

Clampers take €4.5m but cost twice as much

By **Ian Carey**

DRIVERS in Dublin paid a total of €4.5million to have their cars unclamped last year – covering less than half the cost of the clamping service.

The city council is on course to make at least as much this year – but it admitted its parking service sets it back ‘between €9million and €10million’.

Independent councillor Christy Burke yesterday called for the regime to be overhauled because it punishes all taxpayers, not just those fall foul of clampers.

‘Certainly there is a need to reduce, review and go back to the drawing board in relation to clamping fees,’ he said. ‘At the end of the day the taxpayers pay the clamping companies, which is costing the council millions, and the council are only taking in half of that in fines.’

There were 58,079 clampings last year. Between January and April of this year clampers struck 19,791 times, with motorists forced to pay €80 a time to have their vehicles released. The total collected in release fees so far is €1.58million.

Figures released yesterday show Jervis Street in the north inner-city is the prime spot, with 261 vehicles caught so far this year. The street yielded €20,000 in fees in the first four months of the year alone.

The second-worst street is Shelbourne Road in the leafy suburb of Ballsbridge. The road, which leads to the Aviva Stadium, is heavily patrolled by clamping vans, and 230 vehicles have been clamped there since the start of the year.

The rest of the top five blackspots were Dominick Street Lower, near the Ilac shopping centre, Wellington Quay outside U2’s Clarence Hotel, and Ranelagh village.

Last year’s list was headed by Noel Purcell Walk, the small road near St Stephen’s Green Shopping Centre.

A total of 979 vehicles were clamped on the road which is no longer than 100m, making it one of the most lucrative locations for the

‘Let’s go back to the drawing board’

council, bringing in €78,080. Dublin City Council spends between €9million and €10million on the clamping service, the street parking service, metre maintenance and the parking enforcement office.

On top of the €26million it collects from pay and display metres, a fur-

ther €880,000 was collected from private residential parking permits.

Parking permits cost €40 but there is a proposal with the Transport and Traffic Committee to raise that to €50. Councillors are yet to vote on the plan.

The clamping service is operated by Dublin Street Parking Services on the council’s behalf.

Richard Guiney, of Dublin City Business Improvement District, said that parking fees need to come down to support retailers.

‘If the costs were reduced for on-street parking we would welcome it as an incentive to those who are staying for about an hour or two because they are the shoppers as opposed to commuters,’ he said.

In March, the council announced it would impose fees on the few remaining free-of-charge parking spaces in the city centre.

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