

Lobster Pot (Portland Bill) Ltd

Portland Bill, Portland
Dorset DT5 2JT
Tel (01305) 820242
Fax (01305) 786556

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Weymouth & Portland Borough Council
Council Offices
North Quay
Weymouth
Dorset
DT4 8TA

To Councillor Nigel Reed

RE Car Parking Charges at Portland Bill –Winter Rates

I write to the Borough Council to ask them to reconsider the winter car parking charges at Portland Bill. It has recently been drawn to my attention that a 2 hour parking charge will increase from 60p to £1.50 an increase of 150%. I note from the list of proposed charges published in the Echo that no other car park received a similar increase.

I have been the owner of the Lobster Pot since 1975, and in that time the business has changed considerably, culminating in the rebuild during the winter of 2002. I was urged to open the business all year round, and to that end I included air conditioning and heating in the new building so that I could open during the winter. I run a well regarded and professional business with a well trained staff, and I am proud to have earned a gold standard food safety award over the last three inspections. By opening all year I have been able to offer several members of staff a salaried position with job continuity rather than the seasonal opening that we used to operate.

Trading at Portland Bill during the winter is at best a “cover your costs” operation and after three years we have just managed to arrive at that position. During that period revenues at the car park must have increased because the Lobster Pot is open and it seems rather heinous to penalise a business which has already helped winter revenues. We rely totally on the car park for our customer base as there is no practical bus service and no alternative place to park and for practical purposes you can not walk there in winter. The cost of the car park affects us as a business like no other in the area, because there is no alternative. I understand as a council that raising revenue is a problematic and controversial area but I also believe a good council should help a local business where possible. I have no complaint at the increase in parking charges for the summer period, but I strongly believe a reduced rate in the winter could be levied to help us. Furthermore, I understand that a similar problem was identified at

the Nothe car park this year and remedial action was taken by the Council. The situation at the Nothe is very similar to that of Portland Bill, but at least the Nothe is close to the centre of town and has some alternative parking. I would ask the Council to be as sympathetic to our argument as they have been to those at the Nothe.

Since the publication of the new charges many of our regular customers who with out exception are local people have commented unfavourably on the new winter charge and have told us they are unlikely to come out to the Lobster Pot for a tea and scone due to an extra 90p being added to their bill which they cannot avoid paying.

I apologise that this letter has come late in the year, but as I provide eight annual season tickets for myself and staff, I do not use the parking meters where the proposed charges were advertised and I do not always pick up a Dorset Evening Echo. I do feel very strongly that the business is being treated very harshly and I would be happy to meet with any committee member who would be prepared to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Martin Brain
Director

CC Martyn Gallivan - WPBC
Derek Whittaker – WPBC
Christine James - WPBC
Louise Spain – Cluttons (agent for the Crown Estates)
Roland Reynolds – Court Leet