



Durham, United Kingdom

Durham city is situated in North East England. The quality of the landscape surrounding the city centre means it has a unique setting and it is now a major tourist attraction. Durham has a total population of 87,656 and faces the issue of rising traffic levels into the historic centre, much of the activity being generated by tourist traffic. In order to manage the level of traffic entering Central Durham, local decision makers in 2002 decided to introduce charging for those vehicles wishing to access the historic core — in essence the Market Place, Cathedral and Castle, which are part of the World Heritage Site.

Why was urban road user charging introduced in Durham?

The broad aims of the charging scheme were to: improve pedestrian safety; improve access for the disabled; enhance a world heritage site; and sustain the vitality of this part of the city centre. The scheme is designed to resolve the conflict between vehicles and pedestrians when accessing the historic centre.

The revenues raised have been used to support a frequent bus service to and from the charging area, i.e. the World Heritage Site.

What are the features of the Durham scheme?

Durham's congestion charging zone is basically a cordon-based scheme, where drivers must pay to enter a fixed zone. Essentially the scheme covers just one road, which provides access to Durham's World Heritage site on Durham's peninsula. The road gains access to the Market Place, Cathedral and Castle.

The £2 (€2.30) charge is payable on exit from the area between 10.00 to 16.00 Monday to Saturday. Entrance and exit from the area is free at all other times. Exit during the restricted period is controlled with an automatic bollard, which is linked to payment and permit detection apparatus.

Drivers wishing to access the peninsula will be faced with a charge on exit. Drivers must stop at the stop line and red signal located alongside the payment machine. Following a successful transaction, the bollard will lower and, when fully retracted, the traffic signal will change to green and the driver can proceed safely out of the charged zone.

Moreover:

- Drivers who fail to meet the charge will be permitted



to proceed through the bollard system. However, a £30 (€34.50) charge notice is issued to the vehicle owner;

- Vehicles will be recorded on the CCTV system and owners traced through the DVLA ;
- Drivers attempting to avoid the charge through driving out of the uncontrolled entrance will be committing a traffic offence; and
- This is monitored by the CCTV system and appropriate action will be taken against them.

How was the Durham scheme implemented?

Essentially the Durham charging scheme is active along one road (Saddler Street in red on the map) and has not created any problems such as boundary issues or traffic displacement on to other routes. Since the scheme was on a small scale and broadly non-controversial, there was not a high level of opposition to its implementation.

Impacts of the Durham scheme

Results suggest that the scheme achieved an 85% reduction in vehicular traffic (from over 2000 to approximately 200 vehicles per day). It has been reported by businesses that the majority (83%) have not altered their servicing arrangements following the introduction of the charge. As a result of the huge reduction in general traffic levels, vehicle emissions have dropped substantially.

There was a significant improvement in the public perception of the scheme since its introduction – 70% (a 21% increase from before the scheme was introduced) now believe that the charge is a good idea. In broader terms, there has been a rise to 78% (when compared to the scheme's introduction) in those who consider Durham City Centre to be a safe place to visit.

Durham's Saddler Street (in red)



There appears to have been a re-distribution from cars to pedestrians – the big fall in the number of cars appears to have been replaced by the expansion in the pedestrian activity, suggesting that the area has now become a more accessible, safe and pleasant place to visit on foot. The revenues raised have been used to support a frequent bus service to and from the charging area, which is a World Heritage Site.

Conclusion

The introduction of congestion charging in Durham has on the whole been well received by the local population. The charge to access Saddler Street has been successful in reducing traffic levels by 85%.

Durham County Council has received funding under the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) for further transport modeling work, including the option of introducing a wider congestion charge in the city and building a northern relief road. However, in December 2008 Durham County Council announced that it would not be pursuing a bid to the Transport Innovation Fund, effectively ending its interest in an expanded congestion charge zone in the medium term.

