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Aelod Senedd Cymru dros Aberconwy
Member of the Welsh Parliament for Aberconwy



Councillor Charlie McCoubrey,
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Via Email.

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Friday 3rd December 2021

Re: Free Christmas Parking Plans

Dear Council Leader, Cllr. Charlie McCoubrey,

I hope this letter finds you and your Cabinet well.

Small Business Saturday is a non-commercial campaign, which highlights small business successes and encourages consumers to 'shop local'. With this event taking place tomorrow, celebrating its ninth year, it is hoped that we may surpass the success of last December, which saw 15.4 million people spending a record £1.1 billion. Small businesses are the beating heart of the Welsh economy, with a great number of local success stories that we can herald. However, I am concerned that this goodwill to local traders may be undermined by the position of Conwy County Borough Council to not offer periods of free parking in its Council-operated car parks throughout the festive period.

Elsewhere in North Wales, I note that several local authorities have taken proactive steps to ensure that residents and visitors are enticed to spend their money in support of local businesses. Since the 21st November, and until 31st December, I am informed that all Denbighshire Council operated town centre car parks are free of charge after 3pm. In Gwynedd, shoppers visiting the towns of Bangor and Caernarfon, among others, will be offered free parking between the 11th to the 28th December in most council-run car parks. Finally, I am informed that all Ynys Môn-run car parks will offer free parking after 10:00 am, between the 13th and 29th December 2021. At present, Conwy County Borough Council appears to feature on a list of only two local authorities in North Wales who have no plans to offer a county-wide Christmas parking concession period to shoppers.

I am concerned that this may place our towns at a disadvantage. As I am sure you are all too aware, the Christmas trading period is incredibly important for our home-grown, small and medium sized businesses. The rush to find gifts for loved ones is also known to benefit our fantastic local hospitality offering, as shoppers often turn to our cafes and coffeeshops for a mid-session energy boost. As the Shadow Minister for Climate Change, I should also point out that, by encouraging residents to shop locally, we can also do our bit to confront poor air pollution and protect the environment.

With this in mind, I ask that you look to urgently review your Christmas parking plans so that a more generous scheme can be implemented as a means of encouraging more people to visit and spend in our town centres. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. Please also accept my best wishes for a merry Christmas, as well as my warm regards for the new year.

Yours sincerely,

Janet Finch-Saunders MS/AS