

Agenda Item	4
Report No	TC/06/21

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Tourism Committee

**Date:** 16 June 2021

**Report Title:** Motorhome Parking

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an overview of the motorhome market and some of its requirements in terms of overnight parking. It goes on to describe the current position with parking legislation and in particular the position regarding overnight parking and how the Council might develop a policy for such use.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to: -

- i. Note the current position with parking legislation and in particular the position regarding overnight parking; and
- ii. Approve the approach described to defining a Council policy on overnight parking of motorhomes and how consideration of the suitability of individual car parks for overnight parking by motorhomes might be undertaken.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – No implications arising directly from this report. If more detailed activity on a future policy was to be undertaken this could be accommodated from existing service budgets. Any future implementation of new policies could have additional resource requirements, and these would require to be quantified prior to any implementation.
- 3.2 **Legal** – No implications arising directly from this report. However, existing legislation and guidance such as traffic regulations form the basis of how the Council does and can manage car parks and other forms of parking.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - Tourism benefits communities through being a major part of the Highland economy and through helping sustain local facilities

and services. Projects designed to address some of the issues currently experienced in relation to motorhome parking would be expected to produce positive benefits for communities as well as offering a service for visitors.

- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - No implications arising directly from this report.
- 3.5 **Risk** - There is a risk that without a clear and consistent policy on Motorhome parking, The Highland Council will not be providing the support to communities required to help deal with the increase in Motorhome activity in the Highlands.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** - There are no implications arising directly from this report. However, in keeping with agreed Council policy there would be a Gaelic element to projects subsequently undertaken as a result of being identified in this plan. The Council has already undertaken some specific work around the Gaelic naming of overnight stopping points and how this can be used for promotional purposes while also incorporating a greater cultural understanding.

#### 4. Background

- 4.1 As was described in a previous report to this committee on 14 October 2020, recent years have seen an increase in the number of motorhomes coming to Highland. While some of this in the last year has been affected by Covid related restrictions and changes to visitor behaviour, it also reflects a longer-term growth in registrations which doubled from 2012 to 2017. The rate of new registrations is now around 14,000 – 15,000 per year in the UK with some of Highland’s core overseas markets such as Germany, France and the Netherlands seeing similar patterns. There has also been a significant increase in the number of hire vehicles available, not just in Highland, but also elsewhere in the UK and many of those visitors hiring a motorhome elsewhere will come to Highland as part of their trip.
- 4.2 Following this committee’s October meeting the Council made it known that it was keen to see more provision for simple, low cost overnight stops such as is common on the continent (commonly known as “Aires”). In order to encourage and support this the Council has recently produced and distributed a simple guidance document for those landowners interested in such a development. However, while this will expand the range of options available to motorhomes that choose not to use a formal full facility campsite (or who perhaps can’t at peak times when some sites in busier areas can be full), some still seek to use public parking places for overnight stops. It is therefore considered appropriate for the Council to consider a policy on this as it relates to the use of Council owned car parks.
- 4.3 Across Highland there are differing and often quite strongly held views as to whether or not motorhomes should be allowed to stop overnight in places other than formal caravan and camping sites. At one end of the spectrum is the view that this should not be allowed at all while others advocate systems like those on the continent where dedicated stopovers are provided, often by the public sector to encourage stops near communities so as to bring an economic benefit.

In this context it is worth noting that a visitor typically spends around a third of their holiday expenditure on accommodation and around two thirds on other items such as travel, visits to attractions, excursions, shopping or eating out. Motorhome users can

therefore be an important market for local businesses such as shops, cafes, pubs, restaurants and even rural petrol stations.

- 4.4 While this report is not recommending the creation of large numbers of public sector managed sites it does recognise the need to extend a welcome to all visitors to Highland and to ensure there is adequate provision for them. It also recognises that within the motorhome community there are different markets ranging from those who only ever use formal sites to those who frequently camp informally. This is not uncommon in tourism terms and indeed can be seen to mirror for example the serviced accommodation sector where some visitors prefer a high-quality, full-service hotel and others seek budget accommodation with limited service.

## **5. Current legislation and guidance on use of car parks**

- 5.1 Use of Public Car Parks is managed under the Road Traffic Act 1984 & The Roads Scotland Act 1984 & 1991. Under the provision of a Traffic Regulation Order to cover a piece of land designated as a public Car Park the Roads Authority may apply such restrictions on use and enforcement of said restrictions as empowered by the legislation.
- 5.2 There are some 230 off-street car parks regulated by the Highland Council's Off-Street Traffic Regulation Order of 2016. These sites range from 20 fully surfaced Pay & Display Car Parks to remote surfaced & unsurfaced free sites. The default position in relation to Motorhome use is to ban them completely or prohibit them from using the Car Park between night-time hours.
- 5.3 In addition, there are some 100 cemetery car parks which we will be including in a future amendment that will specifically control use of these sites for very limited uses. In view of the sensitive nature of those locations this will involve banning Motorhomes from them at all times.

## **6. Current legislation and guidance on other parking**

- 6.1 All ON street parking is managed through separate sections of the previously quoted legislation and some key points to note are:-
- All roadworthy vehicles may use a designated lay-by to rest, including in a Motorhome for such time as is required. This includes pulling in to sleep overnight. No offence or contravention is committed if the activity is contained within the vehicle. As soon as tables/chairs/cooking etc takes place outside the vehicle they are committing an offence and can be adjudged as "camping".
  - A vehicle should not be stationary within a "Passing Place" other than for the time required to allow a vehicle to pass. Any vehicle parked in a Passing Place is committing an obstruction of the public road and is liable to be reported to Police Scotland.
  - A vehicle may pull onto a verge or land adjacent to the road if there is no restriction in place preventing this / they do not cause any damage / they do not cause danger or hazard to other road users.

Any driver who parks their vehicle in a car park or designated layby is still deemed to be in charge of their vehicle and may be required to move it if requested. As other legislation e.g. around alcohol consumption would still apply and this can have implications for what activities could be carried out when parked in these locations.

## 7. Proposed Policy on Motorhome parking

- 7.1 Contrary to some views there is compelling evidence that financial benefit is brought to communities by responsible motorhome users.

The nature of touring holidays does not always lend traditional Caravan Park type sites to use by Motorhomes although such sites are clearly preferable for longer term stays. Though motorhome users may visit a formal camp site during a holiday this would normally be to stay for a brief period which is often also used to manage waste and water requirements. This approach is common in continental Europe where a system of "Aires" with basic facilities commonly cater for short overnight stops while travelling to a destination or touring and commercial campsites are well used for longer stays as people holiday in a particular destination.

To help support the sensible use of our Roads infrastructure and to help alleviate roadside parking it is proposed that officers take a pragmatic approach and identify key sites of existing off-street parking infrastructure and:-

1. Allow short stays (Maximum of 24hrs) by Motorhome/Campervans;
2. Propose a charge for this where appropriate of £5 for a maximum stay of 24 hours;
3. Prescribe the bays to be used where possible to do so;
4. Identify key "HUB" sites where infrastructure such as; Fresh water, Grey waste & Black waste disposal facilities are provided and charge £10 for a maximum stay of 24 hours; and
5. Funding for these sites is sought separately from existing budgets

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 28 May 2021

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