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Press Statement

Forestry England introducing car parking charges

Beaulieu Parish Council has today written to the Chief Executive of Forestry England regarding the proposed introduction of car parking charges across the New Forest.

The Parish Council is concerned that car park charging will soon be introduced without evidence available to the public demonstrating compliance with the **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**, as required under the Equality Act 2010.

Specifically, the Council has requested reports, assessments, and analyses conducted by Forestry England in relation to its obligations under the Duty. Due to the significance of the issues raised, this request has also been sent to the Minister for Nature. The Council has asked for the implementation of the scheme to be paused until compliance with PSED can be either guaranteed or the process fully completed as required by law.

The Parish Council has also formally requested, under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), key documents that have not yet been made available to local communities, despite Forestry England's previous undertaking to do so. These include risk assessments including those on displacement parking, the business case, and supporting analysis underpinning the proposal.

Chairman of the Beaulieu Parish Council, Nick Hubbard, stated: "We recognise that Forestry England faces complex challenges in managing the New Forest, and we support measures that are properly evidenced and sensitively implemented. However, the New Forest is a unique environment with high local usage, free-roaming animals, and a close relationship between forest car parks and surrounding villages. Currently, we do not consider that enough information has been shared to demonstrate that the full impacts of this proposal have been adequately assessed — including displacement parking, safety risks, equality, and effects on local businesses and residents. Therefore, we have asked Forestry England to pause the implementation of this project, provide the necessary reports, and revisit the proposal while it is openly reviewed by New Forest local communities as required under its Mandate."

The Parish Council emphasised that it remains committed to working collaboratively with Forestry England, local authorities, and community stakeholders to ensure that any future approach is both effective and appropriate to the unique characteristics of the New Forest.

Editor's Notes

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Under the Equality Act 2010, Forestry England must consider how its decisions affect different groups, including disabled people, older people and those on lower incomes. This duty requires public bodies to assess potential impacts and take steps to mitigate any disadvantage.

Publication During Decision-Making (PSED Compliance)

In complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies are expected to consider equality impacts at the formative stage of decision-making. This typically involves preparing and documenting Equality Impact Assessments and making relevant information available at a stage when it can inform engagement and scrutiny. In practice, key assessments and supporting analysis should be available before or alongside consultation and prior to implementation.

Transparency and Information Requirements

As a public authority, Forestry England is also subject to the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, which require environmental information—such as risk assessments and supporting analysis—to be made available on request to enable public scrutiny of decisions with environmental or safety implications.

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