
14 February 2014

Consultation on local authority parking

A response from Bus Users UK

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Bus Users UK's response

Q1. Do you consider local authority parking enforcement is being applied fairly and reasonably in your area?

Bus Users UK is a national organisation so the local perspective is not relevant to our response. Parking policy needs to ensure that highways are not disrupted by parked vehicles and that the number of private cars entering town centre locations are proportionate to the local situation. Bus users should not have journey times lengthened by inconsiderate or inappropriate car use, of which parking can be a major consideration.

Bus passengers are disadvantaged when illegal or poorly-designed parking adds to journey times. Increased bus journey times not only make bus services less attractive, they add to the operating costs of bus services, and that cost is then passed on to fare-paying passengers.

Parking at bus stops should always be considered illegal and that restriction should be enforced rigorously. Bus users with mobility impairment, which may include carrying shopping or being encumbered by small children as well as physical impairment, depend on buses being able to pull up properly at bus stops. Not being able to pull in due to illegally or poorly parked cars can prevent people with impairments being able to board easily or at all, negating the very considerable investment and effort that has gone in to improving accessibility for all bus users.

The contribution bus passengers make to town centre economies should not be underestimated. As bus travel is a much more sustainable means of access to town centres than the private car, parking policy should enable bus services to be an attractive alternative to the car. Car parking charges should reflect the true economic value of the space occupied in a town centre and enforcement measure should be commensurate with that economic value. Bus use has flourished in towns where car parking is difficult, such as London, Brighton and Oxford, none of which suffer from adverse economic effects by adopting policies which favour public transport over car use by restricting the availability of and access to car parking, car park charging and effective enforcement. There are strong environmental advantages to limiting car use in town centres, and the economy of towns is enhanced if they are made more attractive places to be by limiting car use.

It is clear that across the country parking enforcement is applied in a piecemeal and inconsistent way, leading to inconvenience to all road users and to additional inconvenience and unnecessary expense to bus passengers. Unreliability is known to be the greatest concern about bus use amongst bus users and inadequate parking enforcement is a major contributory factor to unreliability of bus services.

Q2. The Government intends to abolish the use of CCTV cameras for parking enforcement. Do you have any views or comments on this proposal?

Where CCTV is the only practicable way to enforce parking restrictions it should continue to be used. It could be particularly effective at ensuring individual bus stops are kept clear of parked vehicles at all times. Parking in such a way as to inconvenience other road users, such as bus passengers, is not acceptable and it is entirely appropriate that effective enforcement measures and deterrent measures should be used to curb this and any other antisocial behaviour.

Q3. Do you think the traffic adjudicators should have wider powers to allow appeals?

Q4. Do you agree that guidance should be updated to make clear in what circumstances adjudicators may award costs? If so, what should those circumstances be?

Q5. Do you think motorists who lose an appeal at a parking tribunal should be offered a 25% discount for prompt payment?

Clearly there needs to be an appropriate appeals system where parking regulation has been applied unfairly, but due consideration needs to be given to the wider implication of any parking offence. However adjudication of parking issues does not directly affect bus passengers so Bus Users UK does not have a strong view on this issue.

Q6. Do you think local residents and firms should be able to require councils to review yellow lines, parking provision, charges etc in their area? If so, what should the reviews cover and what should be the threshold for triggering a review?

Local authorities have been given the task of implementing car-parking enforcement. While the specifics of local parking arrangements will need to be reviewed periodically to take account of changing circumstances it should be up to the local authority to decide when and in what form those changes should be made. Any such review needs to take a holistic view of the transport needs of the area and should not be influenced by the views of individuals or businesses whose motivation may well be inconsistent with the need for a sustainable transport policy.

Q7. Do you think that authorities should be required by regulation to allow a grace period at the end of paid for parking?

Q8. Do you think that a grace period should be offered more widely – for example a grace period for overstaying in free parking bays, at the start of pay and display parking and paid for parking bays, and in areas where there are parking restrictions (such as loading restrictions, or single yellow lines)?

‘Grace’ and ‘regulation’ would appear to be mutually exclusive terms: regulating a period of grace undermines the whole point of the restriction in the first place. Practically speaking, any period of grace should be entirely dependent upon the nature of the particular situation, and thus should not be subject to regulation. Overstaying a parking meter or legitimate parking space by five minutes will have little impact on other road users. However a short stop on a yellow line could create traffic problems, and a location that is attractive for one motorist to use for a few minutes, to call at a shop, cash point etc, is going to be attractive to other motorists too, such that a series of short stops create the effect of a vehicle being parked illegally for several hours and will create traffic problems, in turn leading to unreliable bus services.

Public transport services also need to have advantages over car use if a positive modal shift is to be created. One advantage of public transport over cars is that people are not limited to a finite period of parking: assuming a reasonable frequency of bus service, people can end a visit to a town or attraction when they like, not when a parking ticket expires. Allowing a period of grace to motorists erodes that particular advantage of public transport.

Q9. If allowed, how long do you think the grace period should be?

As indicated by our response to Q7 and Q8 we do not consider a regulated grace period to be appropriate. Where no inconvenience is caused to other road users (including bus users) then a period of five to 10 minutes might not be inappropriate, but where inconvenience is caused then no period of grace should be permitted.

Q10. Do you think the Government should be considering any further measures to tackle genuinely anti-social parking or driving? If so, what?

Greater use of towing away should be allowed where antisocial parking causes traffic delays or inconvenience to other road users. This should include parking on bus stops for reasons outlined in response to Q1.