

Scrutiny Review of Disabled Parking - Reponses

Councillors**Norma Stephenson**

- 1) Supermarkets, though this is a problem caused by non-badge holders which results in badge holders having to park anywhere else.
- 2) double yellow parking. I know this is allowed but cannot cause an issue for other road users. I'm not sure most badge holders are aware of this or they just choose to ignore it.

Barry Woodhouse

Abuse High Grange Shops (Pizzalicious area). Taxi tank on Rothbury Steet could do with converting to disabled parking.

Chris Clough

Councillor Chris Clough attended the Place Select Committee meeting in person with his wife who holds a blue badge. They highlighted the following issues:

- Where enforcement is visible, it is easy to find a disabled bay; where enforcement is not visible, it is difficult to find a disabled bays
- Parallel disabled bays are entirely unsuitable for users with wheelchairs as they are not long enough. There is also the difficulty of being able to get from the rear of the vehicle in a wheelchair if there is no drop kerb, meaning running on the road to find one
- For blue badge holders with wheelchairs, not all disabled bays are suitable which makes it even harder to find a space
- It is essential that disabled bays are always located close to dropped kerbs
- Disabled bays on cobbled streets are unsuitable for wheelchair users
- There is an urgent need to rethink the marking out of all disabled bays
- Users are concerned that the pressure on disabled bays will increase as the scheme is widened
- Disabled bays need to be wide enough to allow the car door to be fully opened. Bays the same size as normal parking bays are not suitable.
- Three bays at Municipal Buildings car park are unsuitable for wheelchair users
- Parking in a disabled bay when it is not required should be as socially unacceptable as drink driving. Those caught should be fined. Those using stolen or fake badges should also be fined

Disability Advisory Group/ Members of the Public

Disability Advisory Group highlighted the problems with lack of bays, high levels of abuse (particularly at peak time such as Christmas) and unsuitability of the bays due to their size and proximity to dropped kerbs.

 I have a disabled sister and find the scheme very frustrating. I frequently take her shopping at Teesside Park on a Saturday (the day she is not at the centre) and find all the disabled spaces are full and there are no others nearby and so I have to return home without doing the shopping.

I am not sure to what extent the Council can regulate disabled parking in supermarket car parks but mother and child parking appears to take precedence leaving more difficult access for the disabled to the store.

I am concerned that new regulations suggest more categories of people will be entitled to disabled parking including those with autism and dementia. I understand this provision is needed but if it is to go ahead more disabled parking needs to be made available.

I have a blue badge, and use it on Stockton High Street. I find that the bays outside the old post office are the most suitable for me. Here they are for disabled and for pay and display, and I think that these should be disabled only as there is other parking nearby. I have to open the car door to its widest extent, so appreciate the disabled bay adjoining the pavement, instead of being too close to the next vehicle.

Supermarket disabled spaces are usually easy to use, providing there is space available. Many times we see the larger family vehicles nipping in for a short visit, there not being much room for them to open their doors in the regular spaces!

We had not thought about this subject until I began having walking problems, but we really appreciate the provision of the disabled bays which enable me to access the high street etc. when I am having a bad day.

There are a few disabled bays behind the Pavilion in Thornaby which we use on a regular basis, and we find these to be very convenient for Asda, the doctor's surgery, and my hairdresser. We also see these spaces are regularly patrolled by a warden, so although there are only a few spaces nobody spends too long there. We also use the spaces outside Billingham Forum.

Private Car Parks

Tony Donnelly, Town Centre Manager, Billingham

We have around 640 free spaces in the town centre, plus approximately 35 disabled bays. Currently none of the parking areas are managed, although we did look at bringing in a management company last year, but no decision has made at this time to instruct.

Barry Parnell, Centre Manager, Wellington Square

I have been informed that historically the below has been the norm here:

- To what extent is parking in disabled parking bays monitored by your company/ organisation? **Not monitored**
- What are the recorded incidents of abuse? **Not recorded**
- What action do you take against unauthorised parking in the bays? **Should there be any complaints from customers regarding none blue badge parking in disabled bays a message would be put on the vehicle stating that parking is for disabled customers only**

Karen Eve, Castlegate Shopping Centre

Further to your letter regarding your interest in mis-use of our blue badge bays I am able to advise you that we monitor them on a daily basis. We have 52 disabled bays and we have a company who issue fines on our behalf if we report any parking offences. We issue a fine of £60 reduced to £40 if its settled within 2 weeks. We have little (if any) abuse of our bays due to efficient patrols by our on-site staff.

Mike Clarke, Teesside Park

1. Disabled bays are monitored by the whole team but in particular by our security team. Checks are carried out throughout opening hours, of course at times other tasks have to take precedence.
2. Abuse of disabled spaces is not necessarily recorded.

3. Anyone parking without a blue badge is asked to move their vehicle. If they have already parked and left the vehicle a warning notice is placed on the vehicle windscreen, at this moment in time abusers are not fined.

Graham Footer, Chief Executive, Disabled Motoring UK

I do hope that when you carry out your review that the committee will recommend that a policy is put in place and the council starts to tackle the problem by prosecuting those committing Blue Badge fraud. If your Council would like help with putting a policy in place, I can help with that. This would not only help genuine Blue Badge holders but will also help to increase income for the council in that once word gets around the local community that you are taking action against those abusing the scheme, people will be less inclined to take the risk and will actually pay the correct parking fee and not misuse the disabled bays. There is definitely a business case to justify tackling Blue Badge abuse and many other local authorities are already benefitting. Some even employ their own Blue Badge fraud investigator (often part time) which makes a very real difference.

I am sorry there are no statistics relating to your area but there seems to be a lack of enforcement by local authorities in the North East area in general. I can tell you that in Newcastle they successfully prosecuted 88 people for fraudulently using a Blue Badge in 2016.

I can also say that Norfolk County Council decided to tackle Blue Badge abuse in its area last year and went about it the right way in my humble opinion. I could give you more details about how they went about it if you are interested, but in a nutshell they gave people living in Norfolk plenty of warning that they would begin cracking down on the abuse before they started and re-enforced the message periodically to remind the local community. They also employed a part time Blue Badge investigator who did a great job for them in tackling the abuse. They were able to use a softly, softly approach at first which was well received and then they were able to get tougher as time went by and by taking that approach they got the support from their community. We had very favourable feedback from genuine Blue Badge holders saying how delighted they were to see and read about the councils approach. I also noted that the local media gave it a lot of favourable air time and supported the approach taken by the County Council.