



**POPLA**

Parking on Private Land Appeals

**2023**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

---

PARKING ON PRIVATE LAND APPEALS (POPLA)

## CONTENTS

---

### WELCOME

Message from Ed Dodman 4

### OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

5

### SECTION 01

Commentary on appeal numbers 6

### SECTION 02

Appeal themes and work with the British Parking Association (BPA) 7 - 9

### SECTION 03

Industry affairs 10

#### Website

[www.popla.co.uk](http://www.popla.co.uk)

#### Telephone

03301 596 126

#### APPENDIX 01:

POPLA 2023 OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

#### APPENDIX 02:

POPLA APPEALS DATA

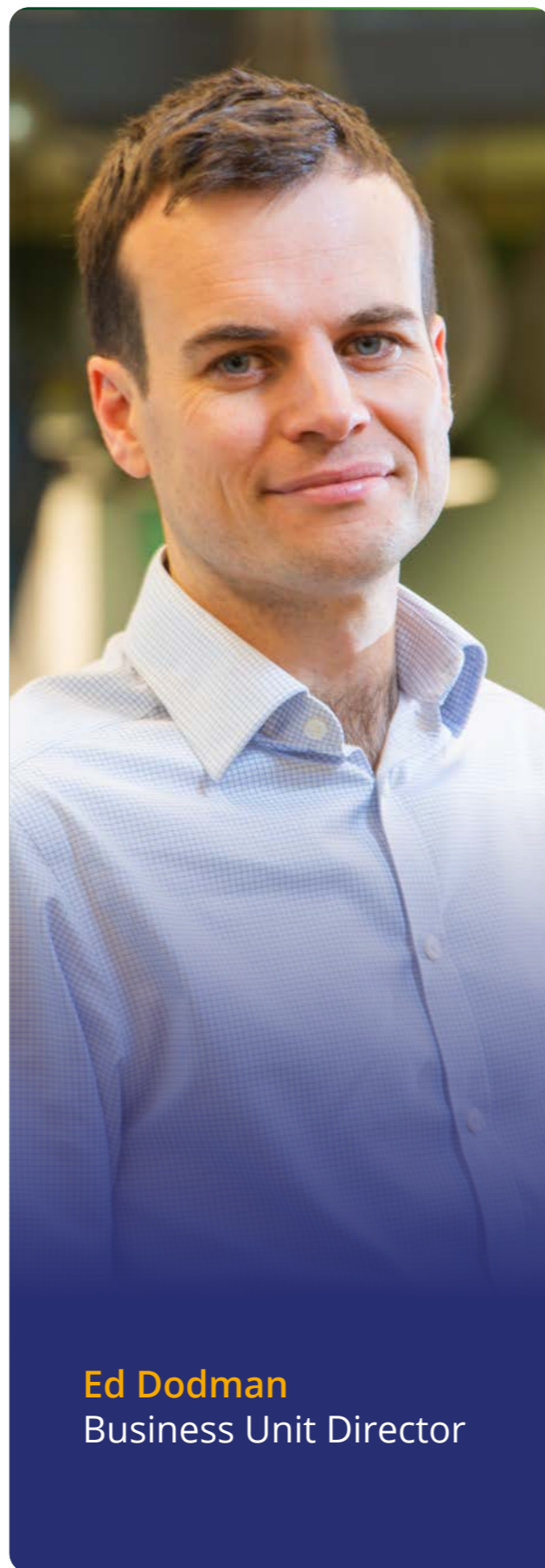
## MESSAGE FROM ED DODMAN

"In the year to October 2023, we saw a record year for parking appeals submitted to us with more than 93,000 motorists seeking our help, believing that they had received incorrect or unfair parking charge notices. Although record numbers of appeals were received, we were able to effectively manage this increase in demand with the majority of motorists receiving their decision before the target date.

This year, we've continued to work closely with parking operators to highlight opportunities for improvements across the sector by identifying trends and repeat appeals. This ensures that our insights can have a positive impact for other motorists who may be affected by the same issues. This report contains some examples of this important work.

In many of the appeals we see, motorists don't argue the validity of the parking charge, but they explain why circumstances on the day mean the parking charges could be seen as unfair. There is currently inconsistency in operator handling of such appeals – and this is something that impacts on the reputation of the industry.

As the Government continues to consider the implementation of the Parking (Code of Practice) Act, we support the aim of ensuring that all operators are working to the same enhanced standards to deliver better outcomes for motorists. We also look forward to enhanced guidance for operators on the treatment of mitigating or potentially unfair circumstances.



**Ed Dodman**  
Business Unit Director

## POPLA'S YEAR IN NUMBERS

Between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023, we...

**Handled 15,907 inbound calls**  
with 98% of calls answered within 30 seconds  
- 1,692 compared to 2022 (-10%)

**Received 93,085 appeals**  
+8,611 compared to 2022 (+10%)

**Decided 66,341 appeals**  
+9,902 compared to 2022 (+18%)

**\*Allowed 14,840 appeals**  
+111 compared to 2022

**42% of appeals that completed the POPLA process resulted in the appellant's parking charge being cancelled**  
37,125 out of 88,626 (-3%)

**Parking operators decided not to contest 22,285 appeals**  
+2,379 compared to 2022 (+12%)

**\*\*Refused 51,501 appeals**  
+9,844 compared to 2022

**88,626 appeals completed the POPLA process**  
+12,334 compared to 2022 (+16%)

**We also referred 731 appeals back to the operator**

to ask them to cancel the parking charge as a goodwill gesture due to mitigating circumstances - and they agreed to do this 303 times.

**41% of appeals referred were accepted**

\*An allowed appeal is one where we found in the appellant's favour and allowed their appeal to stand - leading to the parking charge being cancelled.

\*\* A refused appeal is one where we didn't find in the appellant's favour - the parking charge stood.

# COMMENTARY ON APPEAL NUMBERS

Over 37,000 motorists who raised their appeal to POPLA this year received the news they were hoping for - their parking charges were cancelled.

Some parking charges are not issued correctly which aren't always captured by the parking operator's internal appeals processes. We're able to identify this in our appeal assessments and require the parking operator to cancel the charges.

We don't assess all appeals that come to us. When a motorist appeals, we ask key questions that allow us to understand the appeal and gather important evidence. Our system then packages this up and sends it to the operator in a clear and understandable format. The operator can contest the appeal by sending an evidence pack within 21 days; or tell us that they won't contest the appeal. In 23.5% of cases, the operator decided not to contest the appeal, resulting in cancelled parking charges for motorists. While there are a variety of reasons for an operator not to contest an appeal, the value we add by making appeal reasons clear to operators will contribute to these numbers and this results in positive outcomes for motorists.

In order to ensure that motorists who wish to use our service can do so, we pride ourselves on our accessibility. We're not just an online appeal portal, we're a team of humans who speak to motorists and deal with any queries they have around the appeal process. People can contact us by phone letter, email, or through the website. We also offer translation services to ensure we're accessible to all motorists.



**“Over 37,000 motorists who raised their appeal to POPLA this year received the news they were hoping for - their parking charges were cancelled”**

# APPEAL THEMES AND WORK WITH THE BPA

There are many reasons why we may receive an appeal from a motorist. For example, a motorist may have a different understanding of the parking conditions to the parking operator or they believe the parking operator hasn't followed the correct process to pursue them for the ticket.

A proportion also come from motorists who understand the parking conditions and recognise that they didn't keep to them but provide reasons why. For example, they might recognise that they didn't pay but tell us the machines in the car park were faulty or there was a problem with a payment app.

Our team work closely together and discuss the appeals that we're assessing. This approach, along with our system, allows us to establish patterns and trends. Where we see a trend, we'll ringfence the cases to find a suitable solution for dealing with future cases.

This provides the opportunity for efficiency and consistency. If, for example, one appellant has multiple appeals for the same site, we'll have one assessor deal with all appeals. Then, if we determine that we're going to allow all of the appeals, we'll speak to the operator to ask them to cancel all of the parking charges, rather than going through the process of responding to several individual appeals.

This also means that, if we have multiple appeals from different appellants about the same issue at one particular site, or across several sites with that operator, it identifies there is a potential issue that needs resolving. Where this happens, as well as making things right for the motorists who have appealed,

we'll work with the British Parking Association to highlight the problem, so they can support the operator in fixing it. That stops future motorists from receiving parking charges in the same circumstances. We've included some case studies below to show examples of this work.

## CASE STUDIES

### PAYMENT MACHINE CONFUSION

A parking operator had several different car parks that used the same payment machines which asked motorists to enter the last three digits of their Vehicle Registration Mark (VRM), then select the image of their vehicle and make payment.

Appellants were advising that they had followed the correct process but still received a PCN. The operator's response to this was that the appellant had selected the wrong vehicle.

What we found was that the operator's Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras were capturing two pictures of the same vehicle, one with a full VRM and one with a partial VRM. Both pictures displayed on the payment terminal. The motorist wasn't to know the difference but, if they selected the picture where the partial VRM had been captured, the machine wasn't registering payment against their vehicle, which resulted in the parking charge.

# APPEAL THEMES AND WORK WITH THE BPA

## CASE STUDIES (CONTINUED)

### PAYMENT MACHINE CONFUSION (CONTINUED)

We raised this with the BPA who contacted the operator to work on a solution. The operator immediately suspended the issuing of parking charges at the site, then worked to fix the problem. We no longer see appeals about this issue.

### UNABLE TO COMPLY WITH THE PARKING CONDITIONS

We identified a site where several motorists had appealed that it was impossible for them to meet the parking conditions. Those conditions required motorists to obtain a permit to park by scanning a QR Code inside the premises. On entering the premises, the motorists could not locate the QR Code. Several sent us detailed photographs and videos to show the QR Code was nowhere to be seen in the lobby of the building.

When we flagged this via the BPA, the operator recognised that their instructions were not sufficiently clear and updated their signs to confirm to motorists exactly where, within the premises the QR Code was located, so it was easier for motorists to keep to the parking conditions.



# APPEAL THEMES AND WORK WITH THE BPA

## CASE STUDIES (CONTINUED)

### OPERATORS NOT FOLLOWING CORRECT PROCESS FOR PARKING CHARGES ISSUED IN SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

POPLA deals with appeals from motorists in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In England and Wales, parking operators are able to pursue vehicle keepers for unpaid parking charges if they do not know the driver. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, there is no law that allows operators to pursue vehicle keepers. They can only pursue a driver for an unpaid parking charge.

For this reason, where a parking charge has been issued in Scotland or Northern Ireland, we can only accept an appeal from a driver. Where a motorist provides a POPLA Code related to a Scottish or Northern Irish site, our system lets them know that only drivers can appeal.

When rejecting appeals, some parking operators were issuing incorrect POPLA Codes for sites in England – meaning motorists were able to bypass the system measures that let them know only drivers can appeal.

This has resulted in a broken consumer journey for these motorists, with us needing to reach out to someone to confirm who was driving. In some cases, where the driver was not known, we've had to confirm that we were unable to hear the appeal.

We highlighted this to the BPA and it worked with members on this practice to ensure motorists are given the correct instructions and referred in the right way.



# INDUSTRY AFFAIRS

## PRIVATE PARKING CODE OF PRACTICE

The new Private Parking Code of Practice was originally published on 7 February 2022. This was subsequently withdrawn by the Government after some legal challenge. Government is currently seeking further information to help design a code that works for motorists and industry.

We support the view that a Code of Practice can bring consistency for operators and raise standards for motorists. It would be a positive step for the sector and we would support its introduction in the future, should it be achieved.

In the meantime, we know the BPA is keen to drive up standards and has already set new expectations of some of its operators in line with some of the non-contested expectations in the Parking Code of Practice.

We'll continue to work with the BPA to provide insights on areas of motorist dissatisfaction and inconsistencies in operator behaviour to help it shape policy for now and in the future.

## SINGLE APPEALS SERVICE

We continue to assist the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of its discovery process. We'll continue to share information on appeal data, themes, process, systems, quality assurance, customer satisfaction, improving standards and highlighting all of the things that make POPLA a high-volume, high performing parking appeal service.

We look forward to continuing to work with the department in 2024 in its quest to find the best solution for private parking appeals.



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities



# POPLA

---

**Parking on Private Land Appeals**