

Drivers warned they now face action if they break rules

Nearly 7,000 escape fines over bus lanes

Report by Richard Gutteridge
richard.gutteridge@expressandstar.co.uk

ALMOST 7,000 drivers in West Bromwich have escaped bus lane fines of up to £90 as council bosses let them off the hook.

Sandwell Council gave the town centre rule-breakers a two week grace period after cameras were switched on, but bosses warn that is now over.

Fines have now started being issued to those who flout the rules in New Street by using the stretch as a short cut.

Scores of drivers are expected to be made to pay after it was revealed a total of 6,803 warning letters had been sent out during the two-week grace period.

The council could have raked in up to £600,000 as a result of those who flouted the rules.

But council bosses have warned there will now be no more second chances.

Cameras

The cameras went live on November 21. Anyone who has driven through the bus zone, which runs past Sandwell College's Central Sixth Form campus, off High Street, since December 5 can expect to be fined.

Initial fines are £60, but if paid within 14 days the total will be reduced to £30.

After 14 days it will stay at £60 and if it has still not been paid within 28 days it will rise to £90.

Bosses at Sandwell Council said cameras were the last resort but that they were determined to make New Street safer by putting a stop to drivers breaking the rules.

Buses have also been held up by the stream of cars passing through the zone. Only buses, Hackney carriage taxis and cyclists are allowed to pass through.

Sandwell Council's roads boss Councillor David Hosell said he expected the number of cars using the zone to drop once people have been fined.

A total of 6,803 warnings were sent for the two-week period.

He said: "The number of people using this route since the cameras went has decreased significantly which has helped cut the congestion around the bus station and started to make things safer for pedestrians."

"But clearly there are still many people ignoring the signs - despite the warning signs and all of the publicity the new cameras have had."

"Motorists need to observe the signs and find another route to avoid receiving a fine."

"We hope that once people start receiving fines, this will dramatically reduce the number of motorists ignoring the signs and help solve the safety issues and congestion in this area."

Chiefs are hopeful the threat of a fine will have the desired effect like it has in other areas, such as Wolverhampton, where bus lane cameras around the city centre have proved successful in stopping drivers using the lanes.

Christmas Day chips on the menu



Festive treat from Market Fish Bar in Wolverhampton - Sunny Mann who will be serving meals on Christmas Day

Restaurant opens doors for needy

By Marion Brennan

marion.brennan@expressandstar.co.uk

have opened their doors and offered free food on Christmas Day.

Mr Mann, 38, said: "Last year we were shocked that whole families came to be fed, but at the same time we were glad that we were able to help them."

"There are a lot of people in Wolverhampton in a sorry state and I've always had the desire to help them."

"Then I thought I've got a chip shop - I can use my chippie to make a difference to people."

"I haven't done this on my own. My brother and sister have been roped in to help and there are a number of Sikh charities and organisations that are behind it as well."

"We believe in helping other faiths celebrate their day. I'm so glad I did it. There was a really good community vibe last year. It really felt like what Christmas was about."

They will also drop off hot food and sandwiches to nearby hostels.

When he finishes his shift tomorrow, the energetic father-of-four will drive home and start cooking Christmas lunch for his wife and their family.

"I have to - she can't cook," he laughed.

Mr Mann said he was looking for someone to play Santa tomorrow - and appealed for carol singers to entertain the diners. "We've ordered loads of potatoes - no one will go hungry," he added.

The chippie will be open between 6pm-8pm today and 11am and 1pm tomorrow.

Halal butchers arsonist at large

The man who firebombed a halal

Jordan told to apologise for insulting Baggies

Politicians have hit out at for-

ley called Jordan's comments

Homer, said: "I think it is disre-

Palace until the club went into