



One parking partner. Infinite possibilities.

Parking in Healthcare

Parkingeeye Head of Marketing, Andie Walton, examines recent survey data to highlight some startling findings on how our industry perceives parking, what stakeholders within the healthcare ecosystem can do to 'move the needle' and busts a few myths to boot.



As the world re-emerges from under the shadow of Coronavirus, the parking industry looks to re-evaluate ways in which it can support the hubs of tomorrow. Market Leader Parkingeye (who oversee almost 600 healthcare sites across the UK) have conducted research to unveil what care professionals think about parking and how it impacts their roles - whether they're directly responsible for facilities across a complex estate or leading at the front line.

Key findings

Almost
90%

Parking is important it seems, with 46% stating it to be hugely important, a strategic imperative and a further 44% listing the car park as important, whilst not 'critical'. While sites such as Manchester University Foundation Trust, one of the UK's largest acute Trusts, saw revenues lift by 40% once a new parking strategy was implemented, the figures are still higher than the Parkingeye team expected. In other sectors, the car park is often overlooked in its ability to yield revenues and drive out operational cost, so these findings are very positive indeed.

85%

The survey findings show that everyone is invested in parking, whether they're a patient, visitor, supplier or staff member. Of those respondents who weren't directly responsible for the car park, it's clear that wider stakeholders are also heavily impacted by poor motorist behaviour and legacy infrastructure in their role (late appointments for instance) – the ripple. In fact, a staggering 85% stated that the car park can become so congested, it creates backlogs in surrounding routes and complaints from local communities.

1/3

When the questions turned more toward specific technologies such as Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR for short), the answers were even more surprising. Whilst a third of those asked could not name a single benefit, a further 40% still perceived ANPR technology as a purely 'space management/enforcement' platform – something which may have been true 10 years ago. This is particularly interesting as it reveals a low awareness of wider ANPR applications.

Comfort
zone

When asked about access control, almost half of the respondents felt almost all or all sites still had physical barriers in place. Another surprising statistic given new technologies available to speed up traffic flows in and out of site and automate payments, especially if those barriers are temperamental and attached to ageing maintenance contracts.

3%

1/3 of respondents felt the car park was a key aspect of the overall facility experience but only 3% felt that parking technology could yield rich behavioural data or create a crucial revenue stream for cost-stricken healthcare facilities. So, whilst parking is important, it was seen as more a necessity for building compliance and a somewhat basic provision.

The parking wish-list

In terms of parking services ranked by importance, the results painted an interesting picture.

Unsurprisingly, many recipients ranked permit management high on the list due to common issues in allocating and overseeing staff parking permissions.

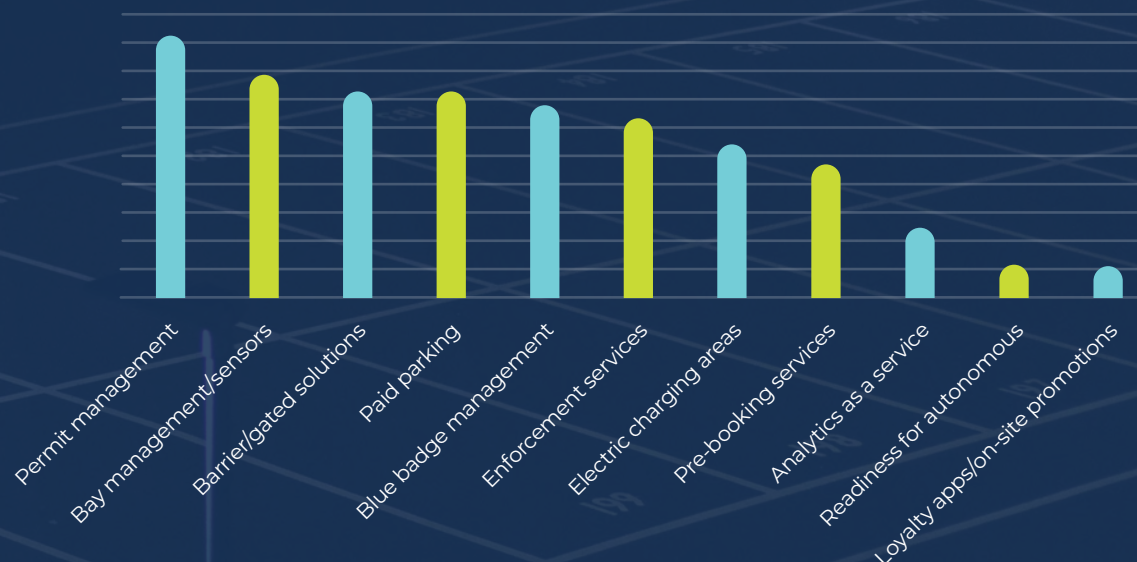
Bay management and blue bay management also performed well, given the continued rise of blue bay abuse. Indeed, it's estimated that disabled badge fraud has quadrupled since 2014, with Disabled Motoring UK (DMUK) concluding that, as part of their Annual Baywatch Campaign, a staggering 1 in 5 supermarket disabled bays are being abused. One has to assume similar behaviour is also common on healthcare sites.

Barriers and gated solutions were ranked third in terms of parking importance – a statistic far higher than expected, given how typically temperamental such hardware can be for users and internal teams alike. However, when taken with findings that over half of those asked said all/ almost all sites still had physical access barriers in situ, it could reflect the deep level of familiarity for the humble barrier, however outdated. It's what we know.

Enforcement services still feature, hovering mid-way down, which seems to confirm that keeping unauthorised use at bay is still a consideration – even on healthcare sites where people can experience the extremes of extenuating circumstances.

Paid parking was given the number 6 spot. Whilst the debate rages about whether healthcare parking should be free, it's clear that there is a disconnect across the parking industry in terms of who benefits from these revenues. Whilst different operators may adopt different commercial agreements, on the whole paid parking revenues go to the Trust. It's public record that Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust made nearly £1.7m from staff and visitor car parking during a 12-month period (up to end 2018), with all monies going back into patient care - benefitting patients and staff. It also helps to fund the running of their free bus service between sites and the general up-keep and maintenance of the car parks. If paid parking does disappear, this could leave a very large hole in already stricken healthcare funding.

Rank importance of these parking services



**“I loved the barrier system. It was tangible. I could see it.
It felt like I was in control when the opposite was true.”**



Tom Higgins, Car Parking and Security Manager, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

What role can ANPR play in the evolution of healthcare parking facilities?

Fundamentally, ANPR uses discreet cameras at entry/exit points to capture number plates to track, understand and improve behaviours on-site. For years used as a highly effective way to highlight unauthorised users, today its applications are far wider than core enforcement and much more sophisticated. Parkingeye manage 3,500 sites across the UK offering a suite of ANPR-powered services to help sites use parking as a revenue stream, transform motorist experience or drive pretty impressive operational efficiencies.

Many may not be aware but baseline ANPR tech has enabled the rise of 'fully virtual' solutions which offer pre/auto-pay services – such as Glyde Spaces and good2go – removing the need to make payment-on-foot altogether. Going further still, vehicle registration technology also facilitates services such as 'Click & Assist' whereby the camera identifies a disabled/vulnerable motorist on entry to site and notifies a member of the team to help.

2 services which ranked particularly low were loyalty apps and analytics. This could well be due to zero appetite or may in fact be driven by a lack of knowledge about how such services can add value within the hospital environment. It's often unsavoury to consider loyalty in a hospital scenario but what is really meant is 'value'. For instance, registered users can search for on-site promotions or be notified once the camera recognises them on entry. This then drives up footfall and revenue for on-site retailers and allows commercial teams to negotiate longer or more favourable tenancies as a result. Behavioural analysis, now fundamental in other sectors but yet to be fully embraced by healthcare, can really drive more informed decision-making and ongoing operational improvements. Imagine teams being able to understand seasonal trends, types of visitors in the car park at any one time, fuel type (to help understand demand for electric vehicle charging points) and car volumes across the day to help inform staff rotas and planning. Parkingeye alone capture a staggering 4m data points every single day – why not use it?

It's worth noting that the survey asked for general comments - an overwhelming majority (over 63%) stated the parking was a headache, both for busy internal facilities teams and users trying to park without adding to stress levels. Across healthcare sites where parking should be as seamless as possible, it's a surprising finding. General space availability was another common challenge, yet this could be due to genuine supply/demand strains or caused by inefficient site organisation. Many sites underestimate the improvements which can be made by reorganising layouts – allocating specific areas for different users, such as staff, visitors and patients, making sure site flow/throughput is optimised and providing enough easy ways to pay. Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust is one of the largest acute Trusts in the UK, employing more than 20,000 staff but before installing ANPR, patients already apprehensive, were finding a stressful situation made worse by not being able to park due to spaces being used by staff and huge queues caused by the barriers.



63⁺%

stated the parking was a headache



Finance & Procurement

With last year's reorganisation of the NHS supply chain, talk of target operating models and pressure to reduce the £13.4bn spent on services such as facilities management, estates and technology (specifically ICT), today's finance and procurement teams must look to digitalisation and automation for more transformational gains.

With such a low awareness of how wider applications of parking technologies can yield not only rich behavioural data and operational efficiency but margin-rich revenues, there appears to be a wealth of opportunity going unseen. The modern healthcare hubs of tomorrow are rooted in the virtual world, where capex-heavy hardware and manual process are no longer needed.

Traditional barriers have long-since been superseded by new technologies such as ANPR due to often-problematic maintenance (plus the time and money drain to manage) and virtualised payments to boost revenues without any additional

investment. Able to facilitate touchless services too, the automation offered by ANPR can transform on-site efficiencies and be implemented in a matter of weeks to give busy teams one less thing to worry about.

Parking has long since been the cash cow but choices on how to deliver paid parking have become somewhat sophisticated. Spanning API integrations, solar powered, indoor/outdoor or freestanding/wall-mounted kit and virtual solutions, procurement teams must consider the resiliency and supplier SLAs for any paid parking service – after all, if the ability to pay goes down, so too does your revenue line... and quickly.

Finally, look to reputable bodies who can validate operator quality - NHS Shared Business Services have a 'Car Park Management & Infrastructure' Framework, which offers NHS sites an OJEU-compliant route to securing market-leading car park management services.

“Revenue for the Trust is up 40% due to increased throughput, more visitors using our facilities and making it easier to pay.”



Tom Higgins, Car Parking and Security Manager,
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Often cost neutral, ANPR solutions can free up a further

40%

of space, extend the lifespan of capital hardware and monetise parking to boost revenues by almost double*

*Dependant on site size and level of abuse prior to the system going live.



Patient Experience & Behavioural Insight

A recent interview with Sonia Patel, NHSX's new Chief Information Officer, highlighted a number of opportunities to improve the overall hospital experience. In particular, Sonia mentioned the NHS Book, a bespoke technology solution providing remote visiting options to patients and their loved ones during the COVID-19 crisis. The impressive roll-out in just 2 weeks (from idea to ward) places people's needs above all else and showed what can be achieved when technology is scalable and flexible enough to adapt within a changing situation.

We must look at how we can accelerate and stabilise digital transformation in the NHS.

But how can parking technology feature in this evolution to deliver the best experience for staff, patients and visitors alike – without impacting on costs and operational resource? The research unveils a staggering 85% stated that the car park can become so congested, it creates backlogs in surrounding routes and complaints from local communities. Imagine the impact on motorists trying to park – indeed, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust themselves found that 25% of complaints were driven by parking-related issues prior to ANPR improvements.

In today's highly connected world, the opportunity to harness and repurpose real-time parking data to deliver a seamless experience has never been more achievable. Drivers long to alleviate stress and find available parking quickly yet some survey comments revealed difficulties with parking meters/machines set at the wrong height or not offering the ability to pay by card. Analysis across Parkingeye's own payment estate shows an almost equal split between card and cash payment

although newer installations show a startling 83% of users now opting for card, demonstrating a clear trend towards full-cashless. Customer choice remains key however, particularly on healthcare sites who support patients and visitors of all ages and technology adoption.

Offering motorists a smooth and uninterrupted entry/exit to site minimises their time within the car park, relieves pressure on surrounding routes and improves overall space turnover – made especially seamless by pre-pay/book and autopay services. No payments on-foot or hassle at a terminal. To benefit from a fully free-flow environment, sites across the UK are decommissioning slow and temperamental barriers which not only drain busy internal teams but can cause serious driver frustration, especially given the often-stressful nature of a hospital visit.

Loyalty apps have been mentioned in our findings but just imagine a patient arriving on site, driving quickly to a space (maybe even pre-booked) without the worry of finding a payment machine, before grabbing a discounted coffee in the lobby at Costa. 5 years ago, this would seem like science fiction but it's already here.

ANPR-powered services which allow a barrierless, cashless, touchless and frictionless trip are now a reality whilst slashing the risk of contravention to ensure that parking doesn't add to stress levels -- especially important for NHS Trusts where visitors, patients and staff can be dealing with extremely difficult circumstances.

“Patients already apprehensive of attending appointments were finding a stressful situation made worse by not being able to park, with many of the car parking spaces being used by staff, further compounded by huge queues being caused by a barrier system. Customer care extends to more than just the car park, it sets the tone for the whole hospital experience.”



Tom Higgins, Car Parking and Security Manager,
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

83%

of users now opting for card



Facilities & Estate Management

The daily demands of managing a 21st century healthcare environment while implementing financial, time and resource savings to meet government targets must seem relentless.

As on-site teams juggle soft and hard FM, utilities, building maintenance & renovation, safety, regulatory compliance and just about everything in-between, it's easy to understand why parking can fall down the list of priorities.

Traditionally the core responsibility of facilities or estate managers, parking is no longer seen as a purely operational endeavour yet it's still common for parking to impact a number of other areas (complaints, revenues, backlogs, etc) before teams reach out for help. It's assumed that this is due to symptomatic pains not always identifying parking as the source – after all, it's not obvious that a lack of cashless payment machines might contribute to poor space availability... but it does.

Clearly, barriers remain core to larger sites – almost half of the respondents felt almost all or all car parks still had physical barriers in place. Another surprising statistic given new technologies available to speed up traffic flows in and out of site and automate payments, especially if those barriers are temperamental, requiring constant attention and/or attached to ageing maintenance contracts.

Complaints can really hurt a Trust's reputation and can range from issues with poor parking behaviours (taking up more than one space, parking across a dropped kerb, etc) and payment options, through to backlogs caused by poor throughput. In the worst cases, this can be catastrophic if blue light routes become blocked and may result in the hospital board becoming involved.

It's clear from the findings that wider applications for ANPR are still largely unknown, with 40% of those able to cite a benefit listing only enforcement/space management services. When considering opportunities to minimise congestion on site, modernise payment options and improve customer experience, ANPR has a lot to offer. Plus, with its powerful automation capability and API integration, manual tasks such as staff permit management, hardware maintenance (as an example, Parkingeye fix 75% of faults remotely) and rich behavioural insight, this technology can give significant time back to already stretched teams. Of course, enforcement remains the 'bread and butter' service for healthcare due to high accuracy rates but many may not know this tech can also be used in conjunction with manned solutions thanks to integrated handheld apps to provide bay management and the ultimate in flexibility. The platform can also support a wide range of touchless services to ensure sites can offer an end-to-end hands-free environment in the post-COVID era.

“People were facing queues, difficulty securing a space and issues in paying, alongside regular breakdowns to the barrier system, which all combined to create frustration and stress for patients, staff and visitors alike. We're now able to welcome a further 50,000 cars each month, thanks to the free flow environment ANPR has created.”



Tom Higgins, Car Parking and Security Manager,
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

75%

Parkingeye fix 75% of faults remotely



Safety, Security & Compliance

It's hard to mention safety in 2020 without touching on COVID-19 and all its associated safety considerations. Social Distancing. A term no-one had really heard of before but one which we now hear a million times a day and it's set to stay, for now at least. But what does that mean for safety on site? Anyone with a car park must understand their hands-free strategy, whilst maintaining good site-flow... and fast.

With all that's been noted about barriers, its role in creating a physical deterrent within certain circumstances shouldn't be underestimated. If a site is tied in with recent capex spend or requires physical barriers for anti-terrorism reasons for instance, ANPR integration could be an option. Essentially, this 'best of both worlds' solution offers contactless arrival on site with no need for the motorist to slow/stop at the barrier. Instead, the camera identifies vehicle registration details on approach and does all the hard work from there, including what charges are due whilst removing the risk of system abuse (namely, exiting visitors gifting newcomers their tickets). The camera understands that the motorist has paid the correct fee on exit and simply lifts, reducing lag time.

Other ways to improve safety on site is by opting for cashless or fully virtual solutions instead, such as auto-pay services like good2go, which simply deducts parking payments on exit

following a simple 3-step registration online. Switching to one-way directional flows with a single entry/exit point can alleviate risk of backlogs and minimise close contact, as can clear lining and safety guidance around payment kiosks, lifts and public walkways.

Any locations housing physical kit will need to implement deep-cleaning regimes, which now should incorporate doors, parking equipment and any other external fixtures. Plus, be clear about site specifics when accepting engineers or suppliers to site, ensure they have hot water in the vans to wash their hands without having to use your facilities and make sure they extend any temporary perimeter barriers (in line with government guidance on hygiene and social distancing).

Good lighting, up-to-date lining and quality surfacing all ensure a site feels more accessible and is safer for users, especially the elderly. Optimally located payment kiosks, set at a height to accommodate disabled users, are also key. Switching to cashless has obvious security benefits as does clearly visible BPA-compliant signage to deter unauthorised use. For sites wishing to go further still, The Park Mark® Safer Parking Scheme is a Police Crime Prevention Initiative (Police-CPI) aimed at reducing both crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities across the UK. This may be an option if security is a particular concern.

“Our manned attendant was handling large amounts of cash which created a different set of headaches, both in terms of personal security and fraud. This also meant that if they were absent from work, we wouldn't generate any revenue – something we simply couldn't sustain given the demand for parking.”



Dai Davies, Abersoch Golf Club Manager

Stop anti-social behaviour in as little as

3 months

and gain full visibility of who's using your site, and when.

In summary



Technology

It's here to help by giving you back control, providing a wealth of user insight, easing backlogs, creating a free-flow system and keeping blue light routes clear.



Revenue

Boost payments, reduce manual input errors and lift compliance through modern solutions which can significantly increase revenues to reinvest back into your estate.



Time

By embracing automation you can drive down costs and give time back to busy internal teams, freeing them up to support your site in other key areas.



Experience

Remove the stress from parking, enable a free-flow environment and implement a parking solution that better supports your patients, visitors and staff.

All corners of the hospital ecosystem need to work together to drive change.

For years, the humble car park has landed in the lap of busy operational/facilities teams and is often seen as a 'necessary evil'. Those days are gone, with parking now able to free up threadbare operational teams, drive out cost through automation, utterly transform the staff and visitor experience, deliver serious revenue to reinvest back into the Trust and facilitate a safer user environment.

Parking is not your problem child, it's your star.

Since 2004 Parkingeye has grown from a pioneering provider into a market-leader which provides a wide range of ANPR, Pay & Display, permit and manned solutions to ease parking pain for healthcare sites across the UK, giving them the capabilities to work and park effortlessly in a highly connected world.

Working with hundreds of healthcare sites across the UK, from large acute NHS Trusts to independent medical centres, Parkingeye's dedicated team provide a highly personalised service which has earned the company a 97% client retention rate.

In association with NHS Shared Business Services, Parkingeye is an approved supplier on the 'Car Park Management & Infrastructure' Framework, which offers NHS sites an OJEU-compliant route to securing market-leading car park management services.



Parkingeye

One parking partner. Infinite possibilities.

To transform the way you approach parking, get in touch.

www.parkingeye.co.uk/nhs | enquiries@parkingeye.co.uk | 01772 450 542

