

**Notes from the  
PBN meeting with Dr Steven Jones, Director of Development PCC  
PLANED Offices, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011**

**Attending:** Dr. Steven Jones PCC, Paul Woolman PBN Chairman, Ian Norman The Havens Business Group, Gordon Barry Narberth COT, David Norcross Narberth COT, Viv Phillips Milford Haven Business Circle, Chris Ward SPAR Milford Haven, Peter Hooper Heating Engineer Tenby, Peter Kidney Heating Engineer Tenby, Angela Burns AM, Jim Price Pembroke, Mike Evans Tenby COT, Phil Whittaker Plummer Tenby, Scott Sarrionandia Plummer Tenby, Glen Bowen Electrical Contractor Kilgetty, Lesley Fisher Tenby House Hotel Tenby, John Robson Builder Tenby, Jane Howells PLANED, Kathryn Bradbury PLANED.

Paul Woolman (Chair) opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. Introductions were made around the table. Paul then outlined the issues that led to the meeting being called including the need for objective evidence of the effect of the parking changes on high street businesses. He also challenged the statement from Darren Thomas, Head of Highways and Construction, PCC that many restrictions were provided at the request of councils, public and businesses over the years. He acknowledged that this was probably true but that they were introduced in a more relaxed environment, when enforcement was minimal, often friendly and relaxed.

Paul stated that the introduction of 'hunting packs' of CPE enforcers (sometimes noted allowing the minimum allowed observation of an inactivity for 5mins before booking and fining parking infringers) changes this long established situation in a very negative way for individuals and businesses. It therefore seems eminently sensible to reduce and relax parking restrictions in the new context of CPE.

He then invited Dr. Steven Jones to make some introductory comments.

Dr Steven Jones talked about The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) review of the report into the health of the county's town centres following the suggestion that the parking changes were having a detrimental impact. The report mapped the vacant retail properties in county high streets over the last 3 years and concluded that there were actually less empty properties in 2010 despite the recession. This was 1 indicator that suggested that it was not as negative as feared.

The report also looked at the impact of introducing charges on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. Steven reminded the meeting that PCC were not the only body to own and administrate car parks. Others include Pembrokeshire National Park, Community Councils and City Councils (ST Davids) and they all have different rates.

Prior to charges being introduced, Pembrokeshire County Council commissioned a report into the predicted impact. It used economic modelling, elasticity (price V demand relationship) and looked at the vitality of the county's towns. It offered

specific recommendations on charges in individual county towns and predicted an initial negative response.

Following charges being introduced the initial evaluation concluded that there was no reduction in parking space usage, it remained static and therefore the impact of introducing charges was not negative.

He qualified this by saying that it was dangerous to draw straight line conclusions when looking at retail issues as there were other general and local trends to be considered.

General trends included

- The recession – loss of blue chip co's Woolworths, MFI etc, M&S store closures
- The exponential growth of the retail sector since the 1980's
- The rapid rise of internet shopping – the 'Amazon' effect especially for items such as music, banking etc
- VAT Increase
- Growth of supermarkets selling both food and comparison goods – 500 new stores opened across UK in 2010

Local trends include

- Opening of new shopping centre in Carmarthen – research indicate 15% shoppers are from Pembrokeshire (PCC desire to reduce leakage out of and have achieved some of this with M&S new store, but this brings issues with Haverfordwest Town Centre too)
- Narberth – the change to business rates
- Other local demographic issues –affluent greys
  - prudent pensioners
  - struggling families

Each town has specific catchments – so there are winners and losers

Overall the retail picture is more complicated than just the parking cause and effect.

A written response to the PCC's Review of the health of town centres has been requested from Chambers etc by 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011, also individual chambers have been invited to meet with PCC to discuss Civil Parking Enforcement and Parking. For Narberth this is on 11<sup>th</sup> march 2011.

Work is also being carried out to benchmark and compare with other similar towns including Llandovery, Llandeilo, Carmarthen, Lampeter, Cardigan and Newcastle Emlyn looking at vacancy rates and parking structure. This is still to be concluded.

In the medium term PCC will also be considering how they can use the results of the Complementarity Study delivered last year to WAG

This looks at the relationship between each of the settlements in the Spatial Plan and considers whether towns are working in a complimentary way, plus housing, leisure, employment, the interface between settlements.

Broadly, they do perform in a complimentary way but identified individual towns with niche issues that could be improved.  
It is being reviewed by the OSC on 24.3.11

**Paul Woolman** stated that he still felt that the changes to parking and enforcement were causing acute problems especially when CPE's were being dropped en masse in towns such as Narberth.  
He invited comments from around the table.

**Phil Whittaker (PW)** from Tenby highlighted the problem of there not being enough parking spaces and that Tradesmen were especially disadvantaged in Tenby.

**Steven Jones, PCC** stated that Ian Westley of the Highways Dept was aware of this.

**'Heating & Gas Engineer'** (sorry could not see who was speaking)

A tradesman's van is their Office. It carries a lot of equipment which is heavy and expensive. He physically cannot park and unload at a distance from the job. Time is wasted fetching and carrying tools. He is aware of the 'Special Dispensation Procedure' but this requires 3 days notice so not suitable for emergency call out situations. Also costly put £15 on cost of sometimes quite small jobs – increases price of service.  
Getting to the stage where cannot afford to go into Tenby to do a job as no suitable parking and cannot afford more fines.

**Narberth** – The car park is fuller than normal currently with residents parking during the day to avoid parking penalties when parked outside their homes. If the car park is full now, what will happen in the summer? Visitors will be turned away from the town as there is no parking space for them.

**Tenby** - A suggestion -that tradesmen could have a permit to use residents parking bays between 9am and 5pm while residents are away at work – this is already happening in Cardiff where people can park in residents parking bays using a parking meter.

Also care workers calling to see older people in town centres cannot do their job. They often only have a 15 minute turn around and are on minimum wage so cannot afford fines. This is a worry for all community services – Meals on wheels, health visitors, Community physio's etc.

**Do not underestimate the Social impact of the parking issues.**

**Pembroke** – Jim Price had polled shop keepers on Pembroke high street. CPE seen as beneficial on the whole as office workers had been blocking shopping bays all day. It has also helped the issue of the bottleneck by the bank which

when blocked can back traffic up as far as Pembroke Dock. Jim recognised and was sympathetic to the plight of tradesmen.

### **Narberth**

Has a similar street plan to Pembroke with a one way narrow High street. However the CofT and the Town Council targeted errant all day 'local' parkers with a Polite Notice. This considerably reduced the problem – without our CPE friends. The businesses were reminded that each one hour parking slot could represent up to eight customers gaining access to the town and their businesses!

### **Angela Burns**

Re enforced the care workers issue and health workers. She also highlighted the abuse of the blue disabled badge system especially in Pembroke Dock. The CPE's were also too rigorous/extreme. Example of the Funeral director who was made to move parking bollards in front of business by the CPE, the space was quickly filled by car and so the Funeral Director could not get the Hearse and coffin to a funeral – very frustrating and upsetting.

### **Milford Haven**

Chris Ward of SPAR stated that Milford Charles Street was on its knees. It has 14ft pavements with double yellow lines and limited parking. Town Centres need to be STOP & SHOP. Shoppers take one run down Charles St and if there are no spaces, go straight to Tesco's.

Sales statistics were given of his business which showed a 26% drop since enforcement started targeting people stopping for a few minutes outside shops. He gave examples of people cancelling paper orders at local news agents and recent paper returns have reached 20% compared to a historic 5% indicating the loss of business. If sales continue to fall in the SPAR, several of the 36 jobs at risk!

Viv Phillips of Zenith Interiors and Chair of Milford Business Circle stated that car parking charges are an unfair tax on small town centre businesses. The multinationals are largely located out of town with lower rates and free car parking, thus drawing customers away.

### **Tenby**

PCC have chosen to enforce 5 minute observation rule on illegally parked vehicles. This needs to be relaxed unless vehicle is in front of a dropped curb. Enforcement has decimated trade of News agent on North Parade – more common sense is needed.

**Tenby House** – 5 minutes is not enough time to allow guests to book in and unload same for Self catering accommodation. Need more flexibility or will drive the tourist trade away.

### **Paul Woolman**

Parking enforcement regulations should be on PCC website. Some are but the full list is not therefore the public are unable to challenge rulings that they think are unfair.

For example drivers making deliveries are being told they have limited time to unload – this is not the case. Businesses need to ask PCC for traffic orders are all are not listed on the website. – Businesses have an urgent need for better communication of the Traffic Orders in force.

### **Angela Burns**

CPE's are not fully aware of the law. Shop keepers are not being allowed to unload in Narberth even on a Sunday.

Care workers are not able to stop momentarily on single yellow lines to help disabled patients into and out of vehicles. She has 40-50 cases listed of serious issues from shop keepers, including a florist in Pembroke Dock and care workers where parking enforcement is seriously impeding activity and threaten the future of the business. Response from PCC has been blunt.

### **Gordon Barry Narberth**

Accepts pre parking charge changes research was very thorough, but unfortunately no work was done on the IMPACT of CPE on the streets of Pembrokeshire. The knock on effects were not understood by the Council. People are now unable to park outside their houses even after 6pm. People have stopped car sharing to work as they are scared to leave their car parked during the day. Narberth estates are full of cars as not enough parking available. Just where do the now displaced parked cars go?

The training of CPE's needs to include more commonsense.

### **Paul Woolman**

Parking enforcement needs urgent review. Also need to review where there are double and single yellow lines in county – could they be converted to 30 minute stop bays especially on some high streets.

### **Mike Evans Tenby**

Tourism is a large employer in Pembrokeshire. According to Pembrokeshire Tourism many businesses are hanging on by a thread – this is the last chance season- because of a number of reasons. Retail businesses are showing reduced stock levels, shops looking emptier, banks are squeezing overdrafts – many Pembrokeshire Businesses are in dire position. Too rigorous enforcement of parking regulations combined with lack of parking will discourage tourists from coming back and word will spread, making the economic situation worse.

It is important for all Pembrokeshire towns to be healthy as they rely on each other.

Where is all the income collected from Car parks such as Tenby who have had charges for many years? It has not been invested back in Tenby. The multi story there still has no lift.

### **Ian Norman Broad Haven**

Town has 3 car parks all administered by different bodies. Town has an issue with cars parked along front all day causing problems for passing traffic while there is still space in car parks so enforcement here would be welcomed.

But the car park in Little Haven is too small and is frequently full!

### **David Norcross Narberth**

Changes to Business rates are forcing 2 specialist retail businesses in Narberth to close. Combined with parking enforcement, Narberth is becoming a less attractive destination. The clear high street has enabled traffic to speed up and many observers are now afraid that an accident will happen.

Emptier high street makes Narberth look dead – suggest 15 minute waiting time on left hand side of road – encourage stop and shop.

Gordon Barry highlighted article in Pembrokeshire Life on parking. Some restrictions are out of date and need urgent review!

### **Lesley Fisher Tenby**

Raised the point of evening staff having to park a distance away and expressed concerns about their safety when returning to their cars very late at night. Could they bring cars into town centre after 8pm for example?

### **Other comments**

- Visitors – good experience is essential
- What are the answers to all this?
- Could CPE's phone tradesmen prior to booking – give them chance to move.

### **Steven Jones PCC**

Will pass comments to relevant person – Jamie Adams

CPE not new – have seen it before working in Lancashire – it will settle down. It is a shock to Pembrokeshire as previously Pembs only had 2 enforcement officers across the county.

### **Other comments**

- PCC has a moral obligation to support local economy.
- Issues are beginning to turn county towns against each other
- Enforcement has net cost to Pembrokeshire of £174,000 hence need income from car parks to make up deficit! With more foresight the number of CPE enforcers could have been greatly reduced whilst still allowing reasonable enforcement and much greater 'profit' for the Council.
- Angela Burns reported the case of the florist in Pembroke Dock who has been so adversely affected by parking enforcement that she will not be renewing the shop lease in 2 months time- another business lost.

- Hairdressers also losing trade as elderly clients unable to walk half mile to nearest car park. Local parking had a half hour limit where as a typical hair appointment is between 2 & 3 hours.
- The Old School car park in Narberth has 65 spaces @£1 per day =£65. Query cost of parking attendant who is also parking in free space.
- Viv Phillips of Milford reminded the meeting that the majority of town centre shop owners are local. Income/profit remains in Pembrokeshire unlike the big multiples.

The Chairman thanked all present for their commitment to attend the meeting, and for their frank exchange of views. He stated that minutes would be available within a week, and would be emailed to those attending.