



## Are you ready for the Post Lockdown tourist Boom?

After three months of lockdown, holiday cancellations and travel restrictions in 2020, the UK witnessed the great escape. Thousands of UK tourists were forced to replace their holidays in the sun with a stay at home holiday. With limited accommodation available we witnessed record sales of tents, caravans and motor caravans as our UK residents took to the road. The inadequacies in our UK network of campsites to deal with spontaneous touring were exposed and scenes of appalling behaviour littered our media pages. They coined the phrase “dirty camping” and much of the blame was erroneously laid at the door of motorcaravan owners. Councils immediately started to ban motorcaravans altogether, putting up notices to prohibit overnight sleeping, and installing height barriers. Yet despite banning those they thought were responsible, many of the problems continued.

The BBC recently reported that “Bosses at the Caravan and Motorhome Club said the lifting of restrictions would be like “a cork popping from a bottle”.”

One thing is certain – 2021 is likely to be even busier than 2020, as foreign travel continues to be restricted and people look to another year of holidays in the UK.

One group of visitors will be many of our 386,000 UK registered motorcaravan owners who will be on the road and looking for places to park, yet surprisingly this is the easiest group to accommodate. Height barriers and prohibitions on overnight parking will not stop them travelling; they have not spent on average £30,000 to £60,000 on a motorhome for it to sit on the drive. Most motorcaravans have onboard facilities and only need access to fresh water and waste disposal points every 3 to 4 days.

The big question is HOW WE DEAL WITH THEM ? The solution is simple:

- Allow overnight parking and sleeping for self contained motorcaravans. This can be on existing car parks or any hardstanding area. No camping behaviour allowed – no chairs, tables, awnings, bbqs etc. Normally limited to 48 hours stay.
- Provide water and waste emptying points at suitable locations like toilet blocks, village halls, car wash etc (known as Aires throughout mainland Europe); this can generate revenue for small businesses.
- Relax planning consent by permitting organisations with car parking space to allow overnight parking and sleeping for self contained motorcaravans as a way to raise much needed funds.
- Provide parking and facilities away from busy tourist destinations to encourage motorcaravans to visit lesser know locations, hence supporting a wider community.
- Encourage campsites to allow access to water and waste points for a small charge to remove the temptation to empty waste inappropriately (despite bad press this is not common practice amongst the motorcaravan fraternity).

All across Europe, such facilities are provided in towns and villages, and are commonly known as “Aires”. They cater solely for motorcaravans, providing much needed facilities which range from basic overnight parking to full motorhome service points with fresh water and waste disposal (including chemical toilet disposal points).

Very few such facilities exist in the UK, yet providing these would:

- ease the pressure on existing campsites

- reduce the amount of 'wild camping'
- remove the incidence of illegal emptying of waste by irresponsible owners
- benefit small clubs struggling for funds who could use their existing car parks.
- benefit village halls, local garages & car washes who all already have suitable locations & existing infrastructure/plumbing for waste disposal points.

Lifting of overnight sleeping prohibition can be temporary for the duration of 2021 on a trial basis.

Furthermore, allowing motorcaravans to park closer to towns and villages encourages spending in local businesses - a recent survey with nearly 9000 responses shows motorcaravan owners spend on average £47 per day excluding retail sales, site fees and fuel.

CAMpRA.org.uk (The Campaign for Real Aires UK) are available to assist and advise you to help your town or village make the most of the opportunities presented by welcoming motorhome tourism, and there are many documents on our website with information on how to do this.

Together we can be prepared, not only for 2021 but for future years .