



Department for **Transport**

**From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State**

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Local Authority Leaders
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Dear Local Authority Leader

The Government's Blue Badge Reform Programme: Blue Badge Improvement Service

Following on from my letter in February 2011, I am writing to ensure that you are kept aware of progress with delivering important reforms to the Blue Badge Scheme, in particular with respect to the Blue Badge Improvement Service.

Since I last wrote to you, we have carried out a competitive procurement to contract a supplier to work with Local Authorities to develop and implement the Blue Badge Improvement Service (BBIS). In May, we appointed Northgate Public Services to deliver the BBIS in partnership with Payne Security who will print and supply the new badge design.

The key outcomes of the BBIS will be a central database of all Blue Badges on issue, the secure printing, personalisation and distribution of the new Blue Badge design and on-line applications and payments via Directgov. These outcomes will help to improve operational efficiency, reduce costs and improve customer services. They will also prevent fraud and abuse of the scheme and ensure that the concession is targeted fairly and sustainably.

BBIS is being delivered using an innovative funding model. Northgate and Payne are investing the necessary capital to ensure the system is built and implemented, in return for a charge per badge issued for the duration of the contract. Local Authorities will pay Northgate directly, and all will pay the same unit price that has been fixed for 5-years.

During June and July, we ran workshops in England, Scotland and Wales to explain in more detail the scope of BBIS, to discuss what is needed over the next few months by way of preparation and change management; and to show how the system and the new badge might look.

These workshops were well attended and the feedback we received was very positive. The Local Authority representatives who attended will now be making preparations for the changes in service delivery. We are in the process of amending legislation that will mean the new badge design is the only one that can be legally issued by Local Authorities from 1 January 2012 to all new applicants, those renewing and those replacing badges, and to raise the maximum fee that Local Authorities are able to charge for a badge to £10.

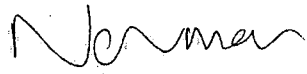
It is important that you are aware of the responsibilities for the Blue Badge service in your Local Authority, and that they are hopefully taking the following recommended steps to ensuring the successful delivery of this important business change:

- Reviewing current Blue Badge process to agree how BBIS will be adopted by the LA.
- Review of charging policy. In England, Local Authorities will be able to charge successful badge applicant up to a maximum of £10 per badge for badges issued with a start date of 1 January 2012. The cost to Local Authorities of the new badge, along with the parking clock, the information leaflet, second class postage and access to all the other BBIS services is £4.60 plus VAT. The fee is being raised to £10 to cover this cost, and also other administration costs associated with processing applications.
- Consideration of how the BBIS will fit in with existing systems and whether any integration is required. The Blue Badge team may require support from IT departments.
- The DfT has signed an overarching agreement with Northgate and each individual LA has to sign an Access Agreement with Northgate. These have all now been issued and will require an authorised signatory to sign the agreements.

Please share this information with all colleagues involved in the administration or enforcement of the Blue Badge scheme and support them through the next few months as they prepare for change. I appreciate your support in delivering a more effective and much improved scheme.

I am copying this letter to Local Authority Chief Executives.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Norman".

NORMAN BAKER