

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Full Council meeting 17 July 2025

Liberal Democrat Group Motion on Support for Visitor Charge Powers for Local Authorities in England

To be proposed by Councillor Michelle O'Doherty

Council notes:

1. Over 1 million overnight visitors and 4.2 million day visitors come to Bath annually.
2. Tourism brings significant economic benefits to our area, generating nearly half a billion pounds in direct and related spend, supporting local businesses and over 8,000 jobs.
3. Direct income to the Council from visitor spending – including £12 million financial surplus from Heritage Services in 2024-25 – helps fund vital public services across Bath and North East Somerset.
4. High visitor numbers are also associated with disbenefits and additional costs to local authorities, through pressure on infrastructure, services, transport, waste management and cleansing.
5. Visitor charges, paid to local authorities by overnight visitors, are commonplace in other countries; similar schemes are beginning to be considered and introduced in the UK using a variety of mechanisms.
6. Visitor charges have the potential to raise additional income which could help mitigate the impacts of tourism on communities and invest in improved facilities and services benefiting residents and visitors.
7. Councils face long-term financial challenges, due to the decline in government grant funding and cost pressures, and have been encouraged to develop new sources of income.

Council:

8. Calls on Government to give English councils the freedom and necessary powers to introduce locally administered visitor charges.
 9. Welcomes the leadership B&NES is showing on this issue and the initiative by the Leader of B&NES Council to establish a joint position with Leaders representing other key heritage cities in England.
 10. Endorses the joint letter from the Leaders which calls for new engagement between Government and councils to explore and develop strategies for ameliorating the adverse impacts of tourism and to consider how the benefits can be as impactful and wide ranging as possible.
- *Unless where specifically set out in the statute, motions approved at Council do not bind the Executive (Cabinet) but may influence their future decisions.*
 - *Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.*

11. Believes any visitor charge schemes in England should be designed locally, based on evidence and tailored to local needs. Furthermore, believes that income should be available to the administering local authority to allocate and should not be to the detriment of other government funding allocations.

DRAFT

- *Unless where specifically set out in the statute, motions approved at Council do not bind the Executive (Cabinet) but may influence their future decisions.*
- *Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.*