



# **West Dorset District Council**

## **Car Parking Policy**

**2017-2022**



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## Introduction

This policy is designed to provide a framework for the provision of Off Street parking in West Dorset which will support both the local economy of the District and the free movement of traffic on the highway. The policy is set out in 4 chapters:

- (1) Overview of existing provision and emerging influences on parking
- (2) Principles of charging for OFF STREET parking in the District
- (3) Car park quality
- (4) Operational protocol, which provides information for the public, members and enforcement officers on the enforcement regime in operation.

The overarching objectives of the Parking Policy are to:

- 1) To provide West Dorset with sufficient appropriately located car parking that is safe and secure with parking charges set at levels that would not be detrimental to the town's economic performance.
- 2) To contribute to Dorset County Council's transport objectives that includes reducing congestion in order to maintain the free flow of traffic while improving road safety and to use parking in order change travel behaviour.

## 1 Overview of Existing Provision

1.1. The Council has off street car parking available across the whole of West Dorset.

Town	Number of car parks	Number of parking bays
Beaminster	2	96
Bridport	7	604
Charmouth	1	26
Dorchester	8	1,607
Lyme Regis	4	650
Sherborne	6	589
West Bay	8	893

- 1.2. The Council manages car parks on behalf of the Town councils in Beaminster, Bridport, Sherborne and Lyme Regis and one privately owned car park in Dorchester. In addition there are other public car parks operated by private operators including commercial parking for customers and staff at supermarkets and retail outlets.
- 1.3. Coach parking is provided at certain car parks Charmouth Road, Lyme Regis (5), Culverhayes, Sherborne (6) and West Bay Road, West Bay (5)
- 1.4. Bays are reserved for vehicles displaying blue badges, generally located in areas of the car parks that are nearest the local amenities and the pay & display machines. There are 98 such bays across the District. Permits are available to those who are entitled to the higher rate of disability allowance. These permits allow the holder to park for 3 hours free of charge.



- 1.5. Free Motorcycle parking is provided by the Council in its car parks in 30 dedicated bays.
- 1.6. There are Electric vehicle charging points in 3 car parks – Trinity Street, Dorchester, East Street, Bridport and Charmouth Road, Lyme Regis. There is no charge for parking while the electric vehicle is connected and charging.
- 1.7. Season Tickets, Residents permits, Business permits and Shoppers permits are available across the district with different eligibility criteria and costs.

## 2 Challenges

- 1.8. Dorchester is a vibrant market town with opportunities for future developments. Consideration for the development potential has indicated the possibility for development on a number of existing car parks however given its large catchment, mobile population with high car ownership, safe and accessible car parking will continue to be important.
- 1.9. The coastal towns have much more seasonal variation in demands for parking than the market towns and there are capacity issues during the height of the summer in Lyme Regis and West Bay but during the winter months these car parks are underutilised.
- 1.10. There are a number of issues in West Bay car parks. A section of West Bay Road car park, Bridport Arms and Station Road car parks are in a poor state and in need of major improvement works to maximise the number of vehicles which can be parked there.
- 1.11. Season tickets are currently sold in levels entitling the holders to park in a number of different car parks in various towns across the District. These do not match the demand or requirements of all users.
- 1.12. The introduction of credit card facilities across all pay and display car parks is scheduled for late 2017

## 3 Principles & Charging

- 1.13. The Council provides a mix of free and charged car parks, with free car parks generally being those where there is either limited demand or an overriding social need for free parking to support a local community facility. Where charges are applied, the following principles influence both the charges levied and the applications of these charges:-
  - **Demand pricing** – prices will be set to reflect demand both across the day and across the year, with charges being highest during peak season and at the busiest times of day. Likewise, those car parks in central locations will have higher prices than periphery car parks. This approach reflects the value of parking spaces, facilitates customer choice, and facilitates equalisation of use across the day. Prices will be benchmarked locally to ensure they are competitive. The charges will be based on whether the town is a Coastal Town or a Market Town as the demands and seasonal variations can be considered more appropriately



- **Charging per bay** – a vehicle which uses 2 bays (e.g., car and caravan) will be required to purchase a ticket for each bay used. Where wide bays are provided to accommodate larger vehicles, these will attract a premium.
- **Blue Badge Parking** – vehicles displaying a Blue Badge are required to pay for parking. Such vehicles will be allowed 1 hour “grace period” over and above the paid for period, compared to the 10 minutes allowed for non Blue Badge holders. Permits are available to those who are entitled to the higher rate of disability allowance. These permits allow the holder to park for 3 hours free of charge.
- **Solo motorcycles** are allowed to park free of charge when parked within a marked parking bay designated for solo motorcycles.
- **Support for residents** – it is recognised that On Street Parking in Dorchester and Sherborne is limited, and reduced still further in some areas when specific sports or cultural events take place. It is also recognised that local people may wish to visit town regularly and should not be discouraged from doing so by the pricing structure. To address these issues the Council will:
  - Make available season tickets for durations of between 1 week and 12 months, with discounts applied
  - Continue to offer Shoppers permits
  - Review the levels and charges for season tickets and residents permits
- **Support for businesses** – local businesses are supported by:
  - Free or discounted parking for specific periods in the lead up to Christmas,
  - Five days per annum when the Town Councils can use the car parks for events which generate valuable footfall for businesses.

#### 1.14. Car Parking Concessions

The number of volunteer concessionary parking requests has become too high for residents to continue to subsidise. To ensure that no organisation is given priority over others the District will no longer issue free parking permits.

#### 1.15. Events on car parks

Any organisation wishing to hold an event on the car park may apply to do so however charges will apply

## 4 Parking Charges Review

1.16. The Council will review its parking charges on an annual basis and when reviewing its parking charges it will take into account a large number of factors, including but not limited to:

- a. The **recovery of expenditure** incurred on the provision and management of the public car parks to avoid this financial burden falling on to the council tax payer and depriving other vital council services of crucial funds.



- b. The **parking charges of its competitors**, including the charges made by private sector car parks within the District, as well as comparing its charges with similar nearby districts and Dorset County Council charges for On Street parking.
- c. The **effectiveness of short term parking charges in town centre car parks** in facilitating turnover of car parking spaces in order to attract more visitors/shoppers to the town centres.
- d. The **demand for car parking**, as evidenced by occupancy rates at different time and date points
- e. The **consumer price index** to understand the impact of inflation rate on parking charges.

The Council will consult the, Chambers of Commerce and Town Councils as part of any charges review.

## 5 Facilities & Maintenance

- 1.17. This section of the policy focuses how the Council's car parks are maintained and the provision of the most appropriate facilities and information within its car parks. Annual reviews will be undertaken to ensure that the policy is appropriate following experience of operating the car parks and taking on board comments received from the public and other stakeholders.
- 1.18. This will ensure that the policy will assist the Council in delivering excellent car parking services for the benefit of the Districts community.
- 1.19. West Dorset District Council recognises that the car parking experience greatly impacts on the overall visitor experience of the various towns as both a work and as a holiday destination. The parking experience commences for the motorist as they near the end of their journey and start looking for a convenient place to park.
- 1.20. Once parked the motorist will then expect it to be easy to locate the nearest pay & display machine and that all machines are in good working order, together with clear instructions for their use. To assist the motorist there should be a number of options when considering making the payment to park, e.g. cash, credit card and mobile phone.
- 1.21. To ensure the Districts car parks adequately meet the needs of motorists, the Council strives to maintain and operate its car parks to the Park Mark standard for appropriate facilities and quality maintenance. The Council takes account of the following guidance and legislation in providing quality car parking:
  - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides national guidance.
  - New planning and highways development control guidance for parking.
  - The Secretary of State's Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities on the Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions.
  - British Parking Association (BPA): Best Practice and Guidance.
  - DfT Operational Guidance to Local Authorities: Parking Policy and Enforcement TMA 2004.
  - Park Mark standards.



## Facilities

1.22. The Council is committed to providing quality facilities in all its car parks to maximise the parking experience of its local community as well as the many visitors and residents. The facilities include:

- **Signage** – there is to be clear signage to assist motorist to locate car parks, park correctly, how to use the various payment channels and make the appropriate payment in order to avoid receiving a Penalty Charge Notice. Each car park is to have relevant telephone numbers clearly displayed should a member of the public wish to contact Parking Services.
- **Wide car parking bays** – parking bay dimensions have not been amended since the 1960's and cars have increased in size. The Council's car parks will therefore have some wider bays introduced when opportunities arise.
- **Payment channels** – motorists can pay using coins, credit / debit cards and via the pay by telephone solution.
- **Disabled parking** – Every car park has dedicated bays for vehicles that are displaying a valid blue badge.
- **Motorhomes** – a number of the car parks will have larger parking bays in order to accommodate motorhomes.
- **Coaches and HGVs** – some car parks have dedicated parking areas that accommodate coaches and HGVs.
- **Lighting** – each car park should have adequate lighting, and schemes will be brought forward to secure improvement when opportunities arise
- **Directional signage** – signs will be placed in the car parks to assist motorists to find information about their destinations once they have parked their vehicles, e.g. shops, cinema and seafront.

## Maintenance

1.23. Every car park will be regularly inspected to ensure that the car park is maintained to a high standard. The checks that are carried out include, but not limited to:

- Surfacing
- Surface markings – bays, directional arrows, yellow lines and wording,
- All car park signage
- Pay & display machines
- Boundary fencing
- Lighting
- Grassed areas and vegetation

1.24. A detailed maintenance program will be developed for all of the car parks to ensure that the high standards remain consistent across the District



## 6 Operational Protocol Policy

- 1.25. West Dorset District Council undertakes patrols and carries out necessary enforcement of its off street car parks in order to:
- reduce town centre congestion by providing car parks that are easy to use and conveniently located to the town centres and other locations/attractions throughout the District.
  - assist the town's commercial viability in managing short stay car parks in order to maximise the turnover of parking spaces and to achieve high occupancy rates.
  - provide a security presence in all the Council car parks
  - ensure the parking provision is fair and encourages sustainable travel choices.
- 1.26. Our aim is for a fair and proportionate regime, which benefits all those who live, work or visit the District. Our aim is also to be consistent with national guidelines and legislation upon which this protocol is based.
- 1.27. The provision of On-Street parking is the responsibility of Dorset County Council. We will aim to work with the County Council wherever possible to provide a joined up service for the public

### Legislation

- 1.28. West Dorset Council enforces car park regulations under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Traffic Management Act 2004 and any subsequent legislation
- 1.29. Traffic Regulation Orders known as Off-Street Parking Places Orders must contain all of the provisions and restrictions for parking including hours of operation and charges.
- 1.30. Officers who enforce the parking restrictions under the Traffic Management Act are known as Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs)
- 1.31. The Traffic Management Act 2004 (Part 6) highlights the importance of continuous professional development for all staff.
- 1.32. All CEOs that patrol and enforce the Council's car parks will be required to have achieved a recognised national qualification within their first year of employment
- 1.33. The qualifications that are currently available to CEOs are as follows:
- City and Guilds Level 2 Award for Parking Enforcement Officers
  - (WAMITAB) Waste Management Industry Training & Advisory Board Level 2 Award for Parking Enforcement Officers

### Issuing a penalty charge notice (PCN)

- 1.34. A vehicle that is observed to be parked in contravention of the parking regulations is likely to receive a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). These are issued by Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs).
- 1.35. The CEO is unable to cancel a PCN once it has been issued





## **Challenging a penalty charge notice**

- 1.36. Motorists in receipt of a PCN are legally entitled to challenge the Notice  
An application form for challenging a PCN can be found on our website  
<https://www.dorsetforyou.com/article/418907/Online-Challenge-of-a-Penalty-Charge-Notice>
- 1.37. The process for appealing against a PCN is set out in legislation and the process is outlined at <https://www.trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk/the-appeal-process/>
- 1.38. Following the issue of a PCN the ability of paying a discounted amount (50%) is allowed up to 14 days after which the full penalty charge is payable.
- 1.39. If a challenge in writing is received within the discount period the 'clock' will stop until a decision is reached and, should the challenge be rejected, another 14 days will be allowed to pay at the discounted amount.
- 1.40. If no contact is received within 28 days a Notice to Owner (NtO) will be issued and the Full Penalty Charge is required to be paid. It is possible to make a formal representation within 28 days of receipt of an NtO and again the 'clock' stops until a decision has been made.
- 1.41. Should the representation be rejected then the owner has the option to either pay the full penalty charge or Appeal to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal (TPT). The TPT is an independent legal body who has the authority to refuse or grant the appeal.
- 1.42. If no payment or appeal is made within the 28 days then a Charge Certificate will be issued increasing the penalty charge by 50%
- 1.43. A flowchart mapping out the PCN process can be found at <https://www.patrol-uk.info/parking/>

### **Clamping and removal**

- 1.44. The Council does not undertake the clamping or removal of vehicles, however that the bailiff companies employed by this Council to execute warrants related to outstanding parking fine debts may immobilise vehicles as part of their enforcement process.

### **Debt Recovery Process**

- 1.45. If the Penalty Charge Notice is not paid and all the above processes have been pursued then the Council will apply for a Warrant at the Traffic Enforcement Centre and appoint Enforcement Agents (Bailiffs) to collect the outstanding debts on its behalf.