

Starting up

- What are some ways to discourage people from driving cars into the centre of towns and cities?
- What do you think a workplace parking levy is?

Vocabulary

The city of Nottingham in the UK has taken a particular approach to discourage people from driving to work in the city centre. Before reading the article, match the words and phrases in Column A with the definitions in Column B.

Column A

- 1 levy
- 2 hectic
- 3 priced off the road
- 4 premature
- 5 pollutant
- 6 tackle
- 7 smog
- 8 controversial
- 9 congestion
- 10 urban

Column B

- a a substance that is harmful to the environment
- b deal with a problem
- c when roads are blocked due to traffic
- d dirty air
- e forced to stop driving because of cost
- f in the city
- g a kind of tax
- h happening before the usual time
- i causing strong feelings of disagreement
- j very busy

How Nottingham cut air pollution with the UK's only workplace parking levy

Chris Powell is part of a declining number in Nottingham: he drives a car to work. This is because the city in England's East Midlands charges the hundreds of companies with more than 10 parking spaces a £415 annual levy per space.

Mr Powell is also lucky; his employer, law firm Rothera Sharp, pays his fee.

“As a firm we are all in favour of the levy,” said the solicitor, who gets one of the company's much desired 15 parking spaces because of his hectic schedule. “All the revenue is going to local transport infrastructure.”

The UK's only workplace parking levy has priced many drivers off the road but it is popular because the money is invested in public transport and the city's air is becoming cleaner.

Other cities are taking note. Officials in Edinburgh, London, Oxford and Birmingham have all been in touch and the Scottish government has just passed legislation that would permit councils to introduce similar levies.

Air pollution contributes to 36,000 premature deaths across the UK annually, according to Public Health England, a government body. The EU legal limit on the level of nitrogen dioxide, the most dangerous pollutant, is 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and Nottingham hit 34 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2018, down from 41 in 2012.

After the UK failed to bring air pollution under legal limits in major cities, the Supreme Court ruled in 2015 that local authorities must reduce levels of nitrogen dioxide. The government responded by ordering three dozen of the largest and most polluted cities to design action plans to tackle their smog.

Because of measures it has already taken, Nottingham is the only city of its size or larger that is not introducing daily entry fees on more polluting vehicles.

It introduced the parking levy in 2012 and has used the £61m raised to date, along with government money, to fund a £580m tram network covering 20 miles across a population of 630,000.

David Mellen, leader of the Labour-controlled council, said the parking levy, imported from Perth, Australia, was controversial when proposed. “The chamber of commerce was very much against it. They said businesses would leave Nottingham and investors would not come. In fact, businesses come here because of our tram system. Congestion is a great deal less than in other cities.”

Since 2012 the number of businesses has increased by 2,350, almost a quarter. There has been a net increase of 23,400 jobs, or 14 per cent, in the city during the period. And over the past 17 years, car use has dropped 7 per cent and, unlike for most UK urban areas, public transport use has increased — by 7 per cent.



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Reading comprehension

Decide whether the following statements about the article are *True*, *False* or there is *Not enough information provided (N)*. Select relevant extracts to support your choice.

- 1 Chris Powell drives to work.
- 2 He is the only member of his company who does this.
- 3 His company, Rothera Sharp, has the largest number of parking spaces among Nottingham companies.
- 4 Several other British cities have also introduced parking levies.
- 5 All the money from the parking levies is invested in transport projects.
- 6 Edinburgh, London, Oxford and Birmingham are also interested in what Nottingham is doing.
- 7 Nottingham has one of the lowest levels of nitrogen dioxide emissions among British cities.
- 8 Three dozen of the UK's largest and most polluted cities are going to introduce Clean Air Zones in the near future.
- 9 In addition to its parking levy, Nottingham also plans to introduce charges for more polluting vehicles entering the city centre.
- 10 Nottingham has used the money collected from its parking levy to help pay for an urban tram system.
- 11 The idea for the parking levy came from Perth, Australia.
- 12 In spite of the introduction of the parking levy, the use of public transport has not increased in Nottingham.

Grammar – comparatives and superlatives

Use the comparative or superlative forms of the adjectives in the box to complete the sentences.

dangerous	polluting	clean	low	big
large (2)	polluted	old	few	

- 1 Congestion is _____ in Nottingham than in many other UK cities.
- 2 The _____ roadside pollutant in European cities is nitrogen dioxide.
- 3 Most British cities which are _____ than Nottingham plan to introduce a Clean Air Zone and to charge an entry fee for the _____ vehicles.
- 4 Because there are _____ cars entering the centre due to the parking levy, Nottingham's air has become _____ .
- 5 Because of the effect of its parking levy, Nottingham is _____ and congested than cities of a similar size.
- 6 The _____ congestion charge system in the UK is in London.
- 7 When it expands in 2021, London will have the _____ Ultra Low Emissions Zone area in Europe.
- 8 The Government was the _____ contributor to the cost of Nottingham's tram system.

Discussion

- 1 What do you think of Nottingham's parking levy as a way of pricing drivers off the road? Would it work in your town or city? Does any town or city use it in your country?
- 2 What are the main ways towns and cities use to discourage or prevent cars from entering city centres?

ANSWER KEY**Vocabulary**

- 1 g
- 2 j
- 3 e
- 4 h
- 5 a
- 6 b
- 7 d
- 8 i
- 9 c
- 10 f

Reading comprehension

- 1 True. *Chris Powell is part of a declining number in Nottingham: he drives a car to work.*
- 2 False. He has *one of the company's much desired 15 parking spaces.*
- 3 N. We are not told about this, but probably not as there are *hundreds of companies with more than 10 parking spaces.*
- 4 False. It is *the UK's only workplace parking levy.*
- 5 True. *All the revenue is going to local transport infrastructure.*
- 6 True. *Other cities are taking note. Officials in Edinburgh, London, Oxford and Birmingham have all been in touch.*
- 7 N. We are not given this information.
- 8 N. We are not told this, although the government has told *three dozen of the largest and most polluted cities to design action plans to tackle their smog.*
- 9 False. *Nottingham is the only city of its size or larger that is not introducing daily entry fees on more polluting vehicles.*
- 10 True. *The city has used the £61m raised to date, along with government money, to fund a £580m tram network covering 20 miles across a population of 630,000.*
- 11 True. *The parking levy (was) imported from Perth, Australia.*
- 12 False. *Public transport use has increased — by 7 per cent.*

Grammar

- 1 lower
- 2 most dangerous
- 3 larger ... most polluting
- 4 fewer ... cleaner
- 5 less polluted
- 6 oldest
- 7 largest / biggest
- 8 biggest / largest

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