

## Fast Learners

**The University of York is balancing the parking needs of staff, students and visitors**

**By Penny Winder, Director, Alpha Parking**

Over 10,000 students and 2,700 staff; a 64 hectare campus site; users including postgraduate and international students, researchers and conference delegates all year around, not to mention visitors attending concerts and other events. That would be a considerable parking challenge for anyone, yet the University of York has coped so well that its work was submitted as an entry for the 2010 British Parking Awards for Off-Street Parking Team of the Year.



How this thriving university manages its car parking has drawn praise from the British Parking Association and made it the envy of other universities. Helping the University of York set such standards is the fact that parking policy is placed within the university's wider environmental objections, within its Sustainable Travel Plan. Furthermore, excellent teamwork and staff retention has been fostered by developing staff who have been recognised as having a key, professional role within the University, rather than being people seen as simply 'slapping tickets on cars'.

Travel Plan Co-ordinator Fiona Macey, working with Alpha Parking, has increased confidence and professionalism of her car parking attendants by introducing a comprehensive training course specifically designed for university car parking staff, including a cycling proficiency test for car park attendants!



The off-street team is crucial in delivering the sustainable travel plan. Its aims include:

- Avoid discouraging staff and students from using the campus
- Catering for people with disabilities
- Maintaining the university's green characteristics and a safe, clean environment
- Encouraging forms of transport other than driving
- Attracting local people to a range of cultural and sporting activities
- Effectively regulate parking, and manage parking at large events

The university owns and operates several campus car parks as well as external sites, which provide around 1,700 parking spaces, including pay-and-display spaces, along with a range of permits for staff, students and visitors. The City of York caps the overall number of parking spaces, so these cannot be increased to meet demand.

Fiona Macey's work on travel planning includes considering travel options for staff and students and promoting forms of transport other than driving. She has developed an integrated package spanning a cycle scheme, cycle days, car-sharing and reduced bus fares. Where they once drove from campus to campus, car parking attendants (CPAs) now cycle between them.

"All CPAs have passed their cycling proficiency test with top marks," says Fiona. "By setting a good example to staff and students, we expect more people to cycle."



High standards of lighting, signage, surveillance and cleanliness are reflected in the eight Park Mark awards for the university's staff and public car parks.

The British Parking Association's (BPA's) Phil Taylor said: "York is committed to providing a safe and non-threatening environment in which to study. The York campus is the first in North East England to implement the scheme."

Fiona added: "The combination of the Park Mark awards and the training give staff a more rounded view of car parks, including house-keeping and signage, as well as enforcement."

Although not bound by the requirements of the Traffic Management Act 2004, university authorities wanted to apply similar standards where possible, to ensure fairness in enforcement. Fiona and training providers Alpha Parking tailored a two-day course to set standards in campus parking, while raising efficiency and morale.

Alpha's Tara Gabriel, who ran the course, said: "To provide perspective and help delegates understand the university's objectives, we explained how parking arrangements have evolved across the industry and considered the specific demands of a university car park. It was important for delegates to understand the university's own parking policy and its special challenges."

Keith Gray, a CPA at York, commented: "We are often the first people potential customers see, so must portray a professional impression. This course was good because it put car parking attendants on a different professional plateau."

The course is approved by the Institute of Leadership & Management (part of City & Guilds) as a Level 2 course.

"Since completing the training, the university has enjoyed increased income from Pay and Display machines," added Fiona.

"The initiative has really helped frontline staff understand present day parking within the industry context, appreciating the importance and impact of the job."

Around the sites, permit parking is widely used and enforced – some spaces are only available for badged 'car sharers', while others may be used by staff, disabled drivers and emergency services. Staff can use any car park, but the Sustainable Travel Plan aims to spread arrival times and support flexible working patterns, providing car parking only accessible after 09.15am.

Staff abusing the system first receive a warning, then a £50 CPN on their 'second strike'.

Keith says: "The 09.15 bays are a way to get to know people. I've even stood in a 09.15 bay for save it for a mum desperate for a space near her office."



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