



Cleaner, brighter, safer car parks

Swansea invests in car parking future



Attractive and vibrant

Swansea seeks to be an attractive and vibrant destination for visitors, shoppers, businesses and residents. This includes investing in safer parking.

City and County of Swansea, the local council, manages 47 car parks with 6,850 spaces in total. Five are multi-stories and the remainder are surface car parks; nine have more than 200 spaces.

They are in the city centre, along the beaches and promenades of the Mumbles and Gower Peninsula, and in the suburbs of Morriston, Clydach, Gorseinon, Gowerton, Pontarddulais, Sketty and Brynhyfryd.



Three of the surface car parks are park and rides; they have 1,550 spaces between them. They are spaced around Swansea in the north, east and north west between 1.5 and three miles from the city centre.

Each has an enclosed waiting area with seating, refreshment machines and information points, as well as toilets with

disabled and baby changing facilities. There are also disabled and mother and baby parking bays, cycle racks and CCTV.

The park and rides are open Monday to Saturday from 6.45am to 7.30pm, plus Sundays during the Christmas period. All are within a ten minute drive of the M4 and so easy to get to:

- Landore Park and Ride, with 550 spaces, is convenient from Swansea Valley and the Brecon Beacons. It opened in 2002
- Fabian Way Park and Ride opened in 2003. It also has 550 spaces and is convenient from Neath, Port Talbot, Bridgend and Cardiff
- Fforestfach Park and Ride is convenient from Carmarthen, Llanelli and Ammanford and opened in 2006.



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From each, buses travel every 15 minutes to and from the city centre, with multiple stops for passengers to get on and off.

Park and ride charges are a flat fee of £2.50 per day. Regular users can buy pre-pay cards and receive 12 days of parking for the price of ten days.



Improved environment, reduced crime

Swansea developed the three park and rides to reduce congestion in the city centre and improve the environment for visitors, shoppers, businesses and residents.

Occupancy rates were growing at all three park and rides until 2010. Since then occupancy has dropped off by around three per cent each year and now averages 45 per cent across the three.

Swansea's deputy parking services manager Steve Sheriff attributes this to commercial car park providers who are undercutting council car park charges via cheaper season tickets, as well as closure of a couple of large call centres and other city centre facilities.

"Most of our users are commuters who work in the city centre and with the call centres closing there are less commuters. More workers are also choosing to drive into the centre and park in the other car parks run by commercial organisations," he explained.



In earlier years car crime was quite a problem in Swansea. A key reason for the council joining Secured by Design, the precursor to the Safer Parking Scheme,



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was to demonstrate its car parks were safe places for vehicles and people. Eleven are now in the scheme and have the Park Mark award.

As a result car crime has dropped significantly. In the seven years Steve Sheriff has worked in the parking services team there have been no thefts or vehicle damage in the council's Park Mark accredited car parks.

"Swansea was one of the most expensive UK cities for car insurance because of thefts, but I don't believe this is still the case," he said.



Accreditation process

During the bi-annual accreditation process Steve visits each of the council's Park Mark car parks with BPA area manager Chas Cannon and a specially-trained police assessor. During their most recent visit, in 2015, they assessed all 11 accredited car parks in a single day.

Chas and the assessor have a list of good management practices and preventative security measures they look for in each car park. These include surveillance such as CCTV, lighting, crime recording, vehicle and pedestrian access, traffic flows, quality of surfaces, cleanliness, signage, staff training and secure boundaries and perimeters.

Prior to their visit, Swansea had already begun a programme of improvements for its car parks. During 2014 the council installed a pay-on-foot system with users



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paying when they leave the car park. At £400,000 this is a significant investment and makes it easier to manage the car parks from a central control room.

Improvements in 2015 include repainting the lines between parking bays so they are clearer and easier to see.

During the accreditation visit Chas Cannon suggested a few other improvements, including updated signage on the main roads from which drivers access the three park and rides, as well as signs within all accredited car parks highlighting they have been awarded the Park Mark.

Subsequently the council hope to invest in upgrading signage within the car parks and on the public highway; but with an estimated cost in excess of £70,000 this will need to be spread over a few years.

The BPA has also helped by providing posters in both Welsh and English. These are now displayed at vehicle entrances, pedestrian access areas, on pay machines and parking zones at all 11 accredited car parks.

"Now we are publicising our Park Mark accreditation more effectively we expect commuters and shoppers will see they and their vehicles are safer in our park and rides and occupancy rates will begin to increase," said Steve.



More information:

www.britishparking.co.uk/Park-Mark---The-Safer-Parking-Scheme

<http://www.britishparking.co.uk/Initiatives/Park-Mark>

<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/parkandride>