



## ***News Release 15.1.18***

### **Trading Standards Take Action to Drive Up Private Car Parking Standards**

Scottish local authority Trading Standards services have carried out a coordinated series of checks on car parks across Scotland in response to increasing levels of complaints from the public. Trading Standards Officers found that 1 in 3 car parks were in breach of consumer protection laws.

Private car parking at retail centres, supermarkets and standalone private car parks is subject to general consumer laws. When drivers pay for private parking, they enter into a contract with the provider and are protected by a range of laws aimed at ensuring fairness for consumers, no different to buying goods and services from shops on the 'high street'.

The investigation was coordinated through the Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS).

Chair of SCOTSS, Peter Adamson, said:

"The main problems we found were inadequate signage and ticket machines that were difficult to use or malfunctioning. We also found evidence of unfair application of penalty charges, for example a £100 charge for a very minor mistake by a driver, who paid the correct fee for parking but failed to type their vehicle registration correctly into the ticket machine."

The investigation found that:

- Penalty charges imposed by operators ranged from £15 to £100 with an average of £75
- 1 in 4 car parks were found to have inadequate signage, so drivers did not know what circumstances attracted a penalty charge or even that payment was required
- Around 50% of car parks used 'ANPR' (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) technology to track vehicles

Peter Adamson continued:

"Private car parking is a legitimate business activity. High-demand parking space in our towns and cities must be managed and consumers cannot expect to park for free in these busy urban areas. However, at the same time consumers must be treated fairly. They must be given all the information they need to use a car park and must not be subject to unfair terms or practices. We want to see an improvement in standards and are working with the industry to achieve this across Scotland. Those car parks which were unsatisfactory during our investigation have been notified of our findings and advised of the improvements required."

Peter Adamson added:

“We are working with Government, trade bodies and consumer bodies to improve the lot of Scotland’s drivers when utilising private parking and we would like to see a single Code of Practice developed which addresses these issues. Anyone who wishes to register a complaint about private car parking, or any other consumer issue, can do so through the Citizens Advice Consumer Service Helpline on 03454 040506 or online at <https://tinyurl.com/onlineconsumercomplaint>

*Notes for editors:*

- 1. The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS), is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC047951). Our members are professional trading standards managers representing every Scottish local authority trading standards service.*
- 2. SCOTSS liaises with local council colleagues across the UK, and engages with government and others around the operation of the consumer protection landscape, providing leadership and consistency to Scotland's 31 trading standards teams. We aim to educate, coordinate, and support good practice.*
- 3. This project involved statutory duties that local authorities have under consumer protection legislation to ensure that consumers are treated fairly when dealing with business.*
- 4. The primary trade association for private parking in the UK is the British Parking Association, Chelsea House, 8-14 The Broadway, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3AH*

*SCOTSS spokespeople are available for interview, please contact*

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