

motor home parking policy

1. Introduction

- a. District Council car parks are a popular choice for both new and returning visitors to our towns and beach resorts. On-street parking is often time limited and scarce whilst in contrast, Council off-street car parks are generally well run, well signed, in the right place, spaces are usually available and prices are fair and reasonable.
- b. Motor homes are now emerging as a popular alternative to more traditional visitor accommodation choices such as hotels, bed and breakfast establishments and cottages and almost half of all local authorities have now recognised that drivers of motor homes are interested in visiting their towns and resorts and are on the lookout for suitable off-street parking in the vicinity of their chosen destination. Certain on-line forums are already linking to the “offer” of suitable motor home parking on Council websites with the clear inference being that such factors are decisive in motor home users’ choice of short-break or holiday destinations.
- c. Many of our neighbouring Councils now have clearly stated policies on motor home parking. Some (including Torridge District Council and Teignbridge District Council appear to encourage limited overnight camping in car parks but others including Plymouth, Torbay, South Hams, West Devon all make it clear that they welcome visitors in these larger vehicles in certain car parks but expressly prohibit overnight camping or sleeping in motor homes in any of their car parks.

2. Day visitors

- a. East Devon does attract a variety of visitors and it is a matter of fact that over the last few years we have witnessed an increase in the popularity of motor homes and we are seeing them in our towns and coastal resorts more and more frequently. This means inevitably that the drivers of these larger vehicles are already seeking suitable off-street parking in our car parks when they visit our towns.
- b. Some of our car parks can accommodate small and medium sized vehicles in a single marked bay, perhaps with an acceptable overhang across a grass verge. Others can accommodate vehicles across two adjacent bays and informally we have always allowed drivers to purchase two pay and display tickets to allow them to park in this way.
- c. At Beer Head, the grass surface car park has no bay markings and motor homes frequently park there without issue.

- d. It is likely to be in the best interests of our town centre economies to encourage the drivers of such vehicles with a clearly stated policy and to make specific provision for daytime parking in designated car parks.

3. Overnight Parking

- a. It has been the subject of occasional complaints over the last couple of years that from time to time, drivers of motor homes and campervans (of various shapes and sizes and in various states of repair) do take the opportunity to park overnight and it is suggested “camp” in our car parks.
- b. This seems to have been a particular issue in Estuary car park in Exmouth, Manor Road car park in Sidmouth and Beer Head car park. Whilst our Parking Places Order does not prohibit overnight parking, it does prohibit overnight sleeping. I think it is clear that the enforcement of this restriction is by no means straightforward and a CEO would need to establish that not only is the vehicle occupied but that someone had actually slept in the vehicle overnight in order to prove the contravention.
- c. In the past a pragmatic view has been taken leading to the custom and practice that if a vehicle is clearly parked in a suitable location and the correct parking fee has been paid with the ticket on display, then no further investigation would be carried out.
- d. We now need to adopt and enforce a policy that restricts motor home parking to those hours that might reasonably be required by a legitimate visitor to our area. A restriction allowing parking only between 08:00h and 22:00h daily would be appropriate. This then presents a straightforward enforcement protocol in which a CEO need establish only that a motor home is present within a car park on any day before 8am.
- e. Overnight parking is prohibited in order to encourage the users of those vehicles to enjoy the facilities on offer at legitimate local licensed caravan sites for overnight sleeping.

4. Long Term Parking

- a. The use of certain car parks for what is effectively the “storage” of large motor homes is inappropriate and on occasions can significantly restrict the availability of parking for town visitors. This has become a particular issue in Seaton’s Orchard car park where it was not uncommon during 2013 to find 15 or 20 such vehicles occupying (or partly blocking) 30 to 40 spaces in this 168 space car park.

- b. Seaton residents have already expressed concerns over the likely loss of more than half of Harbour Road's 367 spaces once development of the Discovery Centre gets underway in 2014 and we anticipate a shortage of visitor parking for the town thereafter.
- c. The issue is also apparent to a lesser extent in other towns and invariably the vehicles concerned are displaying a town/area parking permit that currently costs just £120 for a whole year. This compares very favourably with commercial prices for "secure" storage which I understand tend to be of the order of around £2 per night or £400 to £500 per year.
- d. A restriction on motor home parking in our car parks which limits the hours of parking to between 08:00h and 22:00h daily will deal effectively with the long term parking / storage issue and will compel motor home owning residents without suitable private parking facilities of their own to secure an alternative. This mirrors our existing policy on caravans.

5. Policy

- a. The following car parks shall be designated "approved" for motor home parking: Exmouth: Estuary and Maer Road, Budleigh Salterton: Lime Kiln, Sidmouth: Manor Road, Ottery St Mary: Land of Canaan, Honiton: Lace Walk, Axminster: West Street and Poplar Mount, Beer: Cliff Top, Seaton: The Coach Park.
- b. A number of these car parks already contain marked parking bays large enough to accommodate some motor homes and where a motor home can park entirely within a marked bay, the motor home will be permitted to park there in accordance with the usual terms and conditions of that car park and at the standard tariff. Longer or wider vehicles finding themselves unable to fit into a marked bay will be required to pay for the number of bays they are effectively occupying (including any that they are preventing other customers from occupying) and failure to display the required number of pay and display tickets will result in enforcement action. It is envisaged that a very long and wide motor home could conceivably need to occupy four bays simultaneously but the vast majority of vehicles currently in use will fit comfortably into two adjacent bays and many will be able to use just one.
- c. To implement this policy the East Devon Parking Places Order will allow parking of vehicles captured within the definition "motorcaravan" to park only in "approved" car parks and only between the hours of 08:00h and 22:00h on any day.