

North Devon Council Car Park Strategy 2024 – 2027



1. INTRODUCTION

In 2024 we adopted a new Corporate Plan and identified five priorities. The way we operate, manage and review our car parks impacts and contributes:

1. **Financial Security** – our parking services should represent value for money for our customers, whilst ensuring income generated means we can continue to viably supply services and maintain our assets appropriately.
2. **Housing** – many of our car parks provide an important service to support our residents, particularly in the evenings, we always consider this when assessing the future of our assets.
3. **Climate and Environment** – we must maximize the opportunity to provide infrastructure to support electric vehicles (EVs), where appropriate and carefully consider the location of our car parks.
4. **Pride of Place and Prosperity** – our car parks make a significant contribution to the function of our places, how we operate them will significantly impact how people will perceive them.
5. **People Matter** – our parking services play a fundamental role for our residents, our visitors and our staff.

2. BASIS FOR THE STRATEGY

This strategy enables us to set out a clear, measured approach to how we manage our parking services. It provides a forward plan and framework to enable us to make informed decisions on how we manage our assets, services and travel movements as well as provide best value at a corporate, economic, social and customer-focused way.

We are required to update strategies and plans associated with our car parks, identify potential opportunities and ensure good quality parking provision; these include:

- North Devon & Torrington Local Plan
- NDC Asset Management Strategy

- NDC Commercialisation Strategy
- NDC Climate, Environment & Biodiversity Strategy
- DCC EV Strategy
- Property Asset Management Plan.

We lease, own and operate car parks across the district, with some on behalf of town and / or parish councils.

3. DRIVERS / RATIONALE FOR STRATEGY

The drivers for this strategy are to:

- inform our 'Commercialisation Strategy' and 'Asset Management Strategy'
- ensure visibility and consideration of our parking services
- make sure traffic movement, condition and signage are fit for purpose / have identified and managed risk
- promote accessibility to key areas in our district, to support local economic and social vibrancy
- Reinvest in parking services ensuring best value for our customers
- prioritise public safety whilst using our car parks
- manage parking enforcement in a fair and consistent manner
- improve traffic congestion, encourage more sustainable travel options and smarter choices
- provide access to key services for people with special needs, mobility difficulties and disabilities by providing appropriate parking provision and accessible information
- improve efficiency of our parking services
- consider and make provisions for future issues and demands
- ensure maximised parking utilisation by monitoring cost, income, unused capacity and permit uptake.

4. SERVICE PROVISION

We manage car parks under the 'North Devon (Off Street Parking Places) Order', which regulates charges and patrolling.

We employ Civil Parking Enforcement Officers (CEOs), which are often referred to as 'a traffic warden' or 'a parking warden'. Their role is to fairly and consistently enforce our car parks and other areas. We expect them to ensure the safety of anyone in our car parks and to patrol streets and car parks, reporting any faults or hazards to the appropriate team to resolve.

The Manager and Supervisor provide daily organisation of the parking team (CEO's, Administrators, Cash Collectors and Cash Counters) and all team members are expected to adhere to:

- **positive behaviours** – the team will be focussed on their customers and always display positive behaviours, in line with the our corporate framework.
- **seasonality** –recognise our district as a busy, popular tourist destination, meaning our car parks are under additional pressure between mid-March and October.

5.CHARGING AND TARIFFS

We review tariffs through our annual budget-setting.

Our data shows Ilfracombe, Lynton & Lynmouth and other coastal car parks (Croyde, Cove, Jubilee Gardens, Pier, Wilder Road and Morteheo) are predominantly used by residents between November to mid-March and used by visitors mid-March to October, which is why we set ‘seasonal tariffs’. We also have rural car parks, predominantly for residents parking.

Barnstaple and South Molton car parks are utilised consistently throughout the year by residents and visitors, therefore, we have one tariff in place all year.

5.1 Permits

We monitor permits quarterly, looking at uptake to inform any annual tariff increases we make, as well as the need for us to remove and / or create ones.

5.2 Payment methods

We offer a range of payment methods, including:

- cash at machine
- card at machine
- mobile app.

We always look at latest technology and regularly evaluate multi-vendor platforms as an efficient alternative (cashless parking delivered via mobile app) as part of our asset-planning. We also review the number of machines we have, their locations, power sources and any upgrade needs.

We have 60 payment machines where charges apply (we have multiple machines in our largest car parks). Eight are mains-powered and 52 are solar-powered.

We upgraded all our machines in 2022 to enable card, contactless and coin payments plus 11 machines in Lynton & Lynmouth.

The latest data shows:

- mobile payments increased **from 6%** in 2019 **to 50%** in 2023
- card payments increased **from 7%** in 2019 **to 23%** in 2023

- cash payments decreased from 87% in 2019 to **28%** in 2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 (29/02/2024)
Coins	87%	55%	41%	37%	28%
Card	7%	11%	18%	21%	23%
RingGo	6%	34%	41%	42%	50%

In general, peak usage time is between 10am and 1pm.

In April 2024, we benchmarked our hourly, high-season charges with other councils in Devon and Cornwall, which showed we have the second lowest charges, after South Hams.

Average short-stay	Average long-stay	Average coastal short-stay	Average coastal long-stay
£1.35	£1.25	£1.40	£1.37

* Cornwall Council have 300+ car parks, so we used their car parks most similar to ours

We have seen an overall increase in people purchasing our permits (**16.6% increase since June 2021**, when the new permit system was implemented).

Jun 2021 - Mar 2022	Apr 2022 - Mar 2023	Apr 2023 - Feb 2024
£200,153.81	£207,325.82	£233,447.75
	3.58% inc	12.6% inc

5.3 Car park designation: long, short, medium stay or coastal

We have potential to simplify the 19 tariffs we currently have and we generally use terminology 'short stay' (hourly) or 'long stay' (daily) to define the type. However, this generally relates to accessibility to key locations, such as the High Streets in our principal centres.

We use 'coastal' to explain a car park close to the coast and we recognise we need a balance the availability of these for local residents and seasonal use by visitors.

5.4 Business use and permits

We believe we have opportunities for some of our car parks which are underutilised at certain times. We regularly review effectiveness, particularly in our main commercial centres, to understand where we could promote more use through long-stay or business-owner permits (for example, Hardaway Head, Barnstaple; by us allowing specific permits, usage transformed from minimal to maximum capacity).

5.5 EV charging points

We have invested in EV charge points, via Scottish Power or Osprey in several of our car parks, to support our 'Climate, Environment & Biodiversity Strategy', with a vision of being Carbon Neutral by 2030:

Car Park	Scottish Power	Osprey
Belle Meadow, Barnstaple	0	3
Lower Lyndale, Lynmouth	0	3
Hillsborough, Ilfracombe	0	3
Sheep Pen, South Molton	0	3
Cattle Market, Barnstaple	2	0
South Molton Central	2	0
Wilder Road	2	0

As the highway authority, Devon County Council (DCC) are preparing an EV Strategy for all of Devon and our local plan review will establish our requirements for EV infrastructure.

5.6 Signage

We make sure our car park signage includes:

- car park name
- tariffs and chargeable periods
- operational periods
- application of charges
- permitted vehicles
- machine fault contact details
- [contraventions enforced](#) and
- our contact details.

We make sure the machine signage includes:

- mobile payment service
- web address
- location
- tariffs
- user guidance.

DCC are responsible for directional street signage and we work with them to increase and improve street signage for our car parks. For Barnstaple we have a 'Wayfinding Strategy', which is a broad term used to describe the different ways that people orient themselves in a physical setting and navigate from place to place.

We have online mapping platforms and make sure our website is kept up to date with accurate and current information.

Where possible, we sell old metal signage for recycling and use the funds towards new signage.

5.7 Car parks we manage on behalf of third parties

We have service agreements with:

- Braunton Parish Council
- Caen Field – Private Owner
- Combe Martin Parish Council
- Instow Parish Council
- Lynton & Lynmouth Town Council

These annually reviewed agreements detail the specific services we will provide on their behalf, including cash collection and processing, monitoring and Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) issuing and processing.

5.8 Parking standards / space sizing

Our car park spaces meet the current British Standard of 2400mm x 4800mm.

We have oversized bays of 3500mm x 7700mm in Bear Street and North Walk car parks in Barnstaple, Hillsborough and Brookdale car parks in Ilfracombe and South Molton Central car park.

We review the size and designation of bays available, alongside any other planned works.

5.9 Coach, lorry or motorhome parking

We have the following:

Barnstaple: we have a 'Van and Lorry Park' at Seven Brethren with only seven spaces available. We also permit motorhome parking in North Walk car park, subject to availability.

Ilfracombe: we have a 'Lorry and Coach Park' at Brookdale with 10+ spaces. We also have a 'Lorry and Van Park' at Hillsborough, again with 10+ spaces and in Hillsborough car park we allow motorhomes, subject to availability.

South Molton: we have a 'Lorry and Coach Park' in the centre of town, with 10+ spaces.

We accept this is insufficient provision for a tourist destination and with an increasing population of van-dwellers. We have already recognised potential in creating additional van parking within North Walk, Barnstaple car park and will explore other possible sites through the Local Plan review (as we may need to look at toilet provision nearby too).

5.10 Enforcement

As DCC manage off-street enforcement, the purpose of our CEOs role is to patrol our off-street car parks and parking areas to:

- control parking and to apply enforcement where needed
- monitor and act on related health and safety issues
- provide front line communication to the public
- ensure our car parks are safe and available for use, whilst maintaining a high quality environment.
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We train all our team on the Traffic Management Act 2004 and expect them to gain a 'notice processing' qualification. CEOs are also encouraged to gain the [WAMITAB qualification](#).

We use enforcement agencies (bailiffs) as a third party debt collector, working closely with them to collect unpaid debts for PCNs and tackle an increase in persistent evaders.

6.0 TOWN APPROACH

We have identified a need to set out our approach to asset management, operational objectives and travel movements for our car parks in:

6.1 Barnstaple

- 1 We have predominantly surface car parks in or close to the town centre
- 2 we gained a multi-storey car park when we purchased Green Lanes Shopping Centre in 2021
- 3 we have committed investment to Queen Street / Bear Street car parks to make them our destination car parks (linked in with future high streets funding and projects)
- 4 we commissioned a 'Barnstaple Car Park Strategy' in 2019, identifying options for some of our car parks to be turned over for regeneration uses, however, we need to review this post-Covid and with other regeneration priorities
- 5 'Barnstaple Vision' in 2020 identified the possibility of using some car parks for regeneration and improving the appearance of others, with landscaping and less intensive car use.

Actions:

- review Hydrock car park study with our data collection for use in Barnstaple
- Review Barnstaple Vision
- consider which car parks could be taken over for regeneration projects
- consider the funding packages that might be available to aid this
- consider whether we want to work with partners on the use of our car parks for regeneration purposes; would we retain asset (for example, if used for housing), or would we consider selling for a one-off capital receipt?

6.2 Ilfracombe

- 1 all car parks (harbour, high street and seafront) are surface car parks
- 2 we have a predominantly seasonal take-up of car parking at the seafront and harbour during the summer months
- 3 we know congestion and conflict with pedestrians can arise, with drivers wanting to park as close to main attractions as possible
- 4 we acknowledge signage and information relating to parking availability could be improved in the town
- 5 we have not had any studies in Ilfracombe, meaning data is from our own sources on car park usage and traffic flows
- 6 Ilfracombe Regeneration Board drafted a wider transport masterplan in 2014, however this focussed on better 'traffic management of visitors to the town', not just parking and no clear actions emerged from that work.

Actions:

- plot the current directional signage for car parks from the outskirts of town and in and around the centre, harbour and seafront
- consider options for display boards that give car park spaces available in the key car parks that suffer from congestion
- consider a new signage strategy to manage traffic flow and direction of visitors during the summer months
- identify when car park usage seasonally reduces and which car parks might have a dual function for the winter to create a new income stream
- analyse car park usage data for peak season and off-peak to aid our decision making
- (particularly around the pier) understand if we can work with businesses to manage deliveries a busy times.

6.3 South Molton

- 1 all car parks are surface car parks (four within the town centre), with all year round usage, predominantly by residents and local people
- 2 we have not had any studies in South Molton, meaning data is from our own sources on car park usage and traffic flows

Actions:

- development potential around the central car park
- look into regeneration opportunities

7.0 COASTAL APPROACH

We continually review and monitor our approach to coastal car park charges.

We have a seasonal tariff (1 November to 14 March) in Ilfracombe, Croyde and Mortehoe (our coastal carparks), as winter usage is predominantly residents.

We offer a seven-day rover permit, largely aimed at visitors, at a lower cost than the daily rate (pay and display tickets are not transferrable between car parks). These permits cover long stay and short stay car parks across Barnstaple, Ilfracombe, South Molton and Lynton and Lynmouth, which gives people flexibility across the district.

8.0 CONDITION AND MONITORING

We have projects plans to improve Brookdale, Fairview and the Pier Car Parks.

We carry out a monthly inspection of all our car parks and arrange repairs as required as soon as practicable.

9.0 SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

WE AIM TO:

- continue to roll out LED lighting in all car parks, to reduce our carbon footprint
 - ensure we maintain cycle racks (or install these in as many of our car parks as possible, to contribute to our walk / ride priority and tie into DCC's cycle / walking strategies)
 - consider suitable locations for further EV charging points, particularly focussing on encouraging behavioural change and siting chargers in areas where residents have limited or no off-street parking
 - review our enforcement activity and maintain appropriate levels
 - annually review concessional parking surrounding Christmas dates
 - continue our strategy of disposal of car parks on a case-by-case basis
 - annually review the fees and charges to achieve at least cost neutrality
- further engage with parish councils on car parking matters
- seek opportunities for funding to support the Service
 - explore multi-vendor platforms to allow joining other platforms and widen mobile payment options
 - reduce and simplify the 19 tariffs across our car parks
 - review of our signage
 - consider providing additional parking / site for vans parking (work with Planning Policy with their Local Plan review)
 - analyse the number of ticket machines, their associated functions, usage and mobile payments data to inform decision making
 - review the permits we make available and create new permits, where appropriate.

10.0 OUTPUTS / ACTIONS

- **Condition**

Implement a planned maintenance programme for resurfacing our car parks, as a priority Fair View and Brookdale, as both surfaces are at end of life and are important long stay facilities (used by the workforce in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe).

- **Upgrade**

Plan a machine upgrade programme.

- **Carbon Footprint**

Establish the feasibility of placing solar panels on the top deck of Green Lanes, which is underused.

- **Regeneration**

Establish where underused car parks, could present regeneration development opportunities, to include:

- possible re-organisation of Barnstaple's Cattle Market to improve accessibility to the Castle Mound / green dwell space and / or repurpose their public conveniences
- Portland Buildings presents an opportunity for small scale key worker or temporary accommodation housing scheme.

We will combine these outputs into our 'Asset Management Plan' as a working document. The actions needed will be deliverable set out and monitored.

