EU-wide survey (1). Accordingly, in 2000 the UK government enacted legislation that enabled local authorities to introduce new policy instruments to address this - a Road User Charge (RUC) and a Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) (2). Interestingly, to date only Nottingham City Council (NCC), has decided to introduce a WPL. The WPL is a charge placed on employers in the city with 11 or more employee parking spaces with all the revenue hypothecated for local transport improvements.

The purpose of this paper, is to present the results of an post-implementation study of the Nottingham WPL. Specifically it seeks to understand the reasons why and the factors that allowed Nottingham to introduce a WPL. It aims to highlight the issues, the short term and anticipated long term impact, as well as the likelihood of a WPL being implemented by other authorities in the UK.

To this end, the paper first reviews the literature relating to WPL-type schemes, followed by the method adopted, background to the Nottingham scheme and findings. Finally a discussion and conclusion are presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parking has received increased attention in recent years due to its impact on a number of policy areas. Caicedo (3) found that ‘developments in parking policy have been recognized as a crucial part of the economic and transport policy of a city as it can impact upon economic development and the competitiveness of the local economy; this is achieved through variations in the amount, type and cost of available spaces’. Similarly, IHT (4) argued that ‘parking is no longer a stand-alone issue, but has become a key aspect of both transport and land use planning...[and] must be integrated with all other aspects of urban policy’.

Marsden (5) identified that parking policies are generally introduced for three reasons. First, to regenerate an area either by making parking more attractive; or by reducing parking and using the land for other purposes. Second, parking policies can be used to raise revenue. Third, they can be used to control car use (and hence mitigate congestion) as ‘parking can be a useful instrument in managing travel demand and taming congestion in crowded downtowns’ (6).

However, one significant limitation encountered by officers using parking to control congestion is that in many areas a significant proportion of parking spaces lie outside of their direct control. In particular so-called private non-residential (PNR) spaces – ie at the workplace – which account for around 43% of available spaces in urban areas based on a sample of 17 major UK cities (7).

Various means have been applied to address this problem. Enoch and Ison (8) noted examples whereby cities seek to cap the number of such spaces (eg Boston, MA); require potential car owners to prove they own a parking space to park their new vehicle (eg Japan); link parking provision for new developments to planning permission being granted; and a cash-out program where employers are required to offer staff the cash equivalent to the employer cost of providing the parking (9). Finally there are cases of charging the providers of PNR spaces which have been introduced in Australia and Singapore. Looking more closely at the limited literature available on what can be termed WPL schemes it is useful to briefly review some of the core elements here.

Based on examples in Singapore and Australia (Sydney, Perth and Melbourne), the reasons identified for their introduction include to manage congestion, encourage public transport use, provide revenue to subsidise and fund public transport investment, to improve air quality, and to encourage (shoppers/visitors) or discourage (commuters) certain type of users (8, 10, 11, 12).
Although parking levies have been identified to be easier to implement than RUC (8), parking policies are still seen to be politically sensitive (5). However opposition to parking levies can be minimised if they are simple to understand, include targeted exemptions and if the link between the introduction of the levy and the public transport improvements are heavily promoted (8).

An issue following implementation can be a lack of impact on car use from vehicles avoiding the central areas (8) or if the levy is not borne by the drivers which can greatly reduce the effectiveness of the levy as a demand management tool (13). Furthermore there is a concern for the ‘beggar my neighbour’ effect as employers may be ‘encouraged to re-locate either to out-of-town locations, or to neighbouring towns that do not impose the levy to cut costs’ and is suggested to be of a greater concern in the UK due to the geographical proximity of neighbouring cities compared to Australia (8).

With regard to the impact of parking levies a common theme is the importance of the hypothecation of all or a portion of the revenue to subsidise or fund public transport improvements (8, 13). The impact on congestion however is mixed. Two examples believe parking levies have had no or little impact on car use (8, 14) whilst others have seen ‘a significant reduction in the number of people travelling to the city by car’ (12) as well as a 10% reduction in the number of parking spaces in the first year (11). This reduction in parking spaces has led to an increase in the availability of public short stay parking which although unpopular with commuters has led to an increase in visitors and shoppers (11). Furthermore despite a 10 fold increase in the cost per space in Perth over the past 12 years, the number of licensed spaces has remained relatively stable (13).

**METHOD**

First a documentary review was conducted which investigated the political and institutional background behind the introduction of the WPL in Nottingham. Second a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to understand the WPL. The reason semi-structured interviews were used was that they allow the same themes and topics to be explored in a way that is best for each individual interview and allows any new topics that are identified during the interview to be explored further (15).

In the event, the thirty interviewees were selected on the basis that they were key stakeholders given their connection to the WPL in Nottingham. Specifically this included five Councillors; eleven Officers; nine Employers; and five Others, two Business Lobbying Organisations, a Trade Union representative, a Property Developer and a member of a Regional Partnership Organisation.

The interviews were carried out between February and April 2012 and all respondents were asked the same set of questions and were recorded to allow transcription. The results were then analysed using Nvivo (interview analysis software) to identify themes based on the research questions that were proposed. These were –

1. Why was a WPL introduced?
2. What issues are related to implementation?
3. What issues were there following the introduction of the WPL?
4. What will the impact of the WPL be in Nottingham?
5. What is the likelihood another local authority will introduce a WPL?

**THE CASE OF NOTTINGHAM**

Nottingham is the largest city in the East Midlands region of the UK and is home to two major universities and many large employers such as Boots Chemists, Experian, Capital One and Speedo. Nottingham ‘is one of the eight core cities recognised by the government as the most important drivers of the national economy outside of London...[and] overall the Greater Nottingham economy is worth more than £10.7 ($17.2) billion per annum and more than 300,000 people work in the city’ (16).

The population of the City of Nottingham is 306,700 although the Nottingham-Travel-To-Work Area
is estimated at 805,800 (17). In 2006, 55% of the jobs in the city were occupied by people who reside outside the City boundary (18).

Nottingham is approximately 110 miles north of London. Local transport is well served as ‘Greater Nottingham’s record on transport issues is one of the best in the UK’ (16). ‘Nottingham has a proven track record of innovative working…and was recently named by the Campaign for Better Transport as Britain’s least car-dependent city’ (19). Public transport carries 76 million passengers each year and since 2003 the number of passengers has increased 13% and unlike most other English cities, Nottingham has experienced a renaissance in bus use reflecting the high standards of quality. Congestion levels have been held steady for the past six years’ (20).

Although congestion levels have been held steady, in 2007 Atkins Consultants estimated the cost of congestion on a regional level to be around £935 ($1,504) million per annum of which ‘around £430 ($691) million was incurred by business users’ (21). Specifically for the Nottingham conurbation, it has been estimated that congestion costs the city’s economy £167 ($268) million per annum (21). This is partly caused by the fact that the city does not currently have divided highway links to the major national trunk routes which places pressure on the two-lane roads at peak times. Due to the estimated growth in traffic in Nottingham, Deas (22) identified a transport gap between the demand placed on the network and the transport supply which means that there is a requirement for a ‘significant and extensive expansion of the public transport network’ and a need to constrain traffic growth (23).

In 2004, Nottingham opened the Nottingham Express Transit (NET) Line 1 and it has been regarded as a success with 10 million passenger journeys each year and a 20% increase in peak period public transport usage since it opened (24). For this reason, there is strong support to build on the success of NET Line 1 and extend the tram network and subsequently ease congestion on the road network (25).

The political structure of Nottingham is rare in that the Greater Nottingham conurbation is split between different councils. The City has been governed by a unitary local authority since 1998 where the same political party have remained in power. The area surrounding the City is governed by a two-tier County Council where responsibilities are shared with district councils. This coupled with different electoral cycles can make the political and legislative co-operation difficult particularly when trying to introduce urban area wide measures that spans multiple political boundaries (23).

THE NOTTINGHAM WPL

Despite initial interest from 35 local authorities nationally (in both WPL and RUC) (26), by 2005 NCC was the only local authority that remained serious on implementing a levy when it commissioned a report to assess the impact of a WPL in Nottingham. Following this report, NCC carried out a public consultation and examination into the scheme and developed a business case. Following this NCC outlined that they wanted to introduce a WPL as ‘the benefits it will make possible will help to control the problems associated with traffic congestion, while promoting and encouraging the use of more sustainable, environmentally friendly forms of transport’ (27). Furthermore, as the completion of NET Phase Two was seen to be vital for Nottingham, not being able to secure the local funding, which the WPL would provide, created ‘a very real risk of (government) funds being allocated elsewhere’ (28). In July 2009 NCC had the WPL legal order passed by the UK government and following a delay, due to consideration for the economic climate, charging for the scheme began in April 2012.

From October 2011 all employers were required to licence the number of employee (as well as regular business visitors, pupils and students) parking places that they provided with all employers initially receiving a 100% discount. Following this, only employers with 11 or more employee parking places were required to pay an annual charge of £288 ($442) per space from April 2012; although employers do have the option to pass the charge on to their employees. The cost is set to increase each year until it reaches £381($584) in 2015 and has been estimated to generate £14 million ($21 million) each year (29).The revenue will be used to provide ‘high quality sustainable public transport’ that are ‘realistic
alternatives’ to the private car and will consist of extending the tram, improving bus services and modernising the train station (30). Exemptions apply to all emergency services as well as employers with 10 or less employee parking spaces; employers are able to reduce parking available to employees in order to reduce their bill.

WHY WAS A WPL INTRODUCED?

As policies are usually implemented to address a perceived problem, it is important to understand the transport situation that existed prior to the introduction of the WPL. All but one of the respondents highlighted congestion as a problem which was primarily associated with the peak periods.

‘There is an issue with congestion mainly in the peak periods and we are talking about commuter congestion and not congestion related to leisure users or shopping trips.’

Officer

However more than two-thirds [21] of the respondents felt that a good public transport service was provided in Nottingham. Despite this, although a good service was recognised many officers highlighted the need to work hard to maintain and build on this success.

‘We have got a good transport system and a good reputation for transport in Nottingham and it really is trying to build on that.’

Officer

Respondents identified four reasons as to why the WPL had been introduced which were to raise revenue for the council [24]; an attempt to manage congestion [9]; to improve the economic future of the city [7]; and to make an environmental improvement [4]. It is worth noting that the increased number of responses compared to the number of respondents is because some respondents suggested multiple reasons. Officers highlighted the greatest number of reasons which outlines how NCC recognised the wider benefits of the WPL in comparison to other respondents.

The most frequent response being to raise revenue of which all but one respondent recognised was to fund transport improvements, particularly the tram.

‘I can see why the council have chosen the WPL as a way of raising the revenue because it is a very simple, cost effective way for them.’

Employer

In addition, when NCC employees were discussing the revenue raised from the WPL, the benefit of the leverage the WPL creates as well as a multiplier effect from the spend was highlighted. The leverage which is gained is because approximately a quarter of the funding for infrastructure projects in the UK needs to be found by the local authority in order for central government to provide the remainder of the capital investment. Therefore as the WPL provides the local funding, central government have provided their investment which has allowed NCC to develop two new tram lines which would have been difficult without the introduction of the WPL.

‘This gives us 25% of the total cost that is needed to introduce lines two and three of the tram but the majority comes from central government; so it gives us that leverage and local funding towards introducing the tram.’

Officer

Despite the view of respondents with respect to congestion, only nine respondents highlighted that the WPL was introduced in response to congestion. Although it was recognised as a targeted approach to reduce peak period congestion by increasing the cost of motoring, it was envisaged that the reduction in congestion would primarily be achieved through improved public transport using the revenue from the WPL.
Future prosperity of the city was also highlighted as a reason, a view exclusive to Officers and Councillors. The reasons for this view relates to the importance good transport has on stimulating economic growth as well as the view that the tram cannot be seen as a standalone transport measure but as a regeneration measure that boosts the image of the city.

‘The tram is really important for the future of the city and it is not just viewing the tram as a transport link, but it is regeneration and an image thing which brings Nottingham into the 21st century.’

Officer

Other reasons put forward include the environmental benefit of the WPL. This view stemmed from the belief that it was introduced to internalise the environmental cost of motoring in line with the ‘polluter pays principle’ and that the environmental benefit would only be attained as a secondary factor.

ISSUES RELATING TO IMPLEMENTATION

Officers particularly highlighted the difficulties that existed such as understanding the legislation, how it could be applied and determining the number of parking spaces at workplaces accurately. This was a challenge due to the novelty and the practicality of managing off-street workplace parking spaces.

In addition, Councillors and officers highlighted the benefit of discussing the parking levy with experts from Perth, Australia. This was based on the similar experiences and anticipated issues for both locations and correspondence with their Australian counterparts provided reassurance and helped shift opinions of those sceptical of the scheme in Nottingham.

‘[The parking levy leader in Perth] came to Nottingham for a few days and gave some presentations which were absolutely key to convince senior officers and politicians in the Council.’

Officer

In addition, direct support was provided via an individual who had worked on the Perth scheme and was seconded for ten months to NCC to help develop the legislation. Although there was a benefit of using the experiences from Perth, the usefulness was limited in certain areas. This is because details in the legislation were different as well as cultural and geographical differences between the UK and Australia.

‘If I could change one thing, it would be the definitions in the Transport Act 2000 and do it like the Australians did it. It would be either the people who own the property or the people who rent out the premises and not the occupiers; the owners and not the employers.’

Officer

NCC stated that a referendum was mooted but because of the complexity of the WPL and the difficulty of understanding who and what people would be voting on it was not continued with. It was perceived that people would likely want the extension to the tram and redevelopment of the railway station but would not want to pay for the WPL. The WPL was deemed to be too complex than a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’. In addition, the weighting and who could respond was seen to be difficult due to the number of different stakeholders; these included city and county residents, employers and employees. Therefore it was highlighted that consultation would be better to ascertain the views of the public.

ISSUES FOLLOWING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE WPL

The first concern raised by thirteen respondents related to the timing of the introduction of the WPL during an economic recession. The majority of these views came from employers or business organisation groups who highlighted the issue of additional cost at a time of financial difficulty. One
business highlighted that they were not prepared to pass on the cost to employees because of a potential negative impact on recruitment.

'We have to encourage new and educated talent and I wasn't prepared to let the staff pay for it. So we took a look at the business and said somebody has got to go [made redundant] and that is what we did.'

Employer

Despite this thirteen respondents recognised that the scheme was a long time in the planning, and since it had initially been delayed to accommodate the economic downturn coupled with the uncertainty of when it would end, it was recognised that essentially there is no ideal time for implementation. Furthermore four respondents recognised the importance of investing and creating jobs at a time of recession and the new infrastructure associated with the improvements could be seen to be a positive.

'Infrastructure and investment are creating jobs, precisely the things we should be doing in a recession to get the economy moving again, to get local jobs in to the area and revitalise the area.'

Officer

Concerns were also raised with regard to the use of the WPL revenue. Just over a third of respondents [11] raised an issue with how the revenue would be spent citing that the existing public transport was sufficient, and that the tram is an expensive and unaffordable improvement for the perceived return since the proposed routes were already well served by buses and is inflexible due to the fixed route. Further issues were raised by employers as it was felt that they were paying for something and receiving nothing in return as the majority of the spending was going towards the tram and some employers are not located along the proposed tram routes but are still required to contribute.

'There are not many [of our employees] that will be able to come in on the tram because of our location and it will not benefit us...this made me feel that we are contributing towards the cost of it quite heavily and yet we are not going to get any benefit from it.'

Employer

Despite this view, the spending of the revenue, particularly on the tram was seen to be a positive by half of the respondents. This is because the existing line has been a success and it was thought people are more likely to use a tram in comparison to other modes of travel most notably buses. Furthermore due to the increased capacity it reduces the issue of congestion from multiple buses on particular routes and the fixed infrastructure provides confidence that the tram will be there for the long term which encourages investment due to the perceived attractiveness. Furthermore whilst the majority of the revenue will be spent on the tram, other areas are being enhanced such as an upgrade to the railway station, bus subsidy in terms of a new green bus fleet and support for employers to introduce travel plans. Officers also highlighted that employers will benefit from the reduced congestion which is anticipated even if an individual employer does not benefit directly from the public transport improvements. Therefore it was highlighted that there is a need to ensure employers recognise the wider improvements that are being made as a result of the WPL.

'I don’t think it is a visible enough at the moment...and I don’t think businesses are getting enough feedback on how that money is being used’

Other

Although the provision of more information to employers may reduce the relatively negative perception, there are more genuine transport issues. Some employees may be required to pay the levy in a situation where there is no realistic alternative other than to drive given the location of residence/work, the timing in which the employee begins/ends work, as well as the need for a vehicle in certain types of employment. Therefore some employers/employees may be paying the levy but
will not be benefiting from the improvements. Furthermore, issues were raised in terms of the cost of public transport being too expensive for some motorists to consider changing travel behaviour.

‘In the cases where people have to travel outside public transport hours their staff have no choice and you need to have a choice of whether to say yes or no, but they couldn't come to work if they didn't pay the levy so your choice is taken away.’

Employer

The two major concerns that were raised by employers were the administrative burden it has placed on employers in the city in managing the parking at the workplace due to the difficulty of understanding who is in the car park at any one time and therefore how many spaces to licence; as well as how to manage the cost and the impact that has. This is because there are concerns in terms of the number of spaces that are required and if the cost is passed on, the impact it will have on staff recruitment and retention, deciding whether it is income related, and if it is charged daily, monthly or annually.

‘You have got people ill, on holiday, out off-site, and we do a fair amount of work round the country, so I would say we are probably over paying by about 25%…[and] if you tried to do the optimum, you would blow any sort of savings with the cost of staff.’

Employer

Due to these difficulties, there have been issues raised where despite having paid, employees have arrived at work with no parking available. Another issue associated with passing on the charge is the example where one employer had the threat of industrial action from its employees when it attempted to pass on the cost to its employees. This was eventually resolved as the employer offered to pay the charge for staff on the basis that they carried out 20 hours community work per annum.

The final issue raised related to exemptions. Although respondents generally agreed with the exemptions for emergency services, a large proportion of the respondents questioned the exemption for ten or fewer spaces especially given the fact that you pay for all eleven if you go above this threshold. The first concern was that if it is a congestion measure then regardless of the size of the car park a motorist should pay the charge if they are congesting the road network at peak periods. Further concerns were raised if you go above this threshold since it is a significant extra cost between no charge for ten spaces and the full cost of eleven spaces for one extra. Therefore many believed that in order to make it fairer all employers should receive the first ten spaces free. Despite this, it was claimed the level was set for administrative purposes to make it easier for NCC to manage.

Although employers recognised the desire for NCC to minimise the number of exemptions that were made, there were examples raised where modifications could be made to encourage changes in travel behaviour. This is because unless an employer brings in a complicated way of managing the charge, employees receive no benefit for using alternative modes for getting to work occasionally such as car sharing or cycling as the charge is a flat rate annually unless an individual changes the travel method for three consecutive months.

THE IMPACT OF THE WPL ON NOTTINGHAM

At the time when the research was undertaken, charging for the WPL had been on-going for just under a year. Therefore questions were focused on ascertaining what respondents thought the short term impact had been as well as their view on the long term impact.

In the short term fourteen respondents felt that the WPL would have a negative impact. It was said it would discourage investment due to the additional cost of being based in Nottingham compared to nearby cities. Further issues include a negative impact on congestion in the short term due to works associated with the construction of the tram which is planned to be completed by the end of 2014. There was also seen to be a knock on effect with regard to displaced parking. For example, a
Councillor from a neighbouring authority highlighted an issue with an increased number of motorists wanting to park in their authority which has meant the need to introduce stronger parking policies without alienating their own visitors. Ten respondents had a neutral view with respect to the short term impact based on it being either too early to suggest what the impact had been or that very little had changed following the WPL introduction.

Six respondents felt the WPL had had a positive short term impact. This view was exclusive to NCC employees and was for reasons such as increased public transport usage, greater awareness from the business community of how their employees travel to work because of the implementation of travel plans, as well as infrastructure investment which provides employment and stimulates the economy at a time of recession. In addition, it was stated that a large employer has recently moved in to the city with 600 employees despite the WPL being in place. Furthermore, it was stated that at a time of austerity central government have provided incentives in the form of grants to local authorities willing to invest and therefore as revenue is available from the WPL, it has meant that NCC have been able to win bids which highlights the leverage and multiplier effect the WPL revenue creates. Finally, although the revenue in Year 1 was £7.6 million ($11.6 million), Officers stated that this was only slightly below what was expected due to the staggered price increases and was not a cause for concern.

In contrast to the short term view, half of the respondents felt that the long term impact of the WPL would be positive since they believed that the WPL would have a positive impact on economic prosperity, public transport and congestion. In addition, respondents highlighted how they believed that the WPL would make Nottingham a more attractive place to live and work, which supports the claim that the tram needs to be viewed as more than simply a transport link.

‘So the fact that you’ve got a tram and excellent public transport and lots of other things will mean that it is an attractive place to come and work, invest and live. The WPL will just be a small thing and you will have a lovely city centre and trams and Nottingham will be a nice place to live, work and to be. It will be a modern city and it will be bringing it up-to-date and competing in Europe; so hopefully advantageous in the long run.’

Officer

However, eleven respondents thought the WPL would have a detrimental impact on Nottingham sending out a message that Nottingham is anti-business given the increased cost to employers compared with neighbouring cities. The reason this impact is seen to be long term is because it was viewed that businesses would begin to leave when leases expire and that the perceived impact of businesses not moving in would only start to be felt over a longer time frame.

‘I think in the medium to long term it will have a serious impact on the city as an economic location for businesses to grow and locate...[and] because we are the only city in the whole country that places this additional burden on business, then this puts us at a disadvantage.’

Officer

Another factor raised was the view that transport would actually become worse in the city following the installation of the tram. Some respondents felt that it would never be profitable particularly whilst trying to be affordable to users when compared with the cost of driving. Furthermore, concerns were raised as to the effect the tram would have on traffic flows, as well as the view that car use will actually increase due to land use changes as businesses move to the boundary of the WPL making car use more necessary.

The final view raised by four respondents was they were unsure of what impact the WPL would have in the long term because it was dependent on other factors. These factors included cost of the levy in future years, as well as externalities that may influence the scenario such as the length of the recession, and if other local authorities introduce a WPL particularly in neighbouring areas.
LIKELIHOOD OF ANOTHER UK LOCAL AUTHORITY INTRODUCING A WPL

As Nottingham is the only city thus far to introduce a WPL, a question was posed as to whether the respondents believed that other authorities would introduce a WPL. Nearly two-thirds [19] thought that other local authorities would introduce a WPL; seven believed that Nottingham would remain the only authority; and four remained unsure.

Respondents believed that other local authorities would introduce a WPL for three reasons. The first was the attraction of the revenue raised particularly at a time when local authority budgets are being constrained due to the recession.

‘Government funding is reducing year on year and you have got less money to deliver more because the standards for local authorities are going up and we are sitting on a revenue generating scheme.’

Officer

Another reason was the growing concern with respect to the environment and the view that car use is increasing to unsustainable levels which will mean that authorities will have little choice than to look at demand management measure to control congestion and to try and internalise the environmental cost. It was also stated that because Nottingham had successfully managed to introduce a WPL, the risk of introducing such a measure was now reduced and would therefore appear more attractive to other interested authorities.

Despite this response, there was a view that the WPL would not be introduced in the short term due to the current economic climate and numerous difficult conditions that need to be satisfied in order to allow a WPL to be introduced.

‘I don’t think it will happen quickly, but I think other local authorities will gradually come, but only if it suits them. You have got to have congestion, and it has got to be about commuters, and commuters have got to park in your area, you need strong political stability, a logical geographical area that you can charge in, wary of what competition exists and how easy it is for businesses to do business in that competition, and you have just got to have a firm business case.’

Officer

A number of respondents highlighted that since other authorities do not always have such a strong political majority to that of NCC, it makes it more difficult to introduce a WPL as the political control can shift following elections which can make it difficult for relatively unpopular schemes to be introduced. This political issue is emphasised further due to some councils voting cycles which mean in some instances there are new councillors every year which mean that it can be difficult to get the traction required to introduce such a scheme.

‘One of the reasons we were able to bring the WPL in is because we have had long-term political stability for many years. It has been absolutely out there and clear that this is what we were going to do for 13 years now and that has not been destabilised by successive elections whereas other cities in the main have not had that stability and some of them have more problematic electoral cycles which sometimes make it harder to do that long term thinking.’

Councillor

Finally, it is unclear as to what the impact of the WPL has been in Nottingham and until that is known, it is difficult to say if other authorities will follow suit. Furthermore which political party is in power centrally may also affect the uptake of the scheme as respondents raised issues with particular political parties not being able to be seen to support the WPL and therefore potentially not approving schemes.
DISCUSSION

Table 1 provides a comparison between parking levies based on the literature, document review and interviews. The table compares information using the research questions and highlights the significant addition to knowledge.

From the interviews it was found that NCC recognised the wider benefits that the revenue from the WPL would bring and that it was a complex measure that could not be viewed solely from a transport perspective. This is because it will have an impact on urban regeneration, land use, the environment, business support for travel plans, in addition to the improvements to the tram, bus network, railway station, and impact on congestion. Another benefit is the significant amounts of money that the WPL leverages on top of the local revenue. Without the WPL, this leverage which provides revenue for the improvements would not have been received nor would the expected multiplier effect. Therefore whilst the revenue is hypothecated for transport improvements, this does not mean the benefits are limited to transport.
### TABLE 1 Parking Levy Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
<th>Document Review</th>
<th>Summary of the Findings</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why was the WPL introduced?</strong></td>
<td>To reduce congestion through control over PNR parking; to raise revenue; to improve land use planning and integrate parking with other urban policies; improve air quality.</td>
<td>To directly reduce congestion from the charges and to raise revenue to improve alternatives to address a transport gap identified in future years.</td>
<td>To raise revenue to fund the tram extension and other transport improvements; to leverage money from central government; to reduce congestion; environmental reasons; economic prosperity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues relating to implementation</strong></td>
<td>Easier to introduce than RUC; difficult politically to introduce; need to make simple to understand; targeted exemptions; ensure link is understood between levy and improvements.</td>
<td>Timing given the economic climate; delaying created a risk of government funds being allocated elsewhere and delay benefits of the tram.</td>
<td>Difficulties of working in isolation to introduce WPL; being the first to understand and apply the legislation; understanding the amount of PNR parking; consultancy and legal costs; usefulness of consultation and who to ask; gaining reassurance from authorities with similar schemes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues following the introduction of the WPL</strong></td>
<td>Improvements need to be realised first; costs not passed on to motorists; investment in city discouraged; businesses will leave; competition from neighbouring cities.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Economic climate; use of revenue; displaced parking; benefits to all that pay; communicating the benefits; administrative burden for business; exemptions; public deeming improvements unnecessary; public transport too expensive; staff recruitment and retention.</td>
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<td><strong>Impact of the WPL</strong></td>
<td>Provides revenue for transport improvements; reduction in car use; reduction in parking spaces; increased public transport use; increased visitor / shopping parking and reduced long stay / commuter parking.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Increased public transport use; infrastructure projects; implementation of travel plans; inward investment; availability of cash to make improvements; leverage. Discouraged investment; displaced parking; congestion worsened due to infrastructure works; employers leaving the city; redundancies; administrative burden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short Term</strong></td>
<td>By 2021 in Nottingham: -20% growth in public transport trips -reduce projected car traffic growth to city centre from 15 to 8% -increase park and ride usage by 45% -2.8m less car journeys</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Economic prosperity; increased public transport use; reduced congestion; more attractive city; improved land use; multiplier effect. Reduced investment; businesses moving away; boundary effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long Term</strong></td>
<td>Relatively little impact on car use; increased levy charges in subsequent years can have minimal impact on licensed spaces.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Revenue potential and budget constraints of local authorities; congestion reduction; growing environmental concerns; reduced risk as introduced in Nottingham (no longer the first).Lack of political stability at LA level; not on central government political agenda; impact in Nottingham will act as a deterrent; long term planning and continuity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Likelihood other local authorities introduce WPL</strong></td>
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</table>
Specifically in Nottingham, it is thought that some of the issues and negative perceptions have arisen due to poor communication not outlining the full benefits as to what the WPL is delivering; a lesson identified from Perth. Despite this however, even if the benefits were communicated better, there will still be a view of unfairness towards the scheme when commuters travel outside of peak periods but are required to pay the levy as well as if congestion is not perceived as a problem. Furthermore, employers will view the scheme differently as although there is evidence of an employer recently moving in; it is not simply positive or negative for employers. Therefore although in some individual circumstances there is an equity issue, there will also be individuals that benefit disproportionately and therefore the wider impact needs to be measured rather than assessing it based on individual cases.

CONCLUSION

This paper has provided a qualitative analysis of the implementation of the WPL in Nottingham. Whilst it has provided an insight into the implementation process and the issues of the WPL in Nottingham, further research in the area is recommended with regard to quantifying the impacts on the local economy such as the impact on business as well as the impact on congestion levels.

Following initial interest it took NCC 12 years for the WPL to be introduced in Nottingham. An issue with congestion was acknowledged by the respondents particularly at peak periods and from the documentation a concern was raised if no improvements to transport were made. Furthermore, in 2004 NCC built NET Line 1 which has since been regarded as a success and there was thus a desire to build on this. To fund improvements, significant capital investment was required for the extension to the tram, of which a local contribution was necessary. This was recognised by the majority of the respondents as they highlighted that the WPL was introduced in Nottingham primarily as a revenue raiser to fund the tram extension. Although benefits such as reduced congestion, an environmental impact and urban regeneration were highlighted, the revenue for the tram was seen as the primary motive by the majority of the respondents.

Despite complex issues relating to implementation, principle and practice, NCC have successfully introduced the first WPL in the UK based on 100% compliance. In the literature, IHT (3) outlined the need for parking to be applied and integrated with all aspects of urban policy and the responses presented in this paper, provide support of the wider impacts parking policies can have. Therefore, following the successful implementation of another parking levy, it may provide increased exposure to what parking policies can achieve and lead to parking playing an increasing role in both transport and urban planning.

Although to some the cost of the levy is not sufficient enough to deter car use and/or the alternatives are not adequate, it is expected that some people will change travel behaviour over the life of the scheme. This is because if the employer pays there is a desire to reduce the amount of parking in order to reduce the cost and if the employee pays, the improved public transport coupled with the increased cost to drive will make public transport more attractive than it would be without a WPL. Therefore WPL schemes can have a positive impact on congestion and are able to deliver other benefits if integrated as part of a long term strategy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank all the interview participants who willingly gave their time and without whom this research would not have been possible.
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