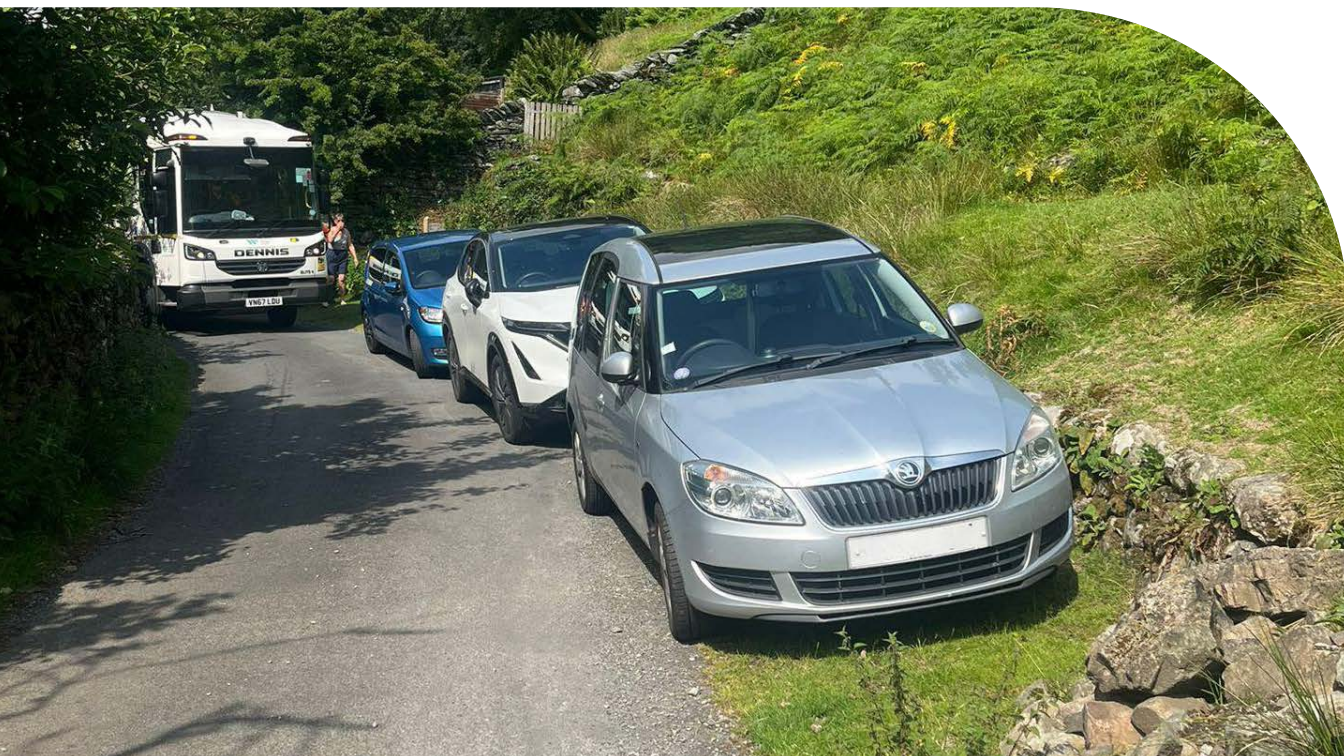


Parking Strategy 2025



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1 Introduction

Westmorland and Furness Council came into being on 1st April 2023 and is comprised of four legacy councils, each with separate parking services. On-street parking was managed by Cumbria County Council and off-street parking by the three District and Borough authorities, but these are now all under our control in our Council. This allows us to develop a fully coordinated parking operation across all aspects of public parking in our area.

This Parking Strategy describes how we plan to use this coordinated approach to support better delivery of parking outcomes for our local businesses, communities and visitors, while contributing to wider Council aims.

Parking serves an important role in Westmorland and Furness. We are a large and predominantly rural geography with a number of dispersed economic centres and visitor destinations surrounded by some of the most sparsely populated areas in the country. This can result in longer than average journeys with limited access to public transport and active travel alternatives, and means that a proportion of trips in Westmorland and Furness will always need to be undertaken by private vehicle. Public parking ensures that these trips can be accommodated at each end of the journey.

Public parking must be managed effectively if it is to provide a balance of benefits for all.

Parking takes up space and is not always the best use of land in town centre environments. It can also be visually intrusive and present obstacles to those who are walking, wheeling or cycling. Availability of parking can encourage unnecessary trips by car, while too little parking can affect economic performance and result in overspill impacts into sensitive areas, such as residential streets.

Parking policy must evolve with the times. Some of our more densely residential areas were not designed to accommodate high levels of car use, but car ownership per household in Westmorland and Furness today is nearly 20% higher than it was 20 years ago, and is higher than both the regional and national averages. Cars are bigger and heavier than they used to be, with recent studies showing that over half of new cars sold in the UK today are too wide to fit in minimum width on-street parking bays, while the ownership of vans in Westmorland and Furness has increased by 37% in the last ten years as the online-shopping courier service-sector has grown.

The national and Council policy agenda has also evolved. We are striving to reach net zero and around 25% of national carbon emissions comes from road transport. Encouraging a shift to sustainable modes of transport and enabling a transition to very-low emission vehicles are therefore priority aims, and parking provides a key policy lever to help us achieve these.

We have therefore prepared this Parking Strategy to describe how we plan to develop Parking Services over the next five to ten years to deliver the best balance of parking benefits for all. In this document, we set out:

- The evidence base we have compiled to support this strategy
- Our vision and objectives for how we want an efficient and cost-effective Parking Service to serve our users, our economy and our communities
- The opportunities to make positive changes across our main parking service areas
- The next steps we plan to take to deliver the strategy

We are confident that the Parking Strategy presented in this document will make our Parking Services operation fit for the future and strongly contribute to our vision to make Westmorland and Furness 'a great place to live, work and thrive'.



54% of Westmorland and Furness residents live in rural areas

Proportion of over 65s is about **40%** higher than the regional and national average¹



About **1 in 16** of the Westmorland and Furness population are Blue Badge holders, which is nearly **30%** higher than the national average and represents about **14,000 badges**²



35 million visitor days to Westmorland and Furness per year³

70% of visitors arrive by car⁴



Over **100,000** jobs in Westmorland and Furness, with over 25% of these being in the hospitality and retail sectors⁵



More than half of residents have **no access** to a morning peak hour bus service within 5 minutes' walk of their home⁶



Rural residents in Westmorland and Furness are **25%** more likely to drive to work than urban resident⁷

82% of households own at least one car compared to **76%** nationally⁸



There are approximately **42 million cars** in the UK, which are parked for **97%** of the time

The Council owns or operates over **75%** of town centre public car parking capacity, comprising more than **100 car parks** offering nearly **7,000 spaces**



¹ONS Mid-Year population estimates 2022

²Department for Transport table DIS0105

³Tourism Volume and Value in Cumbria 2023
STEAM Analysis

⁴Cumbria Visitor Research 2022

⁵Business Register & Employee Survey (BRES), 2022

⁶Bus Open Data Service

⁷Census 2011

⁸Census 2021

2 Evidence base

This Parking Strategy is built on a solid base of evidence, which we have compiled through a comprehensive independent review of our Parking Services operation and a programme of community conversation, which included:

- Formal briefings, workshops and round table discussions
- Meetings with key stakeholders
- Outreach sessions in our local communities
- A questionnaire that was available online and in public buildings
- A dedicated email address to receive comments
- A social media campaign to raise awareness and capture feedback

The resulting evidence base identified a number of challenges across a range of focus areas, the main findings of which are summarised here.

2.1 Structures and systems

A review of our Parking Services structures and systems identified a number of challenges to be addressed, which largely arise from the Council and its parking team being formed from four previous councils. Particular challenges noted were:

1. Legacy differences in parking teams and processes across the four former council areas
2. Variation in the approach to partnerships with supply chain and an opportunity to consolidate multiple suppliers
3. The resource-intensive nature of free time-limited on-street parking enforcement
4. The need to facilitate closer early engagement with Parking Services in Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) design and performance monitoring
5. The resource-intensive nature of the informal Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) appeals process
6. Limited parking and maintenance performance data within and between service teams makes monitoring and strategic planning difficult
7. Lack of unified parking-specific policy to guide parking asset acquisition, temporary closure and disposal decisions



2.2 Car parking assets

A review of our car parking assets and associated contracts identified a number of challenges to be addressed, mainly relating to the consolidation of assets from previous authorities and the management of car parks across Council service areas. Particular challenges noted were:

1. The lack of a centralised car park asset register
2. Lack of a centralised repository of car park TROs
3. An indication that the provision of coach and motorhome spaces and facilities not always consistent with demand
4. Car park directional signage and on-site signage could be improved to support ease of use and compliance with standards
5. The need to facilitate closer early engagement of Parking Services around changes in car park provision, including temporary and permanent closures
6. Legacy differences in the approach to maintenance and operation of Council and third-party car parks across Council service areas, which can cause delay to repairs and improvements
7. Need to consolidate and centralise all third party contractual information

2.3 Fees and charges

A review of our car parking fees and charges identified a number of challenges to be addressed, which again relate to the inheritance of differing practices across previous authorities. Particular challenges and observations noted were:

1. There is a need to provide simple and consistent ways to pay for parking. Multiple payment providers across car parks can reduce ease-of-use for the customer and increases the Council's administrative burden
2. Lack of accessible data due to multiple legacy payment systems with varying functionality
3. Insufficient long-stay parking in most towns, but sometimes plentiful free short-stay parking in retail car parks and on-street
4. Uncompetitive tariffs in some car parks, evidenced by higher prices but low demand
5. Tariff anomalies, e.g. small tariff variations between nearby car parks and inconsistent charges for Blue Badge holders and EV charging bays
6. Enforcement of pay & display car parks can be resource intensive, while free on-street limited-waiting parking can disincentivise car park use
7. Challenge of managing surge demand at popular locations due to high levels of seasonal visitor activity

2.4 Permit parking

A review of our permit parking options identified a number of challenges to be addressed, also mainly related to merging different practices from legacy authorities. Particular challenges noted were:

1. Lack of usage data for on-street or car park parking permit schemes, and no online mapping to show location of existing schemes
2. Legacy variation between on-street permit schemes in terms of permit types, eligibility criteria, and numbers of permits per household
3. On-street disc parking controls unevenly applied across Council area and can cause confusion for visitors unfamiliar with the scheme
4. Considerable legacy variation in the type, cost and duration of car park permits (season tickets) across area
5. No on-street permit charges means that the Council currently absorbs all of the costs for permit management
6. Current paper-based permit system generates administrative burden for Parking Services

2.5 Equality, equity and accessibility

A review of equality, equity and accessibility guidelines and best practice for parking identified a number of challenges to be addressed. Particular challenges noted were:

1. Legacy variation means we have an inconsistent approach to Blue Badge parking benefits
2. Inconsistent provision of accessible parking bays with c.40% of car parks not currently meeting the 6% accessible parking provision recommended by the Department for Transport
3. Ageing population in Westmorland and Furness suggests we should expect an increasing demand for accessible parking
4. Lack of an agreed set of car park design standards and an inconsistent car park infrastructure offer e.g. bay markings, surfacing, availability of standard and accessible EV charging points etc
5. Future digital solutions could reduce accessibility of parking services for various groups of people
6. Limitations in support available for some protected characteristic groups, e.g. when making formal appeals
7. Practice of pavement parking in certain areas can obstruct passage for those with mobility needs

2.6 Summary

The evidence base compiled to support the Parking Strategy identified a number of challenges in the delivery of our parking services. These covered a breadth of service areas and primarily identified challenges which have arisen through the Council inheriting parking assets and practices from four legacy authorities.

In the next section, we present our vision and objectives for how we want our parking services to develop, and then we present the opportunity areas we will be exploring to address these challenges and realise our vision.

3 Vision and objectives

In this chapter, we set out our Vision and Objectives for how we plan to develop our Parking Services over the next five to ten years. These are rooted in relevant policy and best practice, and have been shaped and refined through our stakeholder engagement and community conversation process.

3.1 Policy framework

The following local, regional and national policies establish a policy framework for this Parking Strategy.

3.1.1 Council policy – Council Plan and Operating Model (2023)

Our Council Plan was launched to define and establish our vision, values and priorities to 2028. It is not a detailed plan of everything we will do, but it sets out how we will work to achieve the vision. The vision, values and priorities within the Council Plan are as follows:

Vision: To make Westmorland and Furness a great place to live, work, and thrive

Values: Putting people at the centre of everything we do, listening to residents, and working in partnership with communities. Being a caring council is the golden thread that will run through everything we do, and this is supported by our values:

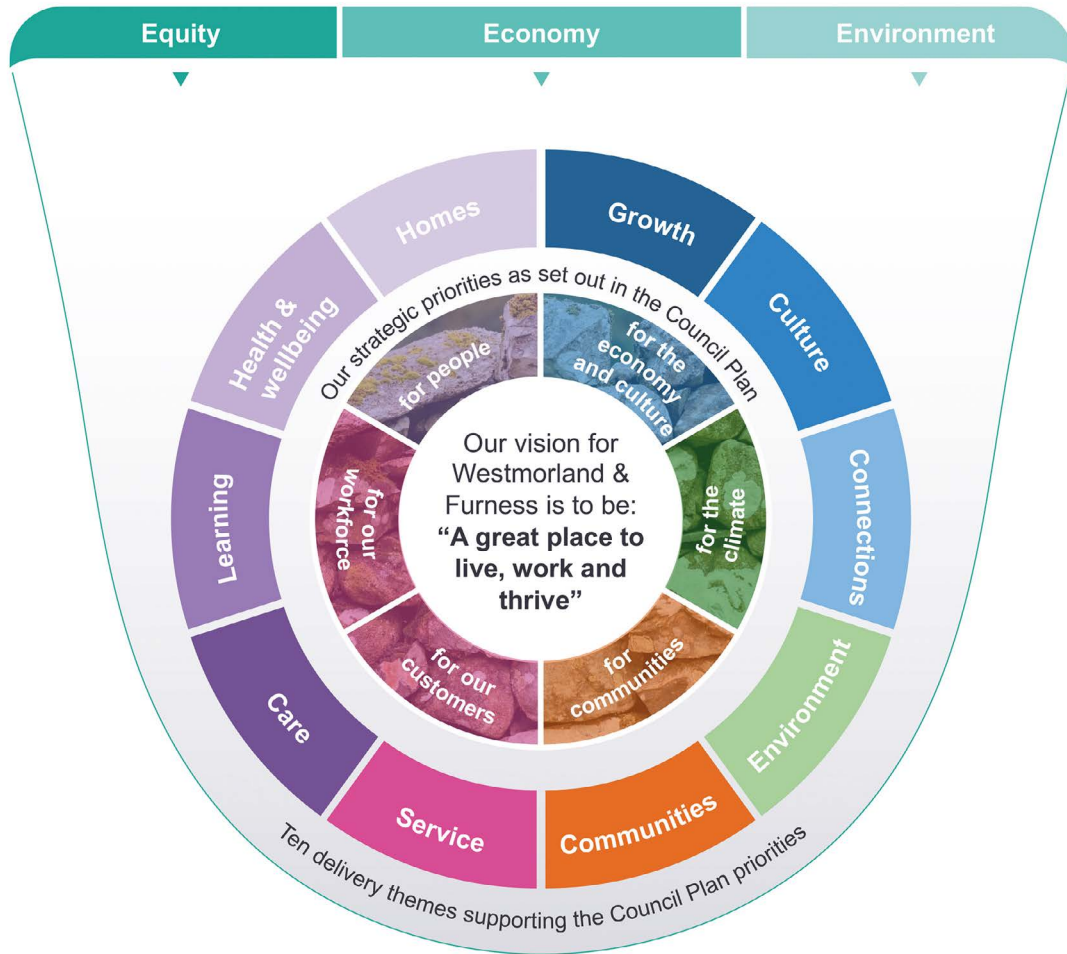
- Ambitious: we are ambitious to deliver benefits for everyone
- Inclusive: we will be an inclusive council, improving diversity, eliminating discrimination, and involving underrepresented communities in local decision making
- Outcome focussed: we are focussed on delivering the outcomes our communities want to see
- Collaborative: we will work collaboratively to deliver the best outcomes for all
- Responsible: we are responsible, socially, environmentally, and financially
- Needs-led: we are sensitive to individual needs in how we deliver our services
- Ecologically aware: we will provide leadership in the drive to become carbon net zero and sustainable

Priorities:

- For People: Improving health and well-being, supporting vulnerable residents, and enhancing education and skills
- For Climate: Striving to become carbon net zero by 2037 and addressing biodiversity loss
- For Communities: Ensuring vibrant, safe, and inclusive communities
- For Economy and Culture: Promoting economic growth and celebrating cultural heritage
- For Customers: Delivering high-quality, accessible services
- For Workforce: Supporting and developing council staff to provide excellent services

How our vision, values and priorities direct our actions is detailed in our Operating Model. This is illustrated in the following diagram, which shows how our priorities are being reflected through ten delivery themes.

Figure 3.1: Council Plan vision, priorities, delivery themes and operating model



Community Focus

We will focus on early intervention and prevention, working with individuals, community groups, parish and town councils, the voluntary sector and partners to reduce need for our services and improve health and wellbeing.

Easy Access

Services will be user friendly, caring and accessible through multiple channels. Wherever possible services will be available and delivered digitally, reducing demand for phone and in-person interaction so those resources can be focused on those most in need.

Effective services

Services are outcome focused and maximise use of technology to drive efficiency and effectiveness. Service delivery is citizen-centred and seamless between services and partner organisations.

Enabling processes

Internal processes and functions are supported by key enabling functions including Human Resources, Project Management Office, Legal, Commissioning and Procurement working closely with service delivery teams.

Supporting technology

'Fit for purpose' technology across the council that supports the delivery of services, promotes digital ways of working, and enables organisational efficiency.

What does this mean for the Parking Strategy?

The Council Plan presents a people-first approach to providing Council services, that aims to provide a positive customer experience, supports the economy and culture, promotes thriving communities, and protects the environment. These core priorities therefore provide key policy themes for the Parking Strategy.

3.1.2 Transport policy – Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan (2022)

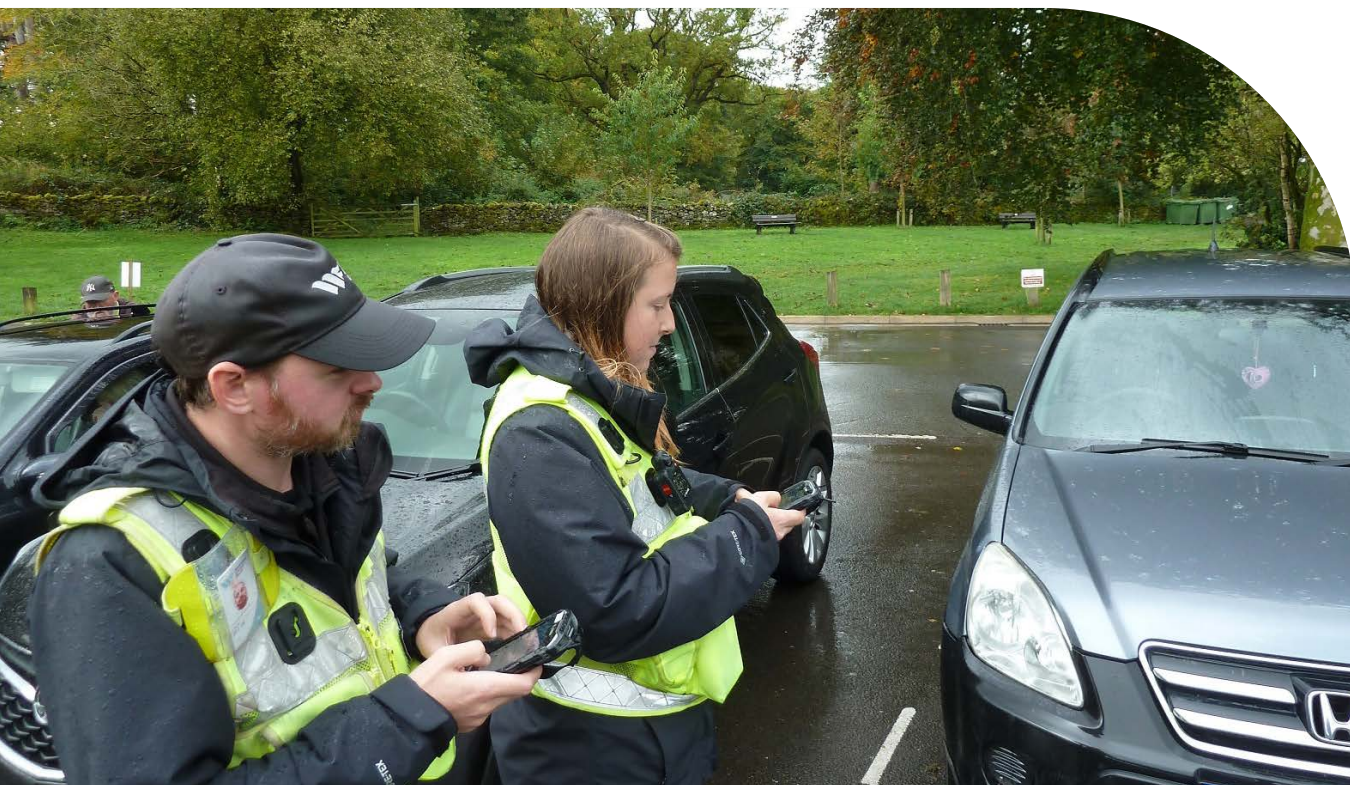
The Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan (CTIP) is the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Cumbria and provides the strategic framework for improving transport and connectivity in the area from 2022 to 2037. Its goals include promoting sustainable and inclusive growth, and tackling climate change. The plan focuses on three main objectives:

- Clean and Healthy Cumbria: Promoting the role of active travel and digital infrastructure as an enabler of sustainable economic growth.
- Connected Cumbria: Making the case for improved transport networks across and to Cumbria, to support economic growth and opportunities for businesses and communities.
- Community Cumbria: Promoting integrated approaches to transport, supporting opportunity and renewal within towns and communities across Cumbria.

The CTIP sets out a vision for Cumbria to become one of the best-connected rural geographies in the UK by 2037, identifying the need to ensure the accessibility of the transport network for all across the area. However, it also recognises that the size, sparsity of population and rural nature of the area makes it challenging to deliver effective public transport for all and that private vehicles will therefore continue to be important for most day-to-day activity.

What does this mean for the Parking Strategy?

Parking plays an important role in contributing to the three main CTIP objectives. It is a key demand management tool for encouraging more sustainable travel, but also provides essential access to support businesses and communities, and offers opportunities for onward-travel interchange with sustainable modes. These core objectives therefore provide key policy themes for the Parking Strategy.



3.1.3 Parking policy – Statutory guidance for local authorities in England on civil enforcement of parking contraventions (2022)

The Government's 'Statutory guidance for local authorities in England on civil enforcement of parking contraventions' (October 2022) mainly applies to the civil enforcement of on-street parking, but it also advises local authorities to design their overall parking policies with particular regard to:

- Managing the traffic network to ensure expeditious movement of traffic, (including pedestrians and cyclists)
- Improving road safety
- Improving the local environment
- Improving the quality and accessibility of public transport
- Meeting the needs of people with disabilities, some of whom will be unable to use public transport and depend entirely on the use of a car
- Managing and reconciling the competing demands for kerb space

This guidance therefore reflects the importance of Council-managed parking as a:

- Parking management tool to balance competing demands for parking capacity
- Traffic management tool to promote traffic flow and safety
- Demand management tool to encourage and support travel by sustainable modes, and
- An accessibility tool to provide access to people with disabilities

The Council needs to set its parking fees and charges having regard to the duty to "secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway..." (section 122 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984). How the charges are set, both on and off street will affect traffic flows.

In addition, the guidance advises that on-street parking enforcement should be self-financing insofar as possible, meaning that all costs should ideally be covered by income from parking or penalty charges. Where a deficit arises, the Council is required to cover this from its general funds. Where a surplus arises, either from on-street parking or parking enforcement legislation and guidance dictates that the Council can only spend this in the following way, listed in order of priority:

1. To cover any deficits from the scheme covered by general funds in any of the previous four years
2. To meet all or any part of the cost of the provision and maintenance of the Council's off-street car parks
3. To meet costs incurred in the provision or operation of public passenger transport services and facilities
4. To contribute to the costs of a highway or road improvement project in the Council's area

What does this mean for the Parking Strategy?

This national guidance complements local policies in highlighting the importance of parking in achieving parking management, traffic management, demand management and accessibility objectives, and adds the advice that the management of parking should be self-funding insofar as possible and that all on-street parking revenue surplus be reinvested in the Council's parking, transport and related environmental activities. These principles therefore provide key policy themes for the Parking Strategy.

3.1.4 Parking best practice: Inclusive Mobility, Car Park Design, Park Access and Park Mark standards

The Department for Transport's 'Inclusive Mobility' guidance document makes a number of recommendations to make transport more accessible to users with mobility impairments. Relating to parking, the document recommends:

- For car parks associated with shopping areas, leisure or recreational facilities, and places open to the general public: a minimum of one space for each employee who is a disabled motorist, plus 6% of the total capacity for visiting disabled motorists
- A designated accessible space should be a minimum of 4800mm long and 2400mm wide. Where the spaces are perpendicular to the access aisle, an additional width of 1200mm should be provided on each side. This extra width may be shared with adjacent spaces. An additional zone of 1200mm should be provided, at the vehicle access end of the space to enable rear access.
- Information about any control systems should be freely available. Preferably, there should be a variety of payment options available (such as contactless or pre-payment). However, if there is no alternative, pay and display machines should be located near to the designated accessible spaces and clearly visible from them.

A 2023 update to the Institution of Structural Engineers' Car Park Design guidance calls for larger standard and accessible parking spaces to reflect the growing size of the average car. The guidance now recommends the minimum bay length be increased from 4.8m to 5.0m, and for the minimum width to increase from 2.4m to 2.6m. This therefore adds to the accessible bay dimensions recommended above in the Inclusive Mobility guidance.

To recognise car parks which provide a high standard of inclusive design, the British Parking Association (BPA) provide an accreditation scheme called Park Access⁹. This helps mobility impaired users to identify car parks which are most likely to cater for their needs.

The BPA also manage the Park Mark¹⁰ accreditation scheme on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers, which is aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities. The status is awarded to car parks where the operator has put in place measures that help to deter criminal activity and anti-social behaviour, such as appropriate management, surveillance, lighting, signage and cleanliness. Car parks which meet both Park Access and Park Mark requirements are eligible to receive Park Mark Plus status, which represents the highest level of car park quality.

What does this mean for the Parking Strategy?

Car parks should provide a parking service for all potential users, and following published best practice and aiming for national accreditation standards provides a recognised way of achieving this. This principle of delivering a positive experience for all customers therefore provide a key policy theme for the Parking Strategy.

⁹ <https://www.britishparking.co.uk/park-access>

¹⁰ <https://www.britishparking.co.uk/Safer-Parking-Scheme/-/Park-Mark>

3.1.5 Key policy themes

These core policies and guidance documents establish the following five policy themes:

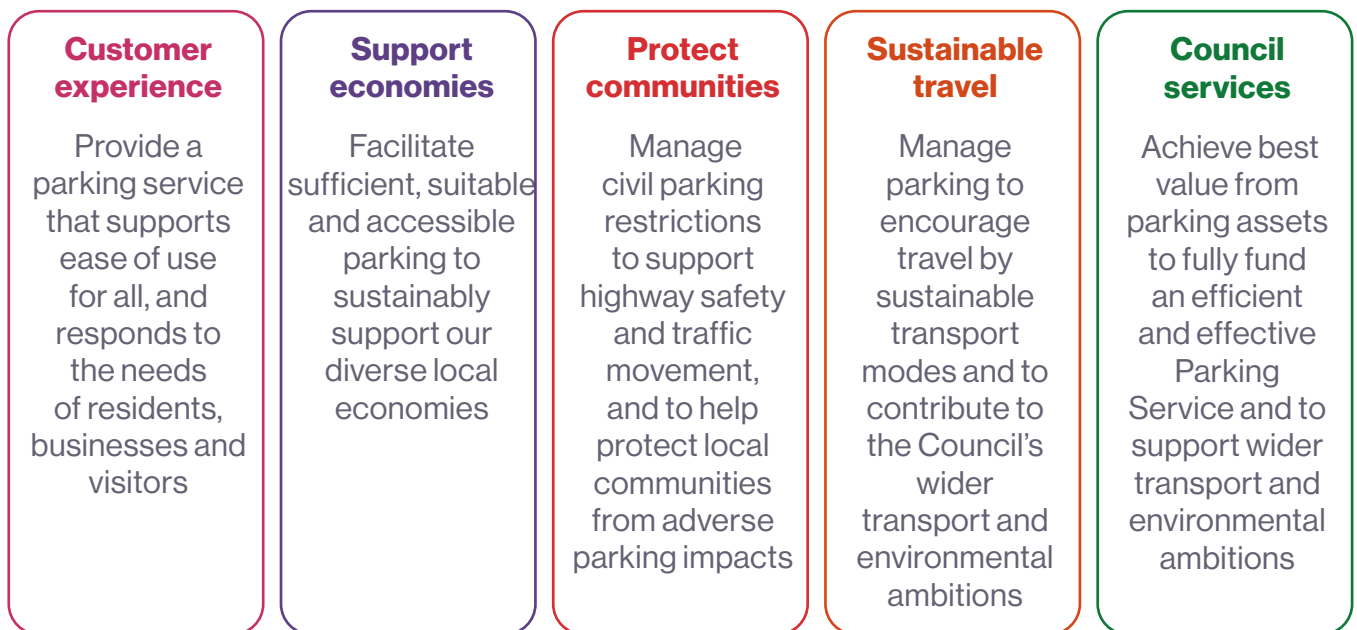
1. Customer experience – Provide a positive experience for the customer
2. Support economies – Ensure parking supports local economies
3. Protect communities – Manage traffic and mitigate community parking impacts
4. Sustainable travel – Protect the environment through encouraging sustainable travel
5. Service efficiency – Achieve efficient and self-funding parking operation

3.2 Vision and Objectives

Guided by our policy themes, the parking review findings, stakeholder engagement and our community conversation, our Parking Strategy Vision Statement is to:

Efficiently manage Parking Services and the provision of parking to provide a positive customer experience and to sustainably support thriving local economies and communities.

Our five Parking Strategy Objectives expand on what this Vision will look like in practice and how we will measure its success. These Objectives are shown in the following figure under the policy theme they relate to, and more detail on why each one is important is provided below.



Customer experience objective

Provide a parking service that supports ease of use for all, and responds to the needs of residents, businesses and visitors

We recognise that while parking enables a journey, it is not the purpose of the journey. Our objective is therefore to provide a parking service which is easy to use and provides a positive experience for all customers, whether they be local residents, workers and business owners, or visitors from elsewhere.

Support economies objective

Facilitate sufficient, suitable and accessible parking to sustainably support our diverse local economies

Transport brings customers and businesses together, and public parking plays a key role in that. We are the sole provider of on-street parking in all locations and the majority provider of off-street parking in most locations. It is therefore our aim to facilitate the availability of sufficient, suitable and accessible public parking to support our local economies, while avoiding an over-provision that takes up land and discourages use of sustainable transport modes.

Protect communities objective

Manage civil parking restrictions to support highway safety and traffic movement, and to help protect local communities from adverse parking impacts

We are committed to fulfilling our statutory duty as highway authority to manage on-street parking restrictions to support both highway safety and traffic movement, and this means managing where parking is both permitted and not permitted. The same powers enable us to implement and manage permit parking controls within residential areas where demand for parking can exceed available capacity, and our objective is to achieve the right balance and useability of controls in all our existing and future permit zones.

Sustainable travel objective

Manage parking to encourage travel by sustainable transport modes and to contribute to the Council's wider climate change objectives

Private car travel is the most space-demanding form of transport, so too much car usage to destinations can overwhelm highway and parking capacity, resulting in traffic delays, air quality and noise impacts, increased carbon emissions, and unwanted parking practices. The availability, pricing and control of public parking, alongside greater coordination with and support of public transport and active travel options, is therefore an important way in which we can discourage unnecessary car trips and support greater use of alternative and more sustainable modes.

Service efficiency objective

Achieve best value from parking assets to fully fund an efficient and effective Parking Service

The provision, operation and maintenance of public parking provides a beneficial service to those who use it, but this comes at a cost to the Council. To avoid these costs having to be covered by our taxpayers, many of whom do not own a car, it is our policy to minimise costs through efficient operations and to cover them from the income generated by the parking charges we implement to achieve our wider parking and traffic management objectives. In the case where this income exceeds costs, the surplus enables us to invest in our Parking Services, as well as in our sustainable transport schemes and, in the case of car park income only, other Council functions and ambitions. All surplus income generated through our parking assets is therefore used to help improve our services.



4 Opportunities

To achieve our Vision of efficient Parking Services which provides a positive customer experience and sustainably supports thriving local economies and communities, we will be making changes to address the challenges identified by the evidence base. Opportunities for change are described below against our three main parking-service areas of responsibility, which cover:

- On-street parking management
- Off-street parking management, and
- Permit parking management

4.1 Parking service area 1 – On-street parking opportunities

On-street parking serves an important role in our town and village centres. It is easier to access than off-street parking and tends to be closer to destinations, so it is useful for the mobility impaired or to serve shop frontages with high-turnover, short-stay demands. Most of our central on-street parking is therefore subject to one or two-hour time restrictions to prioritise it for short-stay use, while some are also reserved for accessible parking.

However, as identified in the evidence base, there is currently some inconsistency of approach to on-street parking restrictions across Westmorland and Furness. For example, some areas are managed by parking disc controls, where users display a time-stamped disc in their vehicle, but others are not.

Through the engagement and community conversation process, we have also been told that parking discs themselves can cause confusion, particularly for visitors who are not familiar with the system. However, these are generally an efficient tool in parking enforcement, as parking staff only have to check a vehicle once to establish whether it has overstayed, unlike length of stay restrictions that require two checks to establish an overstay. As a result, length-of-stay restrictions can result in spaces being occupied by a few over-staying vehicles instead of by many more short-stay users, reducing turnover and potentially stifling our economic objectives. Overstaying on-street vehicles and/or free on-street parking can also discourage use of our charged car parks which are more appropriate for longer stays.

Now that we are a unitary authority, we have fresh opportunities to address these legacy challenges. These opportunities are described in the following table, which also shows how they help deliver against our parking objectives.



Table 4.1: Parking service area 1 – On-street parking opportunities against objectives

No	Opportunity	Benefits	Fit against Objectives
1a	Review all on-street parking restrictions and consider inconsistencies	Parking restrictions will be better suited to local requirements and clearer to users	Customer experience Support economies Protect communities
1b	Develop on street parking control options to include, but not limited to, expansion of disc parking and explore options for the introduction of pay and display (P&D) in high demand areas	Expansion of parking disc zones improves parking staff management and reduces overstay, but it remains potentially confusing for visitors and does not allow for demand to be managed through charging. On-street parking charges are common nationally and payment mechanisms are familiar to parking users. It is easier for parking staff to manage so parking overstay is reduced, and appropriate charging encourages longer stay users to park off-street. It does, however, require new equipment to be installed, and introduces charges where there are currently none	Customer experience Support economies Sustainable travel Service efficiency
1c	Review of internal cross departmental processes to identify opportunities for improved efficiency	Measures such as addressing inter-working between service areas and streamlining systems and processes will improve Council efficiency and help us meet our parking objectives	Customer experience Support economies Protect communities Sustainable travel Service efficiency

4.2 Parking service area 2 – Off-street parking opportunities

The majority of public parking capacity in our towns, villages and visitor destinations is found in off-street car parks. These provide our residents, workers and visitors with somewhere appropriate to park while they undertake the purpose of their trip, and so are essential to supporting our local economies.

However, as identified in our evidence base, there are currently some inconsistencies and inefficiencies across our car parking offer. Capacity availability and pricing is not always matched to demand, while short and long-stay parking is not consistently signposted (either online or on-street) or distributed appropriately. The branding, quality, and facilities available at our car parks varies, while some are more accessible than others to those with mobility impairments and other accessibility needs. The variation in pay & display machine type and quality and the presence of multiple online payment app suppliers can also be confusing for users and inefficient for the Council.

In addition, our current approach of charging by pay & display at our car parks comes with certain disadvantages. Paying for parking on arrival can add pressure to users to return to their vehicle to avoid a parking ticket and prematurely shorten stays, while it adds an administrative burden on the Council to regularly visit all car parks to check tickets and discourage overstaying. The facility for all terminals to accept cash payments also increases vandalism risks and Council maintenance costs, while the number of parking stays paid for by cash continues to decrease.

Now that we are a unitary authority, we have fresh opportunities to address these legacy challenges. These opportunities are described in the following table, which also shows how they will achieve our parking objectives.

Table 4.2: Parking service area 2 – Off-street parking opportunities

No	Opportunity	Benefits	Fit against Objectives
2a	Review all car parks to create a single updated register of the assets, including details of facilities and quality	A single updated register will allow us to better plan, coordinate and monitor our management and investment in all our car parks	Customer experience Support economies
2b	Agree minimum standard for all car parks, and aim for Park Access and Park Mark standards wherever feasible	Achieving nationally recognised quality levels and a consistent level of location-appropriate quality and facilities improves the customer experience for all our users	Customer experience Support economies Service efficiency
2c	Review provision of motorhome and coach parking locations, capacity and facilities	Providing sufficient and suitable parking for motorhomes and coaches is important for supporting the visitor economy and avoiding inappropriate parking	Customer experience Support economies Protect communities
2d	Review signposting to, within and from all car parks, as well as online information availability	Good directional signage to, within and from car parks is helpful to users, reduces search mileage, and supports better parking management	Customer experience Support economies Protect communities
2e	Review designation of short and long-stay car parks at all destinations, and ensure pricing is suitable for demand	Local economies as best supported when short-stay parking is located and priced to suit shoppers and visitors in more central locations, while cheaper longer-stay parking is provided for workers in more outlying locations	Sustainable travel Service efficiency
2f	Transition to single payment systems supplier, including potential upgrade to payment system type / equipment	A single supplier of terminals and online payment apps increases user confidence and Council efficiency, while upgraded systems, such as where users pay before a barriered car park exit, reduces user stress, benefits the economy, and reduces Council management costs	Customer experience Support economies Sustainable travel Service efficiency
2g	Undertake trial of cashless car parks and expand if successful	Increased cashless systems increase terminal reliability and reduce Council maintenance costs	Customer experience Service efficiency
2h	Update car park TROs wherever necessary and explore option to replace all car park TROs with one consolidated off-street parking TRO	Updated TROs allow for better car park management, while a consolidated TRO would make future updates easier to make	Customer experience Support economies Protect communities Service efficiency
2i	Review of internal cross departmental processes to identify opportunities for improved efficiency	Measures such as addressing inter-working between service areas and streamlining systems and processes will improve Council efficiency and help us meet our parking objectives	Customer experience Support economies Protect communities Sustainable travel Service efficiency

4.3 Parking service area 3 – Permit parking opportunities

There are a number of permit parking zones across Westmorland and Furness. These are in residential areas where there can be more demand for parking than there are spaces. This can arise due to residential parking pressures only, and/or because of parking pressures from neighbouring uses, such as a shopping area. Permit zones are therefore important in these areas to prioritise parking spaces for the use of local residents.

However, as our current permit zones were introduced over many years across different legacy council areas, there are some inconsistencies in the way these zones operate, as identified in our evidence base. The zone rules are not always updated to accommodate changes over time, such as increases in resident area population and vehicle ownership per household, while the rules themselves can be confusing for users to understand. The paper-based permit system can also result in lost or stolen permits, and generates a cost for the Council to administer.

There are also a number of season ticket, permit and contract parking schemes in operation across the authority's car parks. These provide frequent users the convenience of not having to purchase tickets on each occasion they use the car park and also offer discounted rates if used often enough. However, as our evidence base identifies, systems vary across the authority area, with differing ticket names, conditions of use and application processes being a potential cause of user confusion. Ticket coverage and prices are not always optimal for the areas they serve, while the current paper-based system generates costs for the Council to administer. There is also some variation in the concessions granted to Blue Badge holders across the area, with some car parks offering free parking and others not.

Now that we are a unitary authority, we have fresh opportunities to address these legacy challenges. These opportunities are described in the following table, which also shows how they will achieve our parking objectives.

Table 4.3: Parking service area 3 – Permit parking opportunities

No	Opportunity	Benefits	Fit against Objectives
3a	Review permit parking, contract parking and season tickets and consider inconsistencies	Permit controls will be better suited to local requirements and clearer to users	Customer experience Protect communities
3b	Review Blue Badge concession parking and address inconsistencies	A simpler and more consistent concessions policy is clearer for users and less open to misunderstanding	Customer experience
3c	Explore transition to fully digital system for permit zones, contract spaces and season tickets, with potential for resident discounts and priority	Digital permits can be instantly downloaded to a device, are easily managed by the user, and cannot be lost or stolen. Transitioning from paper permits also reduces the administrative burden for the Council, and allows for resident discounts and priority to be introduced and managed if required	Customer experience Protect communities Service efficiency
3d	Review of internal cross departmental processes to identify opportunities for improved efficiencies	Measures such as addressing inter-working between service areas and streamlining systems and processes will improve Council efficiency and help us meet our parking objectives	Customer experience Support economies Protect communities Sustainable travel Service efficiency

5 Looking forward

5.1 A vision realised

What will it look like over the longer term as we address our opportunity areas and realise the Parking Strategy vision over the coming years?

Before commencing a journey, drivers will be able to easily identify a suitable car park from our accessible online information. When nearing their destination parking options will be clearly sign-posted. For short-stay visits, on-street parking is more likely to be available through improved management to reduce over-staying visits, and any instructions for use of the bays will be clearly indicated and simple to understand.

For longer stays at our car parks, drivers will enjoy a positive customer experience throughout the process. This will start from a recognition of consistent branding and high-quality, well maintained facilities. Finding a space will be straightforward, as pricing structures will be suited to demand, while different types of spaces will be available to accommodate electric vehicles needing to charge, users needing accessible spaces, and motorcycles, motorhomes and coaches as required. Drivers will not need to pay for a ticket when they arrive or hurry back to their vehicle to avoid over-staying, but instead will just pay for the time they use through improved pay-on-exit technology. All payment machines will take contactless payments and offer an app-based alternative, and pedestrian routes to and from car parks will be accessible and clearly signed. Season tickets will be available to frequent users in convenient, digital format.

Residents living in permit parking zones will benefit from simplified and consistent online guidance and on-street signage regarding scheme usage. Permit availability will be fairly matched to parking capacity to avoid overcrowding, and the process to obtain permits will be intuitive and accessible to all. Permits will move from a paper-based system to an app-based system so that permits will never be lost or stolen, and can be instantly downloaded and managed on a phone or tablet.

Businesses will also benefit from Parking Strategy measures to facilitate appropriate levels of nearby parking, set at demand-matched prices, and suitably managed to discourage over-staying, increase turnover, and ensure availability for customers. Sufficient motorhome and coach parking will support the visitor economy, while car-borne visitors will find the parking system easy to navigate and pleasant to use, both online and on-site. Workers will have the option of long-stay car parks in designated locations, supported where appropriate by early-bird rates and season ticket options.

We will also be making internal changes over time to unify and update parking processes and systems inherited from the previous authorities. This will allow us to reinvest in our parking infrastructure and in our customer service offer, while also supporting increased usage of active and public transport modes.

Together, we will make Westmorland and Furness a great place to live, work and thrive!

5.2 Next steps

The next step towards achieving our Parking Strategy Vision will be to develop a detailed Action Plan with an accompanying implementation programme. All projects arising from this plan will be costed and subject to appropriate governance, including consultation, where appropriate.



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

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