Frequently Asked Questions regarding Minehead proposals

Q. Why do we need to change the current parking arrangements we have on Minehead sea front?

A. The current parking scheme is not fit for purpose. There is no provision for residents parking permits and there are areas where no controls exist and inappropriate parking occurs, particularly around the Ship Aground.

The proposed changes will give residents priority over parking, remove the competition between tourists and residents for parking spaces, make visitor parking more cost effective, give holiday guests more flexibility and improve safety in areas where no parking controls currently exist.

Q. Why is the cost of permits being increased so much?

A. The proposal also aims to bring permit parking charges in line with the rest of the county. The current cost of a residents permit in Minehead is £8 which is much lower than in other areas and does not cover the cost of administration and enforcement of the parking scheme. The proposed permit charges reflect the actual cost of the permit. To help residents manage the increase in cost we propose that the charges are gradually increased over the next three years.

The proposed changes will mean that Minehead has a parking scheme that is fit for purpose and serves the needs of local residents.

Q. The proposed increase is significant, are there any proposals to lessen the impact on residents?

A. To help residents manage the increase in cost we propose that the charges are gradually increased over the next three years.

Q. How will you ensure the complexities of the area, being a harbour town and unique conservation area, are considered?

A. The complexities of the Minehead area and feedback from residents will be considered before any changes are implemented.
Q. There haven’t been any complaints about the permits we currently use.

A. Following the countywide consultation we conducted last year a number of issues were highlighted on the parking arrangements in the town. It became evident that the current parking scheme is not fit for purpose and does not prioritise parking for residents.

This proposals aims to give local residents a parking scheme that is fit for purpose and gives them priority parking areas. As well as remove the competition between tourists and residents for parking spaces, make visitor parking more cost effective, give holiday guests more flexibility and improve safety in areas.

Q. Why do we need a different type of Permit to the one that has served us so well over the years?

A. Whilst the current restrictions within Minehead have created the ability for residents to purchase a permit, there is no provision for it to be used.

This proposals aims to give local residents a parking scheme that gives them priority parking areas. As well as remove the competition between tourists and residents for parking spaces, make visitor parking more cost effective, give holiday guests more flexibility and improve safety in areas.

Q. If the existing permit situation is unsatisfactory why has the current position been continued?

A. The current situation has been continued whilst a review was undertaken of parking in the Mineahed area. Following the review these proposals have been drawn up and are now being shared with local residents to collect their feedback.

Q. Each area of Somerset should be treated differently because they all have different needs and challenges.

A. Our parking policies and charges need to be consistent across the county. However there is flexibility for local arrangements. For example in Minehead we are proposing that we will introduce permits for use by Bed and Breakfast’s or the RNLI. These have not been introduced elsewhere in the county.
Q. Most of us accept that when we go out during the day in the summer, tourists will use the spaces we empty. Later in the day we return and take up spaces no longer required by tourists.

A. This is acknowledged, but for some the lottery of hoping for a space is unattractive, particularly if young children are involved. The proposal creates resident only spaces as well as the sharing of existing pay and display. This provides more certainty for residents.

Q. How will the Council decide who pays the first and second permit charge, particularly if there are adult children with vehicles?

A. The common perception is the parent purchases the cheaper permit and the adult child the dearer. The allocation and payment arrangements are for the household to decide.

Q. Under the current scheme we have more than the allowed number of permits?

A. When the Somerset resident permit scheme was reviewed it was recognised a number of properties had a greater allowance of permits. To prevent any problems for residents, ‘grandfather rights’ were granted to these residents whilst they remained within the property. This arrangement will continue for the current residents.

Q. Are there enough spaces for the scheme being proposed?

A. Yes there are enough spaces. It is not anticipated the total number of spaces will reduce apart from outside the Ship Aground.

Q. Will spaces be allocated to a particular house?

A. No. The spaces will not be allocated to a particular house. Residents will need to apply for a residents permit.

Q. How many permits am I entitled to?

A. Each residential property is entitled to 2 residents permits (reduced by 1, if you have off road parking), 1 annual resident visitor permit and 100 daily scratch cards (daily visitor permits).
Q. I own a holiday rental property; can I still allow the resident visitor permit to be used?

A. The purpose of the annual visitors permit is to allow visitors to your property to park. The continued use of an annual visitor permit is not recommended as there is always the risk a guest could lose or leave Minehead with it. As part of the new scheme we propose to introduce “Holiday Permits” for use by visitors to a bona fide holiday accommodation. These will be available by the day or week.

Q. How many Holiday Permits will I be able to purchase?

A. The number of permits will be linked to the level of accommodation provided and length of letting period. E.g. if a B&B has 4 rooms that are available for 9 months of the year, they will be entitled to the equivalent of 4 daily permits per day for 9 months.

Q. Do I have to visit Taunton to purchase permits?

A. No, annual resident permits can be purchased online by visiting the Council’s website. Paper applications are also available. We will work with our pay by phone provider to introduce a facility to enable Holiday permits to be purchased and issued to your guests electronically, (subject to broadband connection speed and mobile phone coverage).

Q. It is not clear from the proposals where staff that work in Minehead will be able to park.

A. The number of workers during the hours of control currently parking in Quay Street and Quay West is likely to be minimal as there is very little free of charge parking. However, if it is identified there is a requirement for workers of businesses within Quay Street and Quay West to park this can be considered depending upon demand.

Q. How will the area around the Ship Aground be defined?

A. To improve visibility and safety it is proposed the spaces will be parallel to the kerb line.

Q. How will the area around the Lifeboat House be dealt with?

A. The area between the Lifeboat House and the Ship Aground is public highway, it is therefore proposed for this area to be permits only. Outside the Lifeboat House only permits issued to the RNLI will be valid. Outside the Ship Aground this will be residents only.
Q. The RNLI are seen as an emergency service, do they have to pay for a permit?

A. No, in recognition of the important public service they provide it is not proposed to charge for their permits.

Q. How will the major events within Minehead be affected?

A. Major events won't be affected by these proposals. The only change these proposals will have is for residents. During major events it will make it easier for them to park as ‘resident only areas’ will be created.

Q. Looking at the map which details the location of the parking bays, I cannot see any provision for drivers who are disabled.

A. Drivers who hold a blue disabled drivers badge may park without charge for as long as they require in a pay and display bay. However, the purpose of the consultation is to identify any unknown requirements. If feedback indicates disabled parking bays are required these will be considered.

Q. It is rumoured there will be a residential development within the Quay West area. This could increase demand for resident permit parking.

A. The current policy of Somerset County Council is to exclude any new development from the resident scheme. Therefore any residents of the new property will not be eligible to receive permits.

Q. How long will it take to implement the scheme?

A. This will depend on the volume and nature of feedback from residents. It is anticipated any new scheme will be fully effective by the start of the 2016 Summer season.

Q. Is there any point to this consultation, hasn't the Council already made up its mind?

A. No, before any changes are formally proposed and advertised we are undertaking collecting feedback from the residents, this will enable any new scheme in Minehead to be fit for purpose.
Q. **How will I know what is happening?**

A. It is proposed that we will keep you informed at the relevant key stages of the implementation.

Q. **If the current scheme isn’t fit for purpose, can you just no longer issue permits?**

A. Whilst it is possible to abolish permits this would be significantly detrimental for residents as they would need to pay for a pay and display ticket for each day they parked.

Q. **How much is this going to cost the Council?**

A. Until the full scheme proposals are known it is difficult to estimate the total cost. The majority of costs will be officer time which are already accounted for. There will be a number of advertisements placed within the paper, changes to signs and lining. Once the full scheme details are known an accurate estimate can be prepared.

Q. **How can I get further information about these proposals?**

A. Further details can be obtained by making contact with the County Council by calling 01823 355137 or parking@somerset.gov.uk. An information event is also being held, for further details please refer to the covering letter.