

JAOC INTELLIGENCE DOSSIER

NORTH BERWICK PARKING CHARGES

Public Anger, Secrecy & Corruption Claims

Verified & Expanded Edition

Location:	North Berwick, East Lothian, Scotland
Scheme Start:	1 June 2026
JAOC Survey:	28 July - 2 August 2026
Dossier Date:	4 August 2026
Reference:	JAOC-INT-2026-0804-B
Website:	www.jaoc.org.uk

WHY JAOC INVESTIGATED THIS CASE

JAOC Investigations examines corruption, mismanagement, and failures of transparency in public institutions. This case exhibits significant hallmarks of all three: a decision made against overwhelming public opposition, financial projections treated as policy drivers rather than traffic management tools, and a consultation process that residents and businesses believe was performative rather than genuine.

We carried out this investigation **without charge to North Berwick residents** because we do not believe communities should be railroaded into policies they did not vote for. The parking scheme operates as a **stealth tax**: it was introduced despite a petition of ~5,000 signatures, formal opposition from the Community Council and Business Association, and a council vote that rejected a motion to pause and review. The result is a severe drop in footfall, with businesses reporting 20-60% revenue falls and some losing up to £1,000 per day. If established businesses go under or leave the town, North Berwick will no longer get the visitors, investment, or character that sustains it.

JAOC will now commence forensic analysis of all parties involved, focusing on agenda and transparency. Drawing on expertise in military intelligence and forensic accounting, we will uncover the real reasons why these charges were introduced. We will work quickly alongside all stakeholders to unravel this - time is of the essence. We do this without charge and stand with the good people of the town.

This is a sign of duty and resistance against councils and governments operating without a mandate. They must be held accountable for their actions.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New parking charges were introduced on 1 June 2026 despite overwhelming local opposition. The scheme is projected to generate over £1 million annually once initial costs are recouped. A JAOC survey of 507 people confirms charges are driving visitors away: nearly 1 in 5 respondents will not return, with 87% of those citing parking costs directly. Businesses report takings falling 20-60%, with established family businesses losing up to £1,000 per day and warning of imminent closure. The scheme is intended as a test-bed for roll-out across Musselburgh, Haddington, Dunbar and Tranent. This follows a documented pattern of controversy and process failures across East Lothian.

Verification: The £1 million revenue figure is confirmed in council reports. Business impact figures (20-60% fall, £1,000/day losses) are corroborated by Conservative councillors' shop-to-shop surveys and reported in *The Scotsman* (24 June 2026). The vandalism cost of £38,000-£40,000 is confirmed by East Lothian Council and the meter manufacturer.

2. THE SCHEME - FULL DETAILS

Charges & Permits

Item	Cost
Resident Permit	£40/year
Visitor Permit	£4/day
Short-let Permit	£30/week
30 minutes	50p
High Street first 45 mins	Free
75 minutes	£1
90 minutes	£2
Daily Max (campervans/motorhomes)	£15

Charges apply 10am-4pm Monday-Saturday and 1pm-4pm Sundays. Tantallon Terrace operates 10am-6pm Monday-Saturday and 1pm-6pm Sundays. Free parking remains at Recreation Park (Dunbar Road) and outside Controlled Parking Zones.

Verification: Tariff structure confirmed by East Lothian Council's official leaflet and website.

Council Claims vs. Public Reality

Council Claims	Public Reality
Improve space turnover	Fear of fines keeps people away entirely
Reduce summer congestion	Free time too short for shopping, meals or appointments
Fund two full-time wardens and transport improvements	No dedicated resident-only bays - residents compete with visitors
	Confusion over zone boundaries and signage
	PCNs cost £100 (£50 if paid within 14 days)

Additional context: The council's parking strategy (adopted October 2018) forms the policy basis. Critics note the council compared North Berwick to Toronto (population 3.3 million) in its justification - dismissed by local traders as irrelevant to a rural coastal town of ~8,000.

3. JAOC INDEPENDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Fieldwork: 28 July - 2 August 2026 | Total interviewed: 507

3.1 Origin of Visitors

Origin	Number	Percentage
Edinburgh & Lothians	297	58.6%
Rest of Scotland	88	17.4%
Rest of UK	114	22.5%
International/Other	18	3.5%

Key Finding: Over 76% come from within Scotland - this is a local and regional community, not just distant tourists.

3.2 First-Time Visitors

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes - First time	291	57.4%
No - Return visitor	86	17.0%
Unsure/Not stated	130	25.6%

3.3 Will You Return? If Not, Why?

Response	Number	% of Total
Yes - Will return	404	79.7%
No - Will not return	103	20.3%

Reasons for not returning:

Reason	% of 'No' respondents
Parking charges/cost	87%
Other reasons	13%

Key Finding: Nearly 1 in 5 people surveyed will not return. 87% of those staying away cite parking costs. The scheme is actively destroying customer loyalty and local trade.

Verification: JAOC survey methodology and sample size (n=507) are as reported. Independent corroboration comes from a separate East Lothian Business Survey (n=247, Feb-Mar 2026) which found 76% of businesses anticipated a drop in customer numbers, and 85% expected negative effects.

4. PUBLIC OPPOSITION & ECONOMIC IMPACT

Documented Opposition

- Hundreds signed petitions; Community Council and Business Association formally opposed
- A petition with ~5,000 signatures was submitted and rejected by councillors
- Council voted down a motion to pause and review (June 2026)
- 38-40 meters vandalised before enforcement began; repair cost £38,000-£40,000
- Meter manufacturer IPS described vandalism as "completely unprecedented" and "totally extraordinary"
- Crowdfunding launched for potential judicial review
- Three shops reported as "close to closing" in June 2026

Business Impact - Verified Figures

Conservative councillors conducted a shop-to-shop survey of North Berwick High Street traders in June 2026. Findings reported in *The Scotsman* (24 June 2026):

- Takings down 20-60% compared with same period in previous years
- One family business tracked five years of sales data: down approximately £1,000 per day
- Another trader reported local trade had "almost disappeared" due to fear of fines
- Three shops told councillors they were close to closing
- Others cancelling shifts for workers
- Shopping habits changed: locals doing "quick snatch shops" instead of browsing

Council Response

Council leader Norman Hampshire insisted benefits were already being seen and the scheme needed time to "bed in". The Labour group amendment (approved 12 votes to 4) committed officers to supporting businesses while bringing a report to the August 2026 council meeting. The SNP group put forward an alternative motion calling for a review in August, arguing the scheme needed longer to measure impact.

Additional context: The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) warned in February 2026 that charges looked "certain to be a serious blow to local businesses". Garry Clark, FSB Development Manager for East Scotland: "Evidence from other towns across Scotland shows parking fees reduce footfall, hurt independent shops, and often fail to raise the revenue councils expect."

5. CORRUPTION & PROCEDURAL CONCERNS

These are allegations and observed failures; no criminality is yet proven - but the process is deeply flawed:

- The £1.09 million revenue figure appears in council reports from April 2023
- Common Good Fund allocation reported by *East Lothian Courier* (21 May 2026)
- Use of urban data (London, Toronto, Berlin) confirmed by East Lothian Business Survey
- TRO approvals for four additional towns approved at the chaotic December 2025 council meeting where protesters booed councillors outside Haddington Town House

Legal concern: Critics argue Scottish law forbids councils from introducing parking schemes primarily to raise funds for general council coffers. Money raised from on-street parking must be ring-fenced for roads infrastructure. The council maintains revenue will fund enforcement and transport improvements.

JAOC Forensic Analysis: JAOC Investigations will now apply military intelligence and forensic accounting methodologies to examine the agendas, financial flows, and decision-making processes of all parties involved. Time is of the essence. We will work alongside residents, businesses, and stakeholders to expose the real motivations behind this scheme.

6. PREVIOUS CONTROVERSY IN EAST LoTHIAN

This is not a one-off mistake - it is the latest in a documented line of disputed decisions.

Why This Case Is Unprecedented

- First time charges enforced despite clear majority opposition
- First time council openly admits scheme will generate £1M+ revenue - critics say this breaches rules intended for traffic management, not profit
- Reveals a pattern of pre-determined decisions, hidden contracts, and secrecy over accountability
- First time a judicial review crowdfunding campaign launched by residents
- National media coverage: BBC, *The Telegraph*, *The Scotsman*, *The Times*

Verification: The 2013-2014 Haddington and 2018 Musselburgh controversies are referenced in campaign materials and local media archives. The December 2025 council meeting was extensively reported with video evidence of protesters booing councillors. The council's parking strategy document (October 2018) confirms the long-term policy basis.

7. ADDITIONAL VERIFIED CONTEXT

7.1 The December 2025 Council Meeting

On 9 December 2025, East Lothian Council approved Traffic Regulation Orders for Dunbar, Haddington, Musselburgh and Tranent. The meeting was disrupted by noisy protests outside Haddington Town House. Dozens of objectors waved placards; passing cars and vans honked horns. The live webcast was cut after a vote approved pushing ahead. One member of the public shouted "shame on you all". The vote was 11-8 with amendments. SNP group leader Lyn Jardine called for more transparency; council leader Norman Hampshire defended the schemes as necessary.

7.2 National Media Coverage

- **BBC News:** Reported "unprecedented resistance" from residents and businesses (March 2026)
- **The Telegraph:** "Parking meter vigilantes cause £40k damage" (1 March 2026)
- **The Scotsman | Edinburgh Evening News:** Multiple reports on business impact and council votes
- **The Times:** Coverage of growing controversy (March 2026)
- **The Scottish Sun:** Reports on meter vandalism and community opposition

7.3 The Vandalism Incident

In February 2026, ~30 of 40 newly installed parking meters were vandalised before being turned on. Machines were daubed with paint; card readers were glued. Manufacturer IPS stated they had "never seen the sheer volume and extent of the vandalism which has taken place in North Berwick" across thousands of UK installations. East Lothian Council confirmed repair costs exceeded £38,000, coming from existing budgets - money that would otherwise have been spent on vital public services. A second wave occurred in June 2026 after enforcement began, with eight meters damaged between 8-14 June.

7.4 The Crowdfunding Legal Challenge

A Crowdfunder campaign titled "Legal case to stop the parking in North Berwick" was launched to fund a potential judicial review. The North Berwick Community Council also sought an Advocate to file a protective petition in the Court of Session. As of August 2026, the legal challenge remains active.

7.5 Business Survey Data (Independent)

A separate business survey conducted February-March 2026 (n=247) across all five East Lothian towns found:

- 85% expected negative effects on their business
- 78% were "somewhat" or "very concerned" about long-term viability
- 76% anticipated a drop in customer numbers
- 49% expected a direct shift of trade to out-of-town retailers with free parking
- 48% would consider relocating away from town centres
- 42% warned they may be forced to reduce staff

- 64% reported no parking issues or only minor issues resolvable through existing enforcement
- 72% noted limited bus services making car travel essential
- 80% believed older customers would be most severely impacted

8. FACT-CHECK SUMMARY

Claim	Status	Basis
£1M+ annual revenue projection	Verified	East Lothian Council reports, April 2023
20-60% business takings fall	Verified	Conservative councillor shop-to-shop survey; <i>The Scotsman</i> , 24 June 2026
£1,000/day losses for one business	Verified	Five-year sales data tracked by family business; <i>The Scotsman</i>
£38,000-£40,000 vandalism cost	Verified	East Lothian Council and IPS manufacturer confirmation
87% of non-returners cite parking costs	As reported	JAOC survey (n=507); methodology documented
76% of businesses anticipated customer drop	Verified	East Lothian Business Survey (n=247), Feb-Mar 2026
Use of Toronto/London/Berlin data in justification	Verified	East Lothian Business Survey; council parking strategy
2013-2014 Haddington / 2018 Musselburgh controversies	Partially verified	Campaign materials and local knowledge; limited accessible digital archives from 2013-2018
~5,000-signature petition rejected	Verified	<i>East Lothian Courier</i> , 10 June 2026
Common Good Fund allocation	Verified	<i>East Lothian Courier</i> , 21 May 2026

9. DEMANDS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on verified evidence, JAOC Investigations demands the following actions:

- 1. Immediately pause all charging and enforcement** - Business impact is severe, documented, and immediate. The "bedding-in" argument does not address the existential threat to established traders.
- 2. Publish full contract details and financial projections** - Transparency over meter supply (IPS), enforcement arrangements, and revenue modelling is essential for public accountability.
- 3. Commission independent public inquiry into consultation and decision-making** - Allegations of misleading consultation, use of inappropriate urban data, and pre-determined outcomes require independent scrutiny.
- 4. Scrap roll-out plans for other towns until impact is fully assessed** - TROs for Dunbar, Haddington, Musselburgh and Tranent should not proceed until the North Berwick pilot has been independently evaluated.
- 5. Reduce charges and extend free parking time to support local trade** - The current 45-minute free window is insufficient for dining, appointments, or browsing. Evidence shows this is driving "snatch shopping" behaviour that harms independent retailers.
- 6. Ensure all surplus revenue is ring-fenced for local roads infrastructure** - Scottish law requires on-street parking revenue to be used for transport/roads purposes. Common Good Fund allocations must not substitute for statutory obligations.

10. SOURCE APPENDIX

Source	Title / Description	Authority
East Lothian Council	North Berwick parking scheme official page	S
East Lothian Council	North Berwick parking management scheme to go live (press release)	S
East Lothian Council	Common Good Funds information	S
<i>The Scotsman</i> / <i>Edinburgh Evening News</i>	North Berwick traders claim £1,000-a-day losses (24 Jun 2026)	B
<i>The Scotsman</i> / <i>Edinburgh Evening News</i>	Councillors called on to halt parking charges (2 Feb 2026)	B
<i>The Scotsman</i> / <i>Edinburgh Evening News</i>	Parking charges council meeting disrupted by noisy protests (9 Dec 2025)	B
<i>The Telegraph</i>	Parking meter vigilantes cause £40k damage (1 Mar 2026)	A
<i>East Lothian Courier</i>	North Berwick parking charges to begin this Monday (31 May 2026)	NA
<i>East Lothian Courier</i>	Some parking charge profits to go into North Berwick Common Good Fund (21 May 2026)	NA
<i>East Lothian Courier</i>	Vandals target North Berwick parking meters (15 Jun 2026)	NA
<i>East Lothian Courier</i>	Petition to pause East Lothian parking charges rejected (10 Jun 2026)	NA
<i>East Lothian Courier</i>	East Lothian councillors to debate pause to parking charges (5 Jun 2026)	NA
<i>Midlothian View</i>	Parking meter manufacturer calls North Berwick vandalism 'completely unprecedented' (25 Feb 2026)	NA
<i>Midlothian View</i>	£1 million North Berwick parking charges approved (25 Apr 2023)	NA
<i>Midlothian View</i>	Survey reveals 78% of East Lothian businesses fear effects (18 Mar 2026)	NA
<i>Midlothian View</i>	Parking charges in North Berwick look certain to be a serious blow, says FSB (11 Feb 2026)	NA
<i>Midlothian View</i>	Protests over parking charges in East Lothian (9 Oct 2025)	NA
Fair Parking East Lothian	Campaign website and town-specific information	NA
North Berwick Community Council	Parking review and ongoing surveys	NA
Crowdfunder	Legal case to stop the parking in North Berwick	NA
JAOC Investigations	Original dossier and survey data - www.jaoc.org.uk	NA

Authority Key: S = Official/Government | A = National media (high authority) | B = Regional media | NA = Local media / Campaign group / JAOC Investigations

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