

Briefing note: Bristol workplace parking levy

What are workplace parking levies?

A workplace parking levy is a local tax on employers who provide parking spaces to their employees. Nottingham introduced one in 2012 and Bristol, Cambridge, Leeds and Oxford are considering introducing one. The Scottish Parliament recently enacted legislation to enable their introduction.

Bristol City Council is considering introducing a workplace parking levy. The mayor, Marvin Rees, suggested that such a levy could be used to “raise revenue for a mass transit system.”¹

Traffic in Bristol

The traffic levels in Bristol have been relatively static for the last 10 years. In 2008, there were 1.165 billion miles travelled by cars and taxis in the City of Bristol. In 2018, there were 1.159 billion, a decline of 0.52 per cent.²

This was also mirrored in the traffic counters in the city, which showed a slight decline in the average annual daily flow of cars and taxis, from 2.24 million to 2.13 million over the same time period.³

Impact on businesses and employees

Bristol had 17,310 enterprises in 2016, employing 94,661 people, with a combined turnover of £11.02 billion.⁴

The national travel survey 2018 showed that 55 per cent of all employees in England used a car – as a driver, not a passenger – to commute to work.⁵ If this were applied in Bristol, it would suggest that approximately 52,064 employees of small and medium sized companies alone could be affected by a workplace parking levy, raising £20.8 million in revenue for the City of Bristol if all parking spaces are subject to the levy.

The average salary in Bristol in 2018 was £27,893.⁶ As a proportion of gross income, a £415 workplace parking levy (the current level in Nottingham) would equal 1.5 per cent.

Recommendations

Instead of arbitrarily taxing employers for using their own, private land for employee parking, councils should consider other ways of improving congestion and air quality. First, they should dispose of their own off-street parking business empires. But they should also consider whether their on-street parking charges are reflecting market conditions and whether savings could be made in their own use of vehicles, particularly with a view to removing the oldest, most polluting vehicles in their fleet where reductions in fleet size allow.

¹ BBC, *Bristol mayor Marvin Rees makes clean air pledges for city*, 20 June 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-48703633>, (accessed 2 September 2019).

² Department for Transport, *Road traffic statistics: local authority Bristol, City of*, 2019, <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/local-authorities/144>, (accessed 29 August 2019).

³ Department for Transport, *Bristol average annual daily flow*, 2019, https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/storage/downloads/aadf/local_authority_id/dft_aadf_local_authority_id_144.csv, (accessed 29 August 2019).

⁴ ONS, *SME enterprises in Local Authority Districts by Group*, 22 August 2017, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/adhocs/007388smeenterprisesinlocalauthoritydistrictsbybroadindustrygroup>, (accessed 29 August 2019).

⁵ Department for Transport, *Mode of travel: Commuter trips by employment status and main mode: England*, 31 July 2019, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821428/nts0412.ods, (accessed 30 August 2019).

⁶ Office for National Statistics, *Earnings and hours worked, place of residence by local authority: ASHE Table 8.7a*, 25 October 2018, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/placeofresidencebylocalauthorityshetable8>, (accessed 30 August 2019).