

Traffic Management Sub-Committee



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

11 June 2025

Title	Emissions Based Charging
Purpose of the report	To make a key decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Phil Grant, Parking Services Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That subject to statutory consultation, delegated authority is given to the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with Lead Member for Climate Strategy and Transport and Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services, to introduce emissions-based charging for:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) on street pay and display, andb) Resident parking permits and all other parking permits.2. That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) the Traffic Regulation Order for the introduction of emissions-based charging for on street pay and display andb) the Traffic Regulation Order for the introduction of emissions-based charging for Resident parking permits and all other parking permits.3. Should formal objections be received that officers bring a report to a future meeting of the sub-committee for consideration.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Local authorities have powers to control and regulate parking and there is a need to continually improve the way in which parking services are delivered to both enable a better customer experience and support changes to behaviour in relation to wider policy objectives around transport, health and climate. Parking policies can influence the number, type and the amount of usage of vehicles in an area and can be an important tool in delivering behavioural change which results in improvements to air quality (and consequently environmental and public health improvements). Without these changes,

there will be ongoing costs to pressurised health services and higher costs associated with climate change and the need to adapt to it. This paper sets out measures to enable steps to be taken which over time will impact positively on air quality, health and climate outcomes for Reading.

- 1.2. A report on changes to Parking Services was presented to Policy Committee in January 2025. The report set out proposals to introduce emissions-based charging for on and off-street parking, resident and all other parking permits across the Borough.
- 1.3. The proposal to introduce Emissions-Based Charging (EBC) as evidenced by their introduction in other locations in England, is expected to elicit strong opinions, in particular where the changes impact residents permits. To gauge support for the proposed introduction of EBC in the Borough, an informal consultation was conducted in March 2025. Residents, businesses and visitors were invited to make comment about the proposal through the council's web site or direct to the Parking Managers in box. In 24/25 there were 9981 1st permits issued, including discretionary 1st permits, meaning that nearly 10,000 residential properties, as well as businesses and other permit holders affected had the opportunity to respond. A total of 275 people responded to the survey which comprised 18 questions. Information about the communication methods used to promote awareness of the survey to residents, as well as the survey results themselves, are set out in more detail at Appendix 6. 28 emails were received direct to a dedicated email address. These are set out at Appendix 7.
- 1.4. 64% of respondents to the survey strongly agreed or agreed that they were concerned about the effects of air quality on the health of their children or family. A similar number (61.8%) were concerned about the impact on their own health. In summary, a ratio of almost 2 to 1 expressed concern about the impact of air quality on not only their health but also on the health of their family.
- 1.5. There was strong opposition from respondents to linking EBC to permits, with 70% disagreeing and strongly disagreeing when asked if permit parking charges should be linked to the CO₂ and NO_x emission levels of the vehicle. Historically, few motorists ever support the introduction of, or an increase in, parking charges irrespective of the wider health benefits associated with the proposal or their general support for environmental and health interventions.
- 1.6. There were also a high number of responses that suggested the proposals would impact negatively on lower income households affected with the introduction of EBC on residents parking permits.
- 1.7. Positively, while 73% said the proposal was unlikely to change their travel behaviour, a significant proportion at 20% said that it would. Potentially this approach could result in a significant shift in modal choice and result in positive air quality impacts.
- 1.8. The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the information to make a decision as to whether to proceed with the proposed emissions based charging scheme.

2. Policy Context

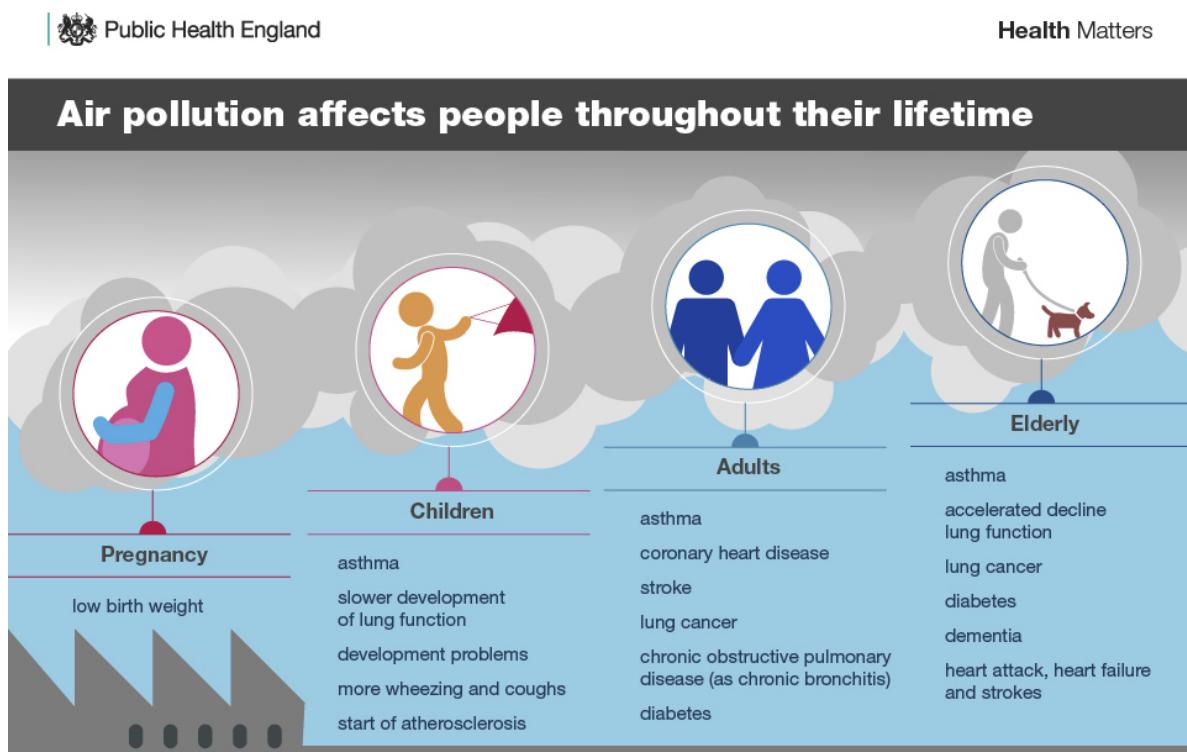
- 2.1 The Council has been developing its Parking Policy over the last few years but is yet to achieve a position where all aspects of its on-street offer have been comprehensively reviewed.
- 2.2 A future workstreams will deliver a new Parking Policy, which links organisational objectives such as Net Zero, the newly adopted Local Transport Plan and the current

partial update of the Local Plan, alongside other strategic plans such as the Air Quality Action Plan and Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy.

- 2.3 As part of the drive to Net Zero, emissions-based parking charges can be used as part of a toolkit to influence and change drivers' behaviour and reduce the number of vehicles overall as well as the number of vehicles with higher emissions using Reading roads, whilst delivering direct benefits for air quality and health.
- 2.4 The introduction of EBC forms part of a wider system of improvements in the town, which aim to increase options and accessibility to public transport and active travel. The overall aim of the policy change is to encourage motorists to consider other more environmentally friendly modes of transport, such as walking, cycling or public transport.
- 2.6 To further support this shift away from ICE, the Council is progressing with plans to install on street EV charging facilities throughout the Borough. Additionally, installation of EV charging points are planned in suitable Council car parks.

3 Air Quality

- 3.1 The Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID) published guidance ([Air pollution: applying All Our Health - GOV.UK](#)) which set out that annual mortality by human made air pollution (all sources, including transport) in the UK is "roughly equivalent to between 28,000 and 36,000 deaths every year. It is estimated that between 2017 and 2025 the total cost to the NHS and social care system of air pollutants (fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide), for which there is more robust evidence for an association will be £1.6 billion." Overall, pollution is a contributory factor in 5% of all deaths.
- 3.2 The illustration below sets out some of the impacts of poor air quality on the population throughout their lifetime.



3.3 Figures show that there has been a steady decline in the amount of greenhouse emissions per head of capita (Co2 per capita report¹). However, the increase in population has counteracted that reduction, resulting in an overall increase in co2 emissions.

3.4 Vehicles are major contributors to air pollution. In the UK, transportation is responsible for up to a third of the nitrogen oxides in the air. Vehicle emissions, such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) can have detrimental effects on human health, causing or worsening respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and increasing the risk of cancer. Additionally, the combustion of fossil fuels in car engines releases carbon dioxide, contributing to climate change. While individual car emissions may be small, the large number of vehicles on our road leads to significant air pollution, particularly in urban areas with high traffic congestion.

3.5 Reading Borough Council adopted its Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) in March 2024. The accompanying report explained that whilst air quality (NO2) in Reading had improved there were still some locations in the town where air quality levels were below UK and World Health Organization (WHO) limits. The Action Plan was approved by Department Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in May 2024.

3.6 As a result of the high levels of car congestion and accompanying air pollution in parts of Reading, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) has been declared covering the town centre and key corridors into and out of the town. The AQAP aimed to target specific locations to achieve compliance with UK and WHO limits and sought to further improve air quality across the Borough as a whole. The Plan continues to focus on reducing nitrogen dioxide (NO2) levels for which transport is a major contributor. One of the mitigation measures identified in the Action Plan is the introduction of emissions-based charging to encourage modal shift alongside delivery of additional walking and cycling infrastructure and improvements to bus infrastructure to maximise use of public transport.

3.7 The Council's Transport Strategy 2040 was adopted in June 2024 and also highlighted the importance of reducing emissions for Reading people and the environment. The Strategy sets out a roadmap to provide transport options to enhance quality of life, reduce emissions and improve air quality to create a carbon neutral town.

Emissions Based Charging Proposals

Pay and Display Tariffs

3.8 With the planned introduction of new machines which record the Vehicle Registration Mark (VRM) there is an opportunity to link to Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) data on tail pipe emissions. Data on vehicle type is already collected through the RingGo pay by phone system. The data enables the Service to identify a vehicles fuel type. This information can be used to model a charging regime targeted at the most polluting vehicles. The primary objective is to encourage those with the most polluting vehicles to choose other modes of transport.

3.9 RingGo data for Reading shows that 88% of all vehicles using the parking app are either petrol or diesel. Only a small percentage (6%) are Ultra Low Emission Vehicles. It is proposed that a percentage charge is added to on-street parking tariffs for the most polluting vehicles, based on the addition of 20% for petrol and 25% for diesel on a sliding scale of charging based on carbon dioxide emissions.

3.10 Westminster and Lambeth have both recently introduced emissions-based charging schemes. Westminster has levied 67% on diesels and a range of 15% to 100% on non-diesels. Lambeth has levied a 75% charge on diesel vehicles. We have started at a lower

¹ [United Kingdom: CO2 Country Profile - Our World in Data](https://ourworldindata.org/co2-profiles)

percentage uplift for Reading but note that this would be subject to future review to continue encouraging and incentivising less polluting vehicles.

- 3.11 Recognising the tail pipe emission benefits of Electric Vehicles (EV), EVs will not pay any additional tariff to encourage take up and reflect the delivery programme of the Council's EV Strategy, which will further support sustainable growth. As more data is gathered about the types of vehicles using the parking service, a review of tariffs will be carried out 2 years after the scheme has been introduced to address any imbalances within the system. The proposed tariff structure is shown in Appendix 2.
- 3.12 It is proposed that emissions-based charging is scheduled to be introduced in October 2025 following the roll out of the new machines and the completion of the necessary legal processes, a detailed process and timeline is included in section 11.

Permits

- 3.13 In 2024/25, the Council issued 30,648 permits of all types. Post Covid, there has been a positive shift in the reduction of second vehicle permits issued to residents, however analysis of vehicle emissions indicates a slow transition to lower emissions vehicles. Whilst affordability and availability are a clear factor in residents' choice to transition to ultra-low emissions vehicles, the impact on air quality particularly in densely packed town centre locations is significant. It is therefore proposed to introduce an Emissions Based Charging regime, as set out in Appendix 3.

4 Other Options considered

- 4.1 Do nothing.
- 4.2 Failure to introduce Emissions Based Charging would limit the Council's ability to influence the impact of internal combustion engine emissions and pollution and the shift towards more sustainable forms of transport. It would also continue to impact on poor health outcomes, particularly for the younger and more elderly residents.
- 4.3 Leaving the existing tariff structure in place will not encourage the travelling public to consider alternative modes of transport.

5 Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 5.1 Poor air quality is considered the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK, because long-term exposure to poor air quality can cause chronic conditions which lead to reduced life expectancy.
- 5.2 Whilst emissions-based charging will not completely resolve the problem, it is one of a suite of measures open to authorities. It can contribute positively to reducing the overall level of air pollution, certainly contributing to a healthier environment.
- 5.3 Emissions based parking charges are already in operation in other councils in the country, such as Lambeth, Lewisham, Westminster and more recently Bath & Northeast Somerset, with positive impacts on air quality being demonstrated. Cardiff has also consulted on proposals.
- 5.4 The aim of the scheme is to further the safety and health of residents through the improvement of air quality. A sliding scale of parking charges for vehicles with the highest tailpipe emissions is one of a number of tools available to encourage behaviour change. Motorists may elect to choose an alternative mode of transport.
- 5.5 The system can be used to support the Council's wider strategic aims of reaching Net Zero by 2030 through the introduction of charging based around emissions, as well as increasing other modes of transport such bus, walking and cycling in line with the objectives of the Reading Transport Strategy.

6 Environmental and Climate Implications

6.1 Transport contributes approximately 30% of all carbon emissions. By using up to date technology and a pricing strategy, motorists' behaviour can be influenced towards cleaner modes of travel.

- The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 – 25 contains a transport action plan which cites an objective as switching from cars to more sustainable modes of transport such as public transport, walking or cycling. Encouraging motorists to move from ICE to EV which are less polluting, will contribute and support the goals outlined in the plan overall. In particular:
 - T2 Develop demand management measures to reduce traffic and encourage shift from high carbon transport².
 - T12 Implement traffic management schemes to support low carbon travel choices³.

6.2 A climate impact assessment is contained in Appendix 3.

6.3 In summary, the proposals are designed to encourage people to consider alternative modes of transport, other than the private car or select less polluting ICE cars over time. Where this scheme has been introduced in London boroughs, there has been a reduction in the use of diesel cars of up to 60%.

6.4 Community Engagement

6.5 The legal engagement processes are set out above in section 8. Officers will liaise closely with communications and develop an appropriate communications plan to make residents aware of the proposals by way of the statutory consultation process. Should the decision be made to implement, following the statutory process, again, officers will develop a communication plan for this and in accordance with the legislative processes.

6.6 If approved, a Communications plan will be developed in conjunction with our colleagues in Communications. Additional pages will be created for the parking web pages to explain to residents what the changes are. This will be supported through the use of newsletters, social media and a press release.

6.7 The Process of Consulting and Implementing Emissions Based Charging

6.8 The legal process for changing the pricing structure will be undertaken in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. Should the decision be made to approve either or both of the proposals to introduce emissions-based charging for pay and display and permits, we are required to advertise our proposals and invite objections or representations via a formal statutory public consultation for a period of at least 21 days. We are required to respond to each objection and members should note that should objections be received they will be reported to a future sub-committee for considerations as set out in Recommendation 3.

6.9 The proposal will also be available at the Civic Centre and Library for inspection. There will also be an e mail address for the public to make any objections or representation.

6.10 We expect the proposal to introduce Emissions charging to residential permits to result in high levels of formal objections, given the strength of feeling shown from the informal

² Environment and Climate Impacts in Committee Reports - guidance

³ Environment and Climate Impacts in Committee Reports - guidance

process. Allowing time to consider objections is expected to take up to 4 weeks from the end of the statutory consultation period.

Informal Consultation

6.11 It is good practice with a major change such as this to undertake an informal consultation to gauge strength of feeling from those most affected by the change. We undertook this consultation from 3rd March 2025 to 30th March 2025. This consultation was conducted online with availability for written submissions. It was advertised via a press release, direct email to residents, social media and the council website. Further detail is available at Appendix 6.

7 Equality Implications

7.1 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) shows there are no negative impacts on the community overall. The introduction of emissions-based charging to permits and pay and display systems affects all sectors of the community equally.

7.2 Based on the above, there will be no negative impacts on the community accessing pay and display or the permit system for parking.

7.3 Equality Impact Assessment is contained within Appendix 4.

8 Legal Implications

8.1 The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 sets out the legal basis for making TROs. In addition, The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 provides for the statutory processes which a local authority must follow when making such orders.

8.2 Before making a TRO for the introduction of the Emissions Based Charging, the Council must undertake a statutory consultation. This involves engaging with key stakeholders including the Chief of Police, residents, businesses, emergency services and transport operators.

8.3 A notice detailing the proposals and the reasoning behind them is published in a local newspaper and displayed on site in the areas where the proposals would apply. Alongside this, a draft TRO order is prepared and made available to the public as part of the consultation process fulfilling both legal and transparency requirements.

8.4 Members of the public have 21 days in which to submit objections or representations to the proposed order.

8.5 In order for any comments to be valid, it must be in writing, state the grounds on which it is made and sent to the address specified in the notice.

8.6 Following consultation, the Traffic Management Sub Committee will review all the outcome of the consultation and decided whether to:

- to proceed with the traffic regulation order as proposed,
- modify the order,
- abandon the proposals.

8.7 If the decision is made to proceed the TRO is formally sealed and made a further notice is published giving the date when the order comes into force. The final step is to implement the restrictions by installing the necessary signage and road markings, where applicable.

8.8 The Council has considered its Network Management Duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004 and its Section 122 duty under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Network Management Duty

8.9 Part 2 Section 16 (1) of The Traffic Management Act 2004 places a duty on the Council as a local traffic authority to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives—

(a) securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and
(b) facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.

(2) The action which the authority may take in performing that duty includes, in particular, any action which they consider will contribute to securing—

(a) the more efficient use of their road network; or
(b) the avoidance, elimination or reduction of road congestion or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority;

and may involve the exercise of any power to regulate or co-ordinate the uses made of any road (or part of a road) in the road network (whether or not the power was conferred on them in their capacity as a traffic authority). This duty places an ongoing obligation in ensuring overall traffic efficiency and network performance and not only applies to vehicles but all to pedestrians and cyclists.

Section 122 duty

8.10 Further Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 places a duty on the local authority so far as practicable to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway. In carrying out this exercise the Council must have regard to the following:

- Desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises.
- The effect on the amenities of any locality effected and (without prejudice to the generality of this paragraph) the importance of regulating and restricting the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles, so as to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the road(s) run.
- The strategy prepared under Section 80 of the Environment Act 1995 (the national air quality strategy).
- The importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles and of securing the safety and convenience of persons using or desiring to use such vehicles.
- Any other matters appearing to the local authority to be relevant.

8.11 This duty focuses on the making of individual traffic regulation decisions.

8.12 Each of these duties has been considered in detail in relation to the proposal identified in this report.

10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below as extracted from the Budget Setting reports as agreed in February 2025, showing the full benefit of £0.365m split across 2 financial years :-

Table 1 Revenue Implications

	Total Annual benefit	2025/26 £000 Budget impact	2026/27 £000 Budget impact
Savings from reduced maintenance	(20)	(15)	(5)
Savings from reduced cash collection costs	(15)	(11)	(4)
Expenditure	(35)	(26)	(9)
* Cost of leasing is not set out here due to the current completion of the procurement, however this has been evaluated against capital expenditure (purchase of machines as a capital asset) and represents better value for money.			
Income from:			
Fees and charges (Residents Permits)	(100)	(75)	(25)
Fees and charges (On Street P&D)	(230)	(173)	(57)
Total Income	(330)	(248)	(82)
Net Cost (+)/saving (-)	(365)	(274)	(91)

10.2 The budget set in February 2025 identified an earliest date of commencement of June 2025. The figures above have been reprofiled across both financial years within the MTFS budget setting to allow for a mid-year commencement.

10.3 Value for Money (VFM)

None identified

10.4 Risk Assessment.

10.5 Legislation introduced by Government to eliminate the sale of ICE cars by 2030 will over time mean that the vehicles accessing both the pay and display and permit system will fall into the lowest categories. This needs to be assessed for impact over time and will need regular review to ensure the approach continues to align with wider parking and transport strategies.

10.6 There is a risk of failure of the DVLA system to correctly identify a vehicle emissions classification. This will be resolved through the use of a third party that can cross check the data.

10.7 Increase in transaction charges by suppliers may impact on future usage.

11 Timetable for Implementation

11.1 Emissions based charging can be introduced in Q3 2025, subject to the successful completion of the consultation and following legal processes.

Proposed Timetable with no objections with timetable with objections below

Process with no objections	Date
Traffic Management Sub Committee to authorise the proposals to introduce Emissions-Based Charging for Pay and Display and/or Permits	11 th June 2025
Notice of Proposal at affected sites Notice of Proposal in local Press Notice of Proposal placed on deposit	26 th June 2025
Statutory consultation ends	17 th July 2025
Analyse and respond to objections	15 th August 2025
Seal Traffic Regulation Order	3 rd September 2025
Notice of Making posted at affected sites Notice of Making published in press Notify objectors	4 th September 2025
Process should objections be received	Date
Traffic Management Sub Committee to authorise the proposals to introduce Emissions-Based Charging for Pay and Display and Permits	11 th June 2025
Notice of Proposal at affected sites Notice of Proposal in local Press Notice of Proposal placed on deposit	26 th June 2025
Statutory consultation ends	17 th July 2025
Analyse and respond to objections	15 th August 2025
Traffic Management Sub Committee to decide on objections received to the introduction of emissions-based charging for pay and display and/or permits.	10 th September 2025
Decision <u>not</u> to proceed:	Process ends
Decision to proceed as follows: Seal Traffic Regulation Order	17 th September 2025
Notice of Making posted at affected sites Notice of Making published in press Notify objectors	18 th September 2025

12 Background Papers

12.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. Tariff structure including emissions charges
2. On street permits charging structure
3. Climate Impact Assessment
4. Equality Impact Assessment
5. Green House Gas Emissions by Sector (UK 2021)
6. Responses to Emissions-Based Charging consultation
7. Direct emails to Parking Manager