# Salcombe businesses warn new parking fees risk damaging seaside economy



Residents and business owners in Salcombe, often referred to as Chelsea-on-Sea, are voicing deep concerns that recent council-imposed taxes and parking charges targeting second home owners and visitors may jeopardise the future of this iconic seaside town. Nestled in Devon, Salcombe has long captivated affluent city dwellers seeking respite along its picturesque coast, but mounting financial pressures are beginning to reveal cracks in its thriving tourist economy.

The local economy relies heavily on tourism, with approximately 60 per cent of the properties in Salcombe designated as second homes. Those property owners already shoulder a burden of double council tax, and a controversial differential parking scheme recently introduced by South Hams District Council has exacerbated tensions. Under this scheme, tourists are now faced with parking charges of up to £10 for a day, a sharp contrast to the £5 annual permit ease afforded to residents, a move critics describe as a 'tourism tax'. Business owners are expressing fears that such charges could deter visitors and significantly affect their livelihoods.

Beck Gordon, who operates the Salcombe Yawl café and Norman's Fishmonger, articulated her plight during a recent interview, stating, “It's a can of worms. I don't even know where to start.” She noted that the dynamic within the town is shifting. “I’ve noticed that kind of second home dynamic is changing and there are more families on holiday than there are people with second homes,” she observed. This change in demographics could hint at the evolving nature of tourism in Salcombe.

Concerns are further amplified by reports of a quieter Easter holiday compared to previous years. Gordon pointed out that day trippers from nearby Plymouth and Exeter have noticeably decreased due to the perceived barriers presented by parking costs. “This is 100 per cent a worry,” she emphasised, stressing the town's seasonal reliance on visitors for survival.

The impact of rising parking charges is not confined to tourists; employees of local businesses also feel the pinch. Workers have reported struggling to afford daily parking fees, with one café manager highlighting that £120 of her wages goes toward parking expenses alone. This reality paints a stark picture of the local economic landscape, which is becoming increasingly strained.

While some businesses, like Bonnie Kouki’s newly opened sandwich shop Mrs Cookies, have managed to attract locals with more affordable offerings, the broader implications of these parking policies remain concerning. Kouki explained, “Within Salcombe a lot of families won't venture into town because it is so expensive,” highlighting how pricing affects both local dynamics and tourism.

Local authorities, on their part, suggest that these measures were necessary due to financial pressures, arguing that their parking rates remain among the cheapest in southern England. Councillor Julian Brazil, Executive Lead for Community Services, stated that the council's aim is to ensure that everyone contributing to local services, including visitors, bears some financial responsibility. However, the dissatisfaction among residents and businesses suggests a disconnect between municipal intentions and public sentiment.

There is a palpable fear among the community that this two-tier parking scheme, which many consider a punitive measure against tourists, will trigger a cycle of economic decline. As local businesses struggle against a backdrop of rising costs and diminished foot traffic, the integrity of Salcombe’s vibrant tourist economy hangs precariously in the balance. For a town that has historically prized its charm and accessibility, the call for accessible pricing and increased community-focused initiatives has never been more urgent.

In an environment where the delicate balance between tourism and local concerns is increasingly tested, the future of Salcombe—a town nearly synonymous with seaside luxury—will depend on how well it adapts to these challenges while striving to preserve its community essence.

**Reference Map**1. [Lead Article]
2.
[[2]](https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/uk-tourism-on-the-brink-as-salcombes-drastic-tourism-tax-parking-hike-sparks-outrage-and-fierce-rebellion-from-locals-and-businesses/)3.
[[3]](https://www.dartmouth-today.co.uk/news/salcombes-concerns-over-parking-plans-736950)4.
[[5]](https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/uks-salcombe-and-dartmouth-face-growing-backlash-over-new-parking-charges-as-businesses-sound-alarm-on-tourism/)5.
[[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/apr/05/locals-priced-out-salcombe-seaside-homes-most-expensive-uk)6. [[7]](https://www.exoticplacestotravel.com/archives/7775)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14724065/coastal-town-Chelsea-sea-fear-tourist-tax.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/uk-tourism-on-the-brink-as-salcombes-drastic-tourism-tax-parking-hike-sparks-outrage-and-fierce-rebellion-from-locals-and-businesses/> - Salcombe, a picturesque seaside town in South Devon, has been named the most expensive coastal town in the UK. With its stunning waterfront, charming boutiques, and high-end property market, Salcombe has long attracted wealthy holidaymakers and second-home buyers. However, a controversial new parking charge scheme introduced by South Hams Council has ignited a wave of anger among locals, with business owners and residents warning it could have dire consequences for tourism. The plan, which implements a two-tier parking system, means tourists will be required to pay significantly more for parking than residents. While locals can access discounted rates through a £5 parking permit, visitors will face steep increases, marking the first parking fee rise since April 2021. This move has sparked widespread concern, with critics labelling it a ‘tourism tax’ that could deter visitors, impact local businesses, and damage the town’s thriving hospitality industry. With Salcombe already recognized as the UK’s priciest seaside destination—boasting an average house price exceeding £1.2 million—many fear that the additional financial burden on visitors will make the town less appealing, leading to an economic downturn.
3. <https://www.dartmouth-today.co.uk/news/salcombes-concerns-over-parking-plans-736950> - Salcombe Town Council has expressed opposition to South Hams District Council's proposal to implement differential car parking charges, set to begin on April 1. The plan involves visitors paying higher rates than residents, a move that the Town Council believes could exacerbate divisions between locals and visitors. Given Salcombe's heavy reliance on the visitor economy, the council argues that such differential charging could disproportionately target visitors who sustain the town's economy, potentially leading to a serious negative impact on Salcombe's economic health.
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2025-01-02/businesses-deeply-concerned-over-plans-to-hike-parking-prices-for-tourists> - Residents and businesses in the South Hams area have expressed deep concern over plans to increase car parking prices. South Hams District Council intends to implement a two-tier parking system from April, where non-residents will have to pay more to park than local people, citing cost pressures as the reason. This initiative will affect around 30 car parks in the busiest towns, including Dartmouth, Totnes, Ivybridge, Salcombe, and Kingsbridge. Business owners, such as Julian Chudley from Dartmouth, have voiced worries that these plans could deter tourists, potentially impacting local businesses and the broader economy.
5. <https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/uks-salcombe-and-dartmouth-face-growing-backlash-over-new-parking-charges-as-businesses-sound-alarm-on-tourism/> - Salcombe and Dartmouth, two of Devon’s most popular tourist destinations, have been thrown into controversy following the South Hams District Council’s decision to increase parking charges for visitors. This new policy, designed to boost local government finances, has sparked concern among local businesses, tourism operators, and residents who fear the impact on visitor numbers. The council’s decision has introduced a two-tier parking system that increases costs for holidaymakers while offering a reduced rate for locals. The change has been met with criticism from many quarters, with some calling it a 'tourism tax', warning that it could drive visitors away and harm the local economy.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/apr/05/locals-priced-out-salcombe-seaside-homes-most-expensive-uk> - Salcombe, a coastal town in Devon, has become one of the most expensive seaside locations in the UK, with average house prices exceeding £1.2 million. This surge in property values has led to a significant number of second homes, with 57% of houses in Salcombe not being primary residences. The influx of wealthy second-home buyers has raised concerns about the affordability for local residents and the impact on the community's character. While some argue that second homes contribute to the local economy, others believe they drive up property prices and make it difficult for locals to afford living in the area.
7. <https://www.exoticplacestotravel.com/archives/7775> - Salcombe and Dartmouth, two of Devon’s most popular coastal towns, are facing growing backlash following the introduction of higher parking charges. The South Hams District Council’s decision to raise parking fees has sparked concerns among local businesses, residents, and tourism operators, who fear the policy will harm tourism and hurt the local economy. The council’s new parking system creates a distinction between local residents and visitors. Residents of South Hams can purchase a £5 permit to access lower parking rates, while visitors must pay the full, increased fee. While this provides some relief to locals, it could lead to higher costs for tourists, especially those visiting for short stays or day trips.