

Metered Parking (MPAG) Newsletter:

Update on the CPZ and Action Required

NOTE: Please ensure you read the paragraph entitled “Elimination of democracy in Glasgow City Council” on page 3 at the end of this newsletter.

Metered Parking (MPAG) which is the only organisation of the citizens dealing specifically with Glasgow parking. MPAG recognises the urgent need to cut down daily commuter parking and the resultant pollution. It represents all aspects of the community covered by the West of Glasgow City Centre Controlled Parking Scheme (CPZ) and its periphery. MPAG is non-party-political.

We are alarmed that Glasgow City Council is again acting without regard to democratic procedures and consultations and is misrepresenting statements by organisations in order to back up its fixed financially-motivated plans.

MPAG Scottish Parliamentary Petition

Early this year two representatives of the MPAG committee presented a petition to the Scottish Parliament. We currently have a Petition being considered very seriously by The Scottish Parliamentary Petitions Committee, which is based on our experiences of Glasgow City Council's behaviour last year in regard to the CPZ. It is worded as follows:

Petition on behalf of the Metered Parking Organisation, calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to review the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 1999 to ensure that the local authority consultation in relation to traffic orders is full, meaningful and democratic.

MPAG Submission on Maladministration to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is investigating many complaints about maladministration by Glasgow city Council regarding the consultation procedures (or rather the lack in many cases) and the non-implementation of democratic decisions taken at the last meeting of the Council Committee on the CPZ last summer.

MPAG Submission to the Minister of Communities

The Minister of Communities has before him a complaint about the social injustices inflicted on our community by the CPZ, especially regarding the restrictions on visiting friends and essential carers of the housebound disabled. This has been considered and rejected as not part of the Minister's jurisdiction.

MPAG meeting with the Council Last Autumn

MPAG wrote to the Leader of The Council (Cllr Purcell) asking to meet him. However, he arranged a meeting with the senior council officials of the Roads Dept. to discuss the operation of the CPZ and at this meeting we put forward comprehensive constructive proposals to overcome problems without penalising residents. The officials agreed to get back to MPAG to discuss the merits of the proposals. In spite of requests no feedback or further discussion as to the proposals were ever received by MPAG.

MPAG Public Meeting on problems of operation of the CPZ

MPAG organised a public meeting to discuss the problems, and invited the Council officials and police who made presentations. Inter alia, there was great public concern expressed about traffic problems due to displacement (which happens when one part of the zone has a differentially late operation of the scheme (i.e. up to 10pm) and in peripheral regions generally. The police stated they did not have the manpower to deal with the extensive illegal blocking of roads caused in the periphery. After this meeting had finished, the Roads Dept. officials told MPAG committee members that they were not concerned with people or social problems (as with the infirm or housebound disabled) but merely with traffic counts.

MPAG concerns ignored

Absolutely no attention has been paid to our concerns. This was illustrated at the last public Roads & Lighting Committee meeting on the CPZ, when councillors complained extensively about the lack of any proposals to deal with the problems. MPAG has been treated with contempt.

Council using false claims of public opinion to support swingeing restrictions & charges

At the last Roads & Lighting Committee meeting some months ago, the Council proposed changes to the CPZ. The proposed impositions of full restrictions and charges up to 10pm in Sandiford and Kelvingrove were based on false statements about public support for such changes. The Council claimed that their decision was based on requests from St Vincent Crescent Area Association and Yorkhill and Kelvingrove Community Council. However, the letter sent by Tony Ownsworth of the Community Council was not seen or approved by any members of the Community Council before it was sent, and any views expressed by him were based on only a few people's comments.

Council Flouting of Democracy and ignoring representations from community representatives

At a packed EGM attended by almost 100 people from the area, the Yorkhill & Kelvingrove Community voted strongly against the extension of parking restriction hours (only half a dozen of those present supported it (i.e. about 6%.) This outcome and a number of constructive proposals were made in a letter to your department by the local Councillor, Dr Malcolm Green. These proposals have all been completely ignored by the Order being presented now.

Cllr. Malcolm Green, as acting secretary of Yorkhill and Kelvingrove Community Council, submitted a letter to Robert Booth, Head of Roads Dept., based on the outcome of the EGM. In this letter he outlined clearly a number of the main objections to the proposed new Council Order as it would affect the Kelvingrove and Sandiford areas. In particular he stated clearly that the majority of residents objected to the increased restrictions and charges up to 10pm. Only a handful of people at the meeting supported this. Also, there was overwhelming support for the elimination of the artificial barriers between the parking control areas in the CPZ. It was noted at the EGM that, in answer to a point made by Dr Chris Mason at the final CPZ decision meeting last year, and just before the vote, Tony Hughes had said that there would be overlap between regions, but this has not been actioned! It was made clear at the meeting that elimination of barriers for all areas within the CPZ would help overnight parking of late returning residents when any event caused evening congestion outside their doors: i.e. they could find a space within an adjacent region without having to jump out of bed early to shift their cars back inside their own regions. It would also help the aged and infirm who need to use their cars to traverse to other areas within the CPZ. (Use of extremely inconvenient radial public transport (in and out of the City Centre) is the only other way, unless they are wealthy enough to use a taxi.) Missing from Cllr Green's letter to the Council was the general support for provision of individual permits to housebound disabled residents for use by their carers.

Simple solutions to local parking problems in the CPZ

Any late-evening parking problems (as for some residents in Minerva Street due to evening events in the Exhibition Centre) could be eliminated by some flexibility in the road signage. In particular there could be designated "residents only 6.00pm-12.00pm" signs on the side of the road adjacent to the residential buildings, or there could be a re-institution of central parking in the very wide Minerva Street, and this could be designated "residents only 6.00pm-12.00pm". Imposition of evening charges up to 10pm unnecessarily penalises a large number of people and their visiting friends and relatives. In any case, elimination of the inter-zone barriers would help considerably.

Permits for big business

Regarding the proposed big business permits (£700pa). This is clearly a financially lucrative change which discriminates against local small shops. The Council will certainly proceed with this. We therefore suggest that business parking should (wherever possible) be in non-residential roads. A clear example of this is the large section of Minerva St. which runs up from St. Vincent Crescent to Finnieston Station. This road is devoid of cars during the day! (Maybe in this case business commuters would be encouraged to park there and use the train to the city!) It is essential for the Council to keep this allocation under control. One permit per business regardless of size might do it. If big business commuters can get permits, then this undermines the whole stated purpose of the scheme.

Elimination of democracy in Glasgow City Council.

In June of this year the Council made changes in the decision process for all service departments. They voted to eliminate the democratic Council committees, thus keeping out the public and stopping any criticism of decisions. Decisions on Council Orders (such as changes in parking controls) will be made by two men in secret (the chief official and the chief executive). This means that local democracy has been effectively killed off until the elections next May, and it means that there will be no democratic discussion or vote by councillors on the revised CPZ Order.

The existing handful of opposition Councillors have complained very strongly. Councillor John Mason protested on Thursday 29 June by occupying the Lord Provost's seat in the Council Chambers. The Council meeting had to shift to the banqueting hall. This resulted in the only publicity the change in the decision-making processes has received in the press.

The Council administration is now behaving in a blatantly undemocratic fashion so it is vital that the people of Glasgow are aware of what they are doing. This could not happen in Edinburgh! Will the people of Glasgow take it lying down?

ACTION NEEDED NOW

1. The only way the public can make their voice heard is by demonstrating and getting press coverage.
2. However, it is essential that the people send letters of objection to the CPZ changes to Robert Booth of the Roads Dept. when the Order is published on 11th August.
3. It is also important for people of the CPZ to stand together and not to be fractionated into the separate areas (as is the Council's divide-and-rule policy). Thus we should address our complaints to the CPZ as a whole and not merely our own small area, and make this clear in our letters.
4. Metered Parking will be calling another Public Meeting to decide on action and to set up specific action groups.
5. In particular it is important for us to focus protests on the Council Leader and Our Local Councillors.
