

## **RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE**

### **TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL – WORKPLACE PARKING LEVY**

#### **SUBMISSION FROM THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND (EIS)**

The EIS has around 55,000 members in Scotland, representing the views of 80% of Scotland's teachers and lecturers and has members in almost all schools, colleges and universities in Scotland. The aims of the EIS are to promote sound learning, advance the interests of education in Scotland and advance the interests and welfare of teachers in Scotland. The EIS is the third largest trade union in Scotland and is an active member of the STUC and TUC.

The EIS is pleased to be invited to give evidence to the Committee on the Workplace Parking Levy (WPL).

#### **Background**

The EIS understand that the Scottish Government/Scottish Greens' WPL amendment to the Transport (Scotland) Bill would give Councils the right to put a levy on each private car parking space at workplaces. The levy would be paid by the employer – who may choose to pass all or part of that levy onto the individual workers using the car parking spaces. Each council would develop its own framework for doing so.

Nottingham Council currently operates a WPL and the annual parking levy for an individual parking space is currently £415, and it raises around £9m per annum. The EIS understands that at least half of employers in Nottingham pass the costs of the levy onto workers.

The EIS understands that the Scottish Government will exempt NHS premises and blue badge holders from paying a levy.

#### **EIS Position on the Taxation and the Workplace Parking Levy**

The EIS stated in a consultation on the 2019-20 Draft Scottish Budget:

*“The EIS recognises that UK public sector spending decisions significantly affect the expenditure available to Scottish Government regarding public spending in Scotland. The EIS has previously called on the Scottish Government to use the increased revenue raising powers at its disposal and welcomes the use of some of these powers in the 2018-19 budget to increase public revenues and thus increase public spending. The EIS believes that the Scottish Government should further explore its options around using its existing and new fiscal powers to support public sector provision.”*

Whilst the proposed Workplace Parking Levy is an example of the Scottish Government seeking to exercise its new fiscal powers to raise taxation, this particular proposal is problematic for the EIS for a number of reasons. At the 2019 STUC Congress, the EIS voted in support of a resolution that included:

*“...also calls on the STUC General Council to publicly oppose and actively campaign against any measures being introduced to the Bill, which would seek to introduce workplace parking levies.”*

The EIS 2019 AGM will take place in early June 2019 where the following motion will be moved:

*“That this AGM call on the Scottish Government to reconsider the powers granted to local authorities to introduce a workplace parking tax or charge.”*

The current EIS position of opposing WPL was therefore set out at the 2019 STUC Congress and there will be an opportunity to update the EIS' position on this matter at this year's EIS AGM.

### **Possible Effect of the Workplace Parking Levy on Teachers**

The aims of a WPL are laudable – to reduce car use thereby reducing pollution and to raise additional revenue to invest in transport infrastructure. Early indications are, however, that some teachers have serious concerns on how a WPL would adversely affect them and there is every likelihood that the 2019 EIS AGM will confirm the view expressed at the 2019 STUC Congress. To understand why this is likely, it is important to understand the teachers' pattern of work and how schools are situated.

Unlike most large workplaces and organisations, schools are located unevenly across all communities. Few schools are located in central business districts with good access to multiple public transport routes. Travelling to school by public transport is problematic for large numbers of teachers. Teachers living in rural areas may not have a public transport alternative to driving, and many teachers (even within cities) may have to rely on a multi-leg public transport journey to travel between their homes and their school workplace. For some teachers, this would involve several hours commuting a day.

It is worth noting that unlike some professions which allow flexible working – for example starting slightly later in the morning or homeworking – teachers must be present before their class at the start of the school day. Considerable disruption to classes/lessons is caused in schools where teachers arrive late.

Another issue is that many teachers cannot afford to buy or rent homes close to where they work, and the most affordable housing is not always close to the place of work. Whilst there has been some progress on teachers' pay, it is still less than the average pay of graduates with five years working experience.

Most teachers take work home, and this includes large amounts of marking or teaching materials. Taking cars to school allows teachers to efficiently and safely carry heavy loads between their places of work and homes.

Teachers that drop their partners off at work or children at other schools or nurseries may also find it difficult to stop relying on their car for travelling to work. Similarly, getting home late afternoon for caring responsibilities may also be a factor as to why some teachers use a car for their daily commute.

For these reasons, a WPL is not likely to significantly reduce car travel for teachers, as many will feel that they have little alternative but to continue using their cars and pay a WPL. The effect of the WPL for most teachers may simply be to lower their take-home pay, in a profession that already feels aggrieved with its pay levels.

Where teachers do choose not to drive in order to avoid paying the WPL they are likely to have increased commuting times and are less likely to take heavy loads home. Neither of these potential effects are going to help the quality of learning.

A number of teachers may also have a partner that either works in another school or another workplace that could have a WPL. It is therefore possible that some households may be hit twice by a WPL scheme, and whilst this may focus minds around the use of cars for commuting purposes, it also has to be understood that some workers have no other realistic choice but to use their cars for commuting. This is true for many teachers living in rural areas and those having caring responsibilities.

Another issue arising from WPL, in making commuting to school workplaces either more expensive or more time consuming (via public transport) is that it may potentially exacerbate recruitment and retention in schools, particularly in rural areas, where they are already acute. There may also be a particular issue for schools located in areas of deprivation which may also not have good public transport links and some of which have long standing recruitment and retention issues too. The EIS believes that the WPL could undermine the strenuous efforts being made by national stakeholders to improve recruitment and retention to teaching, especially in rural schools.

If the WPL amendment is successfully incorporated into the Transport Bill then the EIS would expect schools and other essential public service workers to be exempted in the same way as the Scottish Government plans to exempt the NHS. Those teachers or education professionals that travel between schools as part of their remit should have a statutory exemption.

### **The Nature of the Workplace Parking Levy**

Whilst the WPL is applied to employers, the evidence from Nottingham is that around half of employers will pass it on to workers. The WPL would therefore be, for many, a tax on workers.

The EIS understand the WPL is likely to be a flat rate tax. Flat rate taxes are inequitable since they disproportionately penalise younger teachers on the lowest pay points. In other words, the WPL would hit early career and unpromoted teachers (who are the least well paid) the hardest.

### **Conclusion**

The EIS believes that the Workplace Parking Levy would disadvantage teachers and become an additional tax for many that have no alternative but to drive to work, and for these reasons the EIS does not support the introduction of the WPL.