



Cllr John Wright
The Stables, Paradise Farm
Lower Hartlip Road
Hartlip
Sittingbourne
Kent
ME9 7SU

14 OCT 2011

Our Ref: 789/11/AR
Please quote on all replies

Dear John

Re: Blue Badge Scheme

Thank you for your email dated 9th October 2011.

Please find enclosed a written statement by Norman Baker MP. I am sure that you will be pleased to learn that the changes to the Blue Badge Scheme outlined in Mr Baker's written statement will apply from the 1st January 2012.

To find out more about the reform of the Blue Badge Scheme please visit:
<http://www2.dft.gov.uk/transportforyou/access/bluebadge/reform/index.html>

I hope this reassures you that the Government is tackling abuse of the Blue Badge Scheme, however, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Gordon Henderson
GORDON HENDERSON MP

Constituency Office
Top Floor, Unit 10
Periwinkle Court Business Centre
Church Street
Milton Regis
Sittingbourne
Kent ME10 2JZ



GORDON HENDERSON MP
Member of Parliament for Sittingbourne and Sheppey

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Blue Badge Reform Programme

Statement by: Norman Baker MP.
Date delivered: 14 February 2011.
Statement type: Written.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Norman Baker): I am today publishing the Government's plans for reforming the Blue Badge (Disabled Parking) Scheme. The measures that I am announcing will help those who rely on Blue Badges for mobility reasons. The measures will tackle rising levels of fraud and abuse, and will ensure both that badges are issued more fairly and that the scheme remains sustainable in the long term for those who rely on it most. These reforms will be delivered as soon as possible, and many within a year.

The Scheme helps over 2.5 million disabled people in England retain their independence, by enabling them to park close to jobs, services and facilities. However very few changes have been made to the scheme since it was established in the 1970s. Having listened to the views of badge holders, the general public, disabled people's groups and local authorities, it is evident that the scheme needs to be modernised to reduce current problems and deal with future challenges.

I want to ensure that the scheme focuses better on those whom it was intended to benefit. In particular, this means targeting those people who misuse and abuse it to the disadvantage of genuine badge holders. Secondly, this means ensuring that people have fair and equal access to the concession and the benefits it offers, regardless of where they live.

We are providing improved powers for local authorities to tackle abuse and fraud. This includes extending the grounds available to local authorities to refuse to issue and to withdraw badges and providing local authorities with a power to cancel badges that have been lost, stolen, have expired, or have been withdrawn for misuse. We are also providing local authority-authorized officers with an on-the-spot power to recover badges that have been cancelled or misused. We propose to amend existing legislation to clarify wrongful use of a badge and the powers to inspect badges.

To prevent abuse from happening in the first place and to deal with rising levels of fraud and abuse, we are implementing a new badge design that is harder to copy, forge and alter. Arrangements for printing, personalising and distributing the badge are also being changed and will enable more effective monitoring of cancelled, lost and stolen badges.

We are establishing, with local authorities, a common service delivery project which could deliver operational efficiency savings of up to £20m per year, help to reduce and prevent abuse and improve customer services. The project will also make available an on-line application facility which should result in faster, more automatic renewals for people whose circumstances do not change between renewal periods.



In order to ensure that badges are issued more fairly and consistently across the country, we are amending legislation to require wider use of independent mobility assessments to determine eligibility, including where previously that assessment was carried out by a GP. To support this, we are providing local authorities with control of the current National Health Service spend on Blue Badge assessments. In addition, new good practice guidance will be issued to local authorities to help them make improvements in scheme administration and eligibility assessment.

We are extending eligibility for a badge to some other people, to address current anomalies and issues of fairness. Eligibility is being extended to more disabled children between the ages of 2 and 3 with specific medical conditions and we are providing continuous automatic entitlement to a badge to severely disabled service personnel and veterans. We also intend to remove residency requirements for disabled service personnel and their families who are posted overseas on UK bases. This will enable them to apply for a badge.

To help cover costs more appropriately and to enable the delivery of a new badge design and the common service improvement project, we are raising the maximum fee for a badge that local authorities can charge from the £2 that it has been for nearly 30 years, to £10. 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. In return, badge holders will benefit from less abuse, improved accessibility and better customer services.

I am also publishing today, a summary of responses to a public consultation on the scheme.