

Official Verderer and Verderers and the members of public attending court today, I am Sarah Nield, Chair of the New Forest Association (NFA).

It is less than 2 months until car park charging comes to the New Forest. Habitat Regulation Assessments have been done, mitigation measures agreed by Natural England, the signs are going up, the ditches are being dug, dragon's teeth positioned, car park rangers are being employed. Yet vital issues are still unclear. Let's look at the most important.

First – the money. Support for these charges is largely based upon assurances that the money will go to the Forest. For example, this Court's September minutes record assurances that "the money would be reinvested in the Forest."¹ Subsequently, assurances have been less clear cut. For example, in correspondence with the NFA, FE could only say that "the revenue from Forestry England memberships purchased by regular visitors to the New Forest will come directly to this district." What about other charges and is it the New Forest or the southern district that benefits? In our meetings with FE assurances also have failed to reassure and we note that FOIs seeking financial information from concerned individuals have been sidestepped.²

We have asked for the money to be ring fenced to ensure it stays in the Forest. Failing that, we call for clear undertakings that "the money [will] be reinvested in the Forest" backed up by financial accountability. The published FE accounts fall short. They relate only to the national finances; they do not show Forest related income or expenditure. Thus, unless there is transparency showing the Forest car park income and expenditure, it will be impossible to check that the money will stay and be spent in the Forest.

Secondly, communications is a required mitigation measure.³ To be fair FE have attended many meetings, including one for NFA and NFDog members, and their website provides basic details but where is the wider public messaging particularly "to encourage compliance."⁴ What about highlighting the value of the verges to dissuade those who care about the Forest from verge parking AND warnings of the consequences for those who don't care and verge park?

¹ See Verderers Minutes of 17-09-25 at 2025/14260.

² FOI by High Risebrow dated 26th October 2025 and FOI by John Coleman dated 20th November 2026

³ Liley & Rush, Habitat Regulation Assessment of Forestry England's proposal to introduce charging across New Forest car parks (2025) Table3.

⁴ Ibid.



Lastly and most importantly what about future monitoring to ensure that any damage to protected Forest verges is minimised and where possible remedied? Parking rangers may record the FACT of verge parking but what about monitoring the EFFECT or IMPACT of displacement parking on Forest verges including those on the adjacent commons? To do so requires baseline data of the present ecological condition of these verges AND future periodic surveys by qualified experts to determine any deterioration. The monitoring of ditching and dragon's teeth work envisages periodic surveys but relates to the recovery of ditched areas so only a small proportion of verges and even then, lacks detail.⁵

All in all, we hope for the best but fear the worse and so urge the Verderers, and other statutory bodies, to secure clarity on these issues.

⁵ Natural England Assent dated 27th October 2026.