OBJECTIVES

• Blue Badge holders should be able to park for up to three hours free of charge in off-street car parks.

• Car park managers must monitor the bays to ensure they are not used by non-badge holders.

• Car parks must ensure the parking technology used is either accessible for all disabled people or other provisions have been made to allow disabled people to park.

• The number of accessible bays provided in off-street car parks should be based on the size of the car park and take into account the external and local factors which affect the demand for accessible bays.

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Disabled Motoring UK was formed in 2005 from the merger of The Disabled Drivers’ Motor Club (established in 1922) and The Disabled Drivers’ Association (established in 1948).

1.2 Disabled Motoring UK is the largest UK charity specialising in the mobility needs of disabled people.

1.3 Disabled Motoring UK has approximately 13,000 members across the UK and produces a monthly magazine which is distributed to all members.

1.4 Most disabled persons' parking bays in off-street car parks - for example, supermarket car parks, council run car parks, hospital car parks - are not covered by Blue Badge scheme regulations so they are rarely enforced and do not permit Blue Badge holders to park free.

1.5 Car parks and parking bays like these are likely to be privately owned and managed by an individual business or organisation.

1.6 There are a growing number of developments e.g. shopping centres which do not have any on-street parking nearby so disabled people must use the off-street car park provided. This is why it is so essential that car parks provided are accessible for disabled people.
2 CHARGING FOR PARKING

2.1 There is no national policy for off-street parking charges and pricing varies enormously from car park to car park.

2.2 The Blue Badge Scheme does not apply to off-street car parks and therefore charging holders is a matter for the individual owner or operator concerned.

2.3 Disabled Motoring UK believes that the same free parking concession should apply in car parks as it does on-street eg three hours free parking. When car parks charge it encourages more badge holders to park on the street which is more dangerous and could possibly cause traffic problems.

2.4 Some car parks only permit Blue Badge holders free parking if they park in an accessible bay. Disabled Motoring UK believes disabled people should be able to park free of charge even if they have to park in a standard bay due to lack of space. Operators should monitor whether this is happening on a regular basis and if so, increase the number of accessible bays.

2.5 Some council run car parks only offer concessions to people with vehicles that are vehicle excise duty (VED) exempt. Disabled Motoring UK feels this is confusing and unfair as it discriminates against people who do not receive Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance (HRMC-DLA), probably due to becoming disabled after the age of 65.

2.6 It must be made clear at the entrance to the car park (prior to entry) whether disabled people are charged for parking and what conditions are imposed (e.g. only parking in marked bays).

3 ENFORCEMENT

3.1 In local authority off-street car parks, parking place orders normally either make it an offence for someone not displaying a valid Blue Badge to park in a disabled person’s parking bay or make it subject to the payment of an "excess charge".

3.2 Disabled Motoring UK believes that all local authorities should ensure that only Blue Badge holders park in disabled persons’ parking bays and penalise motorists who do not abide to this rule.

3.3 In private off-street car parks the charges and conditions of use are essentially a contractual matter between the owner and the motorist. In such car parks, spaces reserved for Blue Badge holders are in most cases not legally enforceable. However, it is also possible in law for the owners of a private car park to agree with the local authority that a parking place order be made in respect of that car park.

3.4 Conditions of use can then be enforced as if it were a local authority car park, with penalties or excess charges levied on offenders.

3.5 Disabled Motoring UK believes it is in the interests of supermarkets and other stores to enforce their disabled persons' parking bays as unauthorised use can lead to loss of trade if disabled people are unable to shop at their stores.

4 CAR PARK DESIGN

4.1 The majority of car parks in the UK require a ticket to be taken on entry, paid for at a pay-machine, and a ticket put in a slot at a barrier to exit. This technology can be difficult for people with disabilities to use especially those with upper limb disabilities.

4.2 Entry Barrier Ticket Machines
4.2.1 Retrieving a ticket from a barrier can be very difficult for many people with upper limb disabilities and dexterity problems.

4.2.2 Although there are usually “help” buttons cited on the ticket machine these can be difficult to reach and press in a sufficient way to summon help. People with speech problems or hearing impairments can find the intercom system an added challenge.

4.2.3 Disabled Motoring UK believes the best alternative for taking a ticket at the barrier is an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system. These allow motorists to pre-register their number plate so barriers are automatically raised on entry.

4.3 Parking Payment Machines

4.3.1 These machines require the driver to put a ticket in a small slot and then put in the correct amount of money to pay for their parking.

4.3.2 Some of these machines are now made at a height “suitable for wheelchair users” but this does by no means make them accessible to a large number of disabled people. Although there may be staff available to help their office is usually some distance from the payment machine and summoning their attention usually entails crossing a busy car park.

4.4 Pay & Display or Parking Meter Systems

4.4.1 These machines are more common on the street but are also found in off-street car parks.

4.4.2 Like parking payment machines these require money to be fed into a small slot. More sophisticated parking meter systems also require a number plate to be entered on a screen. These procedures can be very difficult for people with limited dexterity or strength. Another tricky task is peeling the tape off the back of a ticket to stick to the window of the car.

4.4.3 The positioning of parking meters also causes problems for wheelchair users if they are situated in a place which is difficult to reach.

4.4.4 In some car parks ticket machines are situated at the opposite end of the car park to the disabled parking area so this can cause added problems to people with mobility impairments.

4.5 Pay-by-phone

4.5.1 A number of Councils offer Pay-by-phone or Pay-by-text as a payment option in their car parks. It is likely that in the future more Councils will introduce this technology.

4.5.2 Although the majority of disabled drivers do carry a mobile phone there is a vast difference between making a call and having to press buttons on your phone in response to an automated voice.

4.5.3 Those people who can not use a phone are likely not to be able to use a payment machine either so providing a payment machine as a solution is not a viable alternative.
5 AVAILABILITY OF DISABLED BAYS

5.1 Disabled Motoring UK believes that the number of accessible bays provided in off-street car parks should be based on the size of the car park and take into account the external and local factors which affect the demand for accessible bays.

5.2 Off-street disabled parking provision must therefore be calculated on an individual car park basis, taking into consideration external factors likely to affect demand.

5.3 Guidance on the required number and percentage of disabled parking bays should be based on the size of the car park, rather than a blanket ‘6%’ of the total number of bays as previously recommended by the Department for Transport.

5.4 Disabled Motoring UK recommends the following provision of accessible spaces which reflects five ranges of car park size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of Car Park (no of spaces)</th>
<th>Designated Bay Provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-50</td>
<td>2 + 3% total car park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-200</td>
<td>3 + 3% of total car park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-500</td>
<td>4 + 3% of total car park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1000</td>
<td>5 + 3% of total car park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 +</td>
<td>6 + 3% of total car park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>