

**Portfolio holder for Environment and Sustainability decision – 3
October 2025**

**Parking arrangements for Christmas 2025 in support of
local businesses**

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public – No requirement for an exemption under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972
Executive Summary	<p>To support the local retail and business community and town and parish councils during festive celebrations, it is the intention to allow 4 days when charges do not apply in each town and village centre car park.</p> <p>These days are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Business Saturday (this year on the 6th of December 2025) • The last weekend before Christmas (20th/21st December 2025) • An additional day where Town and Parish Councils may request free parking in support of their respective Christmas events
Recommendation(s)	That the Council allocate 4 days of free parking in town centre car parks to support local businesses and communities during December 2025
Reasons for recommendation(s)	This recommendation supports the public at what is for many a difficult time of year financially, as well as promoting the use of local businesses for Christmas shopping. It supports the aims of Prosperity Priority 2 from the Corporate Plan 2024-28– “Supporting our high-quality business base and economic centres to thrive and grow”
Ward(s)	All Wards
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Geoffrey Blunden- Environment and Sustainability
Strategic Director(s)	Richard Knott- Strategic Director Housing and Communities

Officer Contact	Brian Byrne Community Safety and Support 02380 285089 Brian.Byrne@nfdc.gov.uk
-----------------	---

Introduction and background

1. Small business Saturday celebrates the UK's 5.45 million small businesses and encourages the community to show their support by shopping locally. The event is always held on the first Saturday each December. In addition, local town and parish councils host local festive community events, also with a focus of highlighting and enhancing footfall at local businesses, normally held the last weekend before Christmas. Nationally these initiatives have been well-received and supports the public at what is for many a difficult time of year financially, as well as promoting the use of local businesses for Christmas shopping.

Proposal for 2025 free parking days

2. It is proposed to allow 4 days when charges do not apply in town and village centre car parks. These days are:
 - Small Business Saturday (this year on the 6th of December 2025)
 - The last weekend before Christmas (20th/21st December 2025)
 - One additional day where Town and Parish Councils may request free parking in support of their respective Christmas events.

Corporate plan priorities

3. This proposal supports Prosperity Priority 2 from the Corporate Plan 2024-28 – "Supporting our high-quality business base and economic centres to thrive and grow". It does this by encouraging both residents and visitors to visit our town and village centres at a vital time for local retailers and other businesses in the run-up to Christmas. It is considered that the temporary and marginal loss of income from these days (as quantified in the Financial Implications section of this report) is acceptable considering the financial benefits it brings to the local businesses and communities.

Options appraisal

4. The option of not providing these free parking days has been considered but it is felt that the benefit to the local communities outweigh the loss of revenue to the council over these days. In assigning 4 days, this will enable car parking services to work alongside town and parish councils in planning for local events.

Consultation undertaken

5. Town and Parish councils have historically been in full support of this proposal. No further consultation has been undertaken, and the matter can be given further consideration at any time following requests and feedback received.

Financial and resource implications

6. It is estimated that, due to the use of parking clocks by a percentage of car park users that the loss of meter income would be less than £10,000, over the whole period. The cost implication has already been factored within the current year's car parking budget.

Legal implications

7. Signage will be placed in each car park to advise customers of free parking. Payment machines will be covered to prevent payment during allocated free periods.

Risk assessment

8. Where car parks are to be used for hosting of Christmas festivals, a full risk assessment, site plan and management plan is submitted by the relevant town or parish council and reviewed prior to agreement of any activity taking place.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

9. Free parking could increase the amount of car journeys to the respective towns, noting however that footfall and local spend would be to the benefit of the local economy. This could also increase carbon emissions in this limited period. It is also noted that there are often alternative sustainable modes of travel available, and these can be publicised by the towns and parishes alongside their advertisement of the free parking offer.

Equalities implications

10. None identified as the offer is district wide and inclusive of all NFDC car parks located within town and parishes, and which offer disabled parking spaces.

Crime and disorder implications

11. The matter has been reviewed by the Community Safety team with no increased crime and disorder implications identified.

Data protection/ Information governance/ ICT implications

12. No implications have been identified within this proposal.

New Forest National Park/ Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

13. No implications have been identified as the areas proposed are existing designated car parks.

Portfolio holder endorsement

14. I have agreed to the recommendations of this report.

Signed: Councillor Geoff Blunden

Dated: 03/10/2025

Date on which notice given of this Decision – 03 October 2025
Last date for call in – 10 October 2025