

Report on the Third Baywatch Parking Survey in Northern Ireland



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1 Introduction

The Baywatch Campaign (NI) was launched in February 2006. The Campaign has the twin aims of ending the abuse of parking bays provided for the use of disabled people and working with service providers to improve the design and provision of accessible bays.

Baywatch is a partnership of disabled people and disability organisations including the Mobilise Organisation, Disability Action and Shopmobility NI. The lead partner organisation is Imtac, a committee of disabled people, older people and others whose role is to advise government and service providers on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

The work of Baywatch is supported by the Department for Regional Development. The Campaign seeks to change public attitudes to parking abuse through a series of events and to work directly with service providers to improve provision.

Baywatch Campaign (NI) is part of a wider campaign that has been running in Great Britain for a number of years. Baywatch was founded by four campaigning organisations: The British Polio Fellowship, The Disabled Drivers' Association, The Disabled Drivers' Motor Club and Disability Now. The Disabled Drivers' Association and Disabled Drivers' Motor Club has since merged to form the Mobilise organisation. More information on the Baywatch Campaign in Great Britain is available from their website at www.baywatchcampaign.org.

This is the third Baywatch Parking survey undertaken in Northern Ireland. Results from the previous surveys – 2006 and 2007 – are available from the Baywatch Section of the Imtac website.

2 2009 Parking Survey

The 2009 parking survey took place from the 18th to 25th May. During the week volunteers were asked to complete a survey form when visiting any car park. The survey form asked people to record parking provision and the level of abuse in car parks, their comments on the design of bays, what was being done to prevent abuse and the response of service providers to complaints about abuse.

Imtac received 118 completed survey forms. Everyone involved in the Campaign would like to thank those that took part. This report contains the detailed results of the survey. The key findings of the survey are:

- The level of abuse has risen from 21% to 24% since the last survey in 2007 – there was however a drop in the numbers of surveys returned
- Surveys indicate that many major retailers seem to be doing more to prevent abuse of bays
- As in 2007 surveys indicate that public bodies such as local councils and health trusts are not doing enough
- Surveys suggest the design of parking bays is improving
- More people are reporting abuse – however the majority remain dissatisfied with the response
- Bays are still perceived as being misused by parents with young children
- Abuse of the Blue Badge by non-disabled people is still perceived as a problem

3 Findings of the use and abuse of parking bays

Key statistics

In total 1246 bays were surveyed during the week. The usage of the bays was high with 971 cars parked in the bays (around 78%). In total 300 cars were parked in the bays without displaying a Blue Badge. This means that just over 24% of the bays were abused by non-disabled members of the public. This compares with a level of abuse of just over 24% in the 2006 survey, 21% in the 2007 survey and 20% in previous surveys undertaken in Great Britain.

What people said

Comments from people who undertook the survey reflected the frustration felt about the lack of consideration shown by other members of the public. The perception amongst participants remains that Badges are sometimes being used by non-disabled people. Finally people felt that some parents with young children feel it is ok to use accessible bays. Others reported that disabled people were using Parent & Toddler bays and felt this was equally wrong.

Some of the comments were:

“This happens [abuse of bays] on so many mornings I have called into this shop. One person actually sat and read her paper after buying it”

“During the year bays are often blocked by inconsiderate drivers and health service vehicles.”

“The staff working in this health service home are abusing the bays”

“I have observed a lot of abuse on other occasions – quite often mother and child using [accessible] spaces.”

“I feel Parent & Toddler bays should be surveyed too. Many disabled people parking in these too and many don’t have young children.”

“I find that a lot of people are using other peoples blue passes.”

“I also know of a few people who use Blue Badges belonging to other people – why don’t the wardens or police check the photograph.”

4 Findings relating to the design of bays

Key statistics

The survey asked people to rate the design of bays using the following options – excellent, good, fair, poor and very poor. The results of the survey indicate most people are satisfied with the design of bays:

Rating	Response
Very good	26%
Good	37%
Fair	27%
Poor	8%
Very poor	2%

These findings show a marked improvement in how easy people found bays to use compared with the two previous surveys.

Whilst people reported a greater satisfaction with the design of bays some problems still exist. People reported that the numbers of bays were often inadequate, the location of bays was often too far from the main entrance and often there were difficulties getting from the bays to the door because of a lack of dropped kerbs or because dropped kerbs were blocked. Finally some people reported confusion about which bays were for disabled people and which for Parent & Toddler

What people said

“The number of bays is woefully inadequate for peak periods. The car park (for a hospital) has no lift therefore wheelchair users have to circulate round and round until a space becomes available.”

“We visit Ards hospital every week for physio and speech. This is a regular occurrence that we cannot get the car into a bay and have to park on double yellow lines.”

“More spaces needed!”

“Can dropped kerbs be kept clear for wheelchair users and scooter users?”

“It was unclear which bays were for disabled customers and were for Parent and Child.”

5 Findings regarding enforcement of bays

What people said

People were asked to comment on what was being done to prevent the abuse of parking bays. Many people (but not all) indicated that signage was provided. This year many people reported that some of the major retailers appear to be doing more to prevent abuse of bays. Other people still feel service providers are not doing enough to prevent abuse:

“Had a sign to say vehicles would be clamped for misuse”

“Security are responsible for illegal parking. They check if no Blue card on display then if necessary call out registration number for owner to return to their car.”

“If no blue badge displayed a sticker is put on car indicating they have parked in a disabled bay.”

“Tesco did produce a note saying “you are blocking this area intended for Blue Badge users.”

“The staff at ASDA are great!”

“Shopping centres have to take more responsibility!”

6 Findings on reporting abuse

Key statistics

A higher percentage of people reported abuse in this year's survey (24%). Only 14% of people found the response good or fair compared to 72% who found the response poor or very poor.

What people said

Many people still feel reporting abuse is pointless:

"The abuse is that common that there is no point reporting it – no action is ever taken."

People who reported abuse were far from happy with the response:

"No staff to check badges when asked went off on sick 4 years ago"

"No one seemed interested about doing anything about it"

"Not their job"

"They said the trolley men put stickers on the cars. Saw trolley men – said they don't bother anymore as offenders just throw them away."

Service providers reported that they had no powers to prevent abuse:

"I spoke to the duty manager. He agreed bays were abused but said that there was nothing he could do – the traffic enforcement officers would not help on the leisure centre car park"

"The Centre manager is aware of the problem but is restrained by the council in wheel clamping offending vehicles and states that the police should be informed (waste of time!)"

One person suggested action from a higher level is required:

"Pressure should be put on MLA's and the Assembly to do something about this".

7 Surveys by council area

Council	Surveys
Antrim	6
Ards	8
Ballymena	5
Ballymoney	1
Belfast	12
Carrickfergus	4
Castlereagh	7
Coleraine	3
Cookstown	1
Craigavon	3
Derry	3
Down	3
Dungannon	7
Fermanagh	5
Larne	3
Lisburn	17
Magherafelt	2
Newry & Mourne	8
Newtownabbey	12
North Down	9
Omagh	2

8 Surveys by location

The following table details the places people surveyed. As with previous surveys retail outlets including the major supermarkets account for the vast majority of surveys undertaken. It should be noted that a small in number of surveys undertaken at hospitals and council facilities such as leisure centres were overwhelmingly negative.

Location	Surveys
Supermarkets/retail	73
On street/Roads service car park	20
Leisure (including council facilities)	11
Health	9
Bus and train stations	5

8 The next steps

The Baywatch Campaign will use this report to publicise the continuing unacceptable level of abuse of accessible parking bays in Northern Ireland. We will continue to encourage members of the public not to abuse accessible bays and encourage service providers to do more.

We will also take the following actions arising directly from this year's survey:

- Contact the four main supermarkets to highlight the need for consistency across all sites around provision and enforcement of accessible parking
- Highlight the problems of parking at hospital sites for disabled people
- Highlight the poor parking provision of many public bodies in Northern Ireland particularly at local council facilities

If you would like to get involved in the Campaign please contact us:

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You can also keep update online and register for regular email updates at www.imtac.org.uk.

9 Thanks

We would like to thank all those volunteers who took part in this years survey. Special thanks go to the staff and volunteers at Shopmobility Belfast who helped with the mailing of the survey.