Oxford temporary congestion charge for cars

Consultation response, by Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably (POETS)

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POETS (Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably) is a group of senior planning, environment and transport professionals and academics focussed primarily on planning and transport in Oxfordshire.

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Oxford – Proposed Temporary Congestion Charge

1. POETS strongly supports the county council's objective of reducing traffic in Oxford and previously gave its broad support to the proposed traffic filter trial.

2. We recognise the reasons why introduction of the trial has had to be deferred and there is clearly a risk that the target date of reopening Botley Road at the rail station by August 2026, might slip again. Under these circumstances we believe the council is right to consider what other measures might be introduced in the interim to reduce congestion in the city and improve the reliability and effectiveness of bus services. In particular it would provide some welcome relief to the Abingdon Road corridor which has suffered horrendously while the Botley Road has been closed.

3. Introduction of a congestion charge would clearly reduce traffic levels to a degree related to the level of the charge made, the hours of operation and which vehicles are liable to the charge

4. The proposed charging locations are clearly not ideal for a congestion charge scheme to be fully effective, and we are also concerned at the scale and complexity of the exemptions proposed. Given the circumstances, however, with a view to both evaluating its impact while hopefully making a significant contribution to improving traffic conditions in the city, POETS **supports** the principle of an experiment, subject to the following;

   i).a comprehensive publicity campaign should be launched to explain the purpose of the scheme and ensure road users fully understand how it will operate;

   ii) financial incentives to encourage use local buses and park & ride services should be introduced simultaneously;

   iii) consideration should be made of the potential to simultaneously introduce new and/or additional bus services