

National Q & A BRIEFING

Blue Badge Improvement Service (BBIS)

What is the BBIS?

- The English, Scottish and Welsh Governments have been working closely with local authorities and Northgate Information Solutions Ltd in partnership with Payne Security to develop a new system for issuing badges and delivering common services
- The Blue Badge Improvement Service will offer:
 - i. secure printing, supply and distribution of a new Blue Badge;
 - ii. a common store of key information on badges and badge holders to enable verification checks to be made quickly and easily, either from a PC or via smart phones or similar technology;
 - iii. a web-based management information system for local authorities;
 - iv. a national on-line application form available via Directgov
- A range of 'opt-in' additional services will also be offered to local authorities. For example, sending out automatic renewal letters

What are the advantages of the BBIS?

- By establishing a common system for processing Blue Badge information and securely printing and distributing badges, we can prevent many types of fraud and abuse from happening in the first place
- Local authorities will have instant access to key Blue Badge details anywhere in Great Britain, not just in their local authority area.

What changes will it mean for badge holders?

- Applicants will be able to carry out an online eligibility check before applying
- Applicants will be able to apply online at Directgov
- Applicants can track their application
- The system will send reminders at renewal time (by letter, email or text message)

When will it be available?

- BBIS will be available in from 1 January 2012

Badge Re-design

Why is the Blue Badge being re-designed?

- The current design is easily copied and forged. Many local authorities and disabled people have reported incidences of fraudulent copies being used
- Production of the badge is time consuming and fiddly for local authorities. Local authorities currently have to personalise the badge themselves by handwriting the details, and cutting and gluing the holder's signature and photograph, onto the badge. This leads to inconsistencies and details can easily be changed
- There are potential security issues with the storage and distribution of badges, with some local authorities reporting missing stock. Changes will remove the need for local authorities to order stock and store blank badges
- Local authorities have said that the standardisation of information on the badge would help enforcement and the credibility of the scheme

How has the Badge been re-designed?

- The badge will be harder to copy and to forge and the physical security features of the badge will be enhanced, with the use of new technologies and printing techniques
- A single supplier has been contracted to personalise, print and distribute badges to improve security in production, distribution and supply, to reduce production costs and to simplify the process and help local authorities realise efficiency savings

How will it make it better?

By finding a supplier to manufacture and personalise the badge on behalf of local authorities it will lead to:

- Greater consistency in the appearance of the badge
- The ability to use different manufacturing and personalisation techniques offered by a single specialist supplier, increasing the options of security features for the badge
- The ability to make subtle changes to the badge quickly should the new-style badge be fraudulently reproduced
- Local authorities no longer have to order stock and store the blank badges, freeing up space and time
- Local authorities will no longer have to personalise each badge they issue, saving time
- Identifying and standardising the information on the badge will aid enforcement, especially cross boundary checks

- Enhancing the security features of the badge will help prevent forgery and deter fraudsters and will boost the credibility of the scheme
- Improved environmental credentials of the clock and the leaflet

The Badge Fee

Why is the fee for a Blue Badge being increased?

- Under current legislation, local authorities can charge a badge fee of up to £2 for those whose applications are successful. This fee is payable on issue of a badge (not on application) and has not changed since 1983. However, the cost of processing this fee is far greater and as a result a number of local authorities have chosen not to collect it
- The legislation has been changed so that local authorities can charge successful applicants up to a maximum of £10. It will still be for local authorities to decide the fee that will be payable locally
- Raising the fee will enable the implementation of the reform programme. It will allow local authorities to recover some of the costs involved in the new-style badge and administering the scheme

What will the fee cover?

- The new fee should cover the cost of issuing or reissuing a badge, (excluding mobility assessments)
- The cost of the badge itself

How will it make it better?

- By allowing local authorities to charge a higher fee, local authorities will be able to offer a better level of customer service
- It enables investment into security features for the badge and in the common service delivery project. The latter will also deliver efficiency savings
- It will help to prevent abuse and help to discourage inappropriate applications
- Additional investment will reduce levels of abuse and so badge holders should benefit from being able to find parking spaces and from increased levels of accessibility
- In 2008, survey evidence suggested that 68% of badge holders supported an increase in the current £2 fee. When asked how much they thought would be a fair price, 25% thought that it would be fair to charge more than £10 and 59% thought that it should be between £3 and £10.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will the new database be safe and secure?

- The system and the data store will adhere to strict HMG security standards and will only be accessible over secure Government network links
- Local authority administrators will be appointed to control access to the service
- Only authorised LA staff will have access to the system which will be controlled by unique log-on IDs and passwords
- The system will comply with the Data Protection Act

Will the new badge be 'smart'?

- Not at this time. Badges need to be displayed in the windscreen of a car and so are used in a different way to bus and train tickets. Enforcement would still be reliant on an officer walking past a vehicle with a hand-held device that was capable of reading the chip through a windscreen
- These readers would be expensive for local authorities to buy. A back-office would also be needed. The costs. Therefore, at this time are prohibitive.
- But the new style badge could include a chip at some point in the future (eg five years) if costs reduce and hand-held devices are more available.
- The unique numbering system on the new badge will link in with the BBIS and will enable roadside checks to be made using SMARTphones.

Why is the new fee being proposed £10?

- The [relevant local authority] believes that this level is proportionate. In 2008, a survey of badge holders carried out by the DfT showed that 67% of respondents were supportive of local authorities being able to charge more than the existing £2, to more appropriately cover costs. When asked how much they thought would be a fair price, 25% thought that it would be fair to charge more than £10 and 59% thought that it should be between £3 and £10
- Local authorities need to be able to continue to deliver a fair and credible scheme, for those most in need of it, in a sustainable manner
- The average benefit for badge holders from having a badge (and not having to pay parking charges) is estimated to be £300 over the three years for which most badges are valid

Have the rules changed on eligibility?

- No, the eligibility criteria are the same as before. But independent mobility assessments may result in some people not being able to get a badge at renewal

What is changing with respect to assessments of applicants?

- The regulations have been changed and will mean that more people will see an independent mobility assessor when they apply for a badge. This is to ensure that those most in need receive a badge and that they are assessed by a person who is trained in assessing mobility needs.
- This will only apply to people applying under the 'with further assessment' criteria. If you are seen at the time of your first application, the assessor may decide that you will not need to be assessed again at renewal time.
- Independent assessors are being used to help avoid compromising the GP/patient relationship.

What will it mean if I apply on-line?

- Applying on line through [Directgov](#) should make it easier for you to apply as you will only be asked to complete those sections that are relevant to the eligibility under which you are applying.
- If you provide your mobile phone number or email address, reminders can be sent to you at renewal time through these routes. Otherwise, you will be sent a letter.
- Some automatic checks can be made to help speed up your application and to reduce and prevent fraud.
- You may be able to track the progress of your application and to pay on-line if you wish.

What are the environmental credentials of the badge, clock and the leaflet?

- The leaflet is printed on 100% recycled paper. The new parking clock is made from 50% recycled materials and can itself be recycled.
- The new badge cannot be recycled due to the new security features and the need for the badge to withstand being placed in heat and sunlight for long periods of time.

- The new badge has been tested for heat resistance. It can withstand temperatures of at least 120 degrees celcius. The inks used should be lightfast.