

EXPERIMENT: 'A SCIENTIFIC PROCEDURE UNDERTAKEN TO MAKE A DISCOVERY.'

There is no scientific basis behind Leicester City Council's implementation of an EXPERIMENTAL PARKING PERMIT SCHEME, or indeed in gauging its outcome.

I have never seen the term EXPERIMENTAL or EXPERIMENT so constantly referred to (x 18 times), and so consistently misused in a less than single page explanatory letter sent out to residents and local businesses in Clarendon Park.

FIRSTLY

Leicester City Council's preliminary research, upon which the scheme has been implemented, is based on "Following requests to look at ways to ease the parking situation..."

Requests from exactly whom, when and over what period of time, how many requests, how were they obtained?

A total lack of a thorough preliminary investigation before implementing such an important local scheme is very concerning.

Especially, as in the recent past, the Council undertook a well-planned and implemented referendum on a proposed residential parking scheme in exactly the same area of Clarendon Park as in the current scheme.

Why did they not follow this proven model again to really determine the mood of Clarendon Park residents and businesses towards this latest parking scheme in our area?

(Incidentally, both results of previous referenda overwhelmingly rejected the parking schemes proposed at the time).

SECONDLY

The time period over which our Council's current unilateral, so called 'experimental' scheme, is taking place (1st of February to 31st of August, 2021), is totally inappropriate.

THIRDLY

The criteria against which the 'experimental' scheme will be judged, is entirely bereft of even a smattering of scientific rigour.

Currently, due to the pandemic resulting in lockdown, there is little traffic between the suburbs and the city centre. We are increasingly shopping on the internet, isolating ourselves, or working and studying from home (or sadly, have been made unemployed because of the pandemic).

Under these totally unique circumstances the use of private cars, public transport, cycling and walking has therefore been greatly diminished, and in any case is entirely different to any normal situation any one of us has ever experienced.

After the six month period that the scheme is initially designed to run for, or even at some time within the six month period of the scheme, during which the effectiveness of the vaccine programme may be more clearly determined, especially in its implications for opening up our schools and our economy, the dynamics of commuter parking may be significantly different to pre Covid-19 patterns.

How can this fluctuating and unpredictable environment, and one which we have little idea as to how long it will last, be a remotely ideal time in which to produce any meaningful results from such an 'experiment'.

FINALLY

The very loosely proposed criteria by which the Council will determine the outcome of this 'experiment' is so vacuous in design, ill thought through, subjective and limited in scope, as to be almost entirely meaningless.

CRITERIA

- 1) “..car-park availability before and after the scheme”, and,
- 2) “The attitudes of residents and businesses” following the “experimental” period.

1. Notwithstanding the afore mentioned and the totally inappropriate environment in which this scheme is being undertaken, exactly what percentage increase in car parking availability in the scheme area will the experiment be determined to be ‘a success or a failure’, and, most importantly, who will decide this figure? We do not have any agreed benchmark prior to implementation of the scheme. Furthermore, will there be a car count taking place concurrently in streets immediately adjacent and not included in the scheme, in order to analyse a possible change in commuter car parking in those areas.? Such a count would give a complete picture of the possible outcome in the parking landscape of the whole area, and could anticipate a problematic knock on effect. Was it even considered, is it being done?

2. What scientific rigour is there in the results of an experiment being dependent upon “attitudes”?

PERPETRATOR, JUDGE, JURY

The only conclusion one can draw is that the end result of this “experimental” parking scheme, which has already been initiated and designed entirely by the Council, and in whose outcome they alone will be the sole arbiters, has already been determined.

IT

This is somewhat uncomfortably hinted at by the rather sinister, “..IT will be decided..”

What or who is deciding ‘IT?!’

The Council, in order to further justify their unilateral implementation of their scheme, state that “Such parking measures are currently in operation in Nottingham and London”.

If the scheme in Clarendon Park is based on a blue print from those two cities, then why was it that no information was given to us on those schemes?

Exactly what problems were the Nottingham and London schemes intended to ameliorate, what preliminary research and consultation took place, are the demographics of those schemes the same as in Clarendon Park, over what period of time did those schemes take place, what was their outcome, have they gone beyond the experimental stage, have those schemes been extended to adjacent areas, are those schemes now fully implemented, and, if so, what is now the cost of the permits for the residents of Nottingham and London in their newly implemented parking permit schemes, and how much in additional income are those councils now raising in parking fines?

Why where we not at least given the details of the Nottingham and London schemes (which we hope our Council fully researched into) in a consultative letter well in advance of the Councils scheme being implemented, so that we had a better understanding of the issues, implications and the possible outcomes?

TICK, TICK, TICK

The lack of such details hints at a perfunctory tick box process undertaken by the Council: “consult”, “experiment”, IMPLIMENT. Their thinking no doubt entirely clouded and guided by the enormous potential for parking permit and parking fine income.

It appears that what our Council is particularly accomplished at, is in SCHEMING.

These other 'parking measures', pulled-out of the air from elsewhere (Nottingham and London), but without any explanation of the way they were set up, or of their outcomes, seem simply to be a case of 'adding verisimilitude to an otherwise balding narrative'.

This unilaterally implemented Council Experimental Parking Permit Scheme in Clarendon Park, following practically zero consultation, shows a complete disregard for our local community, a community who will ultimately have to pay for it, and for its consequences.

Our Council would be wise to remind itself that previous attempts at 'TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION' has had a very unfortunate past for its perpetrators. As a result of such failed attempts in history, we lost our most profitable foreign assets (Stamp Tax – The American settlements), a King lost his head (Ship Tax – Charles 1st), and, in living memory, a once popular Prime Minister lost her Government (Poll Tax – Margaret Thatcher).

Unfortunately, in Leicester, we have a particular problem of political complacency. We effectively live in a one-party state, and this lack of political colour results in too much power residing in too few individuals (one?). This has concerning implications for the choice of key appointments in the Council, and the formulation and implementation of policies by the Council, potentially resulting in a very autocratic process, requiring little need to properly consult those it purports to govern.

However, our elected representatives, once elected, I suppose never need concern themselves with being 'popular', except at election time of course. Round this neighbourhood, if you could pin a red rosette onto a virus we would overwhelmingly vote it in.

WE TRULY ARE A LATTER DAY "ROTTEN BOROUGH"

The process that our Council always finds difficult to adopt, is that if they were to properly and meaningfully consult with the community over which they propose to implement their ideas, it would produce a better outcome, and one in which all stake holders would have confidence in, and take greater ownership of. We could then replace the divisive language of 'us' and 'them' with a more positive lexicon of inclusivity. To do anything otherwise leads to cinisism.

WE RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES THAT COMPRISE THE CLARENDON PARK COMMUNITY ARE NOT SUPPLIANT IMBECILES.

We fully appreciate that there are parking issues that irritate our community, which need to be looked into and sorted out, and that we do need to encourage everyone to use sustainable forms of mobility.

The reasonable amongst us (the majority I would say) also understand that our Council does need to create many and diverse local income streams, due to ever- dwindling resources from Central Government, and the ever-expanding demands on our council services. We sympathise with the enormous and ever- increasing difficulties that they are continually under. Their job is a difficult one.

WE GET IT.

Some of us are even persuaded that long term environmental improvements, which we have to unequivocally make, come at a price, and that going forward, our personal incomes and therefore our standard of living, may well reduce in order to invest in a sustainable future, both for ourselves and for those who come after us, both in our community and far beyond.

IN PLANETARY TERMS, WE ALL SWIM IN THE SAME POND.

Most of us, I am sure, are very appreciative and supportive of our Councils tremendous efforts, made on our behalf by largely able and right thinking local public servants (both officers and those elected) in transforming our city into becoming a more relevant, pleasant, safe and sustainable community, and in implementing improvements to our schools, our health, transport and housing.

Unfortunately, both locally and nationally, the dilemma for our politicians in a modern market led economic system, is that most of us will not vote to become poorer.

In conclusion, we live in uncertain and unprecedented times, in a rapidly degrading planet, and with little idea as to how it will eventually shake out into a new and sustainable future (if such a future is possible).

We need to have fresh ideas and engage in better and bolder thinking, if we are to achieve a benign but effective revolution in our society, in the design of our economy, and in governance.

I feel, personally, we desperately need to re- think much of what we do, individually and as a community. (There most certainly is such a thing as community).

We can contribute locally by acting together, intelligently and inclusively, and in being less selfish and more honest and open with each other, in matters large or small, including in discussions on parking schemes.

WE ARE, AT THE END OF THE DAY, ON THE SAME SIDE.

Yours Faithfully,

John Husain