



Safer Places to Park

Car parks assessed by the police as safer to use

This media pack is designed to give background on the Safer Parking Scheme and Park Mark award, which help UK drivers find car parks that have been assessed by the police and are safer to use.

The Safer Parking Scheme is a national standard for UK car parks that have low crime and measures in place to ensure the safety of people and vehicles. A Park Mark is awarded to each car park that achieves the challenging standards.

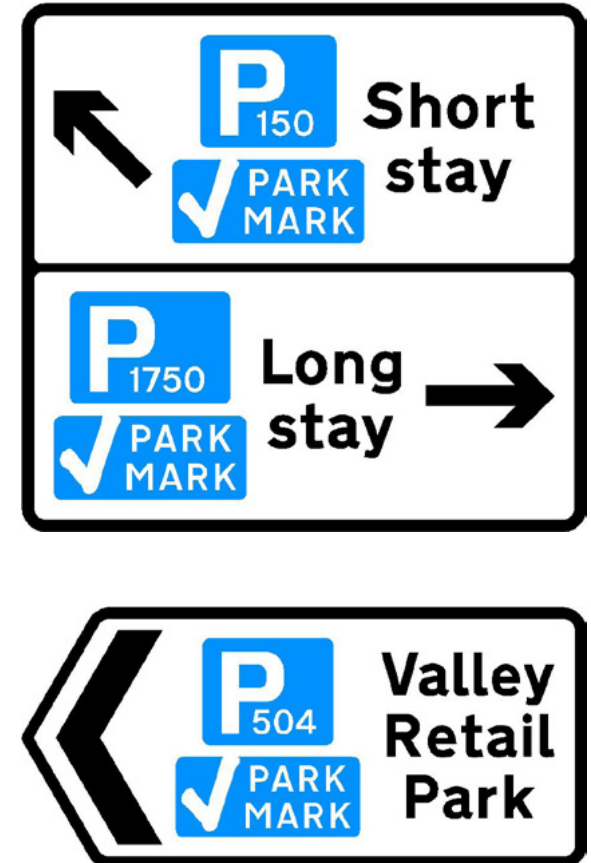
Park Mark helps drivers find car parks where they can confidently leave their vehicle, knowing the environment is safer for them, their passengers and vehicle.

Overview

In the United Kingdom a quarter of car parks have been assessed under the Safer Parking Scheme and achieved the Park Mark award. That's 5,000 of an estimated 17,000-20,000 car parks^[3] across the country where people regularly park their vehicles. Most British car parks are safer places, most of the time. But not all! Park Mark helps drivers tell the difference. Its bright blue box and big white tick are designed to stand out, giving drivers assurance they are choosing a safer place to park.

Each car park undergoes a rigorous assessment by specially trained police assessors. Those achieving the award have management practices and security measures that actively reduce crime. They look safer; they feel safer; they are safer!

Park Mark accredited car parks can be found at train stations, hospitals, universities, town centres, shopping centres, leisure centres, airports, supermarkets, banks and office blocks. The smallest has spaces for just ten cars; the largest have up to 13,000. They're in cities, towns, villages and tourist attractions.





History

First UK multi-storey car parks

The City & Suburban Electric Carriage Company at 6 Denman Street, central London, opened the first multi-storey car park in the UK (and probably the world) in May 1901. The garage had seven floors, 19,000 square feet, space for 100 vehicles and an electric elevator to move the vehicles between floors.^[1]

In 1902 City & Suburban opened its second garage, a converted building in Westminster known as Niagara that could hold 230 vehicles. At both, electric vehicles were housed, serviced, cleaned, insured and delivered to owners on request.

Earliest surviving multi-storeys

The earliest surviving multi-storey car park was built in 1902-03 for the London Motor Garage Co at 33-37 Wardour Street. It was three storeys, could hold 200 cars and is now a pub.^[7]

Botanic Gardens Garage^[2] in Vinicombe Street, Glasgow was built between 1906-1911. The garage has a distinctive art deco façade, ramped access to the second floor and a category A listing with Historic Scotland. It primarily provided storage space for cars belonging to local residents.

The 1907 Electromobile Garage, Carrington Street, London was two storeys for 300 electric cars; it is now managed by NCP.^[7]

First multi-storey municipal car park

A combined car park and bus station erected on Talbot Road, Blackpool 1936-37 was the first to integrate car parking with public transport.^[7]

Underground car parks

Some London hotels and apartment blocks built in the 1930s had car parks in their basements including the Adelphi 1936-38 Grade II listed and Rossmore Court 1936.^[7]

The first underground car parks erected under open space were built under the promenades in Hastings 1930-31 and Blackpool 1932-34.^[7]

Pay on foot

Oxford introduced the first fully automatic pay on foot system in 1974 in Westgate car park as part of its balanced transport policy. Drivers collected a ticket at entry barriers, took the ticket with them while they shopped, paid at a pay station and were given a ticket to raise the exit barrier. The Swiss system was installed and tested during 1973.



Botanic Gardens, Glasgow



Botanic Gardens, Glasgow



Park and ride

The first park and ride scheme operated from the 1960s in Oxford, initially as a part-time service from a motel on the A34, and then on a full-time basis from 1973 as part of the balanced transport policy^[5].

The number of schemes hardly changed until the mid-1980s. By 1991 there were 20 Park and Ride car parks. In 2003 there were 100 Park and Ride car parks in 40 different UK towns^[6].

Safety and security

Autocar & Motor magazine^[4] says in 1991 motorists reported more than 400,000 break-ins in public car parks, with £476m of goods stolen. In 1992, 21% of AA members refused to use multi-story car parks and nearly three-quarters of women felt unsafe in them.

A Department of Transport report in May 1996, *The Effect of Parking Policies in England*, found off-street car parks in town centres were poorly lit and insecure places for cars and people.

Secured Car Parks

In 1992, the Association of Chief Police Officers launched the Secured Car Park Award Scheme to reduce criminal activity and the fear of crime in car parks. Operators received the Secured Car Park award when they introduced effective measures to create a safe and secure

environment that reduced public fears and restricted opportunities for crime to be committed. The Secured Car Park Award Scheme evolved into the Safer Parking Scheme in 2004 and is owned by Police Crime Prevention Initiatives Ltd (Police-CPI)..

Recent renovations

Lex Garage, Brewer Street, London 1928-29 grade II, now operated by NCP, renovated back to its 1930s styling and was awarded a special commendation in the 2009 British Parking Awards.^[8]

Talbot Road, Blackpool 1936-37 won best refurbishment in the 2014 British Parking Awards. Exterior cladding has been replaced by frosted glass that lights up at night; some original features have been retained.





Key Issues for Drivers

The more attractive car parks are for drivers and their passengers, the less attractive they are for criminals. Somewhere pleasant, bright, welcoming and full of life is the last place a criminal wants to be - because they'll be seen.

Safety

Drivers want to feel they and their passengers are safe as they walk to and from their car, and their car will not be broken into or vandalised while it is parked.

Park Mark car parks have lower crime as operators do all they can to reduce both crime and the fear of crime. This includes recording the detail of crime and other incidents of anti-social behaviour.

During the accreditation process police assessors recommend changes that deter offenders, such as perimeter fencing, surveillance and bright lighting. If incidents occur, operators and assessors together identify the causes and take action.

Rogue traders

At meet and greet facilities drivers want to know the people they are handing keys over to are insured and will care for their vehicles.

Park Mark is an integral part of both the Gatwick Approved Operators Scheme and the Meet & Greet Park Mark Operator Scheme. Operators in these two schemes

are committed to ensuring vehicles are not damaged or broken in to and that their valet drivers are insured while driving customers' vehicles to and from compounds. Plus car owners have an appeals process if they are unhappy with the service they receive.

Lighting levels

Pedestrians want to see and be seen as they walk to and from their car. People can fear dark areas.

Park Mark recognises that increased lighting levels in dark areas can reduce the fear of crime and opportunities for offenders to commit offences. Maximum use is made of daylight supplemented by artificial illumination.

Assessors ensure lighting columns can't be used for unauthorised access, cables and wiring are protected against accidental damage or criminal attacks and service boxes are locked and overlooked.

Graffiti

Clean and well-kept car parks reassure drivers they are in a safer environment. Litter and graffiti are quickly removed, thus deterring further graffiti and criminal damage. Vulnerable areas are treated with anti-graffiti coatings, textured surface finishes, climbing plants and highly patterned surface treatments to limit vandalism.

Finding a space

At any one time, 30% of drivers on UK roads are in city centres searching for a space; on average it takes them 10-15 minutes to find somewhere to park. It's not what they want! Instead they want easy access to their destination where they can quickly find a space that is stress-free to park in.

Park Mark car parks use clear directional signage and traffic flow techniques like one-way circulation so drivers are not confused about which way to go. Pedestrian access and exit routes are also clearly indicated with signage and controlled routes such as painted paths.



Courtesy of Gatwick Airport



Research

Research over the years reveals drivers prefer well-managed car parks where spaces turn over frequently and are easy to find.

Safer Parking Scheme

Car park users and operators have been asked their views of the Safer Parking Scheme bi-annually since it was established in 2004. They have revealed high satisfaction within the industry but low awareness among motorists.

Car parks in the scheme are safer and feel safer for drivers and staff. Once they are aware of the scheme, the majority of motorists say they are more likely to use an accredited car park in the future knowing it has been vetted by the police.

Real Cost of Parking, August 2013

This European survey revealed drastically underestimated congestion resulting from car drivers searching for a parking space. At any one time, 30% of drivers are searching for a space in city centres, taking 10-15 minutes to find a parking place. Monetary cost is £1.12 per journey and environmental impact is 1.3kg of CO² emissions. 62% of motorists said they prefer using car parks to parking on the street.

► [Read Report](#)

Size and Shape of the UK Parking Profession, April 2013

BPA research estimates 17,000 car parks with 8-11.3 million spaces across the UK. Between 200,000-300,000 are regulated disabled parking spaces. Occupancy varies between 50-80%.

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Re-Think! Parking on the High Street, January 2013

Explored the relationship between car parking provision and town centre prosperity. It found cars are parked most of the time – 80% at home and 16% at a destination, just 4% in transit on the road.

Additionally, there is no clear relationship between parking charges and amenities provided. Medium and smaller centres that charged more than the national average suffered a higher than average decline in footfall.

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The means to change places for the better, October 2012

London Councils review concludes there is no such thing as free parking, which Mary Portas calls for in her review. Someone has to pay for development and maintenance of parking spaces, as well as enforcement to ensure efficient use. Free spaces lead to longer parking stays and less visitors per day, with local workers the usual beneficiaries.

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The Rise of Meet & Greet Airport Parking, December 2011

94% of travellers said the Park Mark award is important to them when choosing a meet and greet service at Birmingham, Heathrow, Luton, East Midlands and Southampton airports, as well as Southampton Cruise Port.

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Between the Lines: An evaluation of the Secured Car Park Award Scheme, March 2003

The Secured Car Park Award Scheme was the forerunner to the Safer Parking Scheme. This Home Office report said:

- Most car crime occurs on the street
- Secure car parks can help reduce levels of vehicle crime and fear of crime
- Formal surveillance (including patrols), lighting, access control and a good physical appearance of the car park lead to reductions in levels of crime and fear of crime
- Car park management is a critical factor in running a safe, secure car park
- New car parks built to the secured car park standard have low crime levels and are highly rated by users
- Improving security leads to increased usage and profits.

► [Read Report](#)

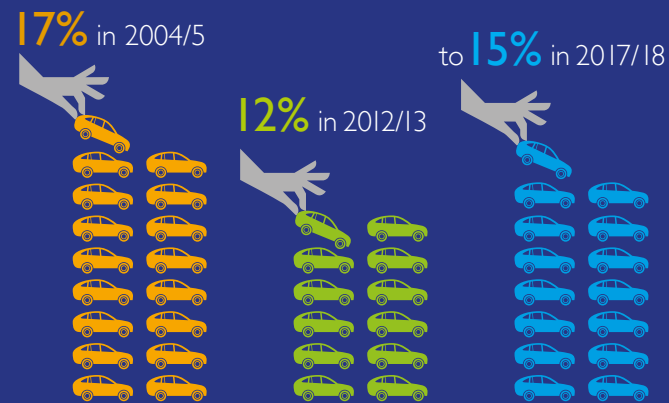
London Parking Supply Study, July 2000

Research undertaken for the Government Office for London revealed 229,900 spaces in 1,675 public car parks and 825,000 spaces in 53,277 private non-residential car parks – 70% of these were for employees. 39% of public car parks were free, 61% charged, average cost was 80p-£1 for two hours.

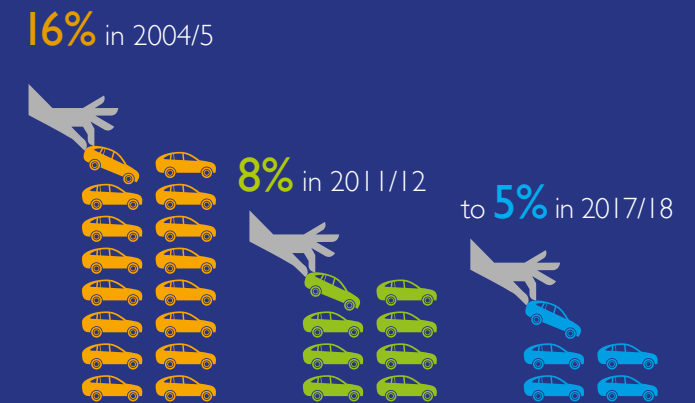
Crime in Car Parks^[9]

Significant reductions in vehicle theft from car parks, theft from the vehicle and vandalism coincide with the introduction of Safer Parking Scheme.

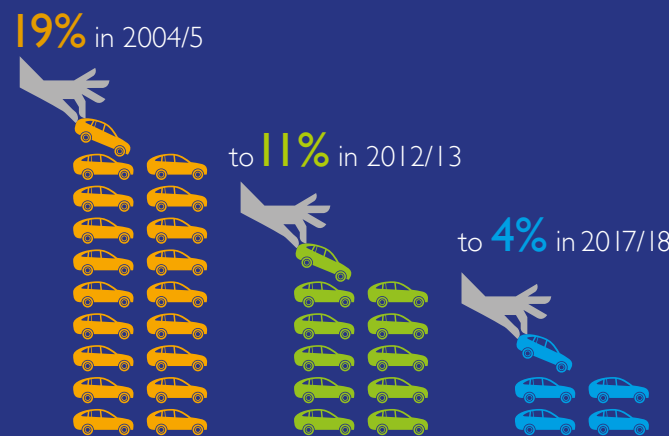
Vehicle-related theft as a percentage of total crime



Vehicle-related theft occurring in non-work car parks



Vehicle-related theft in car parks



Some car parks that implemented the Safer Parking Scheme in 2004 saw vehicle-related crime drop by over **80%** in the first year^[10]



Support

Nine areas

The Safer Parking Scheme is co-ordinated from the BPA headquarters in Haywards Heath. Area managers cover nine areas, providing advice and support to car park operators:

- 1 North East
- 2 North West & North Wales
- 3 Midlands
- 4 Southern
- 5 South West & South Wales
- 6 Scotland & Northern Ireland
- 7 South East
- 8 East Anglia & East Midlands
- 9 North London, Hertfordshire & Buckinghamshire



Partners

The Safer Parking Scheme is managed by the British Parking Association on behalf of Police Crime Prevention Initiatives Ltd.

The scheme and award are supported by:

Managed by:



BPA media spokesperson



Kelvin Reynolds,
Director of Corporate & Public Affairs

Media contacts

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Collateral available

The BPA website www.britishparking.co.uk contains background information on the Safer Parking Scheme and Park Mark including press releases.

References

- [1] <http://www.kcstudio.com/colqa.html>
- [2] <http://www.botanicgardensgarage.org/history.html>
- [3] Spaced Out: Perspectives on parking policy, RAC Foundation, July 2012
- [4] Rise of the Robocop, Autocar & Motor, 11 May 1994
- [5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Park_and_ride_bus_services_in_the_United_Kingdom
- [6] Park & Ride Great Britain 2003, TAS Publications & Events
- [7] Buildings and Infrastructure for the Motor Car, English Heritage, September 2013
- [8] Street Life, Brewer Street W1, Soho Clarion, Spring 2012 http://www.thesohosociety.org.uk/soho_clarion/PDFs/Soho_Clarion_148.pdf
- [9] ONS Crime Survey for England and Wales
- [10] Between the lines: an evaluation of the Secured Car Park Award Scheme 2003