

Improving parking for the West End – some progress



Residents will recall that, last March, [I attempted](#) to get Dundee City Council to undertake a new consultation with residents and local businesses on ways to improve West End parking. My motion then attracted 12 votes but I was outvoted by 15 SNP and Conservative councillors so nothing has been done since to tackle this vital issue.

Last night, at the City Development Committee, I revisited the issue and proposed the following new motion :

“Committee notes with concern that, following the consultation exercise in 2012 in part of the West End Ward relative to a possible residents’ parking scheme, the parking situation for residents and local businesses in the area concerned has worsened.

Committee therefore instructs the Executive Director of City Development to undertake a further informal consultation with community groups including West End Community Council, local residents, the business community and other stakeholders such as the University of Dundee, to ascertain views as to measures that may have public support for possible future introduction.

The outcomes of this informal consultation should thereafter be reported back to this committee to determine which measures have public support and are viable; and the potential scope of any residents’ parking scheme or schemes.

Committee also instructs the Executive Director of City Development to undertake this exercise and report back on his findings and recommendations to this committee as soon as staff resources allow.”

I am pleased to say that, after an excellent deputation by two community representatives – Peter Menzies and Elaine Kuwahara – speaking in a personal capacity – and debate at committee, it was agreed that the possibility of progressing this through the Economic Development working group that is working on supporting new initiatives to support the Perth Road district shopping centre. This will be discussed at its next meeting and, if there is no swift progress, I have reserved by right to take the motion above back to City Development Committee.

This is the first positive move by the council to sort the parking situation since the failed 2012 consultation exercise and I am pleased that at last some progress has at least started. We now need momentum to really tackle and improve the parking situation.

Shanghai seeks ways to promote smoking ban

Political advisers in Shanghai have proposed the city learn from other cities about publicizing the smoking ban that will take effect in five weeks.

Beginning March 1, all public indoor venues and work areas, as well as some outdoor places, such as art performance and sporting venues, open areas at maternity and infant hospitals, kindergartens and bus stops in Shanghai will become nonsmoking zones to shield nonsmokers from secondhand smoke.

But the current anti-smoking advertisements in the city are far from enough, said some local political advisers during their annual gathering last week.

"In Singapore, smoking bans with pictures, such as broken cigarette butts and children covering their mouths and noses surrounded by smoke, are very commonly seen in the streets to gain people's attention," said Wang Xinmei, a member of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Shanghai's political advisory body.

"Beijing also did a good job informing the public of its smoking ban, which became effective in June 2015. On all the flights and trains bound for Beijing there are repeat broadcasts of the smoking ban, which seems powerful, and Shanghai can learn from that," said Wang, who is also chairwoman of the Jinshan district branch of the city's political advisory body.

Gwan Tat-cheong, a Hongkonger and another political adviser in Shanghai, said Shanghai may look to Hong Kong, where smoking indoors has been prohibited since 2007. Publicity of the smoking ban is ubiquitous in public venues and on different communication channels throughout the city, and the notifications also highlight the cost that violators face.

"It always states clearly that errant smokers can be slapped with fines of HK\$1,500 (\$193)," said Gwan, who is also a senior adviser at the Bank of East Asia (China) Ltd.

Severe punishment for violators in the first few days after the regulation takes effect may also serve as a powerful deterrent, said the political advisers. Individuals caught smoking in forbidden areas will be fined from 50 to 200 yuan, and organizations that fail to stop smokers will be fined up to 30,000 yuan, according to the new regulation.

Wu Fan, director of the Shanghai Center for Disease Control, said: "Any new regulation, such as the citywide fireworks and firecrackers ban since the beginning of last year, faces challenges when it first comes into being, but it'll become easier when a consensus is formed in the whole society."

China is the world's largest consumer and producer of tobacco. World Health Organization statistics showed that there are more than 300 million smokers in the country, accounting for almost one-third of the world's total.

Outdoor workers need protection from pollution

People who must work outdoors on heavily polluted days are in dire need of labor protections, Worker's Daily reported.

Wang Hongtao, a food deliveryman in Beijing, said he receives 30 percent more orders on smoggy days, as people tend to stay home due to personal health concerns.

China's online food delivery company ele.me showed a 39 percent increase in orders on Dec. 16, when Beijing issued a red alert for air pollution, compared to Dec. 14, when the air was good.

A courier named Zhang said his salary depends on the number of packages he delivers, so he cannot afford to stop working when the weather is bad.

Sanitation workers and traffic police are also among those who continue working outdoors on polluted days, yet labor protection for such workers remains poor.

Ma Jingjing, a lawyer in Beijing, said smog can cause irreversible harm to humans, yet some laborers have a poor awareness of the health hazards. Ma said it is necessary for authorities to include professional dust masks among the standard equipment for outdoor workers.

Ma also called for a shortening of outdoor work hours when the air is polluted, or for higher pay on smoggy days.

Zhang Yimin, a political advisor in Ningbo City of Zhejiang Province, also proposed the adoption of flexible hours on polluted days.

It can be hard to directly attribute negative health impacts to smog exposure. This poses a challenge when it comes to verifying smog as a reason for occupational diseases.

Health expert Zhou Shenglai, with the Chinese Hospital Association, says diseases caused by exhaust fumes and smog should be included on the list of

occupational diseases for sanitation workers and traffic officers.

Former oil chief sentenced for graft

Wang Tianpu, former general manager of oil giant China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (Sinopec Group), was sentenced Tuesday to 15 and a half years in prison for graft.

The sentence was handed down by the Nanchang City Intermediate People's Court in east China's Jiangxi Province.

The court also imposed a fine of 3.2 million yuan (around 468,300 U.S. dollars) on Wang and ordered all his illicit gains to be confiscated.

The court found that from 2003 to 2014, Wang took advantage of his various positions to help others with business operations, project undertaking and job placement. He asked for and illegally accepted money and property worth over 33.4 million yuan and illegally possessed state-owned assets worth almost 800,000 yuan, according to the court.

The court showed leniency, taking into consideration his confession, remorse and the fact that he voluntarily turned over all his proceeds.

Industrial strategy

The government has published its Green Paper designed to boost industry and productivity, and to spread investment and prosperity more widely around the UK.

One of the main improvements I have been seeking is improved public procurement. The paper stresses the need for change in this area. The public sector buys all too many items from overseas, when acting as an intelligent customer and partner of UK business would allow it to buy good value goods and services here in the UK. The public sector would then benefit from the taxes levied on that business activity and on the incomes of the employees involved, and there would be a saving on the balance of payments.

The Defence department has ordered a large number of Ajax light tanks from Spain. Given the long term production runs needed the government could have worked with a UK company and design. It is importing steel for our new submarines on the grounds that our industry does not make the right specification. Surely it could have been worthwhile to discuss with our steel

industry how they could invest in transforming their base steel into the required material? We are importing large quantities of building materials and components for the UK public housing programmes executed by Housing Associations and Councils. This again is work that could be done at home.

In our overseas aid programme large sums are sent to foreign institutions, charities and companies to spend for us. I want to see us concentrate our aid activities on specialist areas like disease eradication and the provision of clean water. If we did we could have sufficient purchasing power to allow companies to invest in producing the vaccines and water plants here in the UK instead of importing them from other rich countries. Overseas aid is best spent in the country you are helping. Where that is not possible it should be spent on things we are good at here.

The Green Paper also covers R and D, skills, infrastructure, start ups, exports, affordable energy, world leading sectors, spreading investment around the whole UK and creating institutions to assist. Tax cuts would also be a big help in generating enterprise and growth. Ensuring proper competition and preventing take over by large groups wanting to reduce competition will also be essential.