

WITH REGARD TO THE DRAFT MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF DUNGARVAN/ LISMORE CONTROL OF PARKING BYE-LAWS 2018



21st of June 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

We the Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber write to you in relation to the Draft Municipal District of Dungarvan/ Lismore Control of Parking Bye-Laws 2018 respectfully requesting that you protect 'Free Parking From 4pm' in Dungarvan On-Street and Council car parks.

What we are requesting is that 'Free Parking From 4pm' be written into the Bye-Laws and therefore protected into the future. As per the draft document, it is of great concern to the Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber Board and members that there is no reference to this initiative.

You will find below a compilation of the over 70 submissions made by members via Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber in the last two days about the importance of retaining this initiative, the benefits that have been experienced since its implementation and the threats to our community should this initiative change. It is considered one of the best initiatives ever undertaken to draw business to our town - it is fair, it is reasonable and it makes Dungarvan popular and attractive.

This initiative was implemented in 2010 by the Dungarvan Town Council in the spirit of partnership with the Chamber and local business to encourage trade during the worst recession we have experienced. The goodwill it generated cemented a strong, collaborative relationship between the Council & Chamber business community that has since extended into many other areas.

You will find attached emails from our members, many of whom have businesses in the town centre, and all of whom realise the importance of this initiative. These testimonies clearly illustrate the appreciation there is for 'Free Parking from 4pm', the positive impact it has had on business and employment and the genuine concern should any threat to this initiative arise.

If the Draft Bye-Laws included and enshrined 'Free Parking From 4pm', then the worry and uncertainty experienced by business owners and managers would be eliminated, leaving businesses free to get on with improving our offering to ensure Dungarvan stays thriving all day long.

Also as we are encouraging businesses not to increase prices despite demand going up, we are imploring the Waterford City & County Council to do the same.



OBSERVATIONS ON THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF 'FREE PARKING FROM 4PM' INITIATIVE

- People are encouraged to attend late afternoon appointments in medical and dental practices and other services - they can plan for longer appointments.
- There is much more activity in town since the beginning of the initiative – this was experienced from the very first day.
- Businesses often have a peak/busy time between 4-6pm, which had not previously happened.
- This has directly lead to longer opening hours – businesses previously trading until 5pm now open until 6pm.
- More employment has been required to cover the extra trading hours and the extra footfall.
- Shoppers are often more relaxed and will spend longer in shops, therefore purchasing more because they are not tied to a clock.
- Shoppers have become eaters – observations suggest that when people finish shopping later in the evening they will go for food in the town centre afterward, something that would have been unlikely if they had not already been relaxed, parked and less inclined to go home to cook later in the evening.
- Parents are incentivised to bring children to town as they do not have to rush or worry about finding a parking ticket machine and returning to the car with a ticket while trying to keep an eye on small children, which can be a very stressful thing to accomplish. Children can also be the reason spend is higher than if a parent shops alone.
- 'Free Parking From 4pm' is one initiative with universal benefits to all businesses in the town.
- 'Free parking after 4pm' is a welcoming gesture to visitors who also feel valued
- Visitors will stay longer in Dungarvan, spending their evenings in town and taking advantage of everything on offer.
- This initiative is an essential tool to encourage more businesses to open or extend trading and services.





THREATS RESULTING FROM REMOVAL OF INITIATIVE

- Retail is challenged mainly by online shopping for all items including groceries, which is a huge threat to local business and the rates base within the town. Anything that threatens the convenience and access of shoppers in the town is likely to drive business further online and make the competition even more difficult for retailers.
- Shoppers will be incentivised, purely by the offer of free or subsidised parking, to consider only the outlets and areas that offer free parking (mainly international and national stores headquartered outside our region) and therefore the smaller, local businesses will suffer.
- Youghal has suffered due to the implementation of parking charges, Waterford City users continuously complain about the high parking charges in their endeavour to keep the city trading – footfall in both places (the nearest shopping destinations to us) is down and many shops have closed. Dungarvan could be in danger of following suit should this initiative, which has proved so effective in our town, not be enshrined in the Bye-Laws
- If this initiative were removed, the goodwill generated to date would be squandered and it would be perceived negatively by people and businesses who feel that the 'Free Parking From 4pm' is a clear and obvious display of the Council's support and appreciation of the people who come to Dungarvan.

PRACTICALITIES IF THE INITIATIVE IS REMOVED

- As people would still avail of the half hour free, there is little to be gained monetarily from the removal of the initiative.
- The main effect would be to shorten the length of visits to the town and put a timer in visitors' minds again, as they worry over when they have to get back and move their car rather than enjoying their visit.
- Less money will be spent as people are less relaxed and more inclined to stick to getting their errands done without distraction. People are also less likely to make unnecessary trips.
- Less business will lead to a reversal of all the positive effects - shops will have less incentive to stay open later.





- This in turn will lead to a reduction in staff hours and likely staffing levels.
- For those looking to start or expand a business the loss of this initiative will have an impact on their plans and any such disadvantage will act as a disincentive to take the kind of risks that have created such a vibrant, varied quality offering in Dungarvan.

BENEFITS IF THE INITIATIVE IS RETAINED

- It is a huge advantage to attract people to town daily – ‘Free Parking from 4pm’ has delivered that daily boost for Dungarvan.
- Longer trading hours will build Dungarvan’s reputation as a shopping destination.
- More money will continue to be spent locally, creating the perfect environment for developing and starting new businesses.
- More employees will be required and for longer days as our offering increases.
- More thriving businesses will maintain and safeguard the Town Centre, the heart of Dungarvan.
- More businesses doing well results in more rates paid to the Council.
- The positive image of how we value our trade and visitors creates a feel-good factor for shoppers, firmly establishing us as a welcoming town which is active and vibrant.
- Free Parking From 4pm is a Unique Selling Point for Dungarvan. We have traded through recession and the revamp of Grattan Square, we compete against online retailers, with large international stores and with other neighbouring towns. This is a USP and its value in giving us a competitive edge cannot be overstated.
- As we don’t have a train station or airport the main way people get to Dungarvan is by car or bike and this initiative shows our appreciation to them. We will be competing with a number of Greenways in the future so we must use our head-start to build our reputation and retain visitors.
- This mutually beneficial arrangement is the envy of every town in the Country and has worked so well that removing such a successful, popular initiative would be difficult to justify.





OTHER OBSERVATIONS

The Causeway & Causeway Car Park

The Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber are in full support of the fees and maximum stays in The Causeway & Causeway Car Park, as we feel it important that people are not incentivised to park their cars all day in these areas.

Council Car Park

Employees of the Waterford City & County Council enjoy free parking all day adjacent to the town Centre. This is a favourable 'perk' and it is uncommon in the Dungarvan area that so many staff enjoy free parking so close to the town. That fact in hand, we would suggest (as others have before) that this car park be available to the general public at weekend and on bank holidays.

Davitt's Quay

Finally we would agree with Councillor Damien Geoghegan in his recent request for the Council to review parking on Davitts Quay and would encourage Garvey's Car Park to allow access by night to their car park.

A quick analysis of current parking on the quay-side on week days versus week nights and weekends would clearly show there are problems in this area. An emergency vehicle would have a challenge accessing this area on a weekend night, there are so many cars parked either side of the quay it is difficult for pedestrians and drivers to navigate this area safely. We would fully encourage negotiations between Garvey's and the Council to accomplish a compromise that has safety first, access a priority and also would also be aesthetically beneficial.

IN CONCLUSION

We trust you will review this submission fully, and will add the 'Free parking From 4pm' initiative to the District of Dungarvan/Lismore Control of Parking Bye-Laws 2018 for the reasons outlined above.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this submission we would be delighted to hear from you.

Yours Sincerely,

Joe Roche
Chamber President

Jenny Beresford
Chamber CEO

