

Westminster's West End Evening and Sunday Parking Charges - Facts and Figures

Free evening and Sunday parking on single yellow lines in the West End for over 1,700 cars is to be axed on 9th January 2012 as part of plans by Westminster City Council to charge drivers up to £4.80p an hour to park between 6.30pm and midnight on Mondays to Saturdays and from 1.00pm – 6.00pm on Sundays. The Council says that the new charges and single-yellow line parking ban are designed to “increase the turnover of cars parking in the area and make it easier for those driving in to the heart of London to find a parking space”.

Over 15,600 West End workers, residents and church goers have signed the four petitions currently in circulation, with new signatures being added every day.

9,712 signatures on the petition organised by Casino worker Louise Bennett

<http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/we-are-against-westminster-city-council%E2%80%99s-new-parking.html>

3,265 signatures on the petition organised by Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg, Leader of Westminster Council Labour Group

<http://petitions.westminster.gov.uk/WestEndParking/>

1,966 signatures on the petition organised by Nazneen Faruk and Mayfair's Peter Wetherell

<http://petitions.westminster.gov.uk/freeParking/>

696 signatures on the petition organised by Westminster Churches against Sunday Parking charges

<http://www.petitiononline.co.uk/petition/westminster-churches-against-sunday-parking-charges/3177>

LBC 97.3 ran a poll to find out whether Londoners agree with the decision. The results are decisive:

Should the Planned evening and weekend parking charges in Westminster be introduced?

Yes	2%
No	98%

Economic Facts

The independent City forecaster the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) has estimated that Evening and weekend parking charges will cost the West End £800 million a year and threaten more than 5,100 jobs. It suggests nine per cent of the £9.2 billion night-time and Sunday economy could disappear as customers and workers are put off by the new parking charges.

The research found the biggest losses of turnover will be felt by restaurants, bars, pubs and cafés (£330 million) followed by theatres, cinemas, casinos and other places of entertainment (£314 million) and retailers (£145 million). As a result "in excess of 5,100 jobs could be under threat as a result of the parking charges," the report says, although the figure could be far higher.

Report author Oliver Hogan, Head of Microeconomics, CEBR said:

"If you dim the lights of the West End economically you may well dim the attractions of one of the world's top tourist destinations." He said the charges will "turn off a vital revenue stream for the UK during increasingly hard times for the business community," adding: "It was only once the economic modelling and calculations had been completed that we realised the true extent of the potential damage to the London economy."

In addition;

- Recent research by the Society of London Theatres revealed around 16% of London theatregoers use cars to visit the theatre. For those over 55 it was above 20%, with the reasons more about access and security, rather than public transport.
- Around 90% of London theatre ticket revenue is generated within the borough of Westminster.
- This would mean the changes put at risk up to around 14.5% of total theatre income or approximately £72 million a year, based on London theatres grossing £500 million annually - a figure achieved in both 2009 and 2010.
- "Parking availability" and high rents were among the biggest concerns of retailers. A recent survey found 25 per cent of retailers believed high parking charges were the principal reason for falling shop occupancy.
- The Musicians Union asked its members "If the proposed parking charges were introduced, would they deter you from accepting work in the West End? In response, 69% said 'yes' and 31% said 'no'.

What People Say

Business

Peter Wetherell, Mount Street, Mayfair, who is leading the Judicial Review against the parking charges,

"I've run my business here in Mayfair for 30 years and I'm very involved with the fabric of Mayfair and yet I was completely unaware of the consultation. What we feel is that this was pre-determined. We believe it was agreed in principle and they went out to find evidence to support it. We heard about the plans very late on. There has been an inadequate consultation process. This has brought together churches with casino workers, the residents with businesses, the visitors with the late night workers. Everyone is against it except for the council."

Baroness Valentine, Chief Executive of business group London First,

"At a time when the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors are all suffering from the protracted slowdown and reduced consumer confidence and spending, introducing measures that will further discourage customers from coming into central London seems perverse. Westminster's businesses should not be the unwilling guinea pigs in an experiment of which the outcome could be highly damaging to their viability."

Steve Warwick, Federation of Small Businesses

"At a time when businesses are looking to achieve growth and remain competitive, councils such as Westminster should not be regarding parking charges as a quick revenue grab, which is what this decision represents. We need councils to help the high street and not beat them into submission."

Matthew Jaffa, senior development manager of the Federation of Small Businesses,

"We believe this is a short-term money grab. The council is attacking the fabric of the high street."

Giles Barrie, Editor, 'Property Week'

"From landlords to developers, and from retailers to bar owners and restaurateurs, West End business is strongly opposed to the plan to charge £4.80/hour after 6 pm and all day Sunday."

Sir John Ritblat, the former chairman of British Land

"Night times and Sundays are very busy in the West End. That's the way it should be, unlike the old days when the West End was closed down in the evenings and at weekends. Central London is a Mecca for the country and the world. I am chairman of the Wallace Collection, which has weekend visitors, and of the London Business School, where we have weekend classes. I live near Regent's Park in the Westminster area and I work in Berkeley Square. It's short-sighted. Everyone benefits from encouraging people to come to the West End in the evenings and on Sundays. Churches would be badly hit if their congregations and volunteers had to pay extortionate parking fees. At a time of national exigency, people with disposable cash need to be encouraged to spend their money. It's unreasonable to add another tax layer to their already considerable expenses. We have to be pragmatic."

Nick Leslau, Max Property

"Westminster City Council has a stated policy to encourage families back into Mayfair, yet I find it hard to reconcile this with its poorly thought-through parking proposals. The response to the complaint is that the council will create as many residents' parking bays as are wanted. Although we can afford to live in town, some less fortunate friends cannot easily afford nearly £40 to visit us for the day or £25 for an evening. I have been an admirer of the council for years because it runs perhaps one of the most demanding and diverse boroughs with great sense and balance. But it should show some humility and stand down."

David Coffer, the West End's leading expert on restaurant, hotel and bar property,

"Several thousand businesses are likely to be affected by your extreme measures. I would anticipate that, once these appeals become live, Westminster will lose several million pounds of rating income...may I ask if you have considered whether you are shooting yourself in the foot?"

British Hospitality Association

"Putting people off visiting Westminster and spending in its restaurants and other businesses will damage jobs, investment and future prospects"

Annie Martins – Office cleaner

"I am an office and shop cleaner in Westminster. All of my work is done between these hours. The only way to get around quickly and safely from office to office and shop to shop with all the cleaning equipment is by car. I am on minimum wage. If this is brought in it makes my job financially unviable. Please don't bring these restrictions in"

West End Shops

Nat Wakely, John Lewis

"The West End is the premier retail location in the UK, but it also operates in a highly competitive environment. In recent years this competition has increased with the opening of Westfield London and will increase further with the opening of Westfield Stratford. Shoppers seeking to purchase bulky items are keen to be able to use their own cars. The ability to park without charge in the evening and at weekend provides a unique competitive advantage for the West End. At a time when consumer confidence is low and shoppers are forced to consider budgets at all times, we are concerned that the additional cost of car parking will act as a significant deterrent. "

Sir Philip Green

"I suppose, going into the year of the Olympics, it seems like a hugely intelligent way of getting people coming to London. I reckon they could pick up a few more ideas: they could charge people for walking on the pavement. I feel it can only cause damage. People who come to London know they have got to find a place to park. Charging people on a Sunday is just outrageous behaviour."

John King, chief executive of House of Fraser

"There is little congestion on a Sunday and therefore there is little justification for this. The West End suffers from a number of competitors. Any increase in parking charges would be a very significant issue for retailers."

Mary Portas,

"In central London, for example, much has been made of the decision to penalise those wishing to shop out of hours by imposing additional parking restrictions on the pretence that late-night traffic needs to be managed. This is just sheer madness and the only upside I can see is extra revenues generated for the council."

"Parking is just one of the issues that comes up time and time again. It's one of the biggest things that stops flow, and for retailers and restaurants it stops their trade. In all the research we are doing across many, many towns in the UK, one of the biggest inhibitions for people to shop is the parking issues. To be putting [restrictions] in central London just doesn't make sense."

Penelope Kennedy Scott, of the Mayfair & St James's Association, which represents 360 traders, said it remained opposed to the scheme, as did the Bond Street Association and Jermyn Street Association.

Sarah Cordey, of the British Retail Consortium

'Jacking up parking charges looks like an easy option for cash-strapped councils but they shouldn't be ignoring the wider impact on their communities and economies of the damage higher charges cause to town centres. It's short-sighted to treat parking as a revenue-raiser. New fees, which take advantage of shoppers, risk driving away business from town and city centres. The focus should be on providing good transport links and low parking charges which will attract consumers to the local high street, bringing in money and supporting jobs.'

Simone Liw, 36, manager of Mary's Team Hair Gallery, Lisle Street,

"There are many Chinese people living outside of central London who visit the area on a Sunday when they know it is free to park - they come in with their families to enjoy some dim sum and shopping. In terms of our business, there are other hairdressers in London that people can go to - so I worry that they will no longer bother coming here."

Churches

Rt Rev Richard Chartres, Bishop of London

"I have a pastoral concern that whatever its intention, as it is presently formulated, the legislation will be detrimental to the parishioners who have met Sunday by Sunday in our parish churches for hundreds of years. As you know, the 1994 Sunday Trading Act was formulated to protect those who wished to attend worship, and the last figures I saw for Westminster showed that about 15,000 attend

churches of all denominations on a Sunday. I do hope that some imaginative compromise can be agreed with the local churches that will allay their very genuine fears that the council's actions will prove a strong disincentive for those wishing to attend their central London churches - those very churches which contribute so much to the stability, sense of history and pastoral care of the community they serve."

Major Ray Brown of the Salvation Army in Oxford Street

"Westminster council have taken a very short-sighted decision to seriously damage hundreds of years of church community action and spiritual activity for the sake of a quick financial gain. For some members and volunteers at the Salvation Army, this means having to face the terrible decision of having to leave the church they have been involved in all their lives because they can't afford the parking charges."

Father William Pearsall, Farm Street Catholic church, Mayfair,

"Our volunteer community activities are really valuable and would present a huge loss to the local community if these plans affect our volunteers."

Michael Beckett, Church Warden of St George's in Hanover Square

"Sunday parking charges will seriously damage the spiritual heart of the city, and limit the good works undertaken by all the central London churches".

Matt Fuller, Senior Minister, Christ Church, Mayfair

"We do believe these parking charges will have a negative impact upon the quality of community life in Westminster. Along with many others, we find it hard to believe that these charges are being driven by anything other than revenue. We cannot think that this will be a good thing for businesses or community. We have a lot of families who drive in and it adds a cost, which adds difficulties for people."

Baroness Neuberger, senior rabbi to the West London Synagogue near Marble Arch

"We are very worried, it will make a great deal of difference, particularly on Sundays. We made representations to Westminster but they didn't seem very interested"

Rev Valerie Reid, Hinde Street Methodist Church,

"It will be more difficult to travel to worship on a Sunday. Many people travel long distances from all over London to worship at Hinde Street and may be unable to do so if they are unable to use public transport or it is not available"

Theatres

Mark Rubinstein, president of the Society of London Theatre,

"We're doing everything we can to encourage people to come to theatre and make it easier for them to have a good night out so it's a ridiculous time to start discouraging people,"

Nica Burns, vice president of the Society of London Theatre and chief executive of Nimax Theatres

"Westminster is a very good council and is very proactive supporting theatre. However, I do think it is appalling that the weekend should have been affected. Here we are trying to get families to spend more time with each other and families going to the big musicals is a very big deal at the weekends. I think it is morally indefensible - the weekend is a different time of the week and Westminster council shouldn't be treating it like an ordinary working day."

Julian Bird, chief executive, Society of London Theatres,

"We fundamentally believe this is a bad decision for our businesses across the West End. We feel there are facts that are not being considered in the council's consultation and decision making, they have not paid sufficient heed to feedback from businesses. Theatres sell around £500m of tickets every year and that translates in to well north of £2bn economic spend and most of that is spent in Westminster. This is huge business for the part of London that Westminster council controls and we just don't think that's being listened to and thought about. We're not the only ones saying it – everyone is saying it. We would like nothing better than to sit round the table and discuss it but as far as we're concerned this is a genuinely bad decision for London and Londoners, full stop. Particularly in this economic environment, why do anything that puts people off coming in to the West End?"

"We had argued against the extension of charging into other times of the week because we remain particularly concerned about families and the weekend family market in the theatre. We believe that a bigger proportion of the weekend audience come by car than the weekday audience and that reflects the fact that there are more families."

Martin Brown, Equity's assistant general secretary for communications and membership support

"Theatre workers including performers leave the theatre much later than the audience. Often they are travelling home on relatively empty public transport. Being able to park in central London before they start work enables them to travel home safely after they finish work. We fear that forcing theatre workers, who are often very poorly paid, to pay parking charges will put more young performers on public transport late at night and put them at risk."

Andrew Lloyd Webber:

"I am stunned to hear of Westminster's plans to extend parking restrictions during evenings and weekends. In our industry alone, the benefit in terms of revenue to the council will be exceeded many times over by loss of sales, not to mention the

inconvenience to families of Londoners who look to weekend parking to enjoy theatre, one of the city's greatest assets."

Tony Hall, Chief Executive of the Royal Opera House,

"There is a very real danger that people will not bother coming if they have difficult and expensive journeys. It would be tragic to see this business decline and to witness revenue in associated businesses - particularly restaurants and cafés - fall as well."

Harvey Goldsmith, Impresario,

"To create extra financial demand and difficulty for customers and employees in this economic climate is disastrous. As a long-standing Conservative voter I and many others will certainly withdraw our support in the coming elections"

Caroline Miller, Director of Dance UK,

"Dancers rely on employment generated by the major West End shows. Selling the hundreds of thousands of tickets needed to keep these shows in profit takes a huge amount of marketing and hard work. Introducing parking charges when audiences are already feeling the financial squeeze will only make it more difficult. Every show that fails means less jobs for dancers."

Sir Cameron Mackintosh, West End producer

"I think it's a terrible mistake and a rather surprising one from Westminster Council who have actually been fantastic over the last decade in really making the West End work and being huge supporters of the theatre. I just can only think they're rather desperate for money and haven't thought it through. They're going to hurt themselves more than they're going to hurt the theatre, there's going to be a lack of revenue and it's going to put people off from enjoying London."

Charlotte Longstaff, Ambassadors Theatre

"Many actors, musicians, back-stage and front-of-house employees in our theatres travel to and from work by car. Proposed parking fees would have bad effect on weekend theatre economy. Saturday night is busiest night of the week, often subsidising less busy week-nights. Also, development of Sunday night performances. Any disincentive to theatregoers to come into London at the weekend is bad news for the theatre and the wider London economy."

Casinos

Simon Thomas, Hippodrome Casino

"I have spent tens of millions of pounds on the project and am appalled at the insensitivity of the council now to businesses in the area. If I knew early on that the council would treat us this way, I would have reconsidered my decision to invest in Westminster. I am reconsidering my support generally to the Conservative Party."

The increasing media storm on the matter is also damaging to the Conservative Party. It is being seen as money grabbing and insensitive."

"It's disappointing at a time when everyone's under financial pressure that the council wants to take a cheap swipe."

Andrew Love, executive chairman of the Ritz Club, the casino within the hotel, said the majority of the 150 staff drove in from as far afield as Brighton as they couldn't afford to live in the capital. Their shifts finished between 2am and 6am - leaving them unable to rely on public transport.

"It's immoral and I think it's improper."

Louise Bennett, Mayfair casino worker

"There's a huge safety issue. We're going to be expected to walk at least a mile to our cars at three or four in the morning. Consideration should have been made for us. A lot of people in the entertainment industry earn the minimum wage of £5.93 an hour, but on Fridays and Saturdays they would be charged £4.80 an hour to park until midnight."

Nikki Brown, who works for Rockford Casino,

"I leave at four in the morning on certain shifts and I live in Essex where there is no night public transport whatsoever. How can I carry on doing my job when I cannot afford to pay for parking at £4.80? This is the difference between us being able to go to work and not go to work."

Keith Henderson, GMB organiser

"They should have excluded workers in the night time economy from these charges which will have a serious impact on our members and staff working in Westminster's casinos. There is little public transport operating when these workers finish work. This is a particular concern for women casino workers who may have to travel on their own in the early hours of the morning and could be at risk particularly during the long winter nights."

Clubs

James Pearson, artistic director at Soho's Ronnie Scott's, said session musicians were paid about £120 per night, meaning an evening's parking could cost them more than a third of their earnings.

"The whole industry will suffer - restaurants and venues. What [Westminster] don't seem to understand is that we need to make it easy for people to come into this area. It will take the spirit out of Soho."

Larry Pryce, Dover Street Jazz Club in Mayfair

"This will turn the West End into a ghost town."

Peter Stringfellow

"My main opposition to this proposal is quite simply that it will without doubt mean hundreds of jobs will be lost, at least 25 jobs from my two clubs alone."

Jonathan Orr-Ewing, Carlton Club

"The Carlton Club would be very concerned indeed if this proposal is enacted. We have many visitors to the Club from outside the West End, many of whom are not suited by public transport by virtue of age, infirmity and timetables. In addition we have staff who live outside the Westminster area and the evening duties they perform often require them to have their own transport to return home for both speed at the end of an evening shift and security."

Jeff Horton, 100 Club, Oxford Street

"Many of the bands that play here are 'up and coming' and don't have the monetary capacity to have to include the cost of parking. The cost of keeping the world's oldest live music venue in your borough has received much publicity recently, as you probably know. Rent, and Business Rates to Westminster Council are prohibitive. Taking away one of the only 'cost free' services would be yet another nail in the coffin, so to speak, as it would render it virtually impossible to run this particular business without it. It would also beg the question as to what, exactly, do we as businesses in Westminster get back from the council in return for the massive Rates we pay you??"

Musicians

John Smith, General Secretary Musicians' Union

'This is damaging to both performers working in the West End and the audiences that support arts and culture. This tax is a further blow to our members who are already suffering under the Government and Local Authority cuts to the arts.'

Dave Webster, London Region Senior Organiser, Musicians' Union

'I am appalled at the lack of consideration that has been given to our members' concerns. Despite a comprehensive and persuasive submission from the MU, Westminster City Council has simply not listened. This scheme will cost £500,000 to implement and will net between £4m and £7m in revenue per year. This tax on our members' work is totally unnecessary and unfair.'

"Musicians are often are often required to work unsociable hours and carry heavy and valuable instruments and equipment that makes it difficult and risky to use public transport. Many of our members are self-employed and are not sufficiently well-paid to be able to afford the pay the proposed extended parking charges."

Nick Mason, Pink Floyd,

"Anybody tasked with introducing yet more parking charges and restrictions in any major city should be forced to transport and set up a decent drum kit before considering the matter. In fact I'll lend them the kit!"

Nicola Benedetti, Classical violinist

"Evening parking restrictions would be devastating for concert halls and theatres."

Mim Grey, a singer in jazz band The Vodka Martinis,

"I just won't be able to do certain gigs any more. I'm also a percussionist so there's no way I can bring my congas and other drums without taking the car. I live in Buckinghamshire so public transport just isn't an option."

Simon Colman – Keyboard player

"I am a keyboard player who plays many gigs in the West End - corporate, jazz and hotels. Our fees are being constantly stretched, especially in the current economic climate. On most occasions I have to drive in my keyboard and amplifier - I have no choice. Very soon I'm going to be required to pay £30 to park during the evening - and will have to move my car (when the waiting time runs out) at a time when I will be performing. My fee is not big - around £150 for an evening which includes me providing £3000 worth of equipment, Congestion Charge, Petrol/Car usage. If I factor in the £30 parking fee it's going to be impossible to make a living from this work which I remind you involves unsocial hours providing an important entertainment services for the West End."

Tim Thornton – Double Bass player

"As a musician who works on average 4/5 nights a week in the west end at various jazz clubs such as Ronnie Scott's, Pizza Express Jazz Club and The Spice of Life, to name a few. I rely heavily on the ability to park for free after a certain time in that area. My average evening wage is £30-100 which working 4 or 5 nights a week is hard enough to survive on with the price of rent and living in London. I play the double bass and subsequently have to drive as I need to take my instrument, an amplifier and a large bag of electrical leads. This is impossible to take on public transport as it takes up the same space as 2 more people and isn't possible to carry by one person. I would severely struggle to continue making a living as a creative performer in the city which I have grown up and lived in all my life. I feel also this would be damaging to the tourist trade in London as many more venues would have to cut or close down due to the increase in fees demanded by musicians as they would have to pay £20-30 to park near the venue. Please listen to us, this is affecting our livelihood in a very real way."

Victoria Tilson – Double Bass Player

"Before I owned a car, I spent 2.5 years carting my double bass around on the tube and the bus. In that time, I was assaulted by a passenger on the bus and almost thrown off a tube train by one driver. I suffered back injury from having to haul my instrument up stairs, which are more commonplace at a lot of stations than I first

thought. The whole experience was hell from start to finish. I also couldn't manage my amplifier and music stand so had to either borrow equipment from the venue or get other band members to drive the extra stuff there for me. Not a good way of getting repeat bookings. Also, forget cabs. I am always charged an extra £5 each way for my bass to be driven in a cab with me and when you consider that the average fee from Westminster to where I live in zone 3 is approximately £25 each way, that would leave me with only £10 after the gig. Not a very profitable way to earn a living"

Actors

Nichola McAuliffe

"Drunkenness and aggression on streets at night, endless road closures at weekends, dirty and dangerous public transport are enough for the West End theatres to combat. Don't add parking restrictions to the barriers you erect to keep audiences away."

Jeremy Child

"Just a profiteering exercise by Westminster Council. It will make getting to work in The West End very difficult for Equity members, and particularly dangerous for female members returning home late at night. It will also damage the West End restaurant trade."

Jenny Seagrove

"I work as an actor in the West End, and increased parking rates will make it impossible financially for some of my colleagues to accept jobs in London. It is also another nail in the coffin of ever decreasing theatre attendance - another expense for the theatregoer to have to deal with. Please help us and don't implement these charges."

Sally Ann Triplett,

"Actors already work unsocial hours and why should we be penalised because that's the job we do? Mostly we adore our jobs but actors don't get the best wages in the world. People can live up to two hours away and they need the flexibility to be able to use their car,"

Roger Lloyd Pack,

"This feels like an iniquitous and punitive strategy to extract money from an already beleaguered profession, also from a public who pay high prices anyway to go to a show. Surely it's a self-defeating policy anyway. All it will do is drive people away from coming into the West End. Everyone will suffer, including Westminster Council."

Linda Bellingham

"The West End is a huge draw to tourists, not just from abroad but within the UK. Let us encourage families and older citizens to our theatres and galleries and make the cost at least a little less."

Tom Conti

"In a time of such financial hardship for so many people, this action by Westminster Council that will harm so many businesses and therefore those who work in them, is criminally irresponsible."

Dame Janet Suzman

"Sad that a London Borough bearing such an illustrious name should contemplate such a crassly Philistine policy. Or is greedy the word?"

Tim Piggott Smith

"People feel, well, punished when they take their cars into the West End don't they? I think people try much harder not to take their cars in. But one of the times particularly that the West End theatre is trying to make more available to families is the weekend. Statistics reveal that families tend to use their cars more and that people who tend to go to the theatre tend to use their cars more at the weekend and there is a particular feeling that this Friday/Saturday/Sunday charge is really aimed at them and it just makes things harder and more expensive and goodness knows it is expensive enough for people anyway!"

Members of the cast of *Les Misérables*, at Queen's Theatre

Shaun Dalton, 35, who plays factory foreman and Brujon

"The cost of travel from where I live is more expensive than driving at the moment. I'm going to have to do some other job in the days, teaching or something, to subsidise the parking charges." He added: "It just seems like another way to raise revenue, another dig at the driver... Unfortunately it's going to affect the standard of shows."

Alexia Khadime, 28, who plays Eponine,

"I avoid the Tube because I've had problems on it before. Parking charges will mean I won't have the option to get home safely."

Fra Free, 24, who plays Jean Provoire,

"Lots of people drive to the theatre and it could deter people coming to see this show because theatre tickets are expensive as they are. We could see shows going bust."

Restaurants

Richard Bridgeman, the 7th Earl of Bradford, who owns Porters English Restaurant in Covent Garden,

"The West End is one of the few areas in the country that is thriving and the council appears to want to kill it off."

"When you lose 1,700 parking spaces on yellow lines you are going to lose a lot of business,"

Michel Roux, chef de cuisine at the two Michelin-starred Le Gavroche in Mayfair

"It's absolutely despicable and will hurt Mayfair so much because people just won't come here, they will go outside central London. There is no congestion problem in Mayfair and there never has been, and I've been here since 1981. Many of my staff drive in after 6.30 to avoid the congestion charge. They have to drive in because of the simple fact that the cost of housing in London is so excessive. How do you get to somewhere like Merton at 1am by public transport? It takes nearly two hours and if you're a female member of staff it's just not on. But if you have to pay £30 extra a day they are not going to come. The fact that there was no consultation is appalling and bordering on illegal. On a personal front I have been here as a business for 30 years and now I am being told to sod off."

Albert Roux, owner of Le Gavroche, the first restaurant in England to win three Michelin stars.

"Do you not think imposing such ridiculous restrictions will have an extreme adverse effect on business? People with low disposable income use the 'out of hours' time to support businesses in the Westminster borough, the businesses need the support. Have you looked at the figures of how retail trade is dropping? Now you want to kill it. The head of this council has gone too far and should be replaced," he adds.
"Westminster used to be a top borough, now it falls into one of the worst boroughs. Our streets are dirty. Our crime is up. Our services declined."

Jeremy King, co-proprietor of The Wolseley in Piccadilly,

"One of the most foolish central London initiatives I have ever encountered",

Richard Caring, Chairman, Caprice Holdings

"It's the dumbest thing I ever heard. It's a very short-sighted move, because it will cost them an awful lot more in damage to business in the West End"

Richard Shepherd, owner of Langan's Brasserie,

"One of the attractions at my restaurant is the live music. Musicians bring their own instruments, which are bulky and impossible to carry on public transport, and they need to be able to park nearby."

Jamie Barber, owner of Hush, Bond Street,

"The biggest threat to my business since its inception. Your proposals demonstrate an arrogance and disdain to the plight of small businesses. I have not been

consulted and I can only assume that you do not care. I have been a Tory voter since age 18. This has shaken my resolve to vote Conservative."

Sandro Lorabi, manager of Il Siciliano, a family restaurant in Dean Street,

"It's totally unacceptable. We don't know how we'll survive - it's too much. We're under pressure already, so what do you think will happen when they bring in an extra charge? Instead of staff earning £10 an hour, they'll have to earn £5. Instead of getting two people to work I'll have to send one person home."

Yan Chen, head waiter Lisle Street's Young Cheng restaurant,

"It's just too expensive and will stop customers coming as they can't afford to eat and pay to park - on top of the already expensive congestion charge."

Chen Fen Xu, assistant manager at the Dim Sum restaurant,

"It will stop people coming to the area which will make it less busy and vibrant. It is not good for our business and could cost us as much as 20 per cent."

Transport

John Griffin, founder and chairman of Addison Lee which runs 3,000 minicabs in London, said:

"This move is the worst thing you could believe. It will turn the West End into a ghost town. Westminster council are a disgrace. Women will be put at risk because they cannot get home."

Ian Dix, Director of transport consultants Vectos,

"The council has said that traffic flows at night are higher even than during the day. That may be true on certain roads, but that is not the general case."

Tony Travers, LSE

"Camden faces the challenge that if they do not follow suit, then that area could become the place for free parking in the evenings and weekends."

Cultural Institutions

John Berry, Artistic director, [English National Opera](#),

Sandy Nairne, Director, [National Portrait Gallery](#),

Tony Hall, CEO, [Royal Opera House](#),

Ian Blatchford, [Science Museum](#),

Julia Peyton-Jones and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-directors, [Serpentine Gallery](#),

Julian Bird CEO, [The Society of London Theatre](#),

Nicholas Serota, Director, [Tate](#),

Martin Roth, Director, [V&A](#)

We are writing to express our concern at the new parking policies which Westminster council are planning to introduce from January which will extend hours of parking control in the West End from 6.30pm to midnight from Monday to Saturday, and from 1pm to 6pm on Sunday. This is likely to have a serious impact on our visitors and audiences at a time when arts budgets are already being severely challenged by cuts in government spending. Westminster council states that these proposals are being introduced "on an experimental basis", and we call on them to reconsider policies which will have such a detrimental effect on the success of cultural organisations in Westminster and the economy of London in general.

Residents' Groups

Kaye de Ville, Chair, Soho Society

"You should be thinking very hard about placing another tax on people and rather think about helping people through these austere times rather than squeezing more out of them."

Anthony Lorenz, Chairman of the Residents Society of Mayfair and St James's

"Even though this will fill the Council's coffers by £7.2m a year it will do nothing but increase traffic in an already quiet traffic area"

Others and Opinion Formers

Brett Rogers, Photographers' Gallery

"I am concerned that the introduction of charges will act as a significant deterrent to people who cannot find other ways to visit the West End especially on Sundays when they might be combining a trip to the Gallery with several other activities which are better delivered through car than by public transport. Families with children are one of our key groups who might be affected by this move."

Simon Jenkins

"So chuck it, Westminster. Do a Cameron. You know you will have to back down on this plan, so do it now and put everyone out of the misery of an 18-month "experiment". At the very least, stop the pretence that this is not about money. It is for the rest of us, and it is for you."

Politicians

Conservatives

Boris Johnson, Mayor of London

"It's completely mad what Westminster are doing. It will be damaging to business. I'm afraid, as far as I understand the matter, there is a financial issue here for Westminster. In other words, they need the revenue."

"I have grave misgivings about the impact these charges may have on the night time and weekend economy. They potentially discourage people from shopping, heading to the theatre or going to church in the area; and I have heard a great deal of concern from people who may be affected. My powers do not allow me to stop this from happening but we have made it clear to the borough, as forcibly as we can, that we are deeply uneasy about their proposals."

"I am acutely alarmed by the suggestion that businesses in the West End could be hit to the tune of a whopping £800 million and 5,000 jobs by Westminster's proposed parking charges."

Justine Greening MP, Secretary of State for Transport

"I'm sure when Westminster thought about what they were going to do with those parking charges they had a sense they might be able to put some extra money in their coffers that they could probably use on public services, without a significant impact on their night time economy. I think a lot of people have said, actually, it is going to have a big impact... I'm sure as a council they will take that incredibly seriously."

Lord Strathclyde, Leader of the House of Lords

"I do think this is a bizarre decision with no obvious merit. My position is plain. Leave the charges off and let people enjoy Westminster and the centre of London on Sundays and in the evenings. One of the joys of living in Westminster - and I suspect I speak for people who don't live in the borough too - is coming into London at night or on a Sunday and being able to park on single yellow lines, which were designed not to obstruct traffic. This important issue will impact on businesses and people's enjoyment. I hope it's not too late to reconsider."

He said he understood the *"suspicion that this is about raising money rather than improving traffic flow"*.

Bob Neill MP, Minister, Department of Communities and Local Government,

"I am concerned about the effect of higher parking charges on the broader economy of London and the West End, particularly its impact on employees, small firms and sole traders."

Stephen Hammond MP for Wimbledon, PPS to Eric Pickles MP

"There is genuine surprise that Westminster council are claiming that this will help ease congestion. Many Londoners will think that it looks like another tax on entering

central London. Westminster will need to show that this is not just a cash-raising exercise which could well be challengeable."

"These charges risk undermining the vitality of the High Street at a time when we should be helping small shops, not hindering them. I urge Westminster to rethink these charges."

"It is unacceptable for councils to treat residents as cash cows to boost their bank balances,"

Ed Vaizey MP, Culture and creative industries minister

"The West End is probably the most successful theatre district in the world and is crucial to the country's arts scene as a whole; I do not want to see any changes that would harm. Next year, our Olympic year, will be hugely significant for London's West End. Westminster council must think carefully about the impact these changes could have on our theatres, and see whether there are viable alternatives to address the parking challenge while still allowing theatre-goers to park free in the evenings and on Sundays."

Nick de Bois MP, Enfield North

"This is a kick in the teeth for central London businesses at the very worst time. It's crazy."

Mark Field MP, Cities of London and Westminster South

"I am aware that these planned parking restrictions are causing an enormous amount of anxiety amongst constituents. I have received letters and emails from residents and businesspeople alike who have expressed concern about women's safety; the difficulty for friends and family in visiting homes in the West End; the cost of parking to low-paid employees in the hospitality industry; the disincentive for shoppers; the impact on church congregations; and the overall effect the changes could have on the spirit of the West End."

Lord Young of Graffham, former Cabinet Minister

"I cannot understand the logic of it. It's biting the hand that feeds it because the West End pays Westminster council a great deal of money. The whole thing about the West End is that in the evenings and at weekends people can come up there and leave the car, go to the theatre, go to a restaurant. Well, if they can't do that then what's the point? This would just kill the whole thing. I am sure people still haven't yet paid attention to what is coming but when they do you can see there will be a great protest."

"It will be extremely unpopular. I don't know anyone who thinks it is a good idea. It's going to destroy a lot of the West End - entertainment, restaurants, everything."

Daniel Moylan, Deputy Chairman of Transport for London

"It is causing anxiety and concern in a number of sectors including to the Mayor and he would like to see Westminster maybe adapt, delay or develop its plans so that those anxieties are dealt with. If they could find a way of doing that I think he would be relieved. If they could find a way of rethinking and dealing with these problems in some other way I think the Mayor would be relieved."

Steve Norris, former Mayoral Candidate, MP and Minister for London,

"We are appalled by the proposed new parking charges. They will not solve the parking problem you claim to be alleviating, not least because banning parking on yellow lines virtually all weekend will actually make much less space available than at present. What they will certainly do is harm the many businesses in Soho already coming to terms with the tough economic climate. These new charges are cynical, harmful and unnecessary. Please have the courage to cancel them now."

Councillor Glenys Roberts, West End Ward, Westminster City Council

"I just cannot see the logic of effectively cordoning off the West End from motorists in these deeply straitened times"

"I do think the council should think again before issuing the traffic order because so many people on the ground think they have got it wrong."

Councillor Lindsey Hall, Abbey Road ward and chair of the Westminster Council Conservative backbench committee,

"I have said on the record that my position is that I privately do not support it, but I accept the majority decision of the group."

Shelagh Spensley, Chairman of the West End ward Conservative Association,

"Our councillors have put the West End ward in an untenable situation as a result of the planned, extended parking charges in the West End ... The councillors are imposing these restrictions against the warnings of a clear majority."

Liberal Democrats

Norman Baker MP, Minister of Transport

"These charges appear to be less about controlling parking and more about raising money for the council. They look close to vindictive in nature. You might even say that they constitute a war on the motorist."

Brian Paddick, London Mayoral Candidate

"The proposals will inconvenience many low income people who work in pubs, clubs, restaurants and theatres, who often have to make long journeys in the early hours of the morning"

Labour

Ken Livingstone

"Westminster's latest rip-off charges are nothing to do with regulating congestion or improving the environment, and everything to do with ripping off Londoners as a whole to fill Westminster council's coffers."

Tessa Jowell MP for Dulwich

"This is bad news for many - restaurateurs, visitors to the West End and particularly for women going out for a night of fun with friends or to work in the evening, who use their own cars when public transport may not be available. Such a decision risks women's safety. "

Karen Buck MP for Westminster North, Shadow education minister

"Among the voices raised against Westminster's decision are many women drivers and visitors who feel their safety is being compromised and who therefore risk losing their jobs or feel unable to enjoy the West End at night."

Emily Thornberry MP for Islington South, Shadow attorney general

"The timing of these new charges will lead many people to believe that they are being introduced to raise revenue rather than deal with congestion. Westminster council needs to be confident that it can persuade a court, if challenged, that these charges are primarily in order to meet their transport aims rather than fill a black hole in the council's coffers."

Murad Qureshi, Member of the London Assembly

"It would not be too cynical of me to suggest that there is a strong element of revenue raising behind the proposals. Residents have wholeheartedly spoken out against the moves and the proposals are also bad for business."

Labour Councillor Sue Vincent, who represents Holborn and Covent Garden on Camden Council,

"It's going to put huge pressure on available parking. We have heard nothing from Westminster. I am furious."

Green

Jenny Jones, GLA member and London Mayoral Candidate

"I am concerned that the parking charges in Westminster might be an example of green arguments being used to disguise what is actually an exercise in increasing council revenues"

Susanna Rustin, Green party London Assembly candidate, West Central London

“This is a shameless raid on motorists to fill the council's coffers and not a thought-through strategy to tackle traffic and soaring pollution in our city.”

Cross Party

A cross party group of MPs has put down the following Early Day Motion;

“That this House notes the proposal by Westminster City Council to extend on-street parking restrictions to midnight from Monday to Saturday and between 1.00pm and 6.00pm on Sundays; expresses concern at the impact that such restrictions will have on those working unsocial hours in the entertainment and leisure industries, which are a major component of the local Westminster economy; is particularly concerned about the effect this will have on women and more vulnerable workers who have to use their own transport at times when public transport is not running; and calls on Westminster Council to reconsider its parking proposals for those who need to be able to travel to and from work by car.”

Bottomley, Peter
Campbell, Ronnie
Caton, Martin
Dowd, Jim
Godsiff, Roger
Hopkins, Kelvin
Keen, Alan
Meale, Alan
Qureshi, Yasmin
Wicks, Malcolm