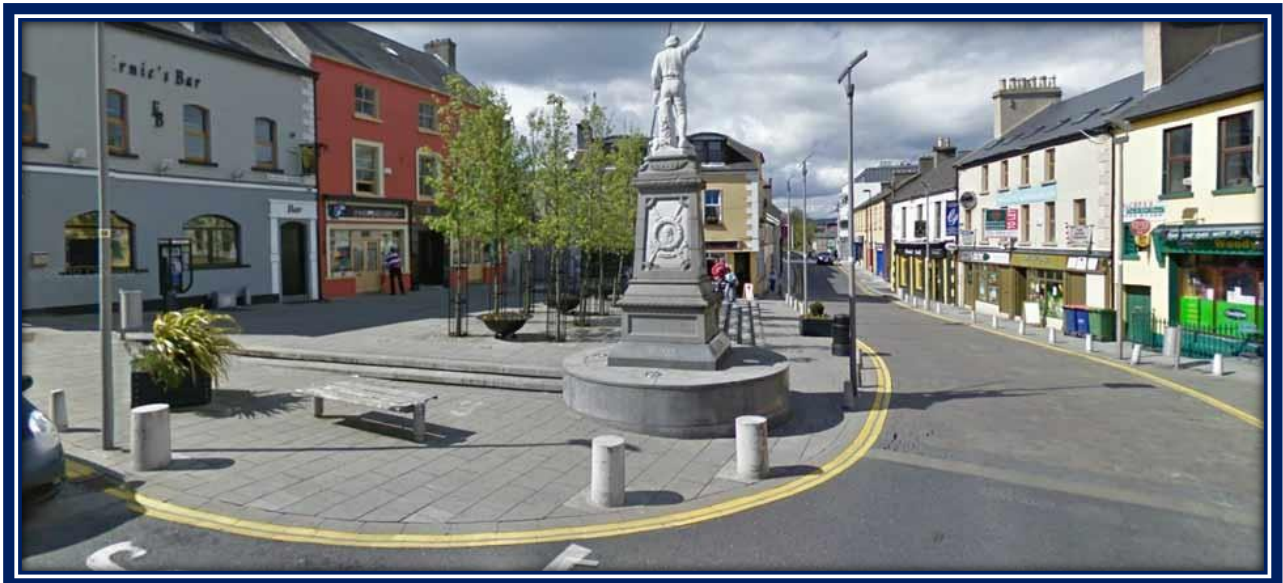




PARKING & TRAFFIC FLOW RECOMMENDATIONS

April 2019



INTRODUCTION

This submission is being made in recognition of the parking issues that have been raised in various surveys and reports over the last number of years. Most recently (June 2018) the views of consumers and retailers in a survey undertaken by iReach Insights (iReach), an independent and objective Market Research agency based in Blackrock, County Dublin. The company works with many 'community-based groups' across Ireland and also supports the research needs of many retailers and business owners in Ireland. This research was commissioned by the Wicklow Town Team Retail Group. Similar findings were identified in 2015 in a Parking Survey undertaken by Wicklow County Council. Most of the issues raised by car park users were also highlighted in a Wicklow and District Chamber of Commerce submission on parking to Wicklow Town Council in 2008.

Based on all the information available to us from these reports and after consultation with the Traffic Wardens, Wicklow Town Team Retail Group put forward the following recommendations on parking which we believe will improve the experience for all visiting our town. In this submission, we have also briefly identified areas that will improve the traffic flow through the town as this can help improve their experience of visiting Wicklow Town.

The 3 surveys used are based on the opinion of consumers and Business owners. The perception is that there are not enough parking spaces. Further evidence may be required to validate these opinions and the extension of the WS Atkins Traffic Survey to include parking will provide this evidence.

We have prioritised our proposals into short, medium and long term solutions. We are certain that the recommendations to improve parking capacity in our town and to improve the management of the limited space that is currently available are worthy of implementation. There is a need to ensure that our town centre is maintained as a retail shopping area of choice. There is also a requirement to ensure a higher turnover of existing parking spaces particularly on Saturday. The parking solutions outlined below will help to transform our town centre into a vibrant retail area.

Parking issues are a perennial problem; let's take this opportunity to resolve these matters for the users, retailers and local authority.

Please find below, the background to the parking issues as identified in the iReach Report and Wicklow County Council Survey and our recommendations based on same. We have also incorporated the recommendations from the Wicklow Chamber of Commerce report in 2008.

BACKGROUND

Wicklow Town Team (WTT) has established a number of initiatives to improve many aspects of Wicklow Town. One such initiative is to improve the town's retail environment and to address several pervasive issues and common concerns amongst its many retail business owners and consumers.

The WTT Retail Group wished to obtain feedback from people living in or working in close proximity to Wicklow Town Centre, to quantify various concerns raised by the town's Retailers. The behaviours and attitudes of shoppers are a key guide to the recommended changes and improvements to Wicklow Town that will directly benefit existing and new businesses in the locality.

iREACH SURVEYS

iReach Survey 1 – Consumer Survey

The target respondents for this survey were residents in and around Wicklow Town. A total of 1,472 survey responses were achieved, with a gender breakdown of 30% men to 70% women. The survey was administered between 7th May and 8th June 2018 with awareness and uptake driven by the WTT Retail Team.

iReach Survey 2 – Business Leaders' Survey

The target respondents for this survey were the business leaders in Wicklow Town. A total of 65 survey respondents was achieved, with 66% indicating that they were Business Owners, 31% indicating that they were Business Managers and 3% indicating that they held other positions within the business. The survey was paper-based and was conducted in June and July 2018.

Executive Findings Report Structure

The Executive Findings report was divided into five overarching pillars common across residents and retail business owners;

- ❖ Pillar 1: Parking and Impact on Wicklow Town Visits
- ❖ Pillar 2: Improvements to Wicklow Town
- ❖ Pillar 3: Suggestions to Retailers and Retailers' Mix
- ❖ Pillar 4: Local Events and Participation
- ❖ Pillar 5: Improved Communications

These pillars indicate the key areas of concern amongst consumers as well as retail business leaders in Wicklow Town and therefore constitute the key action areas identified for Wicklow Town that will increase footfall and spending in the area. Key short-term and long-term actions for consideration have been outlined for each of the five key pillars.

Pillar 1: Parking and Related Challenges

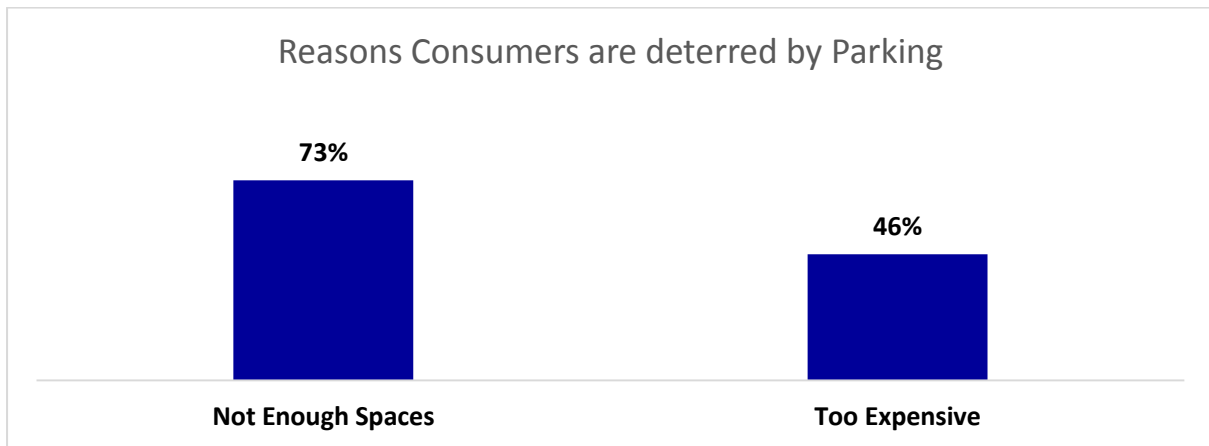
In advance of the survey being launched, it was highlighted by the WTT Retail Team that parking was a pervasive issue for retailers and visitors. The survey of local residents was designed with this in mind, not to bias the survey, but to quantify the direct impact on shopping visits to Wicklow Town as well as uncover suggestions from retailers on improvements to the parking issues in the centre of Wicklow Town.

From the research findings it is clear that parking is an inhibitor of shopping visits to Wicklow Town. It is common that many shoppers wish or need to visit with young families or are older visitors who need to drive. For many visits, a short stay is not an option, so parking availability and related costs are a key consideration for shopping visits especially for those that are looking for an extended stay of 2 to 3 hours in Wicklow Town.

The survey asked consumers if they were deterred from parking in Wicklow Town.

FACT: Forty six percent (46%) of respondents stated that they are deterred from going into Wicklow Town because of parking concerns, led by lack of spaces as well as costs.

Views on Parking – Consumers



The main issues raised by consumers about Parking in Wicklow Town are that there are ‘not enough parking spaces’ (73% of respondents) and that ‘parking is too expensive’ (46% of respondents).

Impact

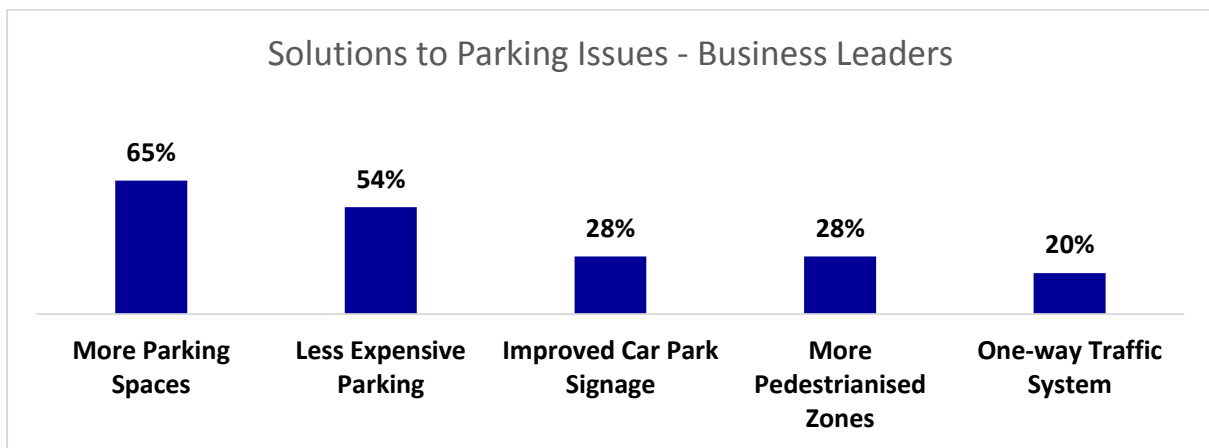
Residents and Shoppers indicate that they would be much more likely to visit and spend time in Wicklow Town if more parking spaces were available and if parking were less expensive.

Views on Parking – Business Leaders

Parking issues are cited by business leaders in Wicklow Town as a ‘challenge’, with 65% indicating that the lack of parking is the biggest challenge faced and 54% citing ‘parking costs’ being a challenge to their businesses.

Asked to indicate the best solutions to the current parking problems in Wicklow Town, 65% of business leader respondents indicated that the town needs more parking spaces. Fifty four percent indicated that parking should be less expensive and 28% indicated that Car Park Signage needs to be improved. Other solutions suggested by retailers were to pilot the introduction of Pedestrianised Zones and a One-Way Traffic System, to identify if this could create additional parking spaces or easier access to existing parking zones.

Views on Parking – Retailer Suggestions



Impact

The provision of more parking spaces at cheaper rates is the main concern for both consumers and business leaders in Wicklow Town, indicating that this should be considered a priority action to be undertaken during any Town Improvement Initiatives. While there are physical limitations to available space for additional parking, there are many suggestions that allow for better utilisation of current parking spaces as well as increased signage to improve flow of traffic to available spaces. While costs ‘per hour’ may not be considered expensive, most shoppers wish to visit for a number of hours, so costs do become an inhibitor for many wishing to visit for an extended period.

This action is the most important improvement initiative desired by business leaders in the town; 88% of those surveyed indicated that the provision of more parking spaces is the most important change needed.

Recommended Actions

The provision of additional parking spaces, less expensive parking and free ‘parking windows’ (outside working hours and on weekends) would be an incentive to many different shopper types to travel into Wicklow Town to spend a few hours or ‘the day in Town’. This would increase footfall and associated revenue amongst retailers and restaurants and Pubs in the town, boosting overall business success and business owner satisfaction.

The Wicklow Town Team Retail Group then reviewed the parking survey that was conducted by Wicklow County Council in 2015:

Wicklow County Council Parking Survey – April / May 2015

The County Wicklow parking survey elicited 700 unique responses and the county-wide breakdown is as follows:

Area	Responses	Percentage of County total
Wicklow Town	416	60%
Greystones	156	22%
Bray	82	12%
Arklow	31	4%
Non-geographic / un-specified	15	2%
Total	700	

The fact that Wicklow Town returned 60% of the responses could be considered a strong indicator that parking is a serious issue in Wicklow town.

Response to Parking Survey 2015 – Wicklow Municipal District

Regular Paid Parking		Regular Parking Frequency		Average Length Of Stay		Typical Payment Method	
Yes	400	Daily	191	30 mins	129	Cash at machine	359
No	9	Weekly	198	1 – 2 hrs	194	Text	31
Blank	7	Monthly	18	2 – 4 hrs	42	Permit	16
		No Answer	9	All Day	44	Via Retailer	4
				No Answer	7	No Answer	6
Total	416		416		416		416

Reasons for difficulty finding parking space (239 reasons given)			Suggestions for parking improvements (304 comments made)		
Code			Code		
A	Abuse of Permits	3	B	Tour bus parking	2
D	Ill-disciplined parking	15	C	Flexible charging/free periods/ticket transferability between zones	217
En	Inconsistent enforcement	29	Ex	Pay on exit at car parks	8
M	Poor maintenance of machines	3	L	Rationalisation of loading bays/hours of operation	11

Q	Inadequate Spaces	132		Ms	Extra spaces/multi-storey car park	38
Tm	Traffic management problems	52		P	Business/staff permits for use in dedicated areas	16
				T	Promote/regularise 'pay-by-text'	9
				Tr	Communication/transparency on how and where parking revenue spent	3
	Total	234			Total	304

Wicklow Municipal District

Average length of stay and method of payment

47% of paid parking users stay between 1-2 hours. 31% stay for an average of 30 minutes and 11% park all day. Only 10% park for an average of 2-4 hours.

86% of users still pay by cash at a machine with only 8% availing of 'pay by test' option.

234 individual comments were made relating to difficulties finding a space with 56% of these relating to inadequate number of spaces.

22% of responses related to various traffic management problems such as congestion brought about by illegal parking on footways and on double yellow lines.

11 comments were made regarding a rationalisation of loading bays and their hours of operation to facilitate extra car parking at certain times.

A further 304 comments for suggested parking improvements were made. 12% of respondents would like to see either a multi-story car park and/or extra parking spaces provided. 5% would like to see the introduction of business user/staff parking permits in dedicated car parking zones.

Just over 70% of respondents made comments on cost related issues with suggestions for free parking periods and transferability of tickets between zones.

Schedule C of the Bye-Laws include the following information:

There are currently 10 Zones of which 9 are 20c per 10 minutes and 1.20 per hour

Zone I is €1.20 per day, this has changed to 50c per day and has been free since Nov/Dec 2018 as the machine is not working (Murrough Car Park).

Loading Bays operate from 9am-12pm Mon-Fri. 15 Minutes grace applies to these spaces all day and paid parking is available from 12pm for stays longer than 15 minutes up to 2 hours.

[No of Spaces – 1001 public spaces]

Zone A - Max 2 hours between 10am-6pm Mon-Sat on Abbey Street [19], Main Street [14], Lower Mall (East) [5]

Zone B - Max 2 hours between 12pm-6pm Mon-Fri & 9am-5.30pm Sat on Abbey Street [19], Main Street [14], Market Square (Where?)

Zone C - Max 4 Hours between 10am-6pm Mon-Sat on Kilmantin Hill [22], New Street [24], Church Street [16], Wentworth Place [27], Fitzwilliam Road [15], Market Steet [10], Bachelors Walk [36], Castle Street [24], Quay Lane [11], South Quay [30], Quarantine Hill, Ball Alley/Colley Street [16], High Street [30], Bayview Road, Abbey Street in front of Salem (gone), Coates Lane

Zone D - Loading 9am-12pm Mon-Fri. Max 4 hours 12pm-6pm Mon-Fri & 10am-6pm Sat on Market Street[10], Castle Street [20]

Zone E - Max 8 hours 10am-6pm Mon-Sat on Bath Street [11], Leitrim Place (west), Strand Street Upper [25], Bond Street [9], Seafront (Ceoltas) [30], Castlevew-Anchorage [30]

Zone F - Max 3 hours 10am to 6pm Mon-Sat in Car Parks: Abbey Street [80], Chuch Street [80], Old Gaol [36], Castle Street/Black Castle [12]

Zone G - Max 8 Hours 10am to 6pm Mon-Sat in St. Patrick's Road/Chapel Hill Car Park [30], St. Manntan's House Car Park [55]

Zone H - Residential parking

Zone I - Max 8 Hours 10am to 6pm Mon-Sat in Murrough Car Park [130]

Zone J - Max 1 Hour paid and 8 hours residential 10am-6pm on Brickfield Lane, Coate's Lane, The Mall (West), 1-5 The Oaks High Street, Leitrim Place [76] (east), Glenside Road, Quarantine Hill (east), Strand Street Upper [25] and Lower [20], Church Street [16] (East), Bath Street [11](Seafront), Weston Close, Saint Dominick's Road, Church Hill.

There are parts of Zone J that we would consider residential and find it hard to believe these are monitored or that they could be considered public parking such as Weston Close.

Having studied the results of the surveys and reports, the Wicklow Town Team Retail Group :

Wicklow Town Team Retail Group recommendations

Fact: 46% of consumers (1,472) are deterred from going into Wicklow Town because of parking concerns, led by lack of spaces as well as costs.

Some suggestions can be implemented immediately.

Some suggestions will require changes to the 'PARKING BYE-LAWS 2017'.

Some suggestions will require further investigation by Wicklow County Council.

Short-term Actions (0 - 6 months)

1. Extend WS Atkins 'Fitzwilliam Square' Traffic survey to include Parking as this will give empirical evidence to the perception that there are not enough car parking spaces.
2. Promote the existing 15 minutes free parking
3. Review Abbey Car Park 2007 planning application for a Multi-Story car park to determine if still valid.
4. Add signage to promote the existence of car parks (entrances to the town, directional and outside the car parks)
5. Review Parking meter placement and signage on meters.
6. Install signage at Knockrobin to divert long term visitors to the Murrough car park
7. Paid parking to start at 10 a.m. and end at 5 p.m. as this will facilitate those working locally to shop for free after 5 p.m. and all signage and machines to reflect same. (Requires updating Schedule C in Bye Laws. Check with Park Rite how much revenue would be lost)
8. Reduce parking price from €1.20 per hour to €1
(This would be on par with Bray, Greystones and Arklow. This requires updating Schedule C in Bye Laws. Check with Park Rite how much revenue would be lost)
9. Ask Park Rite how many people in Wicklow town are using the Parking Tag App
(This was only 8% in the 2015 study. The App removes parking anxiety and should be promoted)
10. Review if the Parking Tag App is the best option. It is currently dearer than cash payment; it should be the same or lower
11. Promote the Parking Tag App
 - Coin-Free Parking - Forget rummaging around for change for the parking meter.
 - Text Message Reminders - Receive a text reminder 10 minutes before your ticket expires.
 - Park Again - ticket about to expire? You can create another ticket without going back to your car.
 - Need a Receipt? - You can retrieve and print your parking receipts
 - Auto Account Top-Up - You never have to worry about not having enough credit

12. Loading Bays – Reduce amount of loading bay space to make way for normal, Age Friendly and disabled parking. (Currently all of the west side of the street is loading except for 1 disabled space located near Butlers Pharmacy).
13. Ask Augustus Cullen Law if their car park could be used by the public at weekends. (public liability)
14. Ask Adrian Shanagher, part-owner of the Grand Hotel if the car park could be used by the public and suggest he install his own parking meters.
15. Update Road markings on the street. Difficult to know you are parking in a disabled spot if the paint is faded or worn away.
16. Move disabled parking outside the Marnier Pub (it causes a bottleneck) to outside Dowling’s Butchers and add an Age Friendly space onto opposite side of road e.g. at Vodafone i.e. reclaim loading Bay space.
17. Create an online register of disabled parking spaces so those with permits know where parking is available.
18. 1 parking ticket will work in all areas except Long term Car Parks (St. Manntan’s House)
(Use a different coloured ticket for this car park. Requires updating Schedule C in Bye Laws)
19. Free parking from 1-2 p.m. weekday as this will encourage people to come into the town to shop and eat. (Requires updating Schedule C in Bye Laws).
20. Parking permits for staff/businesses in Church Street and Abbey Street car park be removed. This is prime parking and should be available for consumers. Encourage all shop owners/staff to use alternative parking such as the Murrough, St. Manntan’s House (Parking permits)
21. Promote €1 ‘Long Term’ visitors (non permit) in the Murrough car park
22. Review how residential permits operate to see if any changes are required.
23. Enforce loading bay times of 9am-12pm for deliveries.
24. Enforce Bus restrictions through the Main Street.
25. Review costs and implications of the above suggestions from Park Rite
Current (2018) breakdown of value and market share of the app. versus meter?
Can parking be funded differently from current arrangements?

Medium-term Actions (7 - 18 months)

1. Install bollards before the mall to stop cars parking illegally and disrupting traffic flow
2. Move zebra crossing from BOI to Fitzwilliam square as part of the development. Need to see how this would affect traffic flow but it is agreed that BOI location is unsafe for drivers and pedestrians.
3. Review all pinch points to see if traffic flow can be improved e.g. Market Square
4. Reduce Max Stay in Car Parks from 3 to 2 Hours.
Requires updating Schedule C in Bye Laws. This will help to turnover spaces. Check with Park Rite if St. Patrick’s Road/Chapel Hill is currently used for more than 2 hours
5. Remove bottleneck and unsafe parking on Wentworth Place.
Remove parking opposite SuperValu delivery entrance back to the main SuperValu entrance – this is a bottleneck area especially when deliveries are being made. Remove 2-3 spaces on the bend at the entrance to Freehill Solicitors (6 Wentworth Place) and Christian Assembly Hall.
Total loss of Max 6 spaces but for the sake of safer traffic flow.
6. No right turn onto Abbey/Main Street from St. Patrick’s Road to remove bottleneck.

7. No right turn onto Main Street from Mortons Lane (Hopkins hill) to remove bottleneck.
8. Purchase Quarantine Hill site and develop a car park. This will be needed if the port is to be developed as well as the Container hotel.
9. With the implementation of a one-way on Church Street as part of the Fitzwilliam Square development – Would herringbone parking be possible as this would yield more spaces.

Long-term Actions (Max 36 months)

1. Trial a Pedestrian system
2. Trial a One Way system
3. Implement Pedestrian/One Way based on trial
This will allow for a better public realm with wider paths and safer for pedestrians. It may enable the removal of pedestrian crossings by reducing the travel speed but increasing or maintaining the journey time.
4. Multi-storey car park in Abbey Car Park assuming it is still viable.
5. Multi-Storey car park – Quarantine Hill.
6. Additional spaces to be created as part of the proposed development of the Bayview Site.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

As a significant percentage of consumers (46%) indicated that they are deterred from going to Wicklow town because of parking issues, improvements to parking in the town should see an increase in the number of visitors to the town and consequently higher spending and increased revenue.

The local residents and retail business owners want to see improvements made to Wicklow Town to give a 'kick start' to increasing visits and related footfall to the Town. We see wider trends where shoppers want to mix short 'necessary' shopping trips which are free for 15-30 minutes (Grocery, Newsagents, Pharmacy) to 'town trips' where visitors and shoppers want to spend an extended amount of time to shop-around different retailers and visit a café or restaurant.

This combined iReach surveys of consumers and business leaders along with the Parking Survey by Wicklow County Council and recommendations from Wicklow District Chamber of Commerce indicates that Improved Parking is the issue or Pillar that will have the biggest impact on visits to Wicklow Town.

The Wicklow Town Team Retail Group look forward to working with the Wicklow Municipal District Council and Wicklow County Council in implementing the recommendations above to maximise the parking potential for the town and to help make Wicklow Town a better place to live, work and play.