

**CAMPAIGN AGAINST  
LEICESTER'S WORKPLACE PARKING LEVY**

**HOW TRADE UNIONISTS  
FORCED LEICESTER'S  
LABOUR CITY COUNCIL  
TO SCRAP THEIR  
PROPOSED WORKPLACE  
PARKING LEVY**

**A TRADE UNION  
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[www.StopLeicesterWPL.com](http://www.StopLeicesterWPL.com)

Email: [Contact@StopLeicesterWPL.com](mailto:Contact@StopLeicesterWPL.com)

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## Introduction

Socialists in Leicester and Leicestershire are celebrating the just-breaking news that the Labour-run City Council has been forced to scrap their plans to introduce a Workplace Parking Levy in our city. Trades Council Assistant Secretary Michael Barker who played a role in both launching and building the trade-union backed Campaign Against Leicester's Workplace Parking Levy said:

*"Tonight's victory once again demonstrates where the true power in society lies, it lies in the hands of ordinary people. The collective pressure brought to bear upon our City Council, but most particularly upon its leader Sir Peter Soulsby, by the trade union movement, has forced the Council to dump their proposed £550 annual tax on workers. Tonight's good news in many ways reflects the uptick in workers' struggle in society which is seeing increasing numbers of workers moving into industrial struggle against the government. The growing popularity of new campaigns like Enough is Enough! illustrate that we are moving into new times where socialist change is increasingly seen as the only alternative to the bankrupt status quo, whether that's enforced by the Tories or Labour."*

The trade-union backed Campaign have highlighted time and again that Labour-led City Councils, like Leicester's, have no socialist solutions to the ongoing climate crisis. Instead, they promote victim-blaming schemes like their proposed levy that only serve to alienate ordinary workers from getting involved in the types of mass struggle needed to stop the unaccountable capitalist juggernaut that is destroying our planet.

Here in Leicester, trade unionists from across the city and county played a critical role in leading the campaign to scrap Leicester City Council's latest proposal to give workers money to private bus companies. The Council's so-called green Workplace Parking Levy aimed to raise funds for greener forms of travel by taxing workers for parking their cars at work (with the scheme applying to workplaces with eleven or more staff parking spaces).

The proposed levy was planned to impact upon 22,000 non-NHS workers, who, if the council had gotten their way, would have to pay £550 a year because of their reliance upon their cars. Furthermore, the council proposed to include an additional 4,000 NHS workers in their scheme (charged at a 50% discount for the three years, and then full price thereafter), an already high levy that was set to increase with RPI every year!

### **The cases of Nottingham and Scotland**

At present the only other city in England which implements this anti-worker

tax is the Labour-run Nottingham City Council, and their scheme was introduced over a decade ago. In their case the levy was forced through amidst much protest from local trade unionists and the public as part of a fundraising package tied to extending Nottingham's tram system via a costly Private Finance Initiative. In Nottingham, as was proposed in Leicester, the tax was supposedly targeting employers not workers: but it is widely understood that in 80% of affected Nottingham workplaces, the levy has been passed directly onto workers as a pay cut.

Scotland, with the backing of the SNP and the Green's, are now in the process of introducing their own parking levies. However there the Labour Party have correctly opposed such levies, and in 2019 they referred to them as "an ill-thought out, half-baked, short-sighted car parking tax that will hit low paid worker." These criticisms of parking levies were actually made by Scotland's Labour transport spokesperson, an individual who went on to highlight that the attempt to introduce such taxes in Scotland had "ignited a backlash that will undermine support for proper environmental action for decades to come." Of course, this principled-sounding opposition to attacks upon workers' only shows what Labour will do in opposition, not what they do when they are in power.

### **A CONsultation and growing opposition**

Back in Leicester, our Labour dominated Council undertook a preliminary consultation over the summer of 2021 which primarily focused on the business community and in doing so ignored most of the regions affected trade unions. Despite this, the Labour City Mayor (Sir Peter Soulsby) distorted the trade union movement's opposition to the proposed levy and pretended that the labour movement actually supported the introduction of parking charges.

Little progress was made with regard to the quality of any [democratic discussion](#) with Leicester's trade union movement. When a 12-week [public consultation](#) was launched in December 2021, efforts to communicate with trade unions were, again, almost non-existent, that is, until the trade unions themselves contacted the City Council and began raising our serious concerns with the proposed levy. Vocal and public criticisms from an increasing array of unions were however only belittled by Council leaders, and shortly after the consultation ended in March the Leicester and District Trades Union Council launched a campaign in opposition to the levy while also striving to "actively support the type of progressive environmental initiatives that [could] act to unite all workers of our city."

Since then, the Campaign Against Leicester's Workplace Parking Levy has been busy. We have distributed over 15,000 leaflets (covering a variety

of topics), undertook regular public campaigning across the region and outside of affected workplaces, published a long stream of letters in the local newspaper, held a public meeting, circulated regular written updates to trade unionists in the region, [published a first pamphlet](#) (in June) and a further two trade union reports, [organised a protest outside town hall](#), lobbied politicians and, in an attempt to win more trade union stewards and their members to our arguments, have continued to demand that the proposed levy is scrapped.

In short, we did everything in our power to channel the popular anger against the threatened parking charge into a trade union led struggle that had the potential for reshaping our regions political agenda in the months and years to come.

All the while the city council's Labour Party leaders have continued to twist and turn, but at no point did they ever provide any answers to our campaign or to the many workers who are angry and fearful of the levy, especially coming as it does during the cost-of-living crisis. For example, at first, we were promised a quick turn around on the consultation which now ended nearly eight months ago. The council said they would have the results processed within just a few weeks. Then they said it would be completed by summer. But instead they only published the consultation results today (on November 7), on the day they announced the levy was being scrapped. Few details are provided in the brief consultation document, but what is clear is that it demonstrates what we have been saying all along, that there was huge public opposition to the levy.

### **Socialist solutions**

Members of the organising committee of the campaign against the levy have always explained that the council's deeply unpopular and regressive levy must be ditched with immediate effect, not just paused. This simple demand was echoed in the Constituency Labour Party which is home to the City Mayor and his deputy, both of whom were responsible for pushing forward the levy, where a motion was passed (on July 14) calling upon the council to scrap their planned levy.

Furthermore, in September two separate Unite branches organising workers in the private sector passed political motions (on September 15 and September 24) that called upon the regional leadership of their union to refuse to fund any future election campaigns of any Labour councillors in the city if they ignored the trade union movement and supported the imposition of a workplace parking levy. Following in the same vein, a similar motion was subsequently passed by the Unite Retired Members Leicestershire branch (on October 5).

In terms of socialist solutions that might unite the working class in ongoing efforts to combat climate change and simultaneously overcome the limits of a badly functioning privately owned public transport system our campaign continues to point to the arguments presented within the excellent pamphlet “Climate jobs: Building a workforce for the climate emergency.” While inspiring ideas for workers’ taking democratic control of their own futures have led our campaign to host the local premiere of *The Plan*. This is a documentary about the Lucas Plan – and is a film that demonstrates how ordinary workers have the ingenuity and willpower to solve this climate crisis if they were not perpetually held back by the capitalist political powers that be.



# Campaign highlights

## MARCH

On March 17, the Leicester and District Trades Union Council passed a motion that was proposed by the GMB Leicestershire Branch (L10) which called for the building a campaign to oppose the proposed WPL. It was agreed that public campaign would be launched as a subcommittee of the Trades Council and the meeting elected two officers to take responsibility for organising the “Campaign Against Leicester’s Workplace Parking Levy,” these being Michael Barker and David Holloway.

On March 18 the Trades Council circulated a press release to the local media advertising the launch of the campaign, a statement that was subsequently ignored by the media. The press release contained a quote from GMB Branch Secretary Steve Alexander who said:

*"The Council has been disingenuous in presenting their proposed levy as a tax on employers. This is because it remains clear that it will be ordinary workers in both the private and public sector who are forced to foot the bill for the crime of being reliant upon their cars to get to work. GMB have therefore committed to escalate our organising efforts against the Council's proposed workplace parking scheme which would see a total of 26,000 workers charged £550 a year to drive to work, 4,000 of which will be NHS staff.*

*"Last night (17th March) our union branch brought a political motion which opposed the introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy to the monthly meeting of the Leicester and Districts Trade Union Council. "The motion stated 'The promotion of a Workplace Parking Levy in Leicester in reality is just a regressive tax on workers and will only serve to undermine efforts to promote inclusive environmental action. We therefore commit to organise between all different trade unions within our city. We will do our best to oppose this new tax on workers and do what we can to actively support the type of progressive environmental initiatives that can act to unite all workers of our city.'*

*"With the successful passing of this motion, trade unions from across the city and county that represent workers in food factories or engineering firms, and employees in the NHS and schools, have now agreed to launch a public campaign to stop the implementation of the Council's proposed levy. However, our union, like other members of the Trades Council are clear that such a campaign would not be limited to opposing the levy and must also fight for the type of equitable green policies that can unite workers in the collective bid to avert the climate emergency facing our planet."*

The press release also quoted Trades Council President Chris Willars who said:

*“Trades Council delegates from unions across our region voted to support the GMB motion because representatives of the Trades Council believe that taxing workers for driving to work is the wrong way to go about funding the improvements that our city’s public transportation system urgently needs.*

*“The problems associated with the proposed Workplace Parking Levy were first raised with the Trades Council in January by Unison City Branch and the National Education Union, whose branch committees had passed motions raising their own serious concerns with the levy. Since then, the Trades Council has organised a series of meetings over the past few months which brought together trade union representatives from across the city to discuss how we might develop a collective response to the proposed Workplace Parking Levy. The passing of GMB motion at our latest meeting now means we will be formally taking our opposition to the WPL out onto the streets, and we would welcome members of the public in joining us in building this campaign.”*

Based upon our first press release, we produced a two-sided colour A5 leaflet, and supporters of the campaign agreed to undertake regular public activity which will involve distributing our materials and building mass support for the campaign’s objectives. But it is significant to note that our campaign had already achieved some significant victories. Firstly, we had helped to unite the local trade union movement in opposition to the levy, while we succeeded in getting thousands of people to raise their concerns directly with the City Council through the formal consultation process (which closed for submissions on March 13).

Other early successes involved obtaining a joint statement from five education unions which recognized that the proposed levy represented “a regressive stealth tax, which will disproportionately impact the city’s lowest-paid workers – including the education, local government, social care, and NHS staff who have been so vital in supporting the city through the COVID pandemic.” This joint statement was reported in the *Leicester Mercury* on February 28. There followed a second joint statement that opposed the levy that brought together the three main trade unions that organise city council workers, these being Unite, UNISON and GMB, which was reported on in the *Mercury* on March 14.

On March 17, City Council officials then met with trade union representatives whereupon Sir Peter Soulsby suggested the review of the consultation would be completed very quickly. Unison City Branch reported at their branch committee meeting that Soulsby had “said that while there

are a lot of responses to work through, the Council would be looking to express an initial view in the next few weeks". Yet this quick turnaround never eventuated.

With regards to obtaining active support from local politicians, so far only one local MP (Claudia Webbe, Leicester East) has come out in support of our work (in the media), see the newspaper article "Leicester MP concerned workplace parking charges would 'disproportionately impact' lowest-paid" (*Leicester Mercury*, March 17). However, already growing numbers of city Labour councillors' have been speaking out against the levy in personal messages to their constituents and within trade union meetings. So, we are encouraging members of the public to write to their local councillors' and to their MP to ask them if they would vote against the introduction of the Workplace Parking Levy if they were given the chance to do so.

## APRIL

On April 2, our campaign printed our first report in response to the official consultation process which is titled: "How the City Council's Own Consultation Process Undermines the Case for a Workplace Parking Levy in Leicester." On the same day we also held our first successful public stall on Granby Street in Leicester city centre. Our campaign also posted information relating to our opposition to the proposed levy -- which included a bundle of our new leaflets and an invitation to get involved -- to more than a hundred schools.

Unfortunately, Sir Peter Soulsby continued to ignore the fact that the findings of the public consultation process have yet to be reviewed which he did by promoting the idea that the levy is a done-deal. For example, on April 22, Soulsby used his official [social media account](#) to boast that the Council has launched a new "partnership" with local bus companies with "£300m joint investment over next 8 years". Deputy Mayor Adam Clarke likewise has been busy promoting a City Council video that makes the same £300 million claim. This claim is misinformation pure and simple, as if you check on the web site accompanying the Partnership's official launch <https://www.leicesterbuses.co.uk/the-big-bus-plan> then you can find out that only £100m has been invested, and the other £200m remains underdetermined at present and includes the funds the Council has proposed to raise from their levy.

## MAY

We held a stall at the May Day Celebration that was organised by the Trades Council at Highfields Community Centre, and a campaign member gave a speech to the event that broadcast on EAVA FM (a local community station). In addition, on May 2 the President of the Trades Council was [interviewed on BBC Radio Leicester](#) where he was able to talk about the importance of our campaign stating that “we are arguing for environmental action and better public transport but not at the expense of workers with a flat-rate parking levy”.



On May 9, Save Our NHS Leicestershire invited a speaker from our campaign (Michael Barker) to debate with a supporter of the levy at a specially organised online meeting of their steering committee. Yet despite giving the City Council two weeks' notice of the specially organised meeting no one from the Council replied to say they could attend the meeting so instead a back-up speaker from the Green Party (Mags Lewis) spoke in support of the levy.

On May 12, a meeting of the Unite Area Activist Committee gave their unanimous support to our campaign. Then two days later our campaign held a face-to-face public meeting to build opposition to the levy. At this meeting we launched our second trade union report which was titled “Climate Change Solutions for Leicester.” This meeting proved very useful and many attendees made suggestions about how we might continue to expand our campaigning efforts going forward. The idea of holding a lobby outside of City Hall was supported by everyone in attendance, as was organising stalls outside of all our city's hospitals to raise awareness about the horrific impact that the levy will have on our NHS which is already understaffed and is facing a huge recruitment crisis.

On May 31, the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union's (BFAWU) Regional Officer George Atwall said in a public statement that:

*"The idea for a levy has never made sense to our members, many of whom rely upon their cars to get to and from work early in the morning and late at night when bus services are largely non-existent. The levy is rightly seen just another regressive tax on workers which will have the hardest impact on some of Leicester's poorest workers. This is why the Baker's Union continues to work alongside other trade unions, like those representing NHS and education workers, within the 'Campaign Against Leicester's Workplace Parking Levy' in calling upon the City Council to see sense and dump their levy.*

*"Many of our hardworking members employed in food factories are already living in poverty because they are not paid a proper living wage. Only last year our union carried out an extensive survey of our members which highlighted the shocking fact that even in working families, children are going hungry as food insecurity continues to grow. Over 35% of the workers interviewed said they had gone without enough food to make sure others in the house could be properly fed, while 19% reported that there had been a time during the pandemic when their household had run out of food because of a lack of money. These workers need a pay rise not a parking levy.*

*"We, as a union, will continue to work with our members to help key workers in the food manufacturing sector across the city to fight for better working conditions and improved pay for all. But introducing a parking levy for driving to work is completely backwards and risks alienating thousands of workers from efforts to find the political solutions that all workers need to address the ongoing climate emergency. This is why the Baker's Union continue to believe that first of all we need to build a public campaign for a massively expanded bus network that is publicly run to meet the needs of ordinary workers. Making such changes represents the best way of encouraging greater bus use, not taxing workers who have no viable alternatives but to drive."*

On the same day that this statement was released, Unite Community Branch, Leicester and Leicestershire, held a branch meeting where they unanimously voted to oppose the planned levy. Unite Community then followed this up by publishing an excellent letter in the *Leicester Mercury* on June 14 in which they highlighted how: *"Unite as a union has long opposed the idea of such workplace charges as the projected parking levy. We opposed such a levy throughout Scotland's local authorities several years ago. As a union locally, the local branches and the Area and Regional Forums have indicated they are opposed to Leicester's plans."*

## JUNE

On June 10, Unison Leicester City Branch released another public statement opposing the planned WPL. Assistant Branch Secretary, Sam Randfield, said his union's members were fearful of the implications that the Council's proposed levy would have on their ability to make ends meet. He observed how:

*“Thousands of people responded to the Council’s public consultation, many of them public service employees like Council and school staff – key workers who were critical to the city’s pandemic response. Although the consultation closed almost three months ago, the Council has still not reported the findings, nor revealed how they intend to proceed, nor even committed to a firm timetable for doing so. This endless dithering is causing unnecessary stress for our members, who are already struggling with the combined effect of the recent national insurance hike, skyrocketing energy bills, and rampant inflation. The Council should acknowledge its own employees’ rejection of this ill-considered and regressive plan, and scrap it without further delay.”*

Unison had previously asked their members who had completed the city council's public consultation to share the comments that they had made with their union. One Unison member explained: “Food and energy prices are soaring making it extremely difficult for everyday people to make ends meet. Some are already having to choose between heating and eating. The extra burden of having to pay the WPL could financially cripple thousands of families.”

A member employed in a city school said: “Most of us are too far away from home to have any choice and have not got an income to cover this, especially given the fact that pay has not risen in line with inflation for quite some time. There is no alternative to get to the school for me and many others, therefore this isn't an encouragement to find alternatives to driving, it is actually more of an encouragement to find alternative employment! Particularly for support staff who simply cannot afford these costs.”

Another Unison member said: “I feel that this is a high cost to our underpaid salaries and again a punishment to the lower paid employees. We live very busy lives and struggle to get to the end of the month. Most of us have children to take/pick up on the way to/from work and need to take the car to work daily. If pollution is the problem, maybe the government could help us to get more efficient cars instead of making this harder for us. I don't agree with this initiative, and I ask LCC to please cancel it.”

On June 15, our campaign published a 42-page pamphlet in an initial print-run of 100. The trade union pamphlet is titled “Campaigning Against Leicester’s Workplace Parking Levy” and is being distributed for free and is available to download on our web site. Alongside a short introduction, the pamphlet reprints 24 articles/letters that were published in the local newspaper between January 31 and June 15 – with varied contributions from 13 different authors.

On June 15, the local National Education Union (NEU) branch held a hybrid-meeting that during which the ongoing work of the campaign received unanimous support from those in attendance.

On June 23, Sir Peter Soulsby gave a rare internal [update](#) on the WPL to the Council’s “Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission.” He said there had been an “overwhelming response to the consultation with over 4000 responses.” Soulsby added: “It was frustrating that a summary was not available due to the volume of responses, but when it is, it would be bought to Commission”. Attempting to put a positive spin on the massive public opposition to the WPL Soulsby added: “There were a lot of responses in support of the proposal taking into consideration the positive impact on the environmental issues and also of people raising their concerns with the proposal on whether it was the equitable thing to do and who would be affected by the cost.”

On June 27 Unison City Branch wrote a strongly worded letter to Cllr Elly Cutkelvin, the Assistant City Mayor for Education and Housing (which was [made public](#) on their web site). This letter demanded to know why the city’s education unions were being kept in the dark about the council’s plans for the parking levy. As Unison branch official Sam Randfield wrote:

*“I am personally disgusted that a Labour-controlled Local Authority would exhibit such utter contempt for the trade union movement. We will not forget it. I strongly suggest you take this opportunity to begin to repair the damage to our industrial relations. We continue to receive significant contact from members on this subject. The cost of living is a real, tangible, and escalating worry for an increasing number, both inside and outside of the City Council’s employment. The ongoing threat of a WPL charge, on top of mounting household bills and rampant inflation, is leading many to consider whether they can afford to continue working in the vital public service roles they currently fulfil. Few can understand what is taking so long, and all are understandably anxious for more information. We believe it is important that those members are able to see for themselves the efforts we are making to obtain that information. Accordingly, this letter will be published.” (As a direct result of publishing this letter Cllr Cutkelvin was forced to arrange an emergency meeting with the union on July 6.)*

## JULY

On July 7, we organised a successful protest/lobby on town hall square just before the full city council meeting that was beginning at 5pm. Speakers at the event included campaign officer Michael Barker, Sam Randfield (Assistant Secretary for Unison City Branch), Steve Alexander (Secretary of GMB Leicestershire Branch L10), Jenny Day (Assistant Secretary of the Leicestershire and City Branch of the National Education Union), Cllr Jacky Nangreave (who spoke for Unite), and John Wallace (Chair of Unite Retired Members Branch). Our protest was also supported by members of another local campaign against road closures that is currently being forced through in Evington against the interests of many members of the local community.

As a result of organising the protest we managed to get some media coverage which included two articles that were printed in the *Leicester Mercury* (with articles featuring on July 7 and July 9). Ahead of this protest, on July 4, one of our campaign officers, Michael Barker, sent the city's Labour councillors the following email:



*"I am writing to you on behalf of the Campaign Against Leicester's Workplace Parking Levy – a trade union backed campaign that aims to scrap the proposed Workplace Parking Levy.*

*As you might already be aware, we are organising a lobby/protest just before the full council meeting on Thursday (July 7) and we are writing to you to ask you to join with us in calling upon the City Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby and Cllr Adam Clarke to scrap their proposed plans to introduce a tax on workers to park their cars at work.*

*We are also asking all Labour councillors in the city to please get in contact with the local representatives from your own trade unions to discuss your views on the Workplace Parking Levy as this remains an issue about which the local trade unions and their memberships hold very strong views. If you have already done this then thank you, and perhaps you might help us further by participating in a caucus of all the councillors in your given union to discuss these issues collectively with other local trade unionists in your union."*



We only had a handful of responses to this email, and we followed-up with those councillors who did respond by asking them to help coordinate caucus meetings of councillors with their union stewards and officials.

During the full council meeting on July 7, questions were posed by a member of our campaign and by a Unison representative to voice our opposition to the levy and to ascertain when the council will be releasing the results of their consultation. The following represents an accurate summary of the answers we had to our questions:

*“We asked when the Council would report the outcome of the consultation, when they would make the decision on whether to implement, and for the reasons behind the delay in reporting. The City Mayor, after shamefully attempting to blame Council officers for his own dithering, revealed that the outcome would be reported in ‘early autumn.’ This was the first time he had committed to any kind of timescale, vague though it is – while we directly challenged him to set a firm date, he refused to do so, again blaming Council employees for his indecisiveness.”*

On July 14, our campaign achieved a significant victory when a local NHS worker succeeded in passing a political motion in the Leicester South Constituency Labour Party which called upon the City Council to scrap their planned Workplace Parking Levy scheme. The campaign also succeeded in ensuring that this positive development was reported in the *Mercury* and a full page was devoted to the story on July 23. The [article reported](#):

*“The constituency Labour Party, (CLP), passed a motion last week calling on Leicester City Council to ‘stand on the side of workers’ by immediately dropping the plan. It is thought the charge would apply to some 26,000 parking spaces within the city.*

*Angelo Sanchez, the local NHS worker who moved the motion at the internal party meeting, said the fact it was passed in that constituency – which counts both the city mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby and lead for transport and environment, Councillor Adam Clarke, among its members – showed ‘the depth of public opposition’.*

*Mr Sanchez said: ‘This tax, or pay cut, which is already being vocally opposed by many of the biggest trade unions in Leicester and Leicestershire, will impose a £550 annual bill upon thousands of workers just for the crime of being reliant upon their cars to go to work.*

*‘The council say they aim to collect this charge from 4,000 NHS parking spaces*

*in spite of the government's ongoing and dangerous underfunding of health services. In this case who will pay, the NHS or the workers?"*

In other news the campaign has distributed our leaflets to workers at one of Leicester's largest factories, the Walkers crisp site in Beaumont Leys, with leaflets dropped off to workers at other factories in the area including PepsiCo, Biffa, and Trelleborg. For the first time we also succeeded in leafleting outside the Glenfield Hospital where tired staff at the end of their shifts were happy to find out that our group was opposing the proposed parking levy.

Our campaign held the Leicester premiere of *The Plan* documentary at the Phoenix cinema on July 16 with a follow-up screening held on July 24. The documentary examines the Lucas Plan, and as John McDonnell MP has explained in relation to the film: *"The story of the Lucas Plan is a truly inspirational one reminding us all how workers are the real experts. At a time when there has never been greater need for workers to be involved in the transition to a sustainable economy, the challenge for all of us in the labour movement is to learn from and build upon the experiences of the Lucas Plan."*

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News

## Campaigners holding film screening

TRADE union group the Campaign Against Leicester's Workplace Parking Levy is hosting the Leicester premiere of *The Plan* at the Phoenix cinema this weekend.

Trades Council assistant secretary Michael Barker, one of the organisers, believes "the positive socialist message contained in this documentary provides an important reminder of the power of ordinary workers to run society in a way that serves the needs of the people and our planet."

The documentary tells the story of a group of engineers, at Lucas Aerospace UK, threatened with redundancy almost 50 years ago. They responded by designing what they called "socially useful" and "environmentally sustainable alternatives" to the military products their company made - including wind turbines, a hybrid car, heat pump and an energy efficient house.

Organisers are keen to ensure the documentary is seen by as many people as possible so the premiere is free to attend for anyone who is a member of a trade union or is willing to join one. The first screening is on Saturday and the second on July 24, starting at 2pm. Search for "ThePlan2022" at: [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk)

On July 27, our campaign emailed both Sir Peter Soulsby and Cllr Adam Clarke to ask them to participate in a public debate about the future of their proposed levy. The text of the email invitation was as follows:

*“As an officer of the Campaign Against Leicester’s Workplace Parking Levy, I am writing to you both on behalf of our campaign to ask if you could make time to participate in an important public meeting that would discuss the viability of introducing a Workplace Parking Levy in Leicester?”*

*We understand that the results of the public consultation (that ended on March 13) may be released to the public in the next few weeks, so our campaign is planning on hosting a large public meeting in September in the form of a debate between leading members of our campaign and those council officials who are taking a lead on promoting the proposed Workplace Parking Levy which ideally would include either one of you attending, or both of you if you think that is appropriate.*

*The format for our proposed meeting would be flexible, depending on the availability of speakers on your side of the debate, but the intention would be to allow the public to hear a robust debate in a public forum between those for and those against the levy. Ideally, we are hoping to hold the debate on a Saturday afternoon at a large venue in Leicester city centre.*

*We understand that you will have busy timetables, but we also believe you will see the importance of engaging in such a public discussion about the viability and impact of the City Council’s proposals for introducing a Workplace Parking Levy. We therefore wanted to ask you two questions. Firstly, would you (or other officials representing the Council) be happy to participate in a public debate with members of our campaign (as outlined in this email)? And secondly, could you write to us to let us know if you (or other officials representing the Council) would be able to participate in such a public debate on any of the following Saturday afternoons in September: these dates being September 3, September 10, or September 17?*

*We will look forward to hearing from you soon, Yours sincerely  
Michael Barker,  
Officer of the Campaign Against Leicester’s Workplace Parking Levy*

We again received no reply to this email (during August anyway).

## **AUGUST**

On August 28, trade unionists succeeded in getting a useful article published in the *Leicester Mercury* titled "[Workplace parking tax will hit city social work, says union.](#)" The article explained:

*"Unison has warned that the [WPL] scheme would hurt services already struggling with recruitment such as the social work sector.*

*For some time now Leicester City Council has faced a crisis in recruiting new social work staff, the union claims. It says the new charges would not only further dissuade people from accepting jobs, but could also drive current social workers from the city.*

*Assistant Branch Secretary for Social Care Karen Wharton said: "UNISON believe that the introduction of the Workplace Parking Levy will present further barriers to the successful recruitment of new social workers and further is more likely to result in an increase in vacancies across already stretched services within the Authority. We believe that it is inevitable that more social workers will leave to seek employment outside of Leicester City due to the financial impact of this Levy".*

## **SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER**

On September 5, our campaign finally received the following nonresponse to our emails from the City Mayor:

*"As you will know the Labour Group on the city council committed in its manifesto in 2019 to consult on the potential introduction of a workplace parking levy. The introduction of such a levy has been supported by many Labour party members and by a significant number of other organisations.*

*The results of that consultation are currently being assessed and I and my colleagues will be considering the representations received, both for and against. Should you wish to hold further meetings to consider such a scheme I am sure you will have no difficulty at all in finding organisations concerned about climate change and about the quality of public transport who would be prepared to speak at such a meeting about the merits of such a levy.*

*I would certainly be very prepared to Chair such a meeting or, if I am not available, suggest that Adam Clarke might do so. Please don't hesitate to contact me when you have arranged other speakers and we will do our best to be present. Yours sincerely, Peter Soulsby, City Mayor"*

This bizarre rejection shows that the Labour Party's local leaders are not able or willing to defend their own policies in front of the public. Thus, even though the membership of Soulsby's own Constituency Labour Party recently called upon the City Council to scrap their proposed levy, Soulsby chose to use his reply to our campaign to insist that the proposed "levy has been supported by many Labour party members". This of course might be true of a handful of largely silent Labour members, but the majority of ordinary people, including leading trade unionists and socialists in the city, have come out firmly against the parking tax. It therefore seems that Soulsby would rather stand on the side-lines of a debate on the future of his proposed tax when increasing numbers of workers are starting to fight-back against the government's relentless profiteering at their expense. As the ongoing and swelling national strike wave clearly demonstrates, increasing numbers of people are now rejecting the idea that they should suffer anymore and are now getting involved in new campaigns like Enough Is Enough ([wesayenough.co.uk](http://wesayenough.co.uk)). The contrast between the Labour City Council's leadership and the actions of their constituents could not be greater. Ordinary people are fighting for their lives, demanding the nationalisation of big energy companies and the coordination of strike actions, yet all the City Mayor can do is offer to chair a debate between others to discuss his own regressive ideas.

As the City Council leadership will not engage with our campaign in a debate, we continued to raise our concerns through the letters page of the *Leicester Mercury*. Amongst these letters (which are contained in this pamphlet) we have taken up some of the pro-levy arguments of the local Green Party, which because of Labour's silence, remains the only political group in the city that has members who seem willing to publicly defend the proposed WPL. In one letter our campaign debunks the misleading idea that introducing a WPL in Leicester would unlock huge amounts of additional funding from the government. While a further important letter highlights how nearly half of the jobs that currently exist in Leicester are filled by workers who travel into work from outside of the city. This means the introduction of a WPL will have huge consequences for people living in the county.



Trade union members of Unite branch LE48 (Leicestershire Central) have been vocal critics of the WPL for some time, and on September 15 their members held a meeting where they made it clear that if the Labour City Mayor chooses to ignore the widespread opposition to his regressive levy, then in the future he won't be able to count upon the generous support of their trade union. The Unite members agreed a political motion that called upon the regional leadership of their union to refuse to fund any future election campaigns of any Labour councillors in the city if they ignored the trade union movement and supported the imposition of a workplace parking levy. The media belatedly reported on this historic motion on October 3 in a *Leicester Mercury* article titled "Cut cash to politicians supporting parking levy". But even before this article was published, on September 24, a Unite branch of engineering workers based at a large firm in the city passed a similar motion questioning their unions funding of the Labour Party. As the *Mercury* explained:



*"Sir Peter, who is a longstanding Unite member, told the Mercury that the council has had "productive discussions" with the union's regional executives. However, Unite's regional secretary for the East Midlands, Paresh Patel, said the decision not to fund re-election campaigns "may well be taken" nonetheless. Mr Patel said: "Introducing a parking levy that will hit already hard-pressed workers during a cost of living crisis is the wrong thing to do. It will be bad for our members and bad for the city's economy. Unite's branches support councillors who stand up for the interests of working people. If they see they are working against those interests by voting for the parking levy, the decision may well be taken not to provide branch funding during re-election campaigns. Now is the time for a Labour mayor to be on the side of working people of Leicester city and Leicestershire - not against them."*

Then on October 5, another similar motion was passed by the Unite Retired Members Leicestershire branch which explained:

*"This Branch asserts that the Workplace Parking Levy proposed by Leicester City Council is a regressive and unfair tax on the working people of Leicester*

*and Leicestershire, and Unite should not support any Councillor who votes in favour of it. We call on the East Midlands Regional Labour Party Liaison Committee, not to provide funding to the election campaign of Councillors standing for election to Leicester City Council in 2023, who have voted for the imposition of the Workplace Parking Levy.”*

Another important development in our campaign occurred on September 23 when the local group “Save Our NHS Leicestershire” — which draws together public, patients and health care workers— published their formal response to the proposed WPL as “Our [view on Leicester City Council’s proposed Workplace Parking Levy.](#)” Although a press release was sent off to the local media, again, this critical issue was not picked up by local reporters. However, in their press release the Secretary of Save Our NHS Leicestershire, Tom Barker, stated:

*“As a campaign, we are concerned principally with defending the NHS, so issues of public health are of critical importance to us. In its current form, the parking levy is a serious threat to the NHS. The NHS is facing a profound crisis on multiple fronts, not least of which is funding. The levy will intensify this by diverting urgently needed funds away from frontline services.*

*“In reality, however, even though the levy is lower for NHS employers, we know that the levy will be passed on to NHS workers. Leicester is one of the poorest cities in the country and its workforce can ill afford an average £550 levy on their wages, especially during a cost of living crisis. There is a well-established link between poverty and poor health. We are extremely concerned that the parking levy could deepen this problem and heap yet more pressure on our health service.*

*“We share the Council’s concerns about the need to tackle the climate crisis, but this is not the way to do it. It is difficult to see how we can address the climate crisis without challenging large vested interests. Instead, we have a proposal which threatens to add to the cost of living crisis faced by thousands of workers whose wages are lagging well behind inflation. The reality is that people need an alternative form of affordable transport if they are going to be able to leave their cars at home. This should be buses but bus services are currently privately owned and are inadequate in both the city and the county.”*

## **NOVEMBER**

On November 3, our campaign emailed out our latest “Update” to our supporters. We explained:

*“Leicester City Council are still keeping the people of Leicester and Leicestershire in the dark about their plans for introducing a Workplace Parking Levy, and we are still waiting for them to release the results of their consultation*

– a consultation that officially ended on March 13!

*“Making matters worse the Council keep delaying on announcing the results of the WPL consultation. Thus, the issue of the WPL consultation results was first scheduled to be discussed at a Scrutiny Commission meeting that was to be held on August 31, which was then rescheduled to be held on October 12, and then rescheduled, again, to take place on November 30. Now it appears that the planned meeting for this month has been cancelled, and the next planned Scrutiny Commission meeting is taking place on December 7 (although the agenda for this meeting has not yet been announced).”*

Then just a few days later, on November 7, the City Council announced the good news that they have caved into public pressure to scrap their proposed parking levy. On the same evening the *Leicester Mercury* published an initial article titled “Leicester City Council scraps controversial Workplace Parking Levy plan” that noted how:

*“A controversial scheme which could have seen employees charged to park at work in Leicester has been scrapped. Leicester City Council announced tonight that it would not be going ahead with its proposed Workplace Parking Levy (WPL). It said the current political and economic circumstances, including the cost of living crisis, had made it impossible to proceed.”*

Of course, at no point in the Council’s briefings regarding their decision to scrap one of their flagship policies did the Council mention the key role played by our campaigns supporters in forcing them to back away from their planned (regressive) tax on workers. The same was true with the Council’s skimpy and poorly produced consultation document (also released on November 7), a ‘report’ which made no mention of the existence of a powerful trade union led campaign against their levy. That said the consultation document did at least prove that many of the arguments made over the past year by our campaign happened to be the most popular arguments that were made by the thousands of members of the public who engaged with the formal consultation process.

**In the following pages, this pamphlet consists of a series of letters that were published in the local press (in the *Leicester Mercury* and *Loughborough Echo*) by supporters of our campaign between June 24 and November 2. We also include three letters that were written by local Green Party representatives that defend the WPL (the title and contents of these letters are printed in italics).**



## Most workers would end up paying levy

Over recent months there have been many letters published relating to the City Council's proposed £550 annual tax on workers who park their cars at work. The vast majority of these letters have opposed the charge, and many of these statements of succinct outrage have just been published in a trade union pamphlet titled "Campaigning Against Leicester's Workplace Parking Levy" which is being distributed for free by our Campaign.

Yet some remain immune to logic. Hence Leicester's Green Party, despite being well-read on some matters, appear to be content in ignoring the content of these letters and they continue to support the proposed levy. Making matters worse they remain intent on belittling the devastating impact that that £550 parking charge would have on thousands of low-paid workers.

In her latest letter Leicester Green Party spokesperson Mags Lewis misleads the public by making it sound like the levy would not apply to those workers who fear it the most. She writes: "Low earners or those needing to travel because of unsocial hours or their nature of work can be exempted from charges." ("*Support the clean air bill and the parking levy,*" Mailbox, June 17)

What we do know is that the tax will apply to the employers of 26,000 workers, encompassing 68% of all available workplace parking spaces in the city. And while it is true that some employers may pay the charge for their workers and perhaps use this temporary display of 'generosity' to stall on future pay rises for their employees, in most cases (following the example of Nottingham), the levy will be passed directly onto employees, and would take over £6,000 from the pay of these workers over the next ten years.

We urge the city councillors and MPs to do the right thing for us all by opposing the Workplace Parking Levy. We also urge everyone reading this letter to take a few minutes and email their local councillors to ask them to take action to oppose the regressive levy which you can do by typing your postcode onto this web site: [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)

There is no simple 'silver bullet' solution that can save the planet and improve our public transport infrastructure. The solution instead lies in the realm of democracy, as it is only the direct action taken by organised workers can force capitalist politicians who are bent on polluting the world and undermining green transport solutions in listening to reason.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on June 24, 2022 by Michael Barker  
on behalf of the Campaign Against Leicester's WPL*

## **This tax attacks**

We can't afford the workplace parking levy.  
Whether you drive a Ford or a Chevy  
to work; should we be made to pay the price of a bevvv  
just to park? This burden is too heavy:  
The back-to-front workplace parking levy.

The council needs to put in some investment first  
into cheap public transport, to tempt commuters who trust  
cars to get from A to B – just watch their dust,  
away from their vehicles, but drive so they must  
because county routes have already been slashed.  
In Tories' haste to make cuts, they smashed  
apart our railways and privatised the bus. They cashed  
in the profits, leaving our services trashed.  
All-electric, zero-emission Nirvana rings hollow,  
when for years, we have all had to swallow  
lies about Leicester being a city to follow.  
Its 'Eco-house' derelict, no real plans for tomorrow.  
Your target, a mere two percent of congestion reduced,  
only alienates people, perplexed and confused  
by meaningless jargon and consultations abused.  
Will you finally decide to give up on this ruse?

And while global warming most threatens the poor,  
The ones whose fault is placed at their door.  
The real culprits control our media, They abhor  
paying tax. Corporations, whose wealth is offshore.  
We need to clean up our act, don't misunderstand me.  
Carbon dioxide, a threat to the whole of humanity.  
But your plans are misguided. It is insanity  
to ask for our support, while taxing us with impunity.  
Why not take public transport back under council control?  
Campaign, demonstrate: regain what the government stole.  
Stop cuts, privatisation, stand up for us all.  
Inspire a new generation. A world without oil or coal,  
run by renewables, the only feasible goal.  
Give workers a real say in how we should roll.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on July 8, 2022 by Andrew Walton*

## Another regressive tax on workers who drive

In a moment in which the cost of living crisis is spiralling out of control and already killing the poor and vulnerable, and an ever-increasing portion of the population is having to decide between heating and eating, Leicester City Council is considering, without any consultation of Labour Party members, imposing another regressive tax on workers that are forced to drive to work.

This tax, opposed by Leicester trade unions, will mean a £550 annual bill for workers just for being reliant upon their cars to go to work and will affect underpaid key workers like NHS nurses who are going to have to pay the full charge after three years.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on July 12, 2022 by Angelo Sanchez*

“

*...This tax, opposed by Leicester trade unions, will mean a £550 annual bill for workers just for being reliant upon their cars to go to work and will affect underpaid key workers like NHS nurses who are going to have to pay the full charge after three years.”*

## **Make the billionaires pay for climate crisis**

I am becoming concerned about the small number of letters being published in the *Leicester Mercury* that are in favour of the City Council's Workplace Parking Levy and that seem to equate driving a car with being financially better off.

I am a low waged worker and trade union steward. The majority of my members drive to work despite being on low pay. Driving a car is an economic necessity for many low paid workers, and it is not an expense that is not undertaken lightly. Members could do without the daily grind of sitting in traffic or enduring the lottery of 'will I or won't I get a parking space'.

But without a properly funded and publicly owned bus service – and it's worth noting that, if the levy goes ahead, we will not even get this – they have no choice.

I also want to raise concerns about the idea that the levy is not a tax on workers, but on employers.

In the public sector, this argument makes no sense. If my employer paid the levy, it would mean passing the cost onto service users (many of whom are themselves low waged), as already scarce financial resources are reallocated to pay the levy. Staff could also be in the line of fire due to cuts to pay and terms and conditions.

Things may be different in the private sector, where the profit motive reigns. But do advocates of the levy really expect bosses to magnanimously stump up for their workers? They didn't in Nottingham when the parking levy was rolled out there. Or do advocates of the levy ask that workers in the private sector fight to make their employer pay it, knowing full well that union membership in the private sector stands at a dire 12.9%?

Let's stop this divisive tinkering and take action to make the real polluters, the billionaires, pay for the climate crisis.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on July 20, 2022 by Tom Barker*

## Staff need to be kept updated on parking tax

Leicester City Council has been consulting on introducing a workplace levy on 26,000 workers who use their cars to get to work, which of course applies to the council's own workforce too. This consultation finished in March but there has been no response from the council as yet regarding the results of this consultation.

Council services are run by its officers and other workers across the whole council.

These people have had their incomes frozen for a number of years yet now the council wants to introduce what can only be seen as a parking tax on its staff and many others besides.

Though everything must be looked at in such difficult times, with cuts in government grants not going away, to consider such an impact on staff at this time is unfair and unjust but to not release the information also shows a lack of respect for all affected workers.

At a time when the cost of living is increasing week on week, the council's staff, like others need to know what is happening, they also deserve for this workplace parking levy not to be implemented.

Some food for thought for the ruling Labour group, next year is election year.

The city council, though greatly reduced, is still one of the largest employers in the city.

These people are also your voters. Don't bite the hands that serve you, or else they may show you the door next May.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on July 22, 2022 by Wayne Naylor*

“*...Don't bite the hands that serve you, or else they may show you the door next May.*”

## Workplace parking levy neither practical or fair

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed plans to charge £550 a year to park at work in the city. Many people don't live in the city and, as such, find that car travel is the only viable option.

Leicester needs to consider that not everyone who works in the city lives there. This policy seems like it's designed to punish employers in the city and the people who work for them, all in the middle of a financial crisis.

While we all need to do our bit for the environment, I don't believe punishing people for trying to provide for their families is a practical solution. People are already having to have time off of work because of high travel costs and this will only make that situation worse.

While we all need to do our bit for the environment, I don't believe punishing people for trying to provide for their families is a practical solution. People are already having to have time off of work because of high travel costs and this will only make that situation worse.

The levy is particularly regressive with regards to people who:

- Live more than five miles away from the city;
- Have a mental health condition or disability that makes public transport unpleasant or impossible;
- Work irregular hours, where there might be limited bus support;
- Don't drive to work every day, for example hybrid workers;
- Earn below a certain income level, who may find the levy particularly challenging.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on July 22, 2022, Name and Address Supplied*

“*...This policy seems like it's designed to punish employers in the city and the people who work for them, all in the middle of a financial crisis.*”

## Council sows confusion over its WPL scheme

Leicester City Council leaders seemingly have nothing to say to the public about their plans to charge city workers £550 a year to drive to work. They remain silent, all the while a fearful and angry debate continues to rage through city workplaces.

The Council don't even try to correct obvious falsehoods, like the one in the opening sentence of a recent *Leicester Mercury* (July 7) article which asserted that the proposed Workplace Parking Levy is a plan "to tax parking spaces owned by private companies in the centre of Leicester." Ignoring this falsehood on the Council's part represents a dereliction of their duties to the public.

To clear up any confusion, the Council should have clarified that the tax will apply to the public and private alike. They should have issued a correction stating that their proposed charge would apply to parking spaces as far north as the industrial estates around Castle Hill and Beaumont Leys (applying to sites like Glenfield Hospital and Walker's Crisp factory), and as far south as Saffron Hill Cemetery.

The Council's own reports acknowledge that the vast majority of workplace affected by their proposed regressive tax lie outside of the city centre, so why can't our Council leaders speak up?

Of the total 31,724 workplace parking spaces in our city, 89% lie outside of the city centre.

The Council's smoke and mirrors approach to what they describe as their "levy on employers" sows deliberate confusion in many ways, but most of all because it pretends to offer a solution to both the climate emergency and poor state of public transport in our city. It does neither.

The levy will do next to nothing to alleviate congestion or improve local air quality, nor will it do anything to lower bus fares to a rate that is considered affordable by workers.

Furthermore, the Council say there will be 400 buses in Leicester by 2030 which is less than our city has today!

If the Council are serious about wanting to transform public transport along the lines proposed by workers' trade unions (like RMT and Unite) they need to campaign alongside workers for improvements, not pummel them with a £550 levy.

The Council have said they will use part of the £10 million a year they levy from our pay-packets to give more money to private bus companies in order to help improve existing services. But this can be done without charging city workers, as the Council admit in their own plans that if the levy falls through then their backup plan is to ask for more money from the Department for Transport.

The Council have proposed that "the most significant area for both revenue and capital investment" in future years will be on the outer orbital

route where the Centrebus route 40 currently provides a very limited weekday service. The Council say they aim to have the route run buses “every 15 minutes within a 5-year period from its current hourly frequency.” This would be nice.

It is however important to point out that while having more buses on route 40 would be welcome, it is not the solution to Leicester’s deep-seated transport problems. Nor would these changes (to be implemented over the next 5 years) solve the fact that many low-waged workers would be faced with an annual £550 charge because they would still be reliant upon their cars to get to work.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on July 29, 2022 by Michael Barker  
on behalf of the Campaign Against Leicester’s WPL*

“ *...To clear up any confusion, the Council should have clarified that the tax will apply to the public and private alike. They should have issued a correction stating that their proposed charge would apply to parking spaces as far north as the industrial estates around Castle Hill and Beaumont Leys (applying to sites like Glenfield Hospital and Walker’s Crisp factory), and as far south as Saffron Hill Cemetery.*”



## Green's can't see wood for trees in backing levy

It is ludicrous for the Green Party to think that they can solve Leicester's dire public transport problems by charging 26,000 city workers £550 a year to park at their workplaces.

Just imagine for a moment that the Green's advocated a similar means of raising money to fund our massively underfunded NHS. A policy proposal that would be comparable to the regressive Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) might argue that every Leicester-based worker in paid employment should pay an additional £550 a year as an additional "NHS levy."

To be clear the Green Party do not promote such a health levy as it would be both unfair and self-defeating to do so. Instead, the Green's call for the immediate removal of all corporate profiteers from the NHS so that health provision can be provided totally free of charge to all users – a principle that socialists say should apply to our country's public transport system.

The Green Party point out on their national web site that "approximately one fifth of the NHS clinical budget is devoted to treating illness caused by unemployment, inequality, poor housing and pollution". So, in our thought experiment the millions raised from the extra health levy on workers could be used to improve health provision for many of our city's poorest and more vulnerable residents.

But the Green's don't advocate such a measure because they understand – in a health context at least -- that increasing the tax burden on workers in such a way would not be fair or equitable. That said, other political parties have historically shown no qualms about generating funding for the NHS in such deeply regressive ways by increasing our National Insurance contributions.

Either way, when it comes to fixing out nation's dire transportation problems the Green's do support regressive parking taxes like the WPL, which are not really very different from schemes that would increase National Insurance contributions to fund the NHS.

The Green's do this despite understanding the scale of the problems caused by many decades of privatisation (like that faced by the NHS), and they acknowledge that "decades of under-investment in sustainable [public] transport has resulted in commuting patterns that are now more reliant on car journeys".

The Green's understand why many commuters are reliant upon cars and not buses, as they explain: "The current state of the bus industry is the perfect example that deregulation of public transport leads to a substandard service." And the Green's understand that to enable our bus networks to be fit for commuting would require "a revolution" in the way that they are funded.

But the Green's cannot see the wood for the trees when it comes to their support for a regressive WPL.

That being said we should give the Green's a small amount of credit for understanding that private finance initiatives must be completely rejected as a means to fund improvements in public transport – as PFI schemes represent an extremely regressive funding mechanism which, it is worth remembering, were used in conjunction with a regressive WPL to construct Nottingham's famous tram system.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on August 6, 2022 by Michael Barker  
on behalf of the Campaign Against Leicester's WPL*

“ *...we should give the Green's a small amount of credit for understanding that private finance initiatives must be completely rejected as a means to fund improvements in public transport – as PFI schemes represent an extremely regressive funding mechanism which, it is worth remembering, were used in conjunction with a regressive WPL to construct Nottingham's famous tram system.*”

## Important lessons not learned over the levy

Right from the start of the confused public consultation on Leicester's Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) the City Council have repeated the misleading idea that by taxing the majority of workers who park their cars (at work) in Leicester the Council will be able to tap untold riches from central government.

Upon launching their public consultation in December last year, the Council therefore explained: "The income from a WPL could be around £95million over the first 10 years, and would enable the city council to match-fund with other grants to invest up to £450million."

Here, to understand the Council's misplaced optimism about being able to access to a further £350million of government grants if they introduce their proposed parking tax, we need look no further than their own "WPL Business Case" document which stated:

*"The Nottingham WPL experience has proved that if a local authority can provide even a modest degree of local funding, it is often much easier to obtain additional funding from a variety of other sources."*

But the Nottingham experience has not furnished Leicester City Council with any such proof.

As Table 4 shows in Leicester City Council's "WPL Business Case" the vast majority of the so-called government match-funding was linked to the financing of the "Nottingham Express Transit Phase 2" -- such that the £170 million that Nottingham extracted from workers using their WPL was matched by £370 million from central government.

What remains unacknowledged here by Leicester City Council is that this tram funding was initially meant to be 100% funded via a government funded PFI (Private Finance Initiative) scheme in the same way as Phase 1 of the tram scheme was (with PFI schemes being best described as scams used to funnel untold profits to the private sector).

But for whatever reason, the government decided they didn't want to pay the full cost the second PFI scheme and so informed Nottingham City Council that they would have to pay 25% of the Phase 2 tram extension. Although later the government changed their minds again and said the City would have to stump up 33% of the total cost of the tram extension.

So, in the face of significant public opposition, Nottingham City Council then pushed forward with their own regressive WPL tax to enable Phase 2 of the PFI scheme to proceed. There are important lessons to learn from this story, but these are evidently not the lessons that Leicester City Council have learned.

## Report featured on BBC East Midlands Today

On August 18, *BBC East Midlands Today* ran an important news story about the forthcoming scrapping of Kinchbus Route 2. Here follows the relevant text from this television story:

NURSE: "So, at the moment I get the bus on nights and days. I usually get it at six 'o'clock in the morning or six 'o'clock in the evening."

JOURNALIST: Kellen Leader depends on buses to get to her job to and from her job as a nurse at the Leicester Royal Infirmary, but from the 4th September the Sileby to Leicester route of the Number 2 Kinchbus she uses will be scrapped.

NURSE: "I actually cried, because how am I going to get to work. I don't want to have to rely on lifts from family and friends. I can get the train, but that means I would have to leave two hours early to get to work and do a 12 hour shift, which means its going to be a 15 hour day that I would have to do."

JOURNALIST: Getting the bus from Sileby isn't exactly easy as it is. During the daytime you can catch one towards Leicester about once every hour, but residents tell me they very regularly don't show up. The services cancellation will also effect other places along the route like Cossington and Birstall. But the bus company says, it just isn't viable anymore....

It's currently the talk of the village. Residents say they were given just two weeks notice.

SECOND PERSON: "It's just going to be completely isolating if you have no other means of transport and you can't get into the train station through the steep stairs then you can't get out the village."

THIRD PERSON: "There are a lot of people that drive, but there are a lot of people that don't drive too."

FORTH PERSON: "If you are taking about £30 or £40 for taxi's to get there and back to where you want to go, then you are not going to have much left out of your pension."

JOURNALIST: Celia Allsop has epilepsy which means she can't drive. She only moved to Sileby two months ago, partly because of its transport links. She's soon to start a new job at a school, where she would have taken the bus too.

CELIA: "I might have to reconsider. I am sincerely hoping that it won't come to that because I really want this job, I really want it, but it may come to that. It kinda of feels like people, particularly people with disabilities, elderly people, and people with all sorts of different health issues, are just kind of ignored."

## Cuts plus levy adds up to misery for workers

When I read the *Mercury* article about the proposed cost-cutting taking place on Route 2 bus route (“*Bus service cut ‘leaves passengers stranded’*,” August 19) it was immediately obvious that this cut would result in many more workers being forced to drive their cars to work to the city.

This point was made by a nurse interviewed on BBC East Midlands Today who said she would have no choice but to drive from Sileby to get to her workplace at Leicester Royal Infirmary.

Because of such ongoing bus service cuts, ultimately determined by government funding reductions and by the many problems associated with privatisation, this nurse from Sileby will be joining thousands of other county-based workers who are already effectively forced to drive into Leicester.

And if the city council gets its way, she will be joining thousands of others who will have no option but to pay the council’s ridiculous planned Workplace Parking Levy.

For many people living outside the city’s boundaries, the proposed WPL is a looming problem that will have a huge and costly impact on their lives, the scale of which was evidenced in the documentation supporting Leicester’s Transport Plan, published just last year.

Within this documentation it is said that Leicester city is “the largest single employer, supporting 178,500 jobs” and that nearly half of these jobs (46 per cent) were filled by workers who travel into work from outside of the city.

Many of these workers will be included amongst the thousands who would be charged to drive to work if the levy is introduced, as catching a bus to work will not be an option for large numbers of them.

The transport documentation also showed that those workers living outside the city are far more reliant upon cars to get to work than those in the city, as a survey showed that just 1 per cent of workers who live in rural locations use public transport to get to work.

On top of years of government cuts to rural bus services, it will come as little surprise that the documentation finds that “outside of the city centre the car is very much the dominant mode for the vast majority of travellers”.

These looming problems show why trade unionists across Leicester and Leicestershire have been so vocal in calling for the outright scrapping of the city council’s proposed parking tax.

Yes, we urgently need frequent, reliable, widespread and cheap (ideally free) public transport, but I agree with the arguments made previously in the *Mercury* by the Campaign Against Leicester WPL: attempts to win people over to the need to revolutionise public transport will only be set back if a WPL is ever introduced.

## City parking levy could cost you £550 a year

For those living in Leicestershire who must commute into Leicester city centre for work there is often no viable public transport options, so they are forced into the position of having to use their cars to drive to work.

This lack of public transport is one reason why trade unionist have spent years demanding that the government must undertake a massive expansion of funding for public transport to all rural areas across the entire country. Yet the government continue to take us in the opposite direction from that suggested by inspiring unions like the RMT (see their recent report titled “Cut Climate Change, Not Public Transport Jobs”).

The latest demonstration of this fundamental governmental failing was reported in the Echo article “Bus service cut ‘leaves passengers stranded.’”

Evidently it seems that residents of Sileby and surrounding villages might soon be losing access to Kinchbus Route 2. If sense doesn’t prevail soon, this might mean that existing bus commuters living in Sileby will be forced to first travel to Loughborough to get a connecting bus to Leicester!

If we take both the transport and climate crisis seriously, we need travel solutions that do more than tinker at the edges of the problems. With one example of such backward tinkering being illustrated by Leicester City Council’s proposed Workplace Parking Levy, where parking at your workplace will cost £550.

Enough is enough! We must force all our political leaders to listen to us so we can transform public transport and much more beside.

*Published in Loughborough Echo on September 7, 2022 by David Holloway  
on behalf of the Campaign Against Leicester’s WPL*

“ *...Enough is enough! We must force all our political leaders to listen to us so we can transform public transport and much more beside.*”

## **The wrong tax at wrong time - so just scrap it**

Unison have pointed out that essential workers in Social Work and the NHS are leaving their professions (Leicester Mercury, August 19 and 23). They report major problems with dedicated, experienced workers leaving and difficulties in recruiting new staff.

With winter looming, sky-high inflation and soaring energy costs, combined with a measly pay offer from the government -- a pay cut in real terms -- it is hardly a shock to see people are voting with their feet and looking for less stressful, better-paid jobs, if they are lucky enough to get them.

The council says that it will decide whether or not to charge themselves for the levy (which will then be added to our council tax bills) or whether to pass this on to workers. A better solution would be for the council to take buses back into municipal control, and invest in cycling infrastructure, to offer genuine alternatives to travelling by car. At the moment, people often have no choice but to use their cars, such have been the cuts to evening and county bus routes.

In the context of this 'perfect storm' of pay rises not keeping up with inflation, the ongoing impact of Covid and difficulties with recruiting social workers and NHS staff, why are the council still looking to go ahead with what is effectively a tax on workers, the Workplace Parking Levy? The council needs to see sense and scrap this plan, which is unworkable and ill-thought-through.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on September 15, 2022 by Andrew Walton*

## **Parking levy would be new form of taxation**

What would you say if Leicester City Council wanted to increase your council tax bill by around 30 per cent? Well that is what they want to do to a section of the people of Leicester and Leicestershire.

They are not directly charging you on your council tax but trying to bring in a new form of taxation called a workplace parking levy.

We already pay enough council tax, of which some is used to subsidise the private bus companies. Now they want even more money so they can buy electric buses and give them to the bus companies. Enough is enough. Workers are struggling to heat their homes and put food on the table.

If the bus companies want new buses how about they use the cash they give to shareholders instead of fleecing the taxpayers? It's time for the council to listen to the people of Leicester and scrap this ludicrous idea.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on September 22, 2022 by Name and Address Supplied*

***“...It's time for the council to listen to the people of Leicester and scrap this ludicrous idea.”***



## Public and unions want levy to be scrapped

Leicester City Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby and his deputy, Adam Clarke, understand that the world faces a climate emergency, but their flagship Workplace Parking Levy will only hinder our city's response to this emergency. This explains why their plans for this regressive tax have faced a monumental political backlash from ordinary workers and the broader trade union movement.

Last year when the Council undertook their first (largely invisible) consultation on their WPL, Soulsby misrepresented the views of the local trade union movement by saying that he'd had "encouraging" conversations with them. Further investigations by trade unionists revealed that the few union representatives who had communicated their views to the Mayor had not expressed support for a WPL. This was a view that was shared by the majority of people who'd engaged in this limited consultation.

In mid-December the City Council then launched a full (three month long) public consultation on their WPL. And given the punishing nature of the levy, public opposition has been increasing ever since. (The primary exception to this resistance existing among a small layer of Green Party activists.)

Kicking things off, in January, a political motion was passed by Unison, the biggest union representing Council workers in Leicester, which raised serious concerns with the WPL.

The following month, representatives from the Leicester and Districts Trades Union Council met with Council officials responsible for the WPL and came away from this meeting with even more concerns. There followed a joint statement from five education unions opposing the levy, and a joint statement released by the three main unions representing council workers in the city raising other serious problems.

The GMB Leicestershire Branch then passed a motion opposing the WPL which highlighted how it was "just a regressive tax on workers" that "would only serve to undermine efforts to promote inclusive environmental action." Then in mid-March, just days after the Council's public consultation ended, this motion received the unanimous support from the Trades Council, a body which represents unions from across Leicestershire, and it was decided that a campaign should be launched to oppose the levy.

Following this decision, the Campaign Against Leicester's WPL had their first organising meeting on March 24, and since then our campaign has published scores of letters in the press (which were brought together in a 42 page pamphlet, available online), held a public meeting (in May), distributed thousands of leaflets, authored detailed reports on the WPL and our proposed alternatives, organised a protest against the Council (in July), and we challenged the Council leadership to debate their proposals in public (a proposal which has been ignored... ridiculously the City Mayor

'offered' to just chair a debate but would not participate).

Supporters of our campaign have achieved other significant outcomes too. We succeeded in getting a political motion passed in Leicester South Constituency Labour Party (the branch which includes Soulsby and Clarke amongst their leading members) which called for the immediate scrapping of the WPL. And earlier this month a historically significant motion was passed in a Unite branch (Leicestershire Central) that agreed that the regional leadership of their union should refuse to fund any future election campaigns of any Labour councillors in the city if they ignored the trade union movement and supported the imposition of a WPL.

But still the people of Leicester and Leicestershire are left in limbo waiting for the results of the public consultation that ended in March!

Surely now the City Council will scrap their backward plans. And if not, we will need to mount a huge protest to fill the streets to force them to see sense.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on September 29, 2022 by Michael Barker and David Holloway on behalf of the Campaign Against Leicester's WPL*

“*...Last year when the Council undertook their first (largely invisible) consultation on their WPL, Soulsby misrepresented the views of the local trade union movement by saying that he'd had “encouraging” conversations with them. Further investigations by trade unionists revealed that the few union representatives who had communicated their views to the Mayor had not expressed support for a WPL.*”

## ***Parking levy was the mayor's key policy***

*Michael Barker and David Holloway's letter ("Public and unions want levy to be scrapped," Mailbox, September 29) makes the mistaken assertion that the workplace parking levy (WPL) is opposed by nearly everyone except a small "layer" of Green Party activists. This is incorrect. It seems extraordinary to misrepresent a major plank of the Labour Mayor's manifesto like this.*

*Yes, the Green Party was delighted when the mayor embraced our idea, but the mayor ran on this ticket, and was supported by his party and the unions to such an extent they decided there was no need even for internal hustings when he decided to stand as mayor again this year.*

*It is the mayor's policy. He was voted in democratically. The mayor had this front and centre of his manifesto, and he was voted in accordingly, and supported by his party and the unions. He was waved through, despite, in the words of the letter "their flagship work-place parking levy" policy.*

*On top of this overwhelming support for the mayor from unions, voters and his party, voter feedback to the Green Party indicates that some people who usually vote Green actually switched because of the WPL policy, precisely to support and encourage the mayoral team with this late but desperately needed environmental policy.*

*In addition, to being supported by many of the public who want climate action, not just warm words, the WPL is supported by Climate Action Leicester and Leicestershire (Call) a non-political group made up of nearly every environmental and climate group in Leicester and Leicestershire.*

*The pamphlet mentioned in the letter confirms the climate crisis is needed and action required. However, there were few, if any, local actions proposed. The only WPL alternative or climate crisis action was renationalising transport: "what is needed is for the nation's public transport infrastructure to be nationalised and run democratically by workers' and users for need, not private profit. "This may seem a long way off right now, but if the climate emergency is to be properly tackled, the question of ownership is key."*

*I have some sympathy with the idea that renationalising public transport is part of the solution, but we don't control that locally.*

*The mayor for years blamed council inaction on buses and plummeting use on the private ownership model, meaning we got cruddy deals with the private companies, while similar cities managed to make it work.*

*Leicester city has legally binding targets to achieve to reduce congestion and air pollution, which are killing us. We need to agree multiple actions, now. We cannot kick the climate crisis can down the road again,*

*while we wait for transport to be renationalised. It's immoral for us to do nothing and then blame private business or the Tories or whoever.*

*The WPL is a fantastic idea, and with half of workers and their families relying on buses, not cars, we need investment, and leadership from a mayor voted in on this WPL ticket. Out-of-hours workers can be exempt, along with the disabled and charities, and we can reward, for example, car sharers by giving them free parking if we want, to encourage climate action and help key workers.*

*Why are the unions not proactively suggesting ways to make the flagship policy work? With 95 per cent of the richest owning a car and barely a third of the poorest owning one, who benefits from car ownership most and from the running down of alternative transport?*

*Sir Peter supported the WPL idea and got voted in with this as part of his manifesto. It was his big climate idea. To try to change this mayoral policy apparently through union threats and meetings behind closed doors seems worrying and hardly in the spirit of democracy.*

*We hope Sir Peter holds his nerve, stands by his policy and shows the leadership the city needs.*

*Published in Leicester Mercury on October 3, 2022 by Mags Lewis  
on behalf of the Leicester Green Party*

## Manifesto pledge right, but not now the policy

Mags Lewis from Leicester Green Party states that the workplace parking levy was a major plank of the mayor's manifesto ("*Parking levy was the mayor's key policy*," Mailbox, October 3). It was never a given thing that was going to happen -- the manifesto says that there would be a consultation on the idea of a parking levy.

In the manifesto there are no details on how much the charge would be or who it would impact. Now these details are now known there is a lot of opposition to the levy, due to the impact on people's lives.

From my social and work environment, I have not found one person in favour. I have also done some door-knocking on an estate near a school and industrial area and still not found one person in favour.

The Labour party was right to add it to its manifesto to look at it as a possibility back in 2019, but to use Nottingham is wrong. After nearly £750 million spent, they have worse air quality than Leicester (according to <http://www.igair.com>). Please go on this site and check Leicester's air quality against Nottingham and Amsterdam. They both have trams, Amsterdam has far more cyclists and yet their air quality is worse.

Is Leicester's air quality all down to cars? Was the country's air quality better or worse during lockdown when people where not travelling to work? Talking of travelling to work, have people's commutes changed since the pandemic? Are all the assumptions about the amount of pollution / carbon output made from out-of-date data?

The Greens' idea of reducing carbon emissions is to produce electric buses in another country and ship them around the world. Please can you clarify how much carbon is produced making an electric bus as against a diesel bus? If it is anything like the cars, eight per cent more carbon is produced in the manufacturing process.

As for unions trying to change mayoral policy through threats and meetings behind closed doors, it was not behind closed doors, it was a branch meeting open to all branch members and democratically voted on by the people attending.

The levy is an attack on the working people of Leicester and we have democratically elected councillors who are supposed to represent the interests on their constituents. If they vote for the levy it will be going against the wishes of the people, so why would you fund an election campaign for a person that voted to make your life worse?

We need to look at reducing our usage of fossil fuels and electricity as a whole society, not just blame 26,000 car drivers who commute to work by car to earn a living to support their families.

How many car drivers do you really think are going to stop driving to work if the levy is imposed? Not many, as they drive to work not because they do not care about the environment but because it is the most cost-

effective and time efficient way for them to travel.

As for ideas for improving the environment and people's lives, how about a mass programme of home insulation? How about a scrappage scheme for the older, more polluting vehicles and the council helps people to purchase a newer vehicle? If the council takes the services of home car-ers back in-house, could they be provided with modern vehicles? Is the council making as a stipulation to all builders that new houses will need to be passive homes?

The levy needs scrapping now to take the unnecessary stress off of people's budgets and wellbeing.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on October 6, 2022 by Name and Address Supplied*

“

*...We need to look at reducing our usage of fossil fuels and electricity as a whole society, not just blame 26,000 car drivers who commute to work by car to earn a living to support their families.”*

## Target the super rich, not ordinary car drivers

On May 14, the Campaign Against Leicester's Workplace Parking Levy published a report which we called "Climate solutions for Leicester." This report was inspired by an excellent pamphlet produced in 2021 by the Campaign Against Climate Change trade union group titled "Climate Jobs: Building a Workforce for the Climate Emergency."

The "Climate Jobs" pamphlet proposes many concrete solutions that show "how we can cut UK emissions of greenhouse gases to help prevent catastrophic climate change" while also creating millions of jobs for people – that is, not poor-quality employment with zero hours contracts, but jobs with good pay and conditions.

In Leicester, however, our Labour City Council are moving in the wrong direction by publicly proposing to tax ordinary workers not big business with their WPL, and in doing so they are undermining the efforts of other green campaigners who might want to build a mass campaign to democratise our transport infrastructure.

The "Climate Jobs" pamphlet is clear that the most pressing priority for the green movement must be on uniting workers to campaign for public ownership of key sectors of the economy, not just transport: "*Solutions to the climate crisis need to challenge and reduce existing social and economic inequalities not reinforce them.*"

Equitable solutions around which mass campaigns can be built already exist and the "money is there" to fund such initiatives, especially when we consider the massive levels of tax avoidance engaged in by the billionaire-class. But the major problem for ordinary people, is that while the "money is there" "[w]hat has not been there is the political will [from our political representatives]."

Transportation of course remains a major contributor to climate change: hence the need for a "huge increase in public transport to meet people's needs". Improvements which can be achieved through two main methods: "one is the transfer of journeys from more to less polluting modes of transport, and the other is reducing the amount of travelling done."

But the methods chosen for achieving these societal-wide changes remains of critical importance, which means that the methods adopted must not discriminate against those who rely upon their cars to get to work.

Instead, we must look towards promoting more systemic changes as opposed to tinkering around the edges and punishing workers because the super-rich have made our public transport system both expensive and unreliable. On this point the "Climate Jobs" pamphlet observes:

*"Changes in employment patterns, gentrification and rising house prices has resulted in people living further from work. The road building policies of consecutive governments has produced and reinforced this problem. But*

*such is the expense and inadequacy of privatised public transport that many people use the car even where the train or bus makes exactly the same journey.”*

So, to build a campaign that can bring people together, rather than tax thousands of workers who are reliant upon their cars through no fault of their own, trade unionists and politicians must lead by example and think big to deal with the massive problems facing workers.

Solutions to the climate emergency will never eventuate unless private ownership is challenged and overturned to make way for public ownership. And to secure such systemic changes we need to make sure that we don't attack car users, but instead focus our sights much higher, that is, on all the corporate profiteers. That is why part of such a campaign for public ownership of critical resources needs to highlight that public use of buses and trains “should be free-to-cheap to encourage general usage.”

There are of course many other things that will need to be done as a part of a campaign to improve public transport and lower carbon dioxide emissions and many other positive examples are contained within the “Climate Jobs” pamphlet which is available to read online.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on October 10, 2022 by Michael Barker  
on behalf of the Campaign Against Leicester's WPL*

“ *...the methods chosen for achieving these societal-wide changes remains of critical importance, which means that the methods adopted must not discriminate against those who rely upon their cars to get to work.”*



## Socialist stance not adopted by all Greens

RE: Mags Lewis's letter ("*Parking levy was the mayor's key policy,*" Mailbox, October 3). Referring to the online pamphlet that our campaign, the Campaign Against Leicester's Workplace Parking Levy (WPL), published in June -- a publication which was largely comprised of letters that had been published in the Mercury -- Mags wrongly asserts that, "the only WPL alternative of climate crisis action was renationalising transport".

To prove this point, she refers to the text of a single letter. Yet even this bus-related letter did not limit itself to demanding that transport should be managed under democratic workers' control.

The letter explained that "ownership was key" but the paragraph that Mags quoted provided another means by which people in Leicester could take action. The end of the paragraph she quoted from ended by stating: "A key step is to support [already unpaid and overworked] transport workers in waging a struggle against their employers, both to improve their own conditions but also to increase their confidence in demanding change."

Concerning other solutions, our pamphlet suggests that "*Leicester City Council should pursue franchising as a means of taking limited control over our city's bus infrastructure as a step towards kicking the private-sector profiteers out of our transport network.*" But our Labour-run City Council have chosen not to adopt even this limited approach, and would rather punish workers for having to drive to work by imposing a regressive tax (the WPL).

That said, we understand the limits of franchising, and elsewhere in our pamphlet we quoted the RMT union's position "*that municipal ownership, supported by ring-fenced national funding, rather than Enhanced Partnerships or franchising, which both rely on private operators to run services, is the most cost effective and efficient way for local authorities to deliver... improvement to local bus services*".

Finally our pamphlet is clear that "a good place to look for green solutions" to the current climate emergency "lies within the trade union movement itself, and most particularly within the excellent pamphlet 'Climate Jobs: Building a Workforce for the Climate Emergency' (2021) which can be read online here [www.cacctu.org.uk](http://www.cacctu.org.uk)". We also discussed the contents of this pamphlet in a separate document that we produced titled "Climate solutions for Leicester."

We admit that most of the letters published by the various supporters of our campaign have focused on debunking the long flow of misinformation promoted by the City Council and by the Green Party, but

ultimately as a trade union led initiative, our campaign is clear that the most effective solutions to the climate crisis will come about through the democratic efforts of ordinary workers organising through their trade unions.

At the same time, we don't pretend that trade unions are perfect. Recent decades have amply illustrated that all too the leaders of trade unions have set back political struggle of workers by entering cosy partnership relationships with capitalist powerbrokers. But now with new trade union-initiated ventures like Enough is Enough, workers are increasingly starting to find new leaders who are willing and able to ditch the politics of partnership to confront the powers-that-be with a class-based approach to organising.

Here it would be amiss of us if we failed to mention that the Green Party (nationally) has officially backed the Enough is Enough campaign, but Mags as a local Green Party spokesperson, demonstrates that this campaign's underlying socialist message concerning the need for class struggle has not filtered down to all Green activists.

Thus, after a branch of Unite the union passed a motion saying that their members didn't want to finance the election campaigns of Labour politicians who choose to promote the regressive WPL, Mags took this as an opportunity to disparage union democracy. Mags makes this attack on unions clear in her letter when she referred to the passing of this democratic motion as an attempt to threaten politicians "behind closed doors" that was "hardly in the spirit of democracy." How wrong can she be.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on October 22, 2022 by Michael Barker and David Holloway  
on behalf of the Campaign Against Leicester's WPL*

## **Bus fare offers could help revitalise our city**

I took a visit into Leicester town centre recently and was saddened to see a thriving city that has been allowed to be run into the ground.

We need to take urgent action and work with bus companies to find ways to make bus journeys cheaper or free outside of rush hour. It could make Leicester busier and greener if we did this one simple measure.

I pushed Arriva to reduce fares when Leicester City won the Premier League trophy several years ago. They did so and reported a success, so why don't they retry?

For example, Monday to Wednesday they could make a £1 day pass and see their buses full again with a positive knock-on to our society.

*Published in Leicester Mercury on October 26, 2022 by Name and address supplied*

## ***Workplace parking levy not at odds with beliefs***

*Along with many Greens, I've been a proud union member all of my working life. I'm also proud that my party supports the five core demands of the Enough is Enough cost of living campaign.*

*These five demands are: real pay rises, slashing energy bills, ending food poverty, decent homes for all and taxing the rich. Greens also support a minimum wage of £15 an hour.*

*These demands go hand in hand with climate action, social justice and climate justice. To suggest efforts to reduce car use, improve public transport for all and enable active travel in a cost of living crisis are somehow incompatible with these demands is simply wrong.*

*A better question might be to ask why the Greens, but not Labour, are on board with the Enough is Enough agenda.*

*Published in Leicester Mercury on October 26, 2022 by Mags Lews, Leicester*

## ***Appreciation for city's longest electric route***

*I'd like to write to say how proud I am that as of this week my city of Leicester now has the longest all electric-powered bus route in Europe. My cycle to work crosses over part of this route, so I smell the difference. I was anxious when first starting the habit of using my commute to keep fit, so I appreciate initiatives like this. I am looking forward to trying out the service.*

*We should be encouraging our councillors to take bold moves like this so people do have choices of how they can travel.*

*Mailbox is uncomfortable to read at the moment: the bullying approach of the unions attacking anyone daring to express a wish that we could discourage car use is dreadful.*

*Michael Barker and David Holloway's use of this page to personally attack campaigner Mags Lewis ("Socialist stance is not adopted by all Greens", October 22) is especially vicious. I don't want to see debate stifled like this. Why no use this page to say what you like about our city and county? Let's offer some praise or appreciation instead.*

*Published in Leicester Mercury on October 27, 2022 by Ursula Bilson, Evington*

## **Bus cuts will see even fewer on board**

The route planners at Arriva buses must have some marbles missing! I'm referring to the changes to the No.16 Loughborough to Coalville route, where to my mind the changes are a model of ineptitude.

It appears that someone has sat in an office and stuck a pin the map and said, "I know, we'll do this" - with no consideration for the paying passengers (you known, the people that keep you in a job).

Living in Thringstone, I now have to get a bus to Coalville if I want to go to Leicester. It's just the same on the return journey, whereas before you could get the No.16 to Whitwick Market Place and get a connection to Leicester.

They aren't even gaining passengers from this decision, in fact they're losing some as they have cut out all the stops from Dumps Road to Whitwick Market Place and are now following the same route as Skylink, which runs a service along the same route half-an-hour before them.

I wonder how long before they reduce the service to a two-hourly one?

*Published in Leicester Mercury on November 2, 2022 by Name and address supplied*

## Scrap parking levy, not genuine green policies

Leicester City Council ended their consultation on their ill-thought through proposal to introduce a Workplace Parking Levy over seven months ago. The Council leadership promised a quick turnaround on this consultation, but the public are still being kept in the dark about the levy's future.

According to the City Council, after much delay this issue was first due to be discussed at a Scrutiny Commission meeting scheduled to take place in late August, but this was then postponed to October 12, and now postponed again to the next Scrutiny meeting that is due to take place on November 30.

But as reported in the Leicester Mercury, the City Mayor's own constituency Labour Party has already voted to scrap the levy, as have many unions, to refuse to fund Labour politicians who vote to back this regressive tax or levy, that will have a huge impact on workers (including NHS workers) who live outside of Leicester.

Forty-six per cent of the jobs that exist in Leicester city centre are filled by commuters who travel in from outside of the city, many of whom must rely upon their cars to get to work and will therefore be penalised by the introduction of any WPL.

This is just one of the many reasons why the proposed levy must be completely scrapped not just paused.

But just because the WPL must be stopped doesn't mean that genuine green policies should not be promoted, and for those interested in finding out more I would recommend downloading 'Climate Jobs: Building a Workforce for the Climate Emergency' (2021) from this web site [www.cacctu.org.uk](http://www.cacctu.org.uk)

*Published in Loughborough Echo on November 2, 2022 by David Holloway  
on behalf of the Campaign Against Leicester's WPL*

## Get involved with the Trades Council!

Socialists in Leicester and Leicestershire are celebrating the just-breaking news that the Labour-run City Council has been forced to scrap their plans to introduce a Workplace Parking Levy in our city. On November 7, Leicester and District Trades Union Council Assistant Secretary Michael Barker said:

*“Tonight’s victory once again demonstrates where the true power in society lies, it lies in the hands of ordinary people. The collective pressure brought to bear upon our City Council, but most particularly upon its leader Sir Peter Soulsby, by the trade union movement, has forced the Council to dump their proposed £550 annual tax on workers. Tonight’s good news in many ways reflects the uptick in workers’ struggle in society which is seeing increasing numbers of workers moving into industrial struggle against the government. The growing popularity of new campaigns like Enough is Enough! illustrate that we are moving into new times where socialist change is increasingly seen as the only alternative to the bankrupt status quo, whether that’s enforced by the Tories or Labour.”*

If you want to find out about the Trades Council then contact us

Facebook: Leicester and District Trades Union Council

Our victory once again demonstrates where the true power in society lies, it lies in the hands of ordinary people. The collective pressure brought to bear upon our City Council by the trade union movement forced them to dump their proposed £550 annual tax on workers. This good news in many ways reflects the uptick in workers' struggle in society which is seeing increasing numbers of workers moving into industrial struggle against the government. The growing popularity of new campaigns like Enough is Enough! illustrate that we are moving into new times where socialist change is increasingly seen as the only alternative to the bankrupt status quo, whether that's enforced by the Tories or Labour.

**CAMPAIGN AGAINST  
LEICESTER'S WORKPLACE PARKING LEVY**

