



CPT Gynn Square Coach Park Response

The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) is recognised by the Government as the UK trade body for bus and coach operators with in excess of 90% of bus fleet, and 55% of coach fleet within its membership numbering around a thousand business members.

National Picture

Coach travel plays a vital and often underappreciated role in transporting people around the country every day. Coaches provide a comfortable, environmentally sustainable way of transporting huge numbers of visitors around the country. They support our tourism industry, with domestic and international visitors who travel by coach contributing over £6 billion to the UK economy each year. They transport hundreds of thousands of children to school each day, ensure people can still get where they need to go during rail engineering works, and provide those who might otherwise struggle to travel with a safe and easy door-to-door travel option.

The coach is one of the most environmentally friendly ways of travelling, with average carbon dioxide emissions per passenger per journey being around 1.5 times higher for rail, 5 times higher for air and 6 times higher for car travel.

All too often local authorities are failing to properly consider provision for coach travel as a sustainable form of transport that can ease congestion and air pollution by reducing traffic. Coach travel to visitor attractions is frequently hampered by poor access, lack of suitable drop-off/pick up points, lack of coach parking and general coach facilities.

This can lead to increased car use, with associated congestion, car parking and air pollution issues, and in some cases can even restrict visitor numbers. When coaches have to travel considerable distances away from their destination to park, vehicle emissions and driver hours are increased and driver rest time is curtailed. These factors sometimes result in coaches parking in residential areas with a negative impact on the relationship between coach operators and local people.

Blackpool Tourism

CPT notes the positive benefit of tourism to the economy of Blackpool's which has grown for a fourth successive year. The latest STEAM independent research figures for 2018 show that compared to the previous year, the total number of visitors grew by almost 200,000 to 18.2m, with increases in both day and staying visitors.

Over the same period, the value of Blackpool's tourism industry soared by 4% to £1.58bn. That means that the resort accounts for more than 40% of the value of Lancashire's total visitor economy.

The report also shows that the total number of full-time tourism and hospitality jobs supported in Blackpool has grown to 25,400 – a one per cent increase over the previous year. Whilst the specific statistics are not as readily available for contribution of the coach sector to Blackpool, it

must be noted that a significant proportion of the positive tourism value is attributable to the coach sector either as day trips or longer term holidays.

The Blackpool Destination Marketing plan (2015 to 2017*) although a little outdated notes that:

- Total of £1.295bn generated within the local economy through visitor and tourism business expenditure
- 13.5m tourism visits made by day visitors to Blackpool, generating over £430m for the local economy
- 3.5m visits made by visitors staying in Blackpool, generating a total of 9.3m bed nights and contributing over £863m to the local economy
- In the SWOT analysis a weaknesses is recognised as a lack of appropriate facilities for coach drivers and Passengers
- The SWOT analysis also includes conversion of large volumes of day visitors into staying visitors as an opportunity
- The 'Next Chapter' includes: Coach parking: Development of bespoke facilities for coach drivers and passengers

The destination marketing plan would appear to recognise the role and benefit of the coach sector in it recognition of lack of facilities being a weakness and an opportunity.

Gynn Square Coach Park

The facility currently provides room for 12 coaches and is chargeable as follows:

Up to 45 minutes	£2
Up to 4 hours	£6
Up to 24 hours	£12
Up to 48 hours	£17
Up to 72 hours	£20

Anecdotal evidence suggests a reduction in coach use of the facility and this is likely in part, due to the perception of a lack of safety due to break-ins or vandalism of coaches parked overnight in all of Blackpool's coach parks which have been a regular occurrence. Feedback from local operators suggests that vandalism has been a nightly occurrence from North Promenade to South Shore, it appeared that the coaches were in fact being 'targeted'.

The cost of parking would suggest a safe and secure facility would be expected but not necessarily provided. An increase in patrols and/or CCTV installation would be beneficial.

Whilst there are historical vandalism issues, the Coach Park does provide a convenient facility for coaches servicing large group hotels nearby without dedicated coach parking namely Savoy and Cliffs for example.

Without this and the alternative facility being a proposed layby, this does nothing to address the vandalism concerns or increase the perception of safety.

A key aim of the Destination Marketing Plan is to increase conversion of day visitors to overnight stays. Coach tours and excursions provide an accessible, attraction means to do this in conjunction with local hotels but the facilities provided must be safe and secure.

Should the proposed development for the site take place, the Local Authority would strongly need to consider the need for safe, secure, nearby parking as a reasonable cost or provided free. Charging for coach parking in an insecure layby is not attractive, if other existing facilities are to be utilised than journey time for drivers should be a key consideration.

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