

National Office

620 Bristol Business Park
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol, BS16 1EJ

Michael.seddon@forestryengland.uk
[forestryengland.uk](https://www.forestryengland.uk)

Cllr Nick Hubbard

Via email:

Date: 31 March 2026

Dear Cllr Hubbard,

Information Request: Our Ref: 067-26

Thank you for your emails of 24 & 26 March which you have indicated comprises a formal request for information under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

We have previously acknowledged receipt of your request and this letter constitutes a combined response to your Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) request, as well as addressing the wider issues you raised in your correspondence regarding the introduction of car parking charges in the New Forest.

We acknowledge the concerns expressed about the availability of supporting documentation following the New Forest Parish Quadrant Meeting on 28 January 2026, and we have considered all the points you raised in your correspondence in preparing this consolidated reply.

Access to information legislation (which includes the Freedom of Information (FOI), EIR, and Data Protection Acts) is a right of access to recorded information held at the time a request is received (unless an exception is engaged). Documents are disclosed (subject to any redactions) 'as held', which means that there is no requirement to create information in order to answer a question, provide opinion, put the information into context, or provide links to publicly held information created elsewhere.

Please find attached the information we hold within the scope of your request. Please note that, where necessary, we have redacted personal information from these documents. This is allowed for under Regulation 13 of the EIR/FOI, as supplying this could be a breach of the Data Protection Act.



There is no formal requirement to put the information into context or explain the documents. It merely gives a right of access to recorded information. We have, however, provided some explanation to aid your Parish Council.

Equality Impact Assessment

The following documents are attached:

- PPG44 - Equality Impact Assessment - introduction of parking charges_Redacted
- Appendix 9 Official Sensitive Equality Impact Assessment NFCPC c_Redacted
- Supplementary Document to Accompany the National Parking EqIA

Forestry England charges for parking in many other locations across the country, and the roll out of charging in our New Forest car parks has drawn on this considerable experience. A national Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is already in place. This applies to all the locations where we charge for parking. This document is regularly updated.

The national EQIA is supplemented by several supporting documents that consider the specific local issues and factors in the New Forest. This includes a supporting local EQIA (which was created in the initial stages of the planning for this project), and a supplementary document that has been updated as the project has progressed.

We have worked closely with all of the required statutory bodies to develop our plans for parking in the New Forest. We have also met with many local organisations, including parish council representatives at quadrant meetings and the Consultative Panel. This process has contributed significantly to the development of the scheme. Feedback from these groups has contributed to several changes, including opening hours and providing additional and accessible ways to pay. These are reflected in the local supporting document.

It is not a requirement to publish the EQIA documents. However, they have been shared on request.

We have reviewed these documents, and our approach, when considering your information request. It is our view that the appropriate assessments have been made and documented, and that we are fulfilling our Public Sector Equality Duty. As a result, we will proceed with the roll out of the parking scheme, as planned with and consented to by the relevant statutory bodies.



Risk Assessments

The following documents are attached:

- Verge Protection Risk Map
- New Forest CP HRA 110925(1)_Redacted
- New Forest HRA Background Document
- Annex to HRA Background Document

Project Risk Register

We have decided to withhold the project risk register, as it is covered by the exception granted by Regulation 12(4)(d) material in the course of completion.

Public Interest in Maintaining the Exception:

- **Safe Space" for Deliberation:** There is a need for officials to have a private, candid space to debate sensitive, in-progress financial options without the fear of premature disclosure of ideas that might not be adopted.
- **"Chilling Effect":** As this requests relates to a live, ongoing, matter, disclosure of early, draft, or "subject to change" analysis is likely to deter officials from exploring options in future discussions or lead to sanitised, less-honest reporting.
- **Misleading Information:** If releasing in-progress financial analysis, which is subject to change, this would mislead the public, causing them to believe a project has a different financial outcome than the final, accurate version.
- **Inaccuracy of Data:** Specifically for 12(4)(d), if the financial data is in the course of completion and known to be inaccurate, incomplete, or in a state of flux, the public interest lies in ensuring accurate, final data is presented, particularly as the Forestry Commission is accountable for how it manages public funds.
- **Avoiding harm to ongoing internal deliberations:** Disclosure could lead to external influence or pressure before officials have concluded analysis or reached a balanced position

Public Interest in Disclosure:

Under the EIR, there is a presumption in favour of disclosure unless a valid exception applies and when the public interest in maintaining the exception outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. In the case of this request, the following factors in favour of disclosure have been considered:



- **Accountability for Decision-Making:** Transparency regarding how public authorities make decisions, particularly regarding spending public money or environmental policy.
- **Public Good:** Making details of the agreement public can help allay fears over poor decision making and reassurance that Forestry England is making decision in the best interests of the forests they manage.

Balancing exercise:

- Is it a "live" issue? Yes.

Decision:

The decision has been made to not to share the agreement; as the public interest in engaging the exceptions outweighs the public interest in releasing the information.

Unique Characteristic of the New Forest

The following documents are attached:

- New Forest CP HRA 110925(1)_Redacted
- New Forest HRA Background Document
- Annex to HRA Background Document

The unique environmental and cultural characteristics of the New Forest were considered as part of the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), as agreed with Natural England. The HRA documents have been widely shared publicly as part of the development of the scheme, and during engagement with local groups. They have also been made available to members of the public requesting further details about the scheme.

We have also been working with the commoning community, via the Commoners Defence Association and the Verderers of the New Forest, to ensure the scheme addresses access for this group. These factors, and our responding actions, were considered by the latter as part of their consent for aspects of the scheme and are publicly recorded on their website in the relevant Court and Committee meeting minutes.

Traffic and vehicle displacement

This issue is included within the HRA documents (monitoring protocol contained within the Annex document) and risk assessments listed above. These risks have also been carefully considered in the plans for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) that have been developed by Hampshire County Council in discussion



with Forestry England. More details regarding these Temporary Waiting Orders can be found here - [Public notices | Hampshire County Council](#).

As outlined in these documents, displacement parking will be closely monitored by a dedicated Forestry England parking team. This data will inform any additional actions and measures that need to be taken.

Visitor Management and Public Safety Assessment - attached

The following document is attached:

- New Forest Car Parks_Redacted

Environmental and Ecological Assessments

Please refer to the HRA documents provided.

Animal & Livestock Safety Risk Assessments

The following document is attached:

- Guidance Principles for Verge Protection New Forest Dec 2025_Redacted

You express concerns that the introduction of car parking charges will lead to increased animal accidents, as people may park in appropriate locations. Animal accidents are recorded by the Verderers and shared publicly on their website, and via the Court, as part of their responsibilities. Forestry England participates in the Animal Accident Group established by the Verderers, to support and collaborate on measures to reduce the risk of animal accidents.

In terms of land management, Forestry England supports this issue through the management of roadside vegetation - planned in consultation with groups, including the Commoners Defence Association, Natural England, and the Verderers - and through maintaining fencing in some sections. We have also consulted with these groups in creating the draft guidance principles for verge protection (attached).

Signage and infrastructure in Forestry England car parks are subject to Verderer's consent - consideration of which includes these issues.

Forestry England participates in joint-agency operations to reduce animal accidents, such as Operation Mountie which is carried out in partnership with the local police force.



Animal and livestock safety is further addressed in the development of a Temporary TRO and displacement parking monitoring process, as previously referenced in this letter.

Parking enforcement safety assessments

The following document is attached:

- REC 12 Parking Ranger Patrol, Enforcement, Site Maintenance & Public Engagement_Redacted

Business Case and Decision Documentation

We have decided to withhold the business case and decision documents, as it is covered by the exception granted by Regulation 12(4)(e) - Internal communications.

Public Interest in Maintaining the Exception:

- The Business Case and Decision Documentation forms part of ongoing internal policy development, and the ICO has recognised that authorities require a “safe space” to discuss options, test assumptions and prepare advice away from external pressure.
- Releasing internal papers at this stage would expose provisional analysis, draft reasoning and early conclusions that may change, leading to premature scrutiny and potentially undermining the integrity of the policy-making process.
- The ICO has noted that premature disclosure of internal communications can discourage officials from providing full and candid advice, which would have a detrimental effect on the quality of decision-making.
- Protecting the private space for officials to consider advice and weigh up options is in the wider public interest, as it supports well-informed, effective final decisions

Public Interest in Disclosure:

- Transparency helps the public understand how the authority develops policy and reaches decisions.
- Disclosure of business case material could demonstrate how evidence, options and cost considerations were assessed, supporting informed public debate.
- Publishing this information may increase accountability for the use of public funds and the robustness of internal decision-making processes.



Balancing exercise:

- Is it a "live" issue? Yes.

Decision:

The decision has been made to not to share the documents, as the public interest in engaging the exceptions outweighs the public interest in releasing the information.

Consultation and engagement

We are not required to conduct a public consultation for the New Forest parking scheme. We have, however, been working closely with the relevant statutory bodies to ensure all necessary consents and permissions are in place. We have also shared our plans with, and gathered feedback from, a wide range of local groups.

We have carried out over 85 engagements with local stakeholders and groups regarding the parking scheme since the start of 2025.

This has included the New Forest Consultative Panel, which we attend on a regular basis. The scheme was shared at a Panel meeting in March 2025 and has been a topic for discussion at each subsequent meeting. The Panel represents a wide range of key organisations and stakeholder groups in the New Forest. Feedback from these sessions has helped shape the project. Presentations from these sessions are publicly available via the link provided below.

Forestry England representatives have also attended all parish council quadrant meetings to provide information about the scheme and participate in discussion on this matter. The scheme was shared and discussed at these sessions in 2025, including at the quadrant sessions that Beaulieu Parish Council have been invited to attend, and has been a topic for each subsequent meeting since this date.

The majority of these sessions are forums that Forestry England is invited to attend, and are not minuted by the organisers. The exception to this are:

- Verderers of the New Forest who minute their court and committee sessions and these can be found here - <https://www.verderers.org.uk/resources/>
- New Forest Consultative panel who share presentations given at their meetings on their web page - <https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/about-us/forums-and-facilities/consultative-panel/>
- Additional minutes may also be found via this page, where we have engaged in New Forest NPA meetings - <https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/about-us/meeting-agendas-minutes/>



Given the information provided regarding these aspects of the scheme, including the considerable engagement carried out with local groups and bodies, we do not intend to pause the implementation of the scheme.

We have tried to deal with your request as fully as possible. If you have any questions, then we would be happy to try and answer these for you. However, should you wish to request an internal review of our response, within forty working days, please contact:


Forestry Commission
Chief Executive Officer
620 Bristol Business Park
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol
BS16 1EJ

Email: commissioners@forestrycommission.gov.uk

We aim to resolve any concerns with you directly in the first instance. However, should the matter fail to be resolved to your satisfaction, you may make an additional appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Further information on the role of the ICO and guidance on FOI/EIR can be found on the ICO's website: www.ico.org.uk or by calling the ICO helpline: 0303 123 1113.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Seddon
Forestry England Chief Executive

