Forestry England

Blue Badge Concessions & Vehicle Tax Exemptions

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Blue Badge Parking Concessions

Forestry England pricing policy does not include parking concessions for blue badge holders.

Forestry England car parks are classified as off-street parking and are therefore not covered by the national Blue Badge parking concessions, (free parking) which are intended primarily for on-street parking. As with many other off-street car parks, including visitor attractions and retail centres, parking charges apply to all users, including Blue Badge holders.

The Blue Badge scheme is not dependent on income or wealth and is also available to people with unseen or hidden disabilities too. At the same time we recognise some people with disabilities can also be financially disadvantaged. The money visitors spend with us is re-invested to maintain and improve facilities in the forests and is an important part of our ambition to be mostly self-funded and reduce the already small proportion of tax-payer funding we get.

This approach helps ensure a fair and consistent charging policy across Forestry England sites, while enabling income from parking to be reinvested directly into the maintenance and improvement of forest facilities. This includes ongoing investment in accessibility measures such as accessible parking spaces, toilets, changing places facilities, accessible trails and sensory experiences.

Forestry England recognises the importance of making forests welcoming and accessible to all visitors, while balancing this with the need to maintain sites sustainably and reduce reliance on public funding.

Vehicles Exempt – Vehicle Tax

A Blue Badge by itself does not automatically mean the driver will receive reduced Vehicle Excise Duty / VED). The exemption is based on certain disability benefits, not just possession of a Blue Badge.

Criteria:

- 100% exemption (free VED) if receiving:
  - the higher rate mobility component of DLA
  - the enhanced rate mobility component of PIP
  - certain other qualifying mobility benefits such as Armed Forces Independence Payment or War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement
- 50% reduction if receiving:
  - the standard rate mobility component of PIP or Adult Disability Payment.

Constraints:

- The exemption/reduction applies to one vehicle only
- The vehicle must be registered in the disabled person's name or their nominated driver's name

- The vehicle must be used for the disabled person's needs, and not mainly for someone else's personal use

Forestry England is not required to provide free parking to vehicle owners who are exempt from vehicle tax, as vehicle tax exemption and parking charges serve different purposes and operate under separate policy frameworks.

Vehicle tax exemption is a government welfare measure intended to support some disabled people with the costs associated with vehicle ownership and mobility. It is funded through national taxation and administered through eligibility for specified disability related benefits. Forestry England's parking charges, by contrast, contribute towards the management, maintenance and operation of public forest sites and associated visitor infrastructure, including car parks, accessible facilities, surfacing, signage, litter management, safety measures and wider site upkeep.

Parking charges are applied on the basis of vehicle use and occupation of a parking space, rather than the taxation status of the vehicle or the personal circumstances of the driver. Vehicles exempt from vehicle tax continue to use the same parking infrastructure and facilities as other visitors, and therefore generate comparable operational and maintenance costs.

Forestry England already provides a range of reasonable adjustments and accessible facilities to support disabled visitors in accordance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010. These may include accessible parking bays, improved access routes, accessible toilet provision and proximity parking where available. Introducing mandatory free parking linked specifically to vehicle tax exemption could create additional financial and administrative burdens that may impact the sustainability of site management and visitor services.

There are also practical considerations regarding administration and enforcement. Any concession linked to vehicle tax exemption would require systems to verify eligibility, manage misuse, process disputes and maintain consistent application across sites. This would increase operational complexity and associated costs.

In addition, not all disabled people qualify for vehicle tax exemption, and not all Blue Badge holders are vehicle drivers or registered keepers of exempt vehicles. A policy based solely on vehicle tax exemption could therefore result in inconsistent outcomes between disabled visitors with differing benefit arrangements and mobility needs.

For these reasons, Forestry England considers it appropriate to retain discretion over its parking policies and concession arrangements, while continuing to consider proportionate and reasonable measures to support accessibility and inclusion for disabled visitors.