Cyngor Tref Trallwng
Welshpool Town Council

Maes y Dre Recreation Ground - Car Parking Management and Charging

Business Case

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1. Executive overview

This business case examines whether to introduce a managed charging scheme at the two existing car parks at Maes y Dre Recreation Ground, with the primary aims of protecting access for recreation, discouraging long-stay unrelated parking, and recovering management costs.

It assesses parking demand, pricing, revenue, non-domestic rates, three enforcement approaches, legal issues, consultation, risks and implementation dependencies. It does not presume that the proposal will proceed.

A £3 daily tariff with 10 paying vehicles per chargeable weekday generates illustrative annual income of £5,934 after output VAT and assumed payment fees. Deducting a central illustrative NNDR provision of £3,200 leaves £2,734 before enforcement, integration, power, administration and other costs. The financial case is therefore sensitive to occupancy and rates.

2. Site, existing arrangements and rationale

Area	Spaces (approx.)	Area	Current provision
Main car park	41 marked	1,275.3570 m^2	Free
Bowling club car park	10	508.1571 m^2	Free
Total	51	1,783.5141 m^2	Free

Both parking areas form part of the same land parcel and are managed by the Council.

Users include sports participants and spectators, dog walkers, school and nursery visitors, youth organisations, local workers and other long-stay motorists. Charging and management of only one area risks displacement to the other.

The Council has identified the two areas as contiguous and considers a single hereditament the appropriate working assumption if they become separately rated, subject to actual occupation and valuation decisions.

The September 2026 Council discussion (minute WTCM890) prompted examination of weekday charging, a free initial period and alternative enforcement arrangements. The underlying objectives should be judged by access and parking turnover as well as net revenue.

3. Parking evidence and limitations

Date/time	Observed vehicles (approx.)
6 October 08:01	10–12
6 October 10:28	17–19
6 October 13:43	19–21
6 October 15:52	17–19
6 October 17:18	7–8
6 October 19:46	3–5
20 October 08:55–15:00	17-18

These observations indicate material weekday occupation but are snapshots rather than a continuous vehicle count.

They do not establish turnover, individual duration, number of vehicles exceeding a free period, or actual paying demand. School collection and drop-off may cause high turnover without chargeable stays.

Revenue forecasts below are sensitivities, not estimates based on measured chargeable stays. The forthcoming consultation will provide additional qualitative and self-reported duration evidence but cannot replace measured entry/exit data.

4. Charging design under consideration

Element	Working proposal
Free period	Two hours initially proposed; duration open to consultation
Tariffs	£2, £3 or £4 per calendar day, VAT inclusive
Chargeable days	Monday–Friday excluding bank holidays
Chargeable hours	All day on chargeable days; calendar day resets at midnight
Payment	Council-operated online platform using GOV.UK Pay
Machines	None currently proposed
Coverage	Both car parks
Permits/exemptions	No general permits assumed; any operational exceptions to be determined

A midnight reset requires precise published terms for overnight stays, including the position where a stay begins on a free day and ends on a chargeable day. Accessibility and digital exclusion require explicit mitigation.

5. Financial assumptions and tariff model

All business-case figures are net of output VAT; motorists' tariffs are VAT inclusive. For comparability, the initial model uses 252 chargeable weekdays per year, which is deliberately a provisional convention and overstates days if bank holidays are not removed.

The implementation-year model must use the actual weekday count excluding bank holidays. Assumed card fee per paid transaction: £0.135 plus 0.34% of VAT-inclusive tariff.

Paying vehicles/day	£2/day	£3/day	£4/day
5	£1,921	£2,967	£4,013
10	£3,843	£5,934	£8,026
15	£5,764	£8,901	£12,038
20	£7,685	£11,869	£16,051

Figures represent annual parking income after VAT and assumed transaction fees, before NNDR and enforcement. No parking charge notice revenue is included. At £3, each additional paying vehicle per weekday produces approximately £593 per 252-day year after these deductions.

6. Non-domestic rates (NNDR)

The Council enquired of the Valuation Office on 20 October 2026. Its response declined to provide a prospective estimate and referred the Council to the rating list and car park valuation guidance; it did not determine rateability, valuation method or the assessment unit.

The Council's working view is that the contiguous car parks in common occupation should form one hereditament if assessed separately, but a wider recreation-ground assessment remains a possibility. The 51-space scenario below is an unverified planning assumption rather than an official VO estimate.

Scenario	Illustrative RV	2026/27 NNDR at 0.502
Low (£62.50/space)	£3,187.50	£1,600
Central (£125/space)	£6,375	£3,200
High (£200/space)	£10,200	£5,120

No relief has been assumed. These illustrative rates per space have not yet been substantiated by comparable rating-list entries.

The actual bill could differ materially and the relevant multiplier must be updated for the implementation financial year.

Financial sensitivity after central NNDR provision (£3,200)

Paying vehicles/day	£2/day	£3/day	£4/day
5	−£1,279	−£233	£813
10	£643	£2,734	£4,826
15	£2,564	£5,701	£8,838
20	£4,485	£8,669	£12,851

These balances are not net profit: they exclude contractor charges if any, power, integration, staff costs, administration, compliance and contingencies.

7. Enforcement and operating options

Option A — Council-owned ANPR, byelaw FPN enforcement

The Council would fund cameras, installation, software and maintenance and use ANPR as evidence of possible byelaw offences.

Previously indicated DVLA access costs total £2,080 annually (£52 quarterly plus £156 monthly).

A key legal challenge is that registration data identifies a keeper, not necessarily the individual offender – a FPN must be issued to the person committing the offence and that would not necessarily be the vehicle owner, so the Council must confirm that the FPN process can lawfully identify and pursue the liable person.

No capital quotation is available but ANPR cameras would cost roughly £2,000. This option has material capital, administrative and compliance risks.

Option B — NPC contracted ANPR and private parking charges

National Parking Control (NPC) submitted a proposal dated 28 October 2026 offers funded ANPR cameras, signage and maintenance, a client portal, vehicle safelist, support, and private parking charge notice administration.

NPC has since indicated that it has experience integrating ANPR with existing third-party payment systems and does not anticipate a problem with the Council using its own platform rather than RingGo.

A technical meeting is required to define payment validation, vehicle-registration matching, the free period, midnight reset, data flows, costs and responsibilities. NPC has also indicated a proposed commercial share of paid parking charge notices; the percentage is commercially sensitive and is deliberately excluded from this document. No parking charge notice income is included in the base-case financial model.

The proposed equipment plan includes both car parks and indicates that a power connection is needed.

Option C — Manual Council enforcement using byelaw FPNs

Authorised Council staff would monitor compliance and issue FPNs where legally available. This avoids capital ANPR expenditure but requires officer time, training, recording and prosecution/escalation procedures. The proposed Town Centre Ranger may provide capacity, but this is not yet costed or approved for the purpose. Enforcement would be intermittent.

Comparison	A: Council ANPR	B: NPC	C: Manual
Equipment	Council-funded	NPC-funded in proposal	Minimal
Ongoing cost	Software, DVLA fees, staff	No cost to the Council	Staff time
Payment platform	Council's own	Council's own	Council's own
Enforcement mechanism	Byelaw FPN	Private contractual PCN	Byelaw FPN
Key dependency	Lawful identification of offender	Contract/legal compatibility and integration	Officer capacity and lawful issue

8. Fields in Trust and other legal constraints

Both car parks have Fields in Trust (FiT) protection and neither expansion nor new parking is proposed. Published FiT guidance explicitly requires consent for new or extended car parks. The Council's current interpretation is that the proposed change to charging alone does not require a consent application, and none is planned.

The underlying dedication terms and recreational purpose continue to matter.

The Council has identified Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 as the charging power.

Byelaw provisions, FPN powers, enforcement roles and any interaction with NPC's private contractual terms must be verified. UK GDPR and ANPR DPIA, procurement, bilingual signs, equality and accessibility, safe payment processes and public-law decision-making are implementation requirements.

9. Consultation

The Council invited views on the proposed parking arrangements through an online survey and letters to organisations using Maes y Dre. The consultation asked how the car parks are used, how long vehicles normally stay, what free period would be appropriate and how charges might affect users.

By 5 November 2026, 17 responses had been received: 11 from individuals and six submitted on behalf of organisations. Sixteen respondents opposed the proposal (11 strongly opposed and five opposed); one supported it. These are the responses received rather than a representative survey of everyone using the car parks. Some respondents appear to be associated with the same clubs or nursery.

Summary of responses

Question	Responses
Overall view	11 strongly oppose; 5 oppose; 1 support
Usual length of stay	7 over 5 hours; 2 between 3 and 5 hours; 4 between 2 and 3 hours; 4 between 1 and 2 hours
Preferred free parking period	9 more than 4 hours; 6 three hours; 2 unsure
Likely effect of charges	10 would park elsewhere; 2 would visit less frequently; 5 unsure
Frequency of parking	4 daily; 8 several times weekly; 3 around once weekly; 2 a few times monthly
Car park used	8 main car park; 8 both; 1 bowling club car park
Main reason for use	10 sports club activities; 5 working at nearby school/nursery; 1 school/nursery drop-off; 1 working elsewhere nearby

Comments received

Sports clubs raised concerns about the effect of charges on participation, parents, coaches and visiting teams. Welshpool Town FC suggested charges might discourage people from playing or watching and lead to parking elsewhere. Welshpool Rugby Club described the car park as an important community facility. Waterloo Rovers FC opposed

charges for visiting teams, although it indicated that its own Saturday activities would not generally be affected by the proposed weekday scheme.

Nursery staff and respondents associated with Little Acorns raised concerns about the cost of parking for staff and the need to keep spaces near the nursery available for safe drop-off and collection. One respondent also referred to existing vehicle speeds on the road. These concerns suggest that displacement may have implications beyond the car parks themselves.

Other respondents warned that motorists could move to the cricket and rugby club parking areas or surrounding roads, potentially creating congestion or unsafe parking. One respondent supported preventing all-day parking by people not using the recreation ground, but considered that those attending recreational activities should remain able to park free of charge. The Feathers Association supported the proposal and suggested that partnership work might be considered in connection with parking arrangements.

Implications for the business case

The consultation shows substantial opposition among those who responded, particularly from people involved in sport and nursery provision. It also indicates that the proposed two-hour free period would not meet the stated preference of most respondents: nine selected more than four hours and six selected three hours. This does not necessarily mean that all those respondents would have to pay, because weekend parking is proposed to remain free and some visits last less than two hours.

The potential for displaced parking is a significant concern and should be considered alongside the financial appraisal. The Council has not measured how many vehicles would actually pay, and the responses suggest that some existing users would avoid the car parks rather than pay. Accordingly, the income scenarios elsewhere in this business case remain illustrative and should not be regarded as forecasts supported by the consultation.

The consultation does not, on its own, determine whether charges should be introduced. It does, however, strengthen the case for examining the length of the free period, possible arrangements for genuine recreational users, the effect on nursery staff and surrounding roads, and whether the anticipated income justifies the potential impact. Any final scheme would need to address these issues.

10. Risks and mitigations

Risk	Significance	Mitigation / evidence needed

Paying demand below model	High	Use lower-demand sensitivities; review real turnover
NNDR higher than assumed	High	Comparable RV checks; contingency
NPC payment integration unavailable	High	Written API/feed specification and test
Private PCN legal incompatibility	High	Legal review of land/byelaws/keeper liability
Free period harms recreational access	High	Analyse consultation and adapt scheme
Digital exclusion / accessibility	Medium	Alternative support/payment provision
ANPR errors / privacy	High	DPIA, signs, appeal safeguards, audit
Hidden contract or exit costs	Medium	Full written terms and exit schedule

11. Implementation dependencies and proposed sequence

If the Council was to proceed with implementation then it is recommended that Option B be adopted as the option is fully funded capital and enforcement costs. The Council would retain 100% of the parking tariffs and a set percentage of the fine payments.

The approval to proceed is contingent on the NPC technical requirements being met, power being available and the private enforcement contractual matters.

If approved then the Council would need to set the daily tariff, how many days chargeable and the 'free' period. It would be advisable to set the proposed income at £2000 for the 27/28 budget which would be revised in 28/29 based on the actual income provided.

12. Overall business-case position

The scheme is potentially viable, especially if NPC can provide genuinely funded enforcement while the Council retains parking tariff receipts.

NPC's positive response on third-party payment integration strengthens the practical case, but is not a completed technical specification or contract.

Seventeen consultation responses have now been received, with substantial opposition to charging and concerns about the effect on sports users, nursery staff and surrounding

parking. The findings do not establish the number of motorists who would pay, but they must be considered before any final scheme is selected.

A final conclusion should take account of the consultation findings, legal due diligence, confirmed operating costs and the likely impact of displaced parking.