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# Wye Valley Visitor Centre

**Beset by misuse and abuse that affected capacity for paying customers, Parkingeeye helped this popular tourist attraction make the most of its car park facilities.**

A thriving tourism hub, the Wye Valley Visitor Centre has been offering visitors fun activities in the countryside, and creating opportunities for employment, since 1981. Made up of four attractions - the 'aMazing Hedge Puzzle',

a butterfly zoo, miniature golf, and a laser tag battleground, as well as a café and outdoor picnic area - Wye Valley Visitor Centre is very popular, but non-customers were at the root of their problems.

## Background

The car park was big enough to meet the needs of the attractions, but many of its spaces were used by non-customers, leaving some paying customers with nowhere to park.

Partner and co-founder, Lindsay Heyes, talked us through the challenges of managing the on-site car parking and the impact the issues were having on the business, as well as the solutions Parkingeye helped to implement.



## Challenges



### Misuse and abuse

During busy periods, the car park found itself flooded with people who were not Visitor Centre customers. At peak times, such as Easter weekend, many spaces were filled by people who parked just to walk into the Wye Gorge, simply using the Wye Valley Visitor Centre to avoid paying at other car parks nearby.

The car park is also situated close to a hotel and a nearby church regularly hosting large events such as weddings and christenings, placing further pressure on Wye Valley as the car park would be heavily used by guests and attendees of these events. To make matters worse, organisers of nearby sales events directed trader vehicles to park at the Centre and sometimes even touts set-up promotional events in the car park without permission. Pop-up bike and canoe hire operators with no local base would pick up clients at the Centre, leaving cars behind all day and one rogue trader even sold tickets for parking at the Centre when parking was actually free.



### Lack of spaces for paying customers

"Our true customers could not find places to park during our busiest times, which was very frustrating", Lindsay notes. Because of this, Wye Valley customers would have to use the neighbouring car park and pay for that. This inconvenience proved extremely problematic since Lindsay and his brother Edward had always wanted to provide free parking for their customers.



### Thoroughfare blockages

The Wye Valley Visitor Centre is located close to a busy dual carriageway, so coach parties would stop to just use to visitors' toilets. Lindsay explained the effect that had on the business: "It might sound like a small thing, but we would have as many as six coaches travelling in convoy – meaning around 360 non-customers using the toilets within the space of 10 minutes." This would clog up the car park, fill spaces which could otherwise have gone to genuine customers, and overuse customer facilities.

## The breaking point

The problems facing Wye Valley Visitor Centre's car park came to a head during one Easter weekend when the site was used for an unauthorised treasure hunt. The cars arrived suddenly, without warning. Lindsay explained the problems this caused:

"They were in a race, and so didn't park properly – we had 15 vehicles abandoned around the car park while the competitors demanded answers to treasure hunt questions from staff who were very busy serving. This seriously inconvenienced our true customers and caused a queue of vehicles so long that it stopped traffic all the way out onto the public road. It was at this point that we decided to tackle the issues and started to research the best providers to ensure legal compliance, technical competence, consistency and cost-effectiveness. Parkingeye certainly met all the key criteria we were looking for in a partner."

## Solution

Parkingeye implemented a number of technologies and provided training to help improve the car parking experience at Wye Valley Visitor Centre and eradicate abuse.

Installation of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) to help monitor and identify abuse and an effective enforcement process triggering PCNs to unauthorised vehicles was completed quickly, causing minimal disruption. This enabled the whole Wye Valley Visitor Centre team to immediately benefit.

Utilising Parkingeye's extensive experience, the Visitor Centre staff were offered in-depth training, helping them to deal effectively and efficiently with questions from customers as

well as providing a solid understanding of the process. The Parkingeye team remain on-hand around the clock to answer any unforeseen questions which may come up.

"Parkingeye has made a big difference to us, significantly reducing abuse and it's impact on the business", notes Lindsay. "During the August bank holiday in 2017, 50% of vehicles in our car park weren't customers. On the same day in 2018, this figure dropped to just 15%. The car park was full on both days but now full of genuine customers, so this is a great result for both customers and footfall through our doors."



**"These results are mirrored throughout the year, with the car park seeing a huge reduction in abuse – providing more spaces for the visitor centre's guests and a much better car park experience all round."**



Lindsay Heyes, Partner and co-founder, Wye Valley Visitor Centre

## The benefits of working with Parkingeye

"We'd looked at other competitors but found Parkingeye's commitment to our needs to be exactly what we were looking for. Their employees are obviously very well trained, and it's clear that they know what they are doing."

After-sales and support are huge parts of the Parkingeye service. Supported by a back-office system which automates many of the processes, the Wye Valley Visitor Centre car park now needs minimal management, allowing the team to concentrate their efforts elsewhere. And the online portal ensures Lindsay and his senior team have access to useful performance indicators such as stay duration, utilisation, Parking Charge Notices (PCN's), infrastructure requirements and more – allowing issues to be dealt with immediately and ideas for continual improvement implemented and measured more easily.

A great example of this was in relation to a new attraction at the Centre. Lindsay explains "Statistics gathered from our car park by Parkingeye enabled us to demonstrate how we could meet peak parking needs and gave us precise traffic impact data which was needed to obtain Planning Permission. I'm thrilled to say we were successful in our application – this would not have been possible without Parkingeye."

"The Parkingeye team always do their utmost. They are extremely easy to work with, and our TripAdvisor rating has actually improved as a result! We're such big fans that we've recommended them to other members of our local tourism association too."

With over 14 years of experience helping businesses develop and manage their car parks, Parkingeye have built up a highly efficient and effective process. Combined with attentiveness and empathy, the Parkingeye team can transform your car park from a problem to a profitable resource with a minimum of fuss.

Lindsay highlighted the commitment of our account managers:

**"They're consistently cheerful and proactive, which is great in what must be a high-pressure environment. Our account manager is always on top form, and any minor problems we've faced have been dealt with very quickly and professionally, without any hesitation at all."**



# Parkingeye

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