



**Report on surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City
Centre undertaken in November 2025**

(April 2026)

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About Imtac

Imtac is a committee of Disabled people and older people as well as others including carers and key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of Deaf, Disabled and older people.

Our aim is to ensure that Deaf, Disabled and older people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Why we have undertaken the surveys

Imtac has undertaken several surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre in the past¹. The surveys are undertaken not only to inform the advice Imtac gives to Government around the impact or otherwise on Disabled people of changes to traffic management in the City Centre but also to inform discussions about wider Blue Badge usage in Northern Ireland.

Since the last surveys were undertaken in 2019 several changes have impacted on parking in the city centre. Firstly, streets closed by the fire at Primark in 2019 have now reopened. Secondly, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on travel patterns for people working in the city centre and overall levels of parking provision. With many people working from home more often, evidence suggests parking demand now varies during the week with parking demand on Fridays and Mondays reduced compared to pre-pandemic levels. Interventions made during the pandemic designed to

¹ [Report on surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre undertaken in November 2010](#), [Report on surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre undertaken in October and November 2011](#), [Report on surveys of the on-street Blue Badge use in Ballymena Bangor, Belfast and Lisburn - February 2013](#), [Report on surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre undertaken in September and October 2014](#), [Report on surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre undertaken in August, September, October and November 2016](#), [Report on surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre undertaken in April and May 2019](#).

create more space for people rather vehicles have been largely retained and some cases expanded. These interventions include parklets, expanded footways, bus priority measures and temporary cycle infrastructure. The interventions have involved the removal of parking spaces and other parking opportunities such usage of the yellow line concession.

There have also been policy developments since the last survey which will directly impact on parking on the city centre. The Bolder Vision for Belfast², co-sponsored by the City Council, Department for Infrastructure and Department for Communities sets out vision for the city centre where people are prioritised over vehicles with on-street parking and other parking opportunities reduced. Engagement with officials from the Department for Infrastructure has signalled to Imtac that the proposed Eastern Transport Plan³ will include significant reductions to parking in Belfast City Centre in line with Bolder Vision. Repeating the parking surveys provides Imtac and the Department with evidence of current levels of Blue Badge use in the city centre and will assist both in assessing the potential impact of the proposals for change on Deaf and Disabled people.

How we did the parking surveys

This report is based on six separate surveys undertaken in November 2025. Data from each survey is contained in Appendix A of this document. As per the previous reports around on-street parking, surveys were carried out on different weekdays. Each of these surveys was undertaken at a different time – in the morning, over the lunch period or in the afternoon. A survey was also undertaken on a Saturday. As in previous years the Saturday was confined to streets in the retail area of the city centre.

The surveys covered the same streets surveyed in the 2019 survey. The streets surveyed stretch from Ormeau Avenue in Southside of the city centre to Donegal Street on the Northside and Great Victoria Street on the

² <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/boldervision>

³ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/eastern-transport-plan-etp-2035>

Westside to Victoria Street on the Eastside. The City Centre was divided into two areas:

- (1) The retail core – those streets accessible to the core of the city centre
- (2) The Linen Quarter – those streets a distance from the city centre but close to large offices

The survey records the number of Blue Badge holders parked on a street at any given time. This is designed to give a snapshot of Blue Badge use in the city. The surveys look at how people were using their Badge – parking in an accessible bay, parking in a standard on-street bay or using the yellow line concession. Given the size of the survey area no attempt was made to gather information about how long people were using their Badges in these areas.

What we found

Overall picture

On average the surveys showed 258 cars in the city centre displaying Blue Badges. This is small increase in numbers compared to 2019 but fewer than the previous survey undertaken in 2016.

The removal of some of the restrictions created by the Primark fire have made parking easier for Blue Badge holders. Usage of yellow line concessions has increased since 2019, as has the level occupancy of dedicated accessible bays by Blue Badge holders. Despite this increase abuse of accessible bays by cars not displaying a Blue Badge remains an issue with multiple examples of such abuse noted on the surveys and no evidence of enforcement.

There remains significant use of standard non accessible parking bays by Blue Badge Holders. Numerically the numbers of cars displaying Blue Badges using these bays have been falling but this should be balanced against a significant reduction in the number of on-street parking spaces during the last decade. Imtac estimates there has been a reduction of just

over 25% in the provision on street parking bays in the city centre since 2014. Looking at Blue Badge use as a percentage of overall on-street bay usage, this figure remains at around 30%. There has been an increase in the percentage usage of bays in the Linen Quarter compared to previous surveys but a drop in the actual number of cars displaying badges, illustrating the significant reduction in the provision of on street bays in the area.

Although more evidence is required, the surveys also suggest that there has been a shift in travel patterns and parking demand for Blue Badge holders since the pandemic. The limited data seems to suggest that demand on a Monday and Friday is reduced, particularly on Linen Quarter streets, with usage much higher mid-week. The highest total usage occurred on a Tuesday (326), the lowest on a Friday (233). Changes in working patterns appear to be influencing demand for spaces for Blue Badge holders as well as other users and contributing to a fall in the average numbers of Blue Badge holders using the office dominated Linen Quarter in particular.

Retail Core

As in previous surveys the retail core accounted for the highest usage by Blue Badge holders. On average 197 Blue Badge holders parked in these streets on a weekday a significant rise from 2019. This included rises in the usage of on-street parking bays, the percentage of accessible bays used by Blue Badge holders and the use of the yellow line concession. Saturday usage has also increased from 189 cars displaying a Blue Badge in 2019 compared to 213 in 2025.

All the evidence indicates there has been increased Blue Badge usage in this area since some of the restrictions created by the Primark fire have been removed including the partial reopening of Castle Lane and Donegall Place. Parking restrictions including the removal of both on street and accessible parking bays have been implemented on other streets in the area since 2019. This includes North Street, previously a street heavily

used by Blue Badge holders, where parking has been removed almost entirely to facilitate bus movement and associated infrastructure.

Linen Quarter

As with previous surveys there was less use of the Blue Badge in these streets with much greater use of on-street parking bays than the yellow line concession. On average a total of 64 Badge holders were parked in these streets during weekdays. This is a fall in usage compared with the 2019 survey.

As indicated in the 2019 survey the number of bays in this area continues to be reduced because of other initiatives. Changes since 2019 include the complete removal of parking on the western side of Adelaide Street to facilitate footway extensions, the removal of parking bays on Linenhall Street and Bedford Street to accommodate parklets and bus stops. The removal of parking bays on Brunswick Street to facilitate Flax. Because of this significant reduction in available on street parking bays, the overall percentage usage of on-streets bays by Blue Badge holders has increased in the Linen Quarter despite the actual numbers being lower.

Summary of key findings

The surveys have highlighted several issues:

- Both weekday and weekend Blue Badge usage has risen compared to 2019.
- The rise in usage appears to be due in part to the easing of restrictions introduced to Donegall Place, Castle Place and North Street following the Primark fire.
- The number of Blue Badges being used has reduced compared to previous surveys but this must be viewed in the light of significant reductions in the levels on street parking and other parking opportunities during the interim period.

- There does appear to be evidence showing that demand for parking does vary during the week due to new travel patterns since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Misuse of dedicated accessible parking bays by cars not displaying a Blue Badge remains an issue as does enforcement.
- Blue Badge usage remains a very significant part of overall parking in the city centre and must be a key consideration when making changes.

Considerations and Recommendations

The 2025 survey results raise significant issues for the Department for Infrastructure and the other partners involved in implementing the Bolder Vision for Belfast City Centre. The survey has clearly demonstrated that Blue Badge holders are significant contributor to current parking activity in the city centre. The proposals connected to the Eastern Transport Plan will remove parking from many of the streets covered by the survey. Imtac is concerned that given the current high levels of Blue Badge use in the city centre the proposed changes will have a major negative impact on access to the city for some Deaf, Disabled and older people. It should also be noted that many Disabled people who need a car or vehicle for essential mobility will not have a Blue Badge, so demand is likely higher than reflected in the surveys.

For Imtac it is essential the city centre is inclusive and accessible for everyone including Deaf, Disabled and older people. This includes Disabled people who use the city centre for work, leisure, shopping and cultural activities and for whom the car remains the only viable form of mobility. In planning and implementing changes the Department and the other public bodies involved must fully consider their statutory equality duties in retaining adequate levels of parking in the city centre for people who have no choice but to use a car. The Committee recommend the

Department use the results of our survey to review proposals for the level and location of accessible parking in the city centre.

The Committee recognises that many Disabled people do not have access to a car, and that changes involved in reprioritising streets and enhancing alternatives to the car also have the potential to improve the accessibility of the city centre. These positive changes may also encourage some Disabled people who currently access the city centre by car to use alternative modes. Imtac also sees potential in the creation of hubs where Disabled people could park outside of the city centre and access other transport / modes to travel in. Significant work is required to develop detailed proposals on the improvements required to make alternative access provision to the city centre accessible and inclusive including:

- Detailed proposals for enhancements to the accessibility and connectivity of the public transport network
- Detailed specifications for remote “mobility hubs” outside the city centre
- Detailed proposals for enhancements to the accessibility of the cycling network including infrastructure such as parking
- Detailed proposals for accessible and inclusive micromobility measures

A further issue has been identified by the survey, the misuse and abuse of the Blue Badge and accessible parking. The Committee has significant concerns that limiting parking in the city centre will increase the potential for such misuse and abuse. Without a plan for increased enforcement, Deaf and Disabled people will be further disadvantaged by any changes, through competing for limited parking with other drivers not entitled to use the limited spaces available. The Committee recommends that detailed plans for parking enforcement including Blue Badge enforcement are developed alongside the proposals to reduce on street parking provision in the city centre.

Appendix A

Data from surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre undertaken by Imtac in November 2025

BBH is an abbreviation of Blue Badge Holder.

Survey undertaken lunchtime on Saturday 8th November 2025

Street	BBH in on-street bays	BBH in accessible parking bays	BBH on yellow lines	Total BBH	Total on street parking bays	% BBH in on street bays
Donegal Place	0	0	14	14	0	0
High Street/Castle Place	0	7	20	27	0	0
Bridge Street	0	2	3	5	0	0
Waring Street	1	0	0	1	2	50
North Street	0	4	1	5	0	0
Donegal Street	9	0	3	12	33	27
Royal Avenue	5	2	0	7	23	22

Gresham Street	6	2	1	9	20	30
Smithfield Sq Nrth/Winetavern St	15	7	8	30	31	50
King Street	6	0	7	13	20	30
Berry Street	0	3	18	21	0	0
Queen Street	0	3	2	5	0	0
College Street	0	3	3	6	0	0
Wellington Place	0	10	0	10	0	0
College Sq East	0	3	1	4	0	0
Upper Queen St	2	2	0	4	9	22
Donegal Sq Nrth	0	3	1	4	0	0
Chichester Street	9	11	1	21	15	43
Victoria Street	2	0	0	2	3	66
Gloucester Street	5	1	1	7	28	18

Montgomery Street	1	1	2	4	11	9
Upper Arthur St	1	0	1	2	1	100
Sub Total	62	64	87	213	196	32

Survey undertaken afternoon of Monday 10th November 2025

Street	BBH in on-street bays	BBH in accessible parking bays	BBH on yellow lines	Total BBH	Total on street parking bays	% BBH in on street bays
Donegal Place	0	0	16	16	0	0
High Street/Castle Place	0	9	16	25	0	0
Bridge Street	0	2	3	5	0	0
Waring Street	0	0	0	0	2	0
North Street	0	4	0	4	0	0
Donegal Street	10	0	2	12	33	30

Royal Avenue	2	1	1	4	23	9
Gresham Street	7	2	0	9	20	35
17Smithfield Sq Nr14th/Winetave rn St	8	6	3	17	31	26
King Street	9	0	5	14	20	45
Berry Street	0	2	9	11	0	0
Queen Street	0	3	0	3	0	0
College Street	0	4	5	9	0	0
Wellington Place	0	9	0	9	0	0
College Sq East	0	3	1	4	0	0
Upper Queen St	3	1	0	4	9	33
Donegal Sq Nrth	0	3	1	4	0	0
Chichester Street	4	10	0	14	15	27
Victoria Street	2	0	0	2	3	66
Gloucester Street	6	1	1	8	28	21

Montgomery Street	7	0	0	7	11	64
Upper Arthur St	0	1	4	5	1	0
Sub Total	58	61	67	186	196	30
Alfred Street	6	0	1	7	25	24
Russell Street	2	0	0	2	6	33
Franklin Street	12	0	5	17	24	50
Clarence Street	7	0	0	7	19	37
Adelaide Street	3	0	4	7	28	11
Linenhall Street	11	0	0	11	46	24
Linenhall Street West	5	0	0	5	33	15
Bedford Street	1	0	1	2	3	33
James Street South	5	0	0	5	6	83
Clarence Street West	0	0	0	0	2	0

McClintock Street	1	0	1	2	7	14
Brunswick / Amelia Street	2	0	0	2	11	18
Great Victoria Street	1	2	0	3	4	25
Sub total	56	2	12	70	219	26
Grand total	114	63	79	256	415	27

Survey undertaken lunchtime Tuesday 4th November 2025

Street	BBH in on-street bays	BBH in accessible parking bays	BBH on yellow lines	Total BBH	Total on street parking bays	% BBH in on street bays
Donegal Place	0	0	17	17	0	0
High Street/Castle Place	0	6	20	26	0	0

Bridge Street	0	2	1	3	0	0
Waring Street	0	0	0	0	2	0
North Street	0	4	0	4	0	0
Donegal Street	13	0	5	18	33	39
Royal Avenue	10	1	2	13	23	43
Gresham Street	8	2	3	13	20	40
Smithfield Sq Nrth/Winetavern St	17	6	8	31	31	55
King Street	9	0	9	18	20	50
Berry Street	0	3	16	19	0	0
Queen Street	0	4	1	5	0	0
College Street	0	4	5	9	0	0
Wellington Place	0	8	1	9	0	0
College Sq East	0	3	1	4	0	0
Upper Queen St	5	2	0	7	9	56

Donegal Sq Nrth	0	2	0	2	0	0
Chichester Street	11	10	0	21	15	73
Victoria Street	0	0	0	0	3	0
Gloucester Street	13	0	1	14	28	46
Montgomery Street	6	0	3	9	11	55
Upper Arthur St	0	1	2	3	1	0
Sub Total	92	58	95	245	196	47
Alfred Street	10	0	2	12	25	40
Russell Street	4	0	0	4	6	66
Franklin Street	15	0	4	19	24	63
Clarence Street	9	0	1	10	19	47
Adelaide Street	10	0	2	12	28	36
Linenhall Street	12	0	0	12	46	26
Linenhall Street	5	0	0	5	33	15

West						
Bedford Street	0	0	1	1	3	0
James Street South	1	0	0	1	6	17
Clarence Street West	0	0	0	0	2	0
McClintock Street	0	0	0	0	7	0
Brunswick / Amelia Street	2	0	0	2	11	18
Great Victoria Street	0	3	0	3	4	0
Sub total	68	3	10	81	219	31
Grand total	160	61	105	326	415	39

Survey undertaken morning on Wednesday 12th November 2025

Street	BBH in on-street bays	BBH in accessible parking bays	BBH on yellow lines	Total BBH	Total on street parking bays	% BBH in on street bays
Donegal Place	0	0	15	15	0	0
High Street/Castle Place	0	4	16	20	0	0
Bridge Street	0	2	3	5	0	0
Waring Street	2	0	0	2	2	100
North Street	0	4	0	4	0	0
Donegal Street	12	0	6	18	33	36
Royal Avenue	7	2	0	9	23	30
Gresham Street	8	3	2	13	20	40
Smithfield Sq Nrth/Winetavern St	18	4	0	22	31	58

King Street	3	0	8	11	20	15
Berry Street	0	2	7	9	0	0
Queen Street	0	2	0	2	0	0
College Street	0	4	2	6	0	0
Wellington Place	0	8	0	8	0	0
College Sq East	0	3	0	3	0	0
Upper Queen St	2	1	0	3	9	22
Donegal Sq Nrth	0	2	0	2	0	0
Chichester Street	13	10	0	23	15	87
Victoria Street	3	0	2	5	3	100
Gloucester Street	8	1	0	9	28	29
Montgomery Street	4	0	0	4	11	36
Upper Arthur St	0	1	2	3	1	0
Sub Total	80	53	63	196	196	41

Alfred Street	8	0	0	8	25	32
Russell Street	3	0	0	3	6	50
Franklin Street	11	0	1	12	24	46
Clarence Street	8	0	0	8	19	42
Adelaide Street	4	0	0	4	28	14
Linenhall Street	12	0	0	12	46	26
Linenhall Street West	7	0	0	7	33	21
Bedford Street	0	0	1	1	3	0
James Street South	1	0	0	1	6	17
Clarence Street West	1	0	0	1	2	50
McClintock Street	2	0	0	2	7	29
Brunswick / Amelia Street	2	0	0	2	11	18

Great Victoria Street	1	3	1	5	4	25
Sub total	60	3	3	66	219	27
Grand total	140	56	66	262	415	34

Survey undertaken lunchtime on Thursday 13th November 2025

Street	BBH in on-street bays	BBH in accessible parking bays	BBH on yellow lines	Total BBH	Total on street parking bays	% BBH in on street bays
Donegal Place	0	0	14	14	0	0
High Street/Castle Place	0	6	10	16	0	0
Bridge Street	0	2	1	3	0	0
Waring Street	0	0	0	0	2	0
North Street	0	4	0	4	0	0
Donegal Street	14	0	3	17	33	42

Royal Avenue	4	1	1	6	23	17
Gresham Street	8	3	2	13	20	40
Smithfield Sq Nrth/Winetavern St	11	4	3	18	31	35
King Street	7	0	6	13	20	54
Berry Street	0	2	8	10	0	0
Queen Street	0	1	0	1	0	0
College Street	0	4	5	9	0	0
Wellington Place	0	10	0	10	0	0
College Sq East	0	3	1	4	0	0
Upper Queen St	2	1	1	4	9	22
Donegal Sq Nrth	0	3	0	3	0	0
Chichester Street	7	7	1	15	15	47
Victoria Street	2	0	0	2	3	66
Gloucester	6	1	2	9	28	21

Street						
Montgomery Street	2	0	1	3	11	18
Upper Arthur St	0	1	3	4	1	0
Sub Total	63	53	62	178	196	32
Alfred Street	7	0	1	8	25	28
Russell Street	3	0	0	3	6	50
Franklin Street	11	0	2	13	24	46
Clarence Street	7	0	0	7	19	37
Adelaide Street	9	0	0	9	28	32
Linenhall Street	7	0	0	7	46	15
Linenhall Street West	7	0	0	7	33	21
Bedford Street	1	0	0	1	3	33
James Street South	2	0	1	3	6	33
Clarence Street	1	0	0	1	2	50

West						
McClintock Street	0	0	0	0	7	0
Brunswick / Amelia Street	2	0	1	3	11	18
Great Victoria Street	1	1	1	3	4	25
Sub total	58	1	6	65	219	26
Grand total	121	54	68	243	415	29

Survey undertaken mid-afternoon on Friday 14th November 2025

Street	BBH in on-street bays	BBH in accessible parking bays	BBH on yellow lines	Total BBH	Total on street parking bays	% BBH in on street bays
Donegal Place	0	0	13	13	0	0
High Street/Castle	0	6	18	24	0	0

Place						
Bridge Street	0	2	5	7	0	0
Waring Street	0	0	0	0	2	0
North Street	0	4	2	6	0	0
Donegal Street	6	0	2	8	33	18
Royal Avenue	9	1	2	12	23	39
Gresham Street	8	3	1	12	20	40
Smithfield Sq Nrth/Winetavern St	12	5	1	18	31	39
King Street	10	0	3	13	20	50
Berry Street	0	2	7	9	0	0
Queen Street	0	4	2	6	0	0
College Street	0	4	3	7	0	0
Wellington Place	0	8	1	9	0	0
College Sq East	0	3	1	4	0	0

Upper Queen St	2	2	0	4	9	22
Donegal Sq Nrth	0	3	0	3	0	0
Chichester Street	5	8	0	13	15	33
Victoria Street	1	0	0	1	3	33
Gloucester Street	7	1	2	10	28	25
Montgomery Street	2	0	1	3	11	18
Upper Arthur St	0	1	3	4	1	0
Sub Total	62	57	67	186	196	32
Alfred Street	6	0	0	6	25	24
Russell Street	2	0	0	2	6	33
Franklin Street	8	0	0	8	24	33
Clarence Street	6	0	0	6	19	32
Adelaide Street	3	0	0	3	28	11
Linenhall Street	7	0	1	8	46	15

Linenhall Street West	2	0	0	2	33	6
Bedford Street	1	0	1	2	3	33
James Street South	2	0	1	3	6	33
Clarence Street West	0	0	1	1	2	0
McClintock Street	0	0	0	0	7	0
Brunswick / Amelia Street	1		1	2	11	9
Great Victoria Street	1	3	0	4	4	25
Sub total	39	3	5	47	219	18
Grand total	101	60	72	233	415	24