



To all Castlebar Municipal Area Councillors.

Cllr. Cyril Burke, Cllr. Frank Durcan, Cllr. Blackie Gavin, Cllr. Henry Kenny, Cllr. Al. McDonnell, Cllr. Michael Kilcoyne, Cllr. Martin McLoughlin. Cllr. Therese Ruane.

Re Parking Charges in Kiltimagh

Dear Councillor,

The recent news that Kiltimagh and 7 other similarly sized towns are to have parking charges imposed for on street and council owned car parks is worrying if it goes ahead. It will surely sound the "death knell" for Kiltimagh and possibly for the other towns too.

Kiltimagh as a town, is weak from a retail and service perspective. Most of the service and retail businesses have closed with their former premises remaining vacant and in some cases derelict. In fact 3 businesses, Byrnes Butchers, The Paper Shop and Edens Flowers have all closed in Kiltimagh within the last month. Bringing in parking charges, brings another impediment to bear on the few people who still support the remaining businesses and any such move will ensure that their closure is expedited.

This proposal to bring in Parking Charges comes in the context of us struggling to retain our Bank of Ireland Branch and the Post Office in the town. If we lose either or both, what chance have we of attracting any business or service to the town or even retaining what we have? We have already lost our AIB branch and therefore Bank of Ireland remains the only Bank in town. We are all aware of the An Post rationalisation plans and in fact Kiltimagh has already lost the sorting office and associated jobs in the past 18 months. It is likely that the Post Office will be next on the list.

The simple fact is that it's (unfortunately) a very rare occurrence that you would drive up any street in Kiltimagh and fail to find an available parking space within 100 meters of the premises that you wish to do business in. So the argument that Parking Charges will ensure a turnover of parking spaces and make spaces available for those wishing to visit, is 'null and void'. If there are a few employees of businesses who take up parking spaces for long periods of a day, well we do have 1 hour parking on all streets in the centre in Kiltimagh. However it is not enforced, but would deal with this issue if it were!

So what will be the effect of the parking charges? Simply, it will give another reason or excuse for locals to go to the Multinational Supermarkets in the other towns like Tesco in Swinford or Claremorris or Castlebar, where the parking is free. It gives potential visitors from other towns to businesses in Kiltimagh, a reason not to come. How can this be to the advantage of the town of Kiltimagh? Will this cause the ultimate demise of the last remaining Supermarkets we have, Kavanaghs Supervalu and Carrolls Londis, or the closure of the Cill Aodain Hotel? If it does cause the closure of even one of these businesses, surely Mayo County will have lost more in Commercial Rates than it will gain in Parking Charges!

This brings me nicely to the projected revenues that Mayo County Council expect to receive from Parking Charges in the various towns as related in yesterdays Mayo News:

<http://www.mayonews.ie/news/31544-eight-more-mayo-towns-set-to-pay-for-parking>

Assuming that the relative Parking Charges able to be collected are a reflection of the business that each

IRD KILTIMAGH CLG. AIDEN STREET, KILTIMAGH, COUNTY MAYO, IRELAND



town will do, I find it hard to understand why someone would consider Kiltimagh to be on an equivalent level business wise, to all of Ballyhaunis, Swinford and Foxford put together. In all honesty, I would consider that if Parking Charges are introduced here, a reasonable projection of the amount to be collected would be something of the order of 15-25% of that proposed in that article.

Recognising the changing face of our local economy many years ago has prompted our own organisation to get involved, inter alia, in such things as Tidy Towns, Support for local Festivals and Events, Infrastructural and Amenity Development and perhaps most notably in the provision of 74,000 sq. ft. of workspace which today gives employment to 131 people full time and a further 37 part time. This is 168 jobs in the local economy, jobs which we are facilitating with low cost workspace and business infrastructure (broadband, etc.) in the small hope that they might add to the footfall of the existing business in town so that these existing businesses may survive and in the long run, perhaps, we might get a new business or two, to occupy the vacant premises that litter our main streets. Our Cairn International Trade Centre, which hosted an area meeting of the Castlebar Municipal District about 2 years ago, today hosts 12 companies, including 2 FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) companies, collectively employing 70 people. While overall, our jobs creation effort has been well worthwhile and has spawned businesses like CMS who now employ about 85 people (not included in the 168 jobs above!), we are fighting a losing battle trying to maintain a retail and service based centre to our town centre, and crucially, a derelict and dead town centre will even kill any hopes we have in building on the success of those businesses in our workspace. It doesn't matter that these businesses don't do the bulk of their trade in Kiltimagh – they won't locate in, or remain in, a town that is derelict and dead.

In summary, I think the proposal to introduce Parking Charges to the small towns listed in the article, all with weak retail or service businesses within their local economies, is ludicrous in the extreme and will only serve to close the few remaining retail and service businesses we have. We are therefore asking Mayo County Council NOT to implement this proposal and will be taking this line as part of any public consultation assuming this proposal goes that far. Rather, we think the Council should get behind significant self-help efforts like our own to try and support the existing business and perhaps in time attract a few more, into our local economy and the economies of the other small towns. We are begging your support in this matter as one of our local area Councillors who will ultimately have a significant part of the decision making power on this matter.

I am available to discuss any part of the above or the matter in general with you, at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Kelly

7th February 2018