

Parking Management in Kent - 2006/07 Annual Report

A report by the County Transportation Manager to the Highways Advisory Board on 13 November 2007

Introduction

1. The Kent district councils are responsible for the practical application of parking policy within a framework set by the County Council. This report sets out the principles of the parking framework and provides a summary of data for 2006/07 and an update on progress last reported to this Board on 19 September 2006. Important new work areas have included reviews of parking stock and provision of additional spaces, a pilot to control footway parking and investigations into a clamping/ removals trial. In August 2007 Government published guidance for the introduction of new parking enforcement legislation under the provisions of the Traffic Management Act (TMA). This report outlines the implications as well as opportunities for Kent authorities in terms of working more closely together on best practice, providing improved customer facing services and using the provisions in the legislation to help tackle congestion.

Policy Framework

2. A balanced integrated transport system, with good quality travel options for all is essential to counter the negative impacts of traffic growth. Effective management of parking is central to this effort to deliver the outcomes set out in the Vision for Kent (Keeping Kent Moving) and Towards 2010. Towards 2010 also has a target to remove unnecessary yellow lines and provide additional parking spaces. These objectives, and measures to achieve them, are detailed in the second Local Transport Plan. Broadly this comprises the implementation of Local Parking Plans and the promotion of best practice across the County through the Kent Parking Group.
3. The best way of developing effective local parking systems and integrating them with transport and planning objectives is through a Local Parking Plan. Parking Plans have been developed or are under review for Ashford, Canterbury, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Dover, Thanet and Shepway.
4. In August the Department for Transport published a consultation document "Parking Policy and Enforcement: Operational Guidance to Local Authorities." The guidance sets out proposed changes to the current Decriminalised Parking system to bring parking management in line with the objectives of the TMA. The new system will be called Civil Parking Enforcement and will include enforcement of additional parking and some moving offences by camera as well as a new banded penalty charge rate.

Kent Parking Group

5. The Kent Parking Group (KPG) includes the 12 district councils, Kent County Council and Medway. The group has links to other parking authorities, enabling the sharing of best practice outside of Kent and is represented at the National Parking Adjudication Service (NPAS). KHS is also represented on a South East Authorities forum on parking.

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6. The KPG seeks to promote best practice by sharing benchmarking data, to work together on training and support systems, to collaborate on procurement and act as a lobbying focus on issues of common concern. The group successfully co-ordinated the introduction of decriminalised parking enforcement in Kent. More recently the KPG has been instrumental in helping to set up a South East group of the British Parking Association. This is assisting the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement including joint working with the private sector and should help to improve efficiency in the longer term.
7. Good enforcement is essential for the effective implementation of parking policies. All 12 Kent district councils have delegated powers to run enforcement systems and issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs). PCNs are currently charged at £60. This is discounted by 50% if payment is made within 14 days.

Benchmarking Data

8. A wide range of benchmarking data is collected and analysed through the KPG to determine the effectiveness of the parking service and develop best practice. A summary table with the headline operational data is shown at **Appendix 1** whilst **Appendix 2** details on-street income reported to KHS.
9. In 2006/07 there were 226,334 PCNs issued in Kent, a slight increase of 1% on 2005/06. The percentage of tickets waived following representation or rejected at appeal was 17%, in 2005/06 it was 16%. Overall there was a net deficit in on-street parking of £298,076. This figure is income from charging and enforcement compared to the cost of operating the service. In 2005/06 the net deficit was £80,838. These figures do not include off-street car parks, which are the responsibility of the district councils.
10. The provision of public managed parking spaces across the county tends to change fairly dramatically over time reflecting the dynamic nature of local parking systems. The data for total managed parking spaces in **Appendix 1** illustrates this. The causes can range from new development on public car parks reducing the overall managed stock to the introduction of residents parking schemes increasing the overall managed stock. Over the past six years the overall trend has been for a small increase of some 1.0% per annum.

Developing Best Practice

11. Comparisons of the Kent authorities in the past have highlighted some wide variations beneath the headline data. These variations were due to differences in local policies including observation times and expired tickets waiver policies, Parking Attendant (PA) training, the effectiveness of signs, lines and associated Traffic Regulation Orders. The KPG members have worked to resolve these issues and determine a best way, indeed the Group's Waivers Policy on Enforcement and Cancellation of PCNs has been commended nationally (NPAS annual report - June 2007) and the Kent authorities praised for their openness in publishing it.
12. The success of parking enforcement depends on the quality of the staff delivering the service and good training is a key part of this. The majority of PAs and administration staff have undertaken training courses during 2006/07. Courses have included NVQ enforcement training, break away techniques, job shadowing and disability awareness training linked to inspection of Blue Badges co-ordinated by KHS.

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13. Local parking teams have continued to review provision to ensure parking schemes remain effective, contribute to sustainable transport objectives and cater for additional demand. Reviews have included Sevenoaks, Canterbury, Ashford, Swale and Maidstone. In Maidstone reviews of residents parking schemes have been completed following public consultation in the north and south zones of the town. Some 30 additional bays have been introduced where yellow lines have been removed. Parking on single yellow lines is now permitted on Saturdays in around 60 streets.
14. Kent has been supporting the expansion and enhancement of Park & Ride schemes as part of efforts to tackle congestion. Schemes are under review for Tunbridge Wells. Planning is in hand for a new site at Park Farm to the south of Maidstone in 2008/09 and a further site to the north, potentially linking with the successful 101 bus service to Medway. Canterbury are considering a fourth site to the north west of the city.
15. Following an earlier report to HAB, Canterbury Council have introduced parking enforcement on footways at 5 locations across the district. This is a trial scheme which ends in March 2008 at which time a decision will be taken on whether to extend enforcement to other areas subject to resources and a local consensus.
16. A scheme for clamping/ removal of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) as well as persistent evaders is currently under investigation. Subject to a robust business case being developed this may lead to a pilot for Ashford, especially covering Ashford Business Park where foreign HGVs have been parking in contravention of an overnight lorry ban, and potentially several other east Kent districts. It is understood that a scheme has the support of Kent Police as well as local people although there are concerns over potentially high set up costs and whether the issue may simply move elsewhere.
17. A review of the Kent guidance for introducing Disabled Parking Bays is underway with district officers and disabled users to take into account the Disability Discrimination Act and new Disability Equality Duty.

The Traffic Management Act (TMA) – Parking Policy and Enforcement

18. Government have recently published for consultation Parking Policy and Enforcement: Operational Guidance to Local Authorities. A key part of the TMA, this sets out proposed changes to the parking enforcement system and is due to come into force on 31 March 2008. The main elements are as follows:
 - The new system will be called Civil Parking Enforcement and Parking Attendants will become Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) and Special Parking Areas and Permitted Parking Areas will be called Civil Enforcement Areas.
 - It is recommended that all CEOs hold a nationally accredited qualification such as a level 2 certificate in parking offered by City & Guilds.
 - It will be possible to enforce additional parking offences in Special Enforcement Areas including parking adjacent to a dropped kerb which has been lowered to assist pedestrians, cyclists or vehicles crossing or joining the carriageway and double parking (+ 0.5m from kerb to wing mirror).

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- Differential parking penalties are proposed. These can be set depending upon the seriousness of the contravention, for example a higher rate can be applied to parking on a yellow line placed for safety reasons and a lower rate for parking in a council car park without displaying a valid ticket. Two Bands are proposed: Band 1 which has a higher level of £60 and a lower level of £40, and Band 2 which has a higher level of £70 and a lower level of £50. As currently, these charges are discounted by 50% if paid within 14 days. The draft guidance allows local authorities to select which Band to chose.
 - It will be possible to issue a PCN via the post where a vehicle has been driven away and through camera enforcement of moving offences including one way streets, banned right turns and blocking yellow box junction (in addition to enforcement of bus lanes which is already permitted) and where patrols on foot are not viable.
 - There is a clear expectation that Local Authorities will have undertaken a reasonable level of publicity to explain the new regulations as well as publishing parking policies in an annual report.
19. There are several important areas of concern over the implications of changing to Civil Parking Enforcement. Cost is a significant issue. IT, paperwork and uniform markings will all need to be amended. Both old and new IT/paperwork systems will have to operate in parallel after 31 March until PCNs issued prior to this date have been resolved. Some additional signing may be required which has cost and sign clutter implications. Given the set up costs and new lower level of penalty charges, all Kent Districts are likely to need to adopt the higher Band 2 level of charges in order to cover costs. The Kent authorities have a good record of training parking officers. Additional training based on the TMA is already in place, but it is not yet known whether the Kent NVQ training is sufficient. The legality of enforcing double parking and dropped kerbs in the absence of an approved sign as well as there being sufficient evidence to issue a PCN to a driver who has left the scene is being questioned. Timing is a big issue. There is little time left to prepare for the introduction of CPE and it is not anticipated that the DfT guidance will be finalised until 2008. These concerns will be included in a joint Kent Parking Group response to Government, as well as through the British Parking Association.
20. Once CPE is in place on 31 March 2008 and is seen to be functioning effectively and existing schemes have been fully publicised and legal issues resolved, consideration will be given to taking up camera enforcement of additional moving and parking offences as appropriate at congestion hotspots in conjunction with wider duties under the Traffic Management Act.

Conclusion

21. Effective parking management must be part of a balanced strategy which includes land use, transport and environmental policies. The development of Local Parking Plans has been disappointing, but good progress has been made in the Kent Parking Group with promoting best practice, a common training framework, ensuring fairness and consistency in the issuing of PCNs as well as ensuring that parking enforcement is open and transparent through the publication of data and policies. The introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement under the Traffic Management Act is a significant element of new work and the Kent authorities are working closely together to ensure its successful introduction and to meet wider policy objectives within the County. Progress with these will be the subject of future reports to members.

Appendix 1: Enforcement Comparisons for Kent ⁽¹⁾

	2001/02 ⁽²⁾	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07
PCNs issued and waived:						
Formally issued	160,364	195,013	206,664	214,667	223,903	226,334
Waived (total)	31,705	41,259	31,607	36,475	35,831	38,460
Waived for disabled badge holders	2,812	4,697	4,604	4,900	5,114	5,646
Total PCNs paid:						
Within 14 days	85,362	86,555	88,500	98,413	114,664	113,166
15 - 28 days	12,903	15,656	20,537	24,743	23,836	26,998
After 28 days	4,148	11,438	10,513	9,333	9,139	8,953
Number of PCNs to appeal:						
Won	206	189	173	194	163	156
Lost	154	150	161	168	203	155
Not contested	265	99	188	167	85	232
Total managed parking spaces:						
Off street	33,204	33,959	30,188	31,209	31,176	31,573
On street	6,653	6,848	8,515	7,320	9,033	10,954
Number of FTE Parking Attendants	130	136	136	144.5	148.5	146

⁽¹⁾ PCNs may not always be issued/ processed in the same year.

⁽²⁾ Kent authorities fully decriminalised from July 2001.

Appendix 2: On Street Parking Accounts Kent⁽³⁾

On Street Parking Account 2006-2007 (figures in £s)	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/Deficit
Ashford	£417,550	£330,551	£86,999
Canterbury	£696,578	£793,634	£-97,056
Dartford	£312,489	£434,635	£-122,146
Dover	£630,718	£573,404	£57,314
Gravesham	£560,231	£505,066	£55,166
Maidstone	£559,592	£621,433	£-61,841
Sevenoaks	£257,065	£300,894	£-43,829
Shepway	£301,607	£471,372	£-169,765
Swale	£225,372	£186,216	£39,156
Thanet	£911,140	£952,808	£-41,668
Ton & Mall	£314,667	£405,635	£-90,968
Tun Wells	£704,174	£613,612	£90,562
Total	£5,891,183	£6,189,260	£-298,076

⁽³⁾ Where surplus exceeds £50,000-£100,000 (figure varies by district) expenditure of that surplus is agreed with the County Council and is ring fenced to the district concerned.