



## **Imtac statement on pavement parking**

**(March 2025)**

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## **Making our information accessible**

As an organisation of and for Deaf people, disabled people and older people Imtac recognises that the way information is provided can be a barrier to accessing services and participation in public life. We are committed to providing information about our work in formats that best suit the needs of individuals.

All our documents are available in hard copy in 14pt type size as standard. We also provide word and pdf versions of our documents on our website – [www.imtac.org.uk](http://www.imtac.org.uk). In addition, we will provide information in a range of other formats. These formats include:

- Large print
- Audio versions
- Braille
- Electronic copies via email in PDF or word
- Easy read
- Information about our work in other languages

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## **About Imtac**

The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac) is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including carers and key transport professionals. Its role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of Deaf people, disabled people and older people.

The aim of Imtac is to ensure that Deaf people, disabled people and older people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Infrastructure (herein after referred to as the Department).

## **Background**

Parking on the pavement has been a persistent and increasing problem in Northern Ireland. It creates significant dangers for all pedestrians, but particularly for disabled people, older people and people with young children. Often pedestrians are left with no choice but to use the carriageway to move around these vehicles (and other obstructions) at significant risk to themselves. For some disabled people, such as wheelchair and mobility scooter users, this often involves lengthy and hazardous detours to their journeys to find an accessible route around the obstruction.

Pavement parking damages footways and crossings, creating further hazards for pedestrians, negating investment in our streets and costing the Department for Infrastructure in terms of ongoing maintenance. Often vehicles parked on the pavement obstruct crossings and dropped kerbs, making it difficult or impossible for pedestrians to cross roads safely.

Imtac believes the current situation is unacceptable. In response to a DfI consultation<sup>1</sup> in 2021, 94% of over 1000 respondents said that pavement parking was a problem, and that action was needed to address it. As a Committee, Imtac agrees with the wider public and in this paper, we are calling for urgent action.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/inconsiderate-pavement-parking-findings-report>

## Developments in Northern Ireland

Responsibility for the enforcement of pavement parking in Northern Ireland lies mainly with the PSNI. Under current legislation action will only be taken against a vehicle where it is deemed by the police to be causing an obstruction. Given the subjectivity of what is and what is not an obstruction and the limited resources available to the police, in the vast majority of occasions parking on the pavement goes unpunished.

Organisations including Imtac have been raising concerns about the impact of pavement parking for many years. In 2021 Imtac, along with Sustrans, Disability Action, Age NI, RNIB and Guide Dogs approached the then Infrastructure Minister, Nichola Mallon, requesting that action be taken. Two actions were progressed; a media campaign designed to discourage pavement parking and a consultation about future options for tackling pavement parking.

The consultation ran from late 2021 to early 2022 offering three options for comment:

- Option 1- introduce individual bans using the Department's existing powers.
- Option 2- introduce an outright ban on pavement parking, possibly with some exceptions.
- Option 3- introduce powers that would allow the Department's Traffic Attendants to enforce against vehicles found to be parked on the pavement and causing an obstruction.

The subsequent report<sup>2</sup> published by the Department recorded that an outright ban drew the most support with 68% of respondents in favour of this option. In our response<sup>3</sup> Imtac supported the outright ban but also encouraged the introduction of the other options as an interim measure as legislation for an outright ban would take some time to come into force. There has been no further action on pavement parking since the closure of the consultation three years ago.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/inconsiderate-pavement-parking-findings-report>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.imtac.org.uk/comments-imtac-about-department-infrastructure-inconsiderate-parking-options-paper-consultation>

## **Developments elsewhere**

It is helpful to look at developments in Great Britain when considering where we go next in Northern Ireland with tackling the issues created by parking on the pavement.

### *England*

Parking on the pavement has been banned in London since 1974, except in areas where exemptions apply. The ban works successfully, and London is seen as an exemplar on how to deal with the issue.

The situation in the rest of England is very similar to Northern Ireland. As with here organisations have been campaigning for change in England for many years. In 2019 the Transport Select Committee published a report<sup>4</sup> on pavement parking with a series of recommendations including moving towards legislating for an outright ban. In 2020 the Department for Transport (DfT) published a consultation<sup>5</sup> outlining options for change. There have been no further developments in the rest of England since the closure of the consultation five years ago.

### *Scotland*

In 2019 the Scotland Parliament passed legislation<sup>6</sup> that made parking on the pavement illegal as the default position across the country. The period since the passage of the legislation has involved a long and delayed introduction of the outright ban. Although pavement parking became illegal at the end of 2023, to date only two council areas have introduced a ban, Edinburgh and Glasgow City Councils. Although more will follow, Scotland does demonstrate some of the pitfalls in implementing legislation to ban pavement parking, particularly for smaller, more rural councils as decriminalised parking enforcement is only available in the larger urban areas.

### *Wales*

The powers available to the Welsh Assembly under devolution are more limited than those available to both Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Welsh Government set up a Pavement Parking Task Force which

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<sup>4</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/4891/pavement-parking-inquiry/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/managing-pavement-parking/pavement-parking-options-for-change>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/17/part/6/enacted>

reported in 2020<sup>7</sup>. Following a request from the Welsh Government its recommendations were amended in 2023<sup>8</sup>. The option proposed in Wales is to give local authorities greater flexibility to use existing powers under Traffic Regulation Orders to target enforcement of pavement parking to specific places and areas. This change requires the Welsh Assembly to pass legislation but, despite commitments by the Government to do this in 2023, legislation is still to be introduced.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-pavement-parking-task-force-group>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-welsh-pavement-parking-taskforce-amended-recommendations>

## **Imtac Statement on Pavement Parking**

There is widespread acceptance that parking on the pavement creates dangers and creates hazardous detours many in our society when walking or wheeling. All available evidence shows that there is public support for tougher action on people who park on the pavement. There are, as detailed in public consultations from across the UK including Northern Ireland, options available to Government here to reduce the dangers created by pavement parking.

Despite the widespread acceptance of the problems created by parking on the pavement, both here and elsewhere, progress in implementing change has been slow, often non-existent. Even in Scotland, where legislation was passed to enact an outright ban in 2019, the implementation has been limited to date. Changing the status quo is politically challenging.

Other than occasional social media messaging aimed at challenging public attitudes to pavement parking, little has been done to tackle parking on pavements in Northern Ireland since 2022. For Imtac such campaigns without enforcement demonstrably do not work, leaving those promoting the campaign open to ridicule as the public can see clearly the growing issues created by parking on pavements in towns and cities across Northern Ireland.

Imtac believes that it is not acceptable to further delay tackling this issue. Pavement parking is anti-social, dangerous and is a major barrier to encouraging more people to travel sustainably. As a society we simply should not tolerate people obstructing infrastructure designed for pedestrians.

**Imtac is calling for the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly to bring forward legislation that makes parking on the pavement illegal as the default position in Northern Ireland and set in train movement towards an outright ban.**

The Committee recognises that the time left in the current mandate is short and that the potential to pass such a significant piece of legislation is limited. We also recognise that work is required to educate and raise awareness among our politicians and the wider public about what legislating to ban pavement parking actually involves including the use of exemptions where appropriate, and explaining the overall benefits to society.

It is therefore likely that progress on legislation to ban parking on the pavement will be deferred until the next mandate. Despite this we believe that there is action that can be taken in the interim to address the worst examples of pavement parking. This includes a greater use of Traffic Regulation Orders and more use of Traffic Attendants to enforce pavement parking. Such actions will also contribute to the raising of greater awareness of the issues caused by pavement parking and what a future ban would involve.

**Recognising that legislating for an outright ban will take time to bring in, Imtac is calling for interim actions to be introduced to tackle parking on the pavement.**

**The Committee recommends that a Taskforce, similar to the Welsh model, be established immediately.**

**The Taskforce should be made up of key stakeholders (including Imtac and the Department for Infrastructure) and be tasked to undertake a short, focused piece of work to identify short term actions to tackle pavement parking.**

**Pavements are for people not vehicles.**