



**Report on surveys of the on-street Blue Badge use in  
Ballymena Bangor, Belfast and Lisburn**

**February 2013**

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## **Making our information accessible**

As an organisation of and for 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
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If you would like this publication in any of the formats listed above or if you have any other information requirements please contact:

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## **About Imtac**

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

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

## **About the surveys**

In 2010<sup>1</sup> and 2011<sup>2</sup> Imtac undertook a number of surveys of on-street Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre. We did this in order to inform the advice we give to Government around Blue Badge use. In 2012 the Committee wanted to look at Blue Badge use in other places in addition to Belfast. In particular we wanted to look at locations where parking was free and where on-street charging for parking was in place. In addition to Belfast it was decided to undertake surveys in Ballymena, Bangor and Lisburn town and city centres.

## **How we did the surveys**

Three separate surveys were undertaken in each of the four locations. The surveys were undertaken between June and September 2012. As per the previous Belfast surveys in 2010 and 2011 Blue Badge monitoring was carried out on different days of the week and at different times of the day.

The surveys outside Belfast covered the main parking streets in the towns and city centres involved. In Belfast City Centre the same streets were surveyed as in 2010 and 2011. As in those surveys we looked at two

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<sup>1</sup> [Report on surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre undertaken in November 2010](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Report on surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre undertaken in October and November 2011](#)

distinct areas of the city centre; (1) the retail core around key shopping streets, and (2) business areas close to large offices.

The survey recorded the number of vehicles displaying a Blue Badge parked on a street at any given time. The purpose of the survey is to give a snapshot of Blue Badge use in these towns /city's and to allow comparison in future years.

We looked at how people were using their Blue Badge by examining parking in accessible bays, parking in standard on-street bays or using the yellow line concession. Given the size of the survey area we did not attempt to gather information about how long people were using the Blue Badges for in the survey areas.

### **What we found**

The following tables summarise Blue Badge use in each of the four locations.

Table 1 - Overall Blue Badge Use

Location	Average number of vehicles displaying a Blue Badge parked per survey	Total number of parking bays available
Ballymena	76	263
Bangor	42	250 <sup>3</sup>
Belfast Retail Core	196	283
Belfast Business Area	77	382

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<sup>3</sup> Bangor has mixed parking provision with dedicated bays on some streets and non-marked parking on others. The figured quoted is an estimate of the overall availability of parking in the streets surveyed.

Lisburn	123	271
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Table 2 - Percentage use of on-street parking by vehicles displaying a Blue Badge

Location	Percentage number of vehicles displaying a Blue Badge parked per survey
Ballymena	27%
Bangor	12%
Belfast Retail Core	42%
Belfast Business Area	18%
Lisburn	31%

Table 3 - Use of yellow line concession by Blue Badge Holders

Location	Average number of vehicles displaying a Blue Badge parked on yellow lines per survey	Percentage of vehicles displaying a Blue Badge parked on yellow lines per survey
Ballymena	4	5%
Bangor	6	14%
Belfast Retail Core	80	41%
Belfast Business Area	8	10%

Lisburn	36	29%
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### Assessment of Surveys

- From the information gathered from the surveys there appears to be greater use of the Blue Badge in areas where people have to pay to park on street.
- In general there is a higher percentage of Blue Badge use on-street parking bays in areas where people have to pay to park on street.
- There is a wide variation between Blue Badge use in parking bays from location to location ranging from 12% in Bangor to 42% in Belfast City Centre Retail Core.
- In relation to Belfast use of the Blue Badge in the Retail Core is consistent with previous surveys in 2010 and 2011.
- There has been a drop in use in the Business Area than in 2010 and 2011 – this may be due to undertaking surveys in the quieter summer months.
- There is significantly higher use of the yellow line concession in locations where people have to pay to park on street.

### **Conclusion**

There are three key issues emerging from these surveys.

1. The surveys suggest a link between increased use of the Blue Badge and where people have to pay to park on street.
2. Further work would be required to establish the reasons for this link.
3. However examples from elsewhere suggest that misuse of the Blue Badge, by non-disabled people, could be a factor in increased usage in locations where there is a financial incentive for misusing the Badge.

The Blue Badge Scheme is a vital concession for many disabled people enabling them to access key services and to be active participants in society. Imtac will use the information we have gathered to inform the advice we give to Government with the aim improving how the scheme works for disabled people. Over the next year Imtac plans to:

- Work with Roads Service to look at ways the current Scheme could be changed to deliver greater benefits to disabled people
- Work with Roads Service to ensure the concessions offered by the Blue Badge are not abused
- Work with other parking providers to ensure the concessions offered by the Blue Badge are not abused
- Work with stakeholders to refresh the Baywatch Campaign which seeks to end the misuse and abuse of accessible parking bays