

Government clamps down on rogue parking firms with new Code of Practice

- Code of Practice launched to crackdown on cowboy private car parking firms
- Fines cut by up to 50% in most areas across England, Wales and Scotland
- New Appeals Charter will eliminate fines for motorists who make genuine errors or have mitigating circumstances
- Additional rip-off debt collection fees banned
- Rogue operators who do not follow the Code could be banned from accessing Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) data

Millions of motorists are set to benefit from a major government crackdown on rogue parking firms which will see fines slashed and a clearer and fairer appeals system created.

A new package of measures announced today (7 February 2022) will protect drivers from unfair and extortionate charges, with a new Code of Practice to help keep cowboy private parking firms in check.

The government's [Parking Code of Practice](#) will see parking fines cut by up to 50% in the majority of cases, saving motorists millions of pounds each year.

The proposals include a maximum cap for parking fines, a 10-minute grace period before a late fine can be issued, and a requirement for parking firms to clearly display pricing and terms and conditions.

In England outside of London and in Wales, charges will be reduced from £100 to £70 or £50, depending on the seriousness of the breach.

Private firms which breach the new Code could even be barred from collecting fines from motorists at all.

Currently, private parking firms are able to hide behind non-specific, pseudo-legal and aggressive language when pursuing motorists. The Code of Practice will provide new higher standards.

Rogue firms which break these rules could be barred from requesting Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) data, making them unable to pursue motorists for their charges through the post.

A new, simpler appeals process is also being created, to make it easier for disputed fines to be cancelled.

The measures will be a major boost to millions of motorists in England, Scotland and Wales and will help to draw people back to their local high streets by eliminating the fear of being unfairly caught out.

Minister for Levelling Up, Neil O'Brien MP said:

"Private firms issue roughly 22,000 parking tickets every day, often adopting a system of misleading and confusing signage, aggressive debt collection and unreasonable fees designed to extort money from motorists."

"The new Code of Practice will set out a clear vision with the interests of safe motorists at its heart, while cracking down on the worst offenders who put other people in danger and hinder our emergency services from carrying out their duties."

RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said:

"The RAC has campaigned for years to end the sharp practices in the private parking sector, so we welcome the new national code that will usher in higher standards and will introduce a lower cap on penalty charge notices, an independent appeals system and an end to rip-off debt collection fees. This will undoubtedly make drivers' experience of using private car parks fairer while at the same time force rogue operators to clean up their acts once and for all."

Edmund King, AA president, said:

"These much needed upgrades to private parking rules will give better protection to drivers. For too long, those caught by private parking firms simply pay the charge to get rid of it. Thankfully these days are numbered."

"Drivers should feel confident that having a single Code of Practice and a new Appeals Charter will give them confidence to appeal and be properly heard. We are also pleased that honest mistakes, like mistyping the car registration into the machine, will now be automatically cancelled."

Sir Greg Knight MP, who took the Parking (Code of Practice) Act through Parliament as a Private Members Bill said:

"Some car park providers are honest and fair but a number of unscrupulous rogues have undermined the sector with bad practice. I warmly welcome the government's action which will prevent motorists being unjustly treated in future and will make parking a vehicle a fairer experience for all."

"Action is needed because many dodgy operators are still engaging in unacceptable practices whilst using a threatening and intimidating process to fleece motorists."

Fresh measures proposed in the new Code and Framework include the creation of a mandatory single Appeals Service and Appeals Charter for motorists to turn to if they are unfairly fined. Under options set out in the Appeals Charter, motorists could be able to appeal their fine and see it cancelled entirely if:

- they have a mitigating reason for overstaying their parking ticket such as their vehicle breaking down
- they have made a genuine innocent error, like keying in a digit in their number plate incorrectly
- they have a valid ticket, permit or Blue Badge but failed to display it correctly

The Code also states:

- New parking charge levels which will mirror the local authority system for publicly accessible car parks, halving parking charges for millions of motorists to £50. It will keep the current £100 cap in some circumstances such as abusing Blue Badge bays or if a motorist is trespassing on private land.
- Motorists will be offered a 50% discount if they pay within 14 days.
- Parking debt collectors will be banned from adding additional excess fees to the level of the parking charge, currently as much as £70.
- A compulsory 10-minute grace periods before firms can issue a late fine.
- A compulsory 5-minute cooling-off period in which a motorist can consider the terms and conditions and change their mind about parking.
- A crackdown on parking firms using aggressive or pseudo-legal language to intimidate motorists into paying fines.
- A requirement for parking firms to clearly display pricing and terms and conditions of parking, contact details and how to appeal a charge.

The Parking (Code of Practice) Act became law in March 2019 and builds on action the government has already taken to tackle rogue private parking firms, including banning wheel clamping and towing and stopping over-zealous parking enforcement by councils.

The Parking (Code of Practice) Bill was a Private Members Bill introduced by Sir Greg Knight MP, supported by the Government and received Royal Assent in March 2019. It covers England, Wales, and Scotland – creating consistency for motorists everywhere in Britain.

Currently there are two parking trade associations, the British Parking Association (BPA) and the International Parking Community (IPC). Each has a Code of Practice that their members are required to abide by, but there is no single set of rules, so motorists are vulnerable to bad private parking practices such as deliberately poor signage and unfair parking fines.

Private parking companies who do not follow the Code by the end of 2023 could be banned from accessing Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) data.