

Funding your convenience.

Although local authorities are not legally obliged to provide public toilets, many recognise that they are an important local amenity, especially in areas that attracts large numbers of tourists.

However, because its a non-statutory service, it is generally affected by budgetary cuts, resulting in 'run-down' facilities.

Most authorities would like to provide more and better facilities, but find themselves faced with a huge infrastructure, refurbishment, repair, and staffing costs.



Many realise that one way of reversing the decline, is by increasing staffing levels. More attendants mean:-

- Reduced vandalism,
- Reduced anti-social behaviour,

- Improved security,
- Cleaner facilities, which
- Improves toilet hygiene.

However, the only way most authorities can afford to increase staffing levels, is by making a small charge.



When a cost/benefit analysis is carried out it nearly always shows that the benefits of charging include: -

- Higher standards of cleanliness,
- Higher public satisfaction levels,
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

The 1936 public health act and the 1963 turnstiles act, has restricted the ways in which authorities can implement a charging system.

Earlier this year, legislation was changed, giving authorities the right to charge for the use of urinals.

Nevertheless, authorities are still not allowed to use turnstiles.

Some authorities have found ways around the turnstile act, such as:-

- By using automatic access gates,
- Leasing out the facilities to a management company, who are allowed to use turnstiles.

Those that have been charging, find:-

- The public accept the charge, provided they see an improvement in the facilities, and
- Re-investment of the income generated, leads to improved facilities and improved staff moral.



Many of the 2009 Loo of the Year Awards winners were local authorities that charge for the use of public toilets.

This is clear proof that when managed correctly, charging for the use of public toilets really does work.

Written by, Andy Brown.
Managing Director.
Willings Services Limited.
www.willings.co.uk