

Wednesday 25th February 2026

Concerns Regarding Proposed Parking Tariff Increases

I am writing on behalf of the North Yorkshire BIDs in Skipton, Harrogate, Ripon and Northallerton to express significant concerns regarding the proposed rebalancing of parking tariffs and the additional 10% increase scheduled for implementation from 1 April 2026. We appreciate the evening and Sunday car parking elements of the proposal have now been removed, however after discussion on this subject, we are united in our views and therefore we would like to raise the following concerns.

After reviewing the Tariff Rebalancing Report and the Strategic Parking Principles produced by the Council, while we understand the intention to create consistency and financial sustainability, the proposals risk having substantial negative impacts on the economy and accessibility on the towns across North Yorkshire.

We are all actively encouraging residents and visitors to support the High Streets and town centres in North Yorkshire. Footfall is dependent on accessible, affordable parking to sustain the livelihoods of its residents, the viability of its businesses, and the attractiveness of the town centres.

The Vibrant and Sustainable High Streets “aims to reinvigorate high streets across York and North Yorkshire as thriving community centres”. Towns have been encouraged to apply for funding “to breathe new life into York and North Yorkshire’s high streets”.

The Tariff Rebalancing Report does not appear to be in line with the Mayor’s vision and will potentially reverse the positive impacts of the funding. Our main concerns are highlighted below.

1. Impact on the Local Economy and High Street Vitality

The economy of our town centres relies heavily on a strong blend of retailers, hospitality venues, and tourism. Increasing parking charges risks deterring both local visitors’ day-trippers and overnight stays.

Under the new tariffs, many car parks will see substantial increases, these rises disproportionately affect the “short stay” visits most associated with local shopping and quick errand trips—precisely the type of footfall that sustains town centres and high streets.

While the Council’s Strategic Parking Principles state that “parking will be managed so as to support the vitality and attractiveness of town centres” (Principle 7), the proposed tariff structure appears to conflict with this aim. Retailers already face competition from online shopping and regional retail hubs. Higher parking charges may push more residents to shop elsewhere or online, harming local business.

It is also unclear whether the 30-minute spaces in areas such as Skipton and Ripon will be removed. These are extremely important to allow residents access to the town centres to undertake quick errands. The removal of these spaces will have a significant negative impact on business.

Harrogate experienced a reduction in time spent in the town with the introduction of pay on entry systems in the multi-storey car parks. Pay on arrival is now seeing an increase in people spending less time as they need to make a decision of length of time on arrival rather than simply parking and paying on exit. Systems need to be in place which allow car park users to be flexible to encourage extended dwell times and therefore increased benefits to the town.

2. Potential Damage to the Visitor Economy of North Yorkshire

Skipton, Ripon, Northallerton and Harrogate are all key visitor destinations and attract substantial visitor footfall. Visitor behaviour is highly sensitive to cost, by increasing car parking charges has the possibility of potential visitors choosing alternative destinations.

While the Council states that “availability of parking space is more important than cost” based on national studies, this general finding may not reflect the dynamics of rural tourism, where

- Visitors often make ad-hoc stopping decisions during day trips.
- Higher charges may discourage extended stays—reducing spending in local cafés, shops and attractions.
- Public transport alternatives are more limited than in urban centres.

The proposed 10% uplift on top of rebalanced tariffs risks undermining our position as a convenient, welcoming destination.

3. Disproportionate Impact on Residents and Workers

Many towns across North Yorkshire draw a large working population into the town from surrounding areas each day for retail, hospitality and education. With already limited affordable long-stay parking, the proposed increases create personal cost pressures at a time when households and workers are already managing rising living expenses. At the same time pushing parking onto the already pressured residential streets, creating conflict with the local communities.

The Council’s Parking Principles emphasise the need to “reflect local needs and circumstances” (Principle 2), but a centrally applied tariff increase does not recognise that.

Skipton and Ripon have limited public transport alternatives for daily commuters from surrounding towns and villages, so public transport is not a viable alternative for the local workforce.

4. Lack of Evidence That Increases Will Deliver Positive Behaviour Change

The tariff rebalancing report indicates that one of the goals is to “create a change in driving behaviours” and encourage modal shift. However, without sufficient investment in rural transport alternatives, higher charges will not meaningfully change travel behaviour for many residents and visitors.

In the case of Skipton, Ripon and Northallerton:

- There is no comprehensive local bus network with frequencies suited to shopping, work, and leisure.
- There aren't park-and-ride options.
- Active travel is constrained by the geography and distances between surrounding villages.

5. Recommendations

On behalf of the North Yorkshire BIDs, we formally request that North Yorkshire Council postpone the implementation of the proposed tariff increases.

We ask that the Council undertake a full and meaningful consultation with the North Yorkshire BIDs, as the recognised representatives of the businesses within our towns.

We are committed to working collaboratively to develop a fair and sustainable approach—one that enables the Council to generate necessary income while safeguarding the local economy and protecting the vitality of our town centres.

We look forward to your response and the opportunity to engage on this important matter.

Sent on Behalf of

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Skipton BID Manager

Ripon BID Manager

Northallerton BID Manager

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C.c Neil Roe, David Skaith, Sir Julian Smith MP