



Northumberland
County Council

Parking Services Annual Report 2017/18

Contents	1
Introduction	2
Parking as a service	3
Innovation and New Developments	5
Education, Enforcement and Appeals	5
Transparency in Finance	6

Introduction

Welcome to Northumberland County Council's 2017/18 Annual Parking Report.

Northumberland is the northernmost county in England bordering Scotland to the north, Cumbria to the west and North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead and Durham to the south. The Parking Service is part of the Council's Network Management team within Technical Services. Parking Services manage and enforce on and off-street parking restrictions throughout the county of Northumberland in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Traffic Management Act 2004.

The Council became a unitary authority in 2009 taking responsibility for the management and enforcement of off street car parks and responsibility for on street parking enforcement in April 2012. Since then, the service has remained fluid in terms of its structure and in ensuring priorities remain focused. Road safety, keeping traffic moving and balancing the demand for on and off-street parking for businesses, residents and visitors are our main focus.

Free parking was introduced in 2014 across a number of market towns where parking charges had been in place for many years. The main aim of free parking was to boost town centre economy. Whilst free parking has been successful through increasing town centre footfall, managing the demand for parking has at times been challenging. The increased demand for parking in our town centres has resulted in several consequences.

Despite the parking service running at a deficit since the introduction of free parking the Council is committed to making parking investment and improvements including increasing car parking capacity where it is most needed. In the summer of 2017 the Council commissioned studies into existing car parking capacity and usage covering the key market towns of Alnwick, Berwick, Hexham and Morpeth which included the need to produce a strategy for meeting future parking needs. It was perceived that the level of parking pressure in these towns impacted on the town centre economy and future sustainability. The parking studies sought to establish the current parking usage within each town, estimate future parking demand, identify any issues and concerns and propose recommendations for improvement.

The completed studies were shared with the four Town Councils, local county councillors, businesses and the public, copies of which can be found on the Council's web page at <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Highways/Parking.aspx#parkingstudies>

Work was undertaken in early 2018 to seek the views and opinions of the local county councillors, town councils and other key stakeholders. They were asked to consider the consultant's findings and recommendations to address the range of parking issues in each town. This feedback helped to inform individual action plans. The implementation of these action plans is planned throughout 2018/19 and beyond therefore updates on progress will follow in the 2018/19 annual report.

Parking as a service

Across the service we manage more than 10,500 parking spaces both within off-street car parks and on-street where there is permitted parking and resident parking schemes in place. As well as enforcing car parks and on street single and double yellow lines, school keep clears, zig-zags and dropped kerbs, our 19 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO's) also support our environmental enforcement team in carrying out enforcement of dog fouling and littering.

Operational enforcement is split into 4 teams across the County:- North, South East, Central and West. The back office administration team is based in the Council's main offices at County Hall, Morpeth.

The administration team provides support, strategic and legal guidance to the enforcement operation. The main roles and responsibilities of the administration team are as follows:-

- Penalty Charge Notice processing
- Processing parking permits
- Performance monitoring (CEO, financial and operational statistics)
- Preparation of parking cases for adjudication with the Traffic Penalty Tribunal (TPT)
- Preparation of information for County Court and Enforcement Agents
- Management of website information
- Assisting with the deployment of CEO's and coordination of mobile enforcement units
- Service complaints monitoring and responses as well as responses to Freedom Of Information (FOI) requests
- Administration and management of disc parking
- Maintenance of office IT systems
- Preparation of licence arrangements for trading concession in car parks
- Admin support for the service (orders, payment of invoices, post, stationery, updating office procedures, exhibition bookings and events)

The enforcement team consists of 2 Senior Civil Enforcement Officers (SCEOs) and 17 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs). The 4 operational area teams work from the following bases:-

Central - Coopies Lane Depot, Morpeth and Fenkle Street, Alnwick

North - McDonald House, Berwick

South East - Cowley Road Depot, Blyth

West - Tyne Mills Depot, Hexham

The Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in force across the County are enforced by the Civil Enforcement Officers in each of the 4 teams. The table below details the towns and villages where enforcement is carried out in each team area:-

Central	North	South East	West
Alnmouth	Bamburgh	Ashington	Acomb

Alnwick	Beadnell	Bedlington	Allensford
Amble	Belford	Blyth	Bellingham
Belsay	Berwick	Cambois	Blanchland
Bilton	Craster*	Choppington	Corbridge
Bolam	Holy Island	Cramlington	Greenhead
Boulmer	Milfield	Guidepost	Haltwhistle
Darras Hall*	Newton by the sea*	Hartford Bridge	Haydon Bridge
Druridge Bay	Norham	Holywell	Hexham
Felton	Seahouses	Newbiggin by the sea	Kielder
Lesbury	Spittal	Plessey Woods	Mickley
Lynemouth	Tweedmouth	Seaton Delaval	New Ridley
Meldon	Wooler	Seaton Sluice	Ovingham
Morpeth		Seghill	Prudhoe
Pegswood		Stakeford	Riding Mill
Ponteland*			Stocksfield
Rothbury			Tarset
Stannington			Wylam
Warkworth			Whittonstall
Widdrington Station			Whitfield

* locations that may also be covered by other teams across team boundaries

The main aims of the service are to ensure;-

- effective management of on and off street parking throughout the county is consistent with neighbouring authorities
- a reduction in obstructive parking and associated levels of congestion
- improved road safety and conditions for vulnerable road users e.g. pedestrians and cyclists but with particular emphasis for children, mobility groups and elderly people
- improved conditions and access for public transport
- improved accessibility for local servicing needs, taxis and disabled parking
- support to the local economy

Parking is free of charge in all of the main town centres across the County. Disc parking zones are in operation in Alnwick, Berwick, Hexham and Morpeth in short stay parking places as a means to managing the availability of parking spaces. The turnover of high demand short stay parking is important in supporting town centre economies and in ensuring that visitors coming into our towns can get parked. The Council remains committed to providing free parking wherever possible.

There are however on-street parking charges in Corbridge village and in Berwick Railway Station car park due to the high demand for parking in these locations. We also have parking charges in a number of our coastal car parks including Seahouses, Craster, Holy Island, and Newton-by-the-sea.

We offer a 3, 6 and 12 month parking permit for use in pay and display parking places. The permits provide a significant cost saving compared to buying a pay and display ticket which benefits regular users of our pay and display car parks.

All information on our parking locations and charges can be found on our parking website at parking.northumberland.gov.uk

Innovation and New Developments

New technology - in this year the Council agreed to invest in replacing the existing Civil Enforcement Officer Casio handheld devices with new Samsung mobile devices. The existing technology was procured in 2012 therefore given its age renewal was becoming increasingly necessary. This new technology has a number of benefits including;-

- Automatic Number Plate Recognition software
- Real Time data transfer from Samsung
- GeoSmart Real time CEO tracking and mapping

These technology benefits improve the efficiency of the service and also quicker customer access to PCN information.

Ticket machine upgrades - A number of pay and display ticket machines in our coastal car parks have been upgraded to allow for card payments. The ticket machines in Berwick Railway Station have also been replaced. These upgrades have helped to improve customer experience and also efficiency of the service in reducing cash collection visits for emptying ticket machines.

GDS #Verify - Officers from the Council's Parking Services and Information Services teams worked as one of the pilot local authorities on the Government Digital Service #Verify project. The aims of the project were to improve user end to end journeys in relation to applying for parking permits and to produce a common service pattern that all local authorities could use. This involved significant collaboration with other local authorities across the country which also included working with service users through focus groups. The outcomes of this project have been mainly in relation to sharing best practice rather than producing a product/pattern that could be adopted countrywide.

20 mile per hour restrictions

A scheme of introducing 20 mile per hour restrictions in the vicinity of schools and in town centres is taking place. Restrictions were introduced in locations where concerns had been raised either by town councils, county councillors or through communication with local residents.

Minor Improvement Schemes

Over £1.2M was spent in 2017/18 on a range of minor improvement schemes across the county. These schemes focus on road safety improvements for pedestrians and cyclists including new pedestrian crossings, junction improvements, cycle routes and bollard installations, as well as improvements for road users.

Education, Enforcement and Appeals

The Council introduces new schemes and restrictions each year. As part of the implementation of new schemes officers consult with local stakeholders using a range of

methods including direct consultation, website, through town and parish councils or through local open events held in the community. Our Communications team work with the local press and use our website and social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to communicate changes. We also work with the local stakeholders to ensure that all views are considered prior to implementation. Once restrictions are in place our civil enforcement officers issue warning notices for a period of time to help educate motorists of the new changes.

The Council introduced an enforcement vehicle in 2016/17 to carry out enforcement of school keep clear restrictions. The vehicle which is now fully deployed across the County focuses in areas where there are specific road safety concerns outside of schools as well as in responding to requests direct from schools/parents. More information on our enforcement vehicle can be found at parking.northumberland.gov.uk and you can view our promotional video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rj5dW4khSQ&feature=youtu.be

We are currently updating our enforcement vehicle system to allow us to introduce bus stop enforcement. Our Senior CEOs and back office team are also in the process of devising routes to ensure the most effective and efficient deployment once systems are ready. An update will be provided in next years annual report.

As part of the council's PCN appeals process we consider any mitigation presented on a case by case basis. Our website parking.northumberland.gov.uk provides information and guidance on how to park within the rules and how to appeal or pay a PCN. PCN evidence can be viewed and appeals made direct through the our online service. We also provide a face-face service in our customer service information centres for anyone who needs assistance in making their appeal. We also provide information on how we enforce including contravention observation periods and guidance on the end to end process of a PCN.

Transparency in Finance

Parking Statistics

The below table provides information on parking statistics for the financial year 2017/18

		2017-18	Comments
1	Volume of on street car parking spaces	1,804	most recent audit figures used
2	Volume of off street car parking spaces	8,804	most recent audit figures used
3	Total volume of car parking spaces	10,608	
4	Total volume of PCNs issued	19,986	
5	Volume of high level PCNs issued	7,868	
6	Volume of lower level PCNs issued	12,049	
7	Volume of Regulation 9 PCNs issued	19,482	
8	Volume of Regulation 10 PCNs issued	504	Approved device, PFI and VDA
9	Volume of PCNs issued on street	10,415	

10	Volume of PCNs issued off street	9,571	
11	Volume of warning notices issued on street	34	
12	Volume of warning notices issued off street	35	
13	Volume of PCNs paid	17,043	
14	Volume of PCNs paid at the discounted rate	14,767	
15	Volume of PCNs paid before Charge Certificate (within 56 days)	2,276	
16	Volume of PCNs paid after the Charge Certificate served	727	
17	Volume of Charge Certificates registered	1,239	
18	Volume of Warrants of Execution issued	1,631	
19	Volume of PCNs cancelled	795	

	Reasons for cancelling PCNs		
20a	Avoidance of accident or medical emergency	38	
20b	Vehicle was stolen at time of contravention	0	
20c	Vehicle had broken down	9	
20d	Signs & lines changed at time of vehicle being parked	32	
20e	Ticket machine broken	6	
20f	Motorist paid but ticket/badge/permit was not displayed properly	235	
20g	Loading /unloading in an area where loading exemption applied	156	
20h	Other	319	

21	Volume of PCNs written off	553	
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22	Volume of PCNs resulting in informal challenge	3,312	
23	Volume of informal challenges which resulted in cancellation of the PCN	730	
24	Volume of informal challenges which resulted in rejection of the challenge	2,209	
25	Volume of PCNs resulting in a formal representation	840	
26	Volume of formal representations which resulted in cancellation of the PCN	65	
27	Volume of formal representations which result in a Notice of Rejection	775	
28	Volume of vehicles removed	0	
29	Volume of vehicles immobilised	0	

30	Volume of appeals at the Traffic Penalty Tribunal	29	
31	Of which were allowed	11	
32	Of which were dismissed	15	
33	Of which a consent order was applied	0	
34	Of which were not contested	3	
35	Of which are awaiting decision / other	0	

	Split of reasons for not contesting		
36a	Accepting additional evidence submitted to tribunal	1	
36b	Exercise of discretion	2	
36c	Compelling reason now given	0	
36d	Multiple PCNs	0	
36e	other	0	

Parking Income

The following tables detail income in relation to both on and off-street parking activity

On Street Parking Income

37a	On street parking income	£ 91,613	
37b	Permit income	£ 5,217	
37c	On street PCN income	£ 357,224	
37d	Blue badge application fees	0	n/a
37e	Other	£ 9,553	Sale of Parking Discs
38	Total On Street Parking Income	£ 463,607	

On Street Parking Direct Costs

38a	Civil enforcement	£ 436,937	Employee Related
38b	Admin, appeals, debt recovery & maintenance	£ -	Included in the above figure
38c	Scheme review / new schemes	£ -	
38d	Capital charges	£ -	
38e	Other direct costs of on street parking	£ 64,339	
39	Total On Street Direct Costs	£ 501,276	
40	On Street Parking Surplus / Deficit	-£ 37,669	Deficit

	If a surplus has been generated, how has it been applied		
41a	Off street parking provision		Not applicable
41b	Park & Ride		
41c	Supported bus service		
41d	Concessionary fares & passes		
41e	Community transport		

41f	Shopmobility		
41g	School crossing patrols		
41h	Highway maintenance & traffic improvement		
41i	Transport planning costs		
41j	Other		

Off Street Parking Income

42a	Off street parking income	£ 611,804	
42b	Off street PCN income	£ 258,436	
42c	Other off street parking income	£ 170,990	Permit, Disc and Vendor Income
43	Total Off Street Parking Income	£ 1,041,230	

44	Off Street Parking Direct Costs	£ 1,303,379	Deficit
45	Off Street Parking Surplus / Deficit	-£ 262,149	