

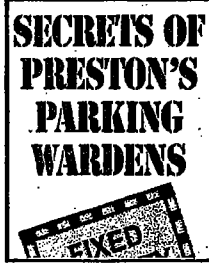
Hussshhh Secrets: we didn't tell you this, but...

- Don't ticket-off! If you get a ticket, leave it on your windscreen as you can only get one ticket a day.
- The weather: this changes the rules, if falling snow obscures a timeplate or covers a yellow fine you can't be ticketed.
- Steamy windows: Wardens have reported bumpy goings-on at the multi-storey car park in Avenham. I was told: "I went to ticket a van once and it started shaking and the windows steamed up." It is one of a number of incidents reported by wardens.



RIGHT OF REPLY

Tim Cowen of NCP said: "We always support the drivers' right to appeal. Any driver who feels they have been treated unfairly should appeal, and we are very happy that the independent appeals service is working well."



MANY, many, unhappy returns – that is the clear birthday message to Parkwise from ticketed motorists in Preston. Thousands of people across the city have appealed against the tickets placed on their windscreen by traffic wardens. During our special undercover investigation into life as a traffic warden, the huge number of people who feel they have been ticketed unfairly was revealed. I was told by bosses at HQ in Preston that 50% of tickets issued are appealed by motorists. The latest count of issued tickets show that, since Parkwise took over one year ago, 25,676 tickets have been issued in Preston. This means almost 1,000 appeals letters are penned by motorists each month which stacks up to about 35 a day. Parkwise bosses also revealed that the number of disabled motorists who appeal against a ticket is near to 100%. Figures of successful appeals have not been released but the Evening Post understands there are certain occasions when a ticket will be cancelled.

For instance, if a motorist, who has committed their first parking contravention by not displaying a valid pay and display ticket clearly, writes to explain it is their first offence, they are likely to have the ticket tipped up. Also, residents ticketed because they displayed an out of date residents permit will win an appeal if they can show their permit was less than 14 days out of date. Blue time plates, still dotted in many places across the city, including on Moor Lane, are also no longer valid. Upon receiving a parking ticket a motorist has 14 days to pay – if they decide to they have to pay £30. If they appeal then the fine will be frozen at £30 until the matter is resolved. The Evening Post learned many motorists are doing this in a bid to stall the time they get to pay at the lowest amount. Motorists who fail to pay within 14 days and do not appeal have to pay £60. Ultimately, if a motorist fails to pay the £60 fine they receive the highest fine of £90. Because parking offences are no longer criminal offences – they are contraventions – long running disputes are dealt with by bailiffs, not the courts. Parkwise is hoping to extend the areas it sends wardens to by training more how to ride scooters. Many are already using cars, but the Evening Post understands the council wants to blitz more remote, rural areas like Goosnargh, Beacon Fell and parts of Garstang to boost ticket numbers further.

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IN September 2004 the job of dealing with parking enforcement shifted from the police and into the hands of Lancashire's town halls. National Car Parks and Parkwise won the contract for a seven-year period to cover the whole county. In the past 12 months the Evening Post has been inundated with letters and calls from people accusing attendants of being unfair. Investigative reporter **NICK OWENS** went undercover to find out the truth of life as a parking warden

UNFAIR?

Half of all motorists appeal the tickets... Nearly 26,000 have been issued in Preston

The time in the class, the tips from the trainer, the chats in the staff room. I have been "warden-ised"

– Nick Owens reflects

**DAY
RELIEVED:**
"How do you
sleep at
night?"



TODAY I was on Beat Six – Avenham.

Two cars were ticketed at Mohammed's Solicitors, a firm on Library Street. It is ridiculous. I was told one car gets a ticket each day because the owner is locked in a dispute with the council. He will be thousands of quid down if he loses – the tickets are scattered around the inside of his car like confetti. I issued four tickets today. Two on Avenham Street – both for expired pay and display tickets. Two on Regent Street, one for parking without a permit and one for an overstay in a free bay. I only saw two of the people affected – on Avenham Street. One was a Chinese man, totally confused. I explained he could appeal. Another was a man who stuck his finger up at me as he drove off. Nice. After lunch, I chatted to a motorist from Birmingham who was given a ticket by another warden. His vehicle immobiliser was faulty and he couldn't get into his car. The warden had no idea of course and the driver will appeal. The guy told me that it is much cheaper to park in the Midlands. He was not, he said, "having a good day".

No such problems for me. I am told I "done excellent" by my supervisor today. I got four tickets and more than 45 observations. Reaction from the public today? As bad as yesterday. I was subjected to more verbal abuse. I was spat at as I walked through the city centre. I had a lorry-load of hand gestures thrust in my direction. I froze as vehicles sped up as I crossed the road. I listened as people asked me how I sleep at night (response – two pillows). And I watched as children gave me dirty looks. But I have to shrug it all off or I would explode. It is all in a day's work for a traffic warden.

**DAY
TRIPLET:**
"On my
own"

I almost arrived late for the morning briefing, but got through the door at 8am. During the briefing we were told of more areas we can't

issue. Someone joked that the council is doing it as they are getting too many tickets. I was told I am to be on Beat Five and Beat Three in the city centre and I am ready to be on my own today. On the way to starting my beat, I learned more about the internal pressure of tickets. A warden told me how it is ground into the wardens. I have noticed this. The language within the HQ is all focused around tickets. "How you doing?" or "How are you?" is always a request for knowing how many tickets you have. On top of that I think about the end of the day. You have to say how many tickets you got, but how do they measure success at keeping traffic flowing? If you don't do well with tickets you feel bad that you have let the team down. I learned one of the team has suggested lobbying for a hotline for the public to complain. At the start of the morning I almost issue two tickets but both drivers return in the nick of time. When they come back and find no ticket on their car they smile like I have made their day. I hear two men, one the owner of the sports car I was about to ticket, say "he was all right weren't he?" "A proper



Dropout rates may rise in this thankless and low-paid job

Let us know

What is your experience at the hands of Parkwise? Have you successfully appealed a ticket or learned something this week which would suggest you have been ticketed incorrectly? Please let us know your views at the Evening Post: e-mail lep.newsdesk@lep.co.uk or write to us at Oliver's Piece, Fulwood, Preston PR2 9ZA

APPEALS against parking tickets issued in Preston may be sky high but the number of parking wardens could be about to DROP. The brigade of wardens based in the city are unhappy over their pay - which the Evening Post understands to be the lowest rate for anywhere in Britain. Wardens in Preston are paid about £5.50 an hour but wardens in Chorley are on £6.25 an hour and Lancaster wardens receive more than £7 an hour. This has left many of Preston's wardens angry - especially because wardens are often drafted into the city from Chorley and Lancaster to blitz ticket hotspots and get paid more than their Preston colleagues. Crunch time for Parkwise and NCP will come when the details of a pay review are announced. NCP has just been taken over by the firm 3i, Europe's leading private equity firm, in a £355m deal and, during our

special undercover investigation, many wardens admitted they would walk if they did not get a hefty pay rise. The turnover of wardens at Preston is also incredibly high. The Evening Post understands that, since September

when NCP took over enforcement in the city, 117 wardens have gone through the Preston HQ. Around 30 of these 117 people took exams and sat lessons required to become a warden but never turned in afterwards or dropped out from the course. About one in four wannabe-wardens fail to make the grade in the final exam.

gent," replied his mate. It's not all bad on these streets. But, finally, I was on these streets on my own. And in the space of an hour I had issued three tickets. As I issued, everything dropped into place. The time in the class, the tips from the trainer, the chats in the staff room. I have been "warden-ised" and I know how to get tickets and I know how to get them fast and properly. I am another ticket machine. By lunch I had issued four. As I walk back to base I move on a line of cabs on Tithebarn Street which are on the wrong side of the road. "Come on lads, you know the rules." And they moved - like dominoes being nudged. And I felt a little bit of power when the motorists jammed behind say "thanks mate". After lunch, it's more tickets. I slow down to be honest and finish the day with seven. I feel it could have been double but I'm not bothered. I'm not driven by a passion for tickets. I laugh with the office girls from the legal firms on Winckley Square. They move their cars from the free hour bays each hour. Every hour they see me come down the road, out they come running. In the end, I started knocking on their window and it's giggles all round. Their bosses were hilarious.



A MAN ALONE: Braving the public, Nick Owens stalks the streets for illegal parking

Each hour they come out - jogging - to shift their sports cars. "Saves you going to the gym lads," I shout. They smile, but in their minds I know what they are thinking. It's 3pm, it's bright, warm sunshine and the lawyers, braces on, bellies-a-bulging and foreheads frowning, are running to move their sports cars. And, like a merry-go-round we see synchronised parking. Moving to the next bay for another hour. It's quite a sight is

Winckley Square by day. What was also a sight today was the reaction from the public. When I drove in today I told myself I would say hello to everyone I passed. I wanted to see their reaction. Out of the hundreds of people I passed 90% were nice. Said hello, good afternoon, asked how I was doing, stopped to chat. The other 10% questioned my parentage, my sexuality, made use of their middle finger, told me to get a proper job, told me

to go **** myself. And the passing motorist? As bad. White van drivers who open the window and hurl verbal abuse. Kids who wind down the window and shout profanities while their parents laugh their heads off. It is the soundtrack for life as a traffic warden. And I hated it, found it deeply offensive and uncomfortable. In all then I issued seven tickets. Only one driver returned while I was issuing. He took it fine.

Knew he was in the wrong and got on with it. Returning to base I chatted to a woman on Winckley Square who teased me about being new. She tells me that each day "my bosses" at Parkwise have tray upon tray of sandwiches delivered to them. Apparently the delivery van parks in contravention. I return back to base, give in my stats and am told "well done." I have had another good day.

Spat at...threatened...abused ...life on Preston's streets is a



IN September 2004 the job of dealing with parking enforcement shifted from the police and into the hands of Lancashire's town halls. National Car Parks and Parkwise won the contract for a seven-year period to cover the whole county. In the past 12 months the Evening Post has been inundated with letters and calls from people accusing attendants of being unfair. Investigative reporter **NICK OWENS** went undercover to find out the truth of life as a parking warden

WAR ZONE

IT was nervous faces all round this morning as myself, and the other five trainees who have stuck this out, filed in to take our traffic warden exam. The exams were difficult with hours of revision needed in order to pass. The pass mark was 75%. After sitting my paper I was not confident. The questions were tricky but presented the issues wardens will have to encounter each day on Preston's streets. It is clear people who pass know exactly what the rules are and how to enforce them. And obviously when they are doing wrong... When the exam was finished none of us were confident. An hour later the results were in. I had passed with 93% and got the mickey taken out of me by everyone who refused to sit with me for the rest of the morning because they were convinced I was secretly a supervisor in disguise. So I am now officially a traffic warden. I am to be PR112 (PR like the city's postcode Preston). And my next task is to get out there and start doing the job in uniform. But I will not be alone just yet. I am to be accompanied by another warden until it is clear I have learned the ropes. The afternoon was spent learning how to work the

DAY NINE:
"Undercover supervisor"



hand held computer, the printer and the digital camera which are the key pieces of equipment for the modern warden. There was a lot of sitting about because our ordered uniform has gone walkabouts - it is due to be with us tomorrow. We can't go out without it because to issue a ticket without wearing a uniform deems the ticket invalid. As we are sitting around a message comes through from a warden on the market. A guy has just drove at him after he went to give the car a ticket. I look at the other two trainees and one mouths the swear word we are all thinking. Every day of the week, on the streets of Preston, wardens are being harangued. Spat at. Driven at. Squared up to. Verbally abused. Tomorrow I am out there. It has been a year now since Parkwise took over the reins but there is no candles or cake in the staffroom - just weary faces fed up of a year of abuse from the public and a year of changing rules from the council. And it is becoming clearer by the day that perhaps

the real villains in all of this are the council. They set the rules, they set the prices, they answer appeals. But of course the public doesn't see it that way. Tomorrow it's my turn to face the music. Speaking of which, eight wardens will be working on security for the Stereophonics concert at the Guild Hall tomorrow. Which reminds one warden of the day two cars taking snooker players to the grand prix at the Guild Hall got tickets. "They went mad," he said. "The Lancashire Evening Post did a cracking spread on it, really funny, I still have it at home somewhere I think." If he does, let's just hope he doesn't look at the reporter's byline.

DAY TEN:
"It's an emergency, I can't drive"

D-day.
I was told to go on Beat Four - Deepdale, also known as "Grief Beat". I was to shadow a warden

until my uniform arrived, then go back to base and get it. I soon learn Kent Street is a hotbed for tickets, especially on Saturdays. On St Ignatius Square a van driver is let off a ticket when he should not be. The driver is in a residents bay with no permit. He says he is working in the house and the owner said it is OK. There is a lack of consistency here and another warden who comes along tomorrow and moves them on will get a volley of abuse. This may have been a case of a warden acting with common sense by not sticking to the rules, but it also seems to be creating a potential problem. Interesting incident on Stanleyfield Road at about 9am. The council has closed off access to the road for two days for building work. The roadworkers turned up at 7am and said all the residents, who have bought permits, have to move their cars. Problem is, the residents are not allowed to park for two days in one hour bays. They have to keep moving about or they will get tickets. They are up in arms and confront Warden D and I but the council will not change their minds on this. Basically, we have a situation where people are turf off their street by the council and then not allowed to park anywhere else without fears of getting a ticket. One man



Nearly 100 tickets so far and counting...that's just ONE car

THERE seemed to be three certainties in life: death, taxes and that one particular car on Library Street would get a ticket. Week after week traffic wardens would arrive at the vehicle parked next to Mohammed's Solicitors on Stoneygate, smile, make a note, wait six minutes for nobody to come and move the car, and then put a ticket on the windscreen.

Trouble is the owner, Hanif Mohammed, was not taking his medicine and was refusing to pay any of the fines.

Mr Mohammed insisted on parking on the road next to his office as he says the land belongs to his building.

Parkwise, however, claimed the land was, in fact, part of the public highway.

Mr Mohammad says the matter is already the subject of legal action but, since Parkwise took over enforcement 12 months ago, traffic wardens have been instructed Mr Mohammed is parked in contravention and they must issue tickets.

As a result of this checkmate there have been almost 100 tickets issued - many were clearly visible scattered around Mr Mohammed's car.

For the wardens, this was one car everyone wanted to get to each day. Our special undercover investigation found many wardens going off their beats to get the car - a practice wardens call "poaching".

As a result, the ticket was usually stuck on to the windscreen by 9am - long before the postman calls.

When we approached Mr Mohammed he said he was unable to discuss the situation because of legal proceedings. He said: "I don't want to say too much at all but the matter was litigated on and we were successful."

"It is fair to say that more often than not now my car gets a ticket - but not every day."

"But this is not just about me, it affects clients who park here too and some have decided not to pay their tickets. "I would say the matter is extremely annoying."

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'One man tells me to ** off when I say good morning. One guy comes running from his office to the window to stick his finger up at me. It's not nice, no matter what you do for a living, for someone to tell you to **** off when you say hello. But it does happen - it's the uniform, it's the job, it's life.'**

tells me that some people are talking of barricading the road unless something is done. It illustrates the attitude of the council and the helplessness of the warden at times. We can do nothing. Parkwise say book these people because the council say book them. The same council which has stopped them parking in the bays they have issued permits for but offered them no alternative. Crazy. I got my uniform and

went back out on beat with Warden D at 2pm. I issue my first ticket around an hour later on Meadow Street. It is correct. But I feel bad about it. My hand is shaking when I press print. The car was parked for an hour and 10 minutes in a free one-hour bay. Two drivers got off with a ticket. One, a woman whose car is parked in contravention, comes running out of doctors up the road to say her husband is the

driver but is being treated inside the doctors. "It's an emergency, I can't drive, I can't move it!" she said tearfully to me. I say it's fine and I am not ticketing her and she almost cries with relief. But then she gets a poor chap waiting for an appointment, and looking none too clever, to move the car. There was no need. But I know other wardens might have slapped a ticket on

and so do the people observing. It's the tale of two wardens I guess. And what of the grief on Grief Beat? I did get abuse. I got regular eye-balling from people. One man tells me to **** off when I say good morning. One guy comes running from his office to the window to stick his finger up at me. It's not nice, no matter what you do for a living, for someone to tell you to **** off when you say hello. But it

does happen - it's the uniform, it's the job, it's life. Back at base all the wardens file in and you give in your "score". The number of tickets and number of cars observed and taken details for. People say I did OK - 32 observations and one ticket. First of many they say and not bad for the first day. I learn the record is about 31 tickets in one day.



GUIDING HAND: Nick is shown the ropes

Handheld Big Brother 'a waste of cash' and not working

WHAT a waste of money... That is what Preston's traffic wardens think of a costly new computer system which they are being trained to use.

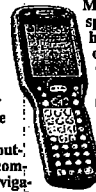
The system - the bill for which is believed to top £100,000 - is designed to make it easier and quicker for wardens to issue tickets.

Handheld computers containing complex satellite navigation systems allow the council to keep an eye on wardens at all times. And they also allow the wardens to have detailed facts and figures about their day, including how fast they are walking. But during our special

week-long undercover investigation into life as a traffic warden on the frontline, Preston's army of wardens spoke of how the expensive new system is simply making their lives harder.

Many wardens also speculated the system had been paid for out of ticket revenue. On one occasion I was told: "It (the new system) just makes my job harder. It is costing the council thousands of pounds and it is not working well at all."

On another I was told: "Why fix something that ain't broken? It is just to watch us. Soon the council will have a map with little lights on in the office telling us where we are at all times."



Husssshhh Secrets: we didn't tell you this, but...

- **Argos points:** These are awarded on merit to any NCP employees each month. Around £200 worth of points are up for grabs each month.
- **Notes on dashboard:** Unless it is an official council waiver, wardens are told to ignore notes on dashboards.
- **Three days:** If a motorist leaves a car in the same spot in contravention for a sustained period they can only be ticketed for three days, after that the warden has to stop.
- **Expired permits:** If a car has an expired permit displayed wardens must give the motorist 14 days grace before issuing a ticket.



RIGHT OF REPLY

Tim Cowen of NCP said: On the Library Street dispute: "It may seem odd that Penalty Charge Notices continue to be issued where there is such a complex dispute, but our job is to enforce the rules in the same manner for everyone. Should a legal judgment make it clear those rules need to change we will take that on board."

On the new computer system: "It is a state of the art, GPS-controlled system which makes the accuracy of the service we supply even greater. It is a significant investment in new technology and there can be some minor teething problems when systems like this are installed. We are confident they will be minor and, when the system is up and running, the public can be further reassured of the quality service we are supplying."

● **What do you think?** Let us know your views at the Evening Post: e-mail lep.newsdesk@lep.co.uk or write to us at Oliver's Place, Fishwood, Preston PR2 9ZA

TOMORROW'S Staggering total of tickets issued in Preston

RIGHT OF REPLY

Tim Cowen of NCP said:

"Traffic regulations are regularly reviewed by the local authorities in Preston, and any member of the public who feels that the regulations in a particular area should be changed ought to make representations to their local councillor.

"Taking down signs in this way - if indeed it was done by people taking issue with the regulations, rather than just vandals - helps nobody.

"The signs will be replaced at the taxpayer's expense and, in the meantime, law-abiding drivers may park there by mistake in contravention of the traffic regulation orders because the regulations are not clearly displayed.

"We try hard to be sensitive to people attending religious gatherings, and will happily work with any local place of worship to advise members of the community how to park legally."

Hussshhh

Secrets: we didn't tell you this, but...

● **Postal tickets:** A ticket only counts if it is handed to you or put on the windscreen. Enforcement can't take place through post. The Evening Post was told: A lot of the public think we can put them in the post. Don't tell them. Let them think that we can, it works in your favour.

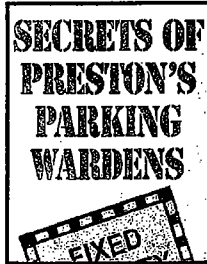
● **Don't knock on doors:** The Post was told wardens are told never to knock on a house door to seek someone out who has parked in contravention.

● **Disabled badges:** Parkwise estimates that around one-in-five cars in Preston displays a disabled badge.

● **Mobile phones:** Members of the public are increasingly using mobile phones to try and record images of wardens issuing incorrectly - wardens are told to be on red alert for this.



The public



IN September 2004 the job of dealing with parking enforcement shifted from the police and into the hands of Lancashire town halls. National Car Parks and Parkwise won the contract for a seven-year period to cover the whole county. In the past 12 months the Evening Post has been inundated with letters and calls from people accusing attendants of being unfair. Investigative reporter **NICK OWENS** went undercover to find out the truth of life as a parking warden

ROAD wars have broken out on a street in Preston, with people taking the law into their own hands to avoid getting a parking ticket.

Time plates have been torn down on Derby Street, off Hammond Row, near the city centre meaning wardens cannot issue tickets there. The street vandalism was uncovered during our special investigation into what life is like as a traffic warden.

Derby Street is one area that wardens have highlighted as a hotspot for motorists who park in contravention of the rules. But now the time plates - the signs which advise members of the public where they can and can't park and for how long they can stop - have been ripped off.

This strictly prohibits wardens from issuing any tickets in this area.

One person who works close to the street said: "Wardens were issuing a lot of tickets for quite a while down here but then, overnight, the tickets stopped. "Then we noticed the time-

● **What do you think about these street vandalism? Has it caused gridlock near to your home? Let us know your views at the Evening Post: e-mail lep.newsdesk@lep.co.uk or write to us at Oliver's Place, Fulwood, Preston PR2 9ZA**

plates were missing from near the parking bays.

"The person who removed them must have done so during the night, because it would be too difficult to do it in broad daylight.

"We rarely see a warden down here now."

When wardens are trained, they are told that they must always pay attention to the location of time plates.

If the plates are too high (over 2.3 metres in height); too far away (over 15 metres from the offence), facing the wrong way, blackened, sprayed on, or not in a visible

condition, then a motorist cannot be ticketed. But during our investigation it became clear that members of the public are increasingly destroying signs to try to stop tickets being issued, and that Derby Street is not the only one affected.

I was told by a warden: "We have to report any missing time plates at once because the council has to come out and replace them.

"If the time plate is damaged or not there, then we are not allowed to issue tickets.

"The problem is that it often takes the council a long time to replace the time plates.

"Also, some bays will have a correct time plate, whereas another one won't and members of the public get confused as to why this is the case.

"The people that lose out are those living nearby; they will get cars parked all over and we can't do anything about it."

Wardens are also told never to issue where blue time plates are up - these are out of date.

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Our trainer has acted with integrity and taught us the rules. He has admitted to us that some wardens don't always play by them but how can he control that?

Today we continued with classroom lessons - two days until the final exam. The day started in the staffroom with the usual talk about beats. Some wardens moaned they were on ones where "they would get no tickets" whereas others cheered that they would be ticketing all day and highlighted the roads where they will strike gold. These wardens have road maps of this city engraved in their minds and those roads are paved with tickets.

In class we talked about instances when disabled cars can be ticketed and about disabled drivers in general.

It seems there are lots of 'dodgy' badges - fake badges are available in pubs for £25.

We were told that we should not target disabled drivers in any way - yet one warden has already demonstrated how they can boost ticket numbers on "slow days".

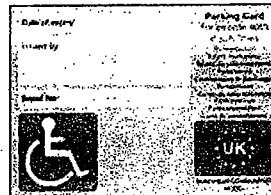
We were told there would be an outcry if we targeted the disabled more strictly and all tickets put on disabled vehicles are appealed. One-in-five cars in Preston has a disabled badge, we are told. We were given a note which

DAY SEVEN: "Black market disabled badges"



says a ticket should only be issued to disabled drivers with a blue badge when:

- the badge details are obscured
- the car is parked in a restricted street where there are loading restrictions in force



STICKY POINT: Disabled badge

- the clock is incorrectly set or not displayed or when the time permitted has elapsed
- the vehicle is parked on a footway, cycle track, restricted bus stop or school area.

We learned about observation times and are warned

never to disclose this information to the public.

What these observation times mean is that if a car, van or HGV is in a bay or zone and they are out of time on a ticket or on a time plate they must be given a period of grace by the warden before he or she issues a ticket. You can't issue one minute after the time has elapsed - but the public don't know this and we were told not to tell them. We

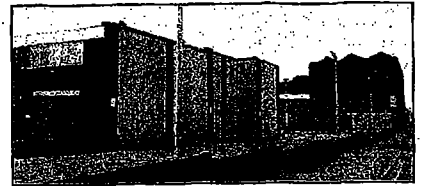
were told wardens in Blackpool ticket one minute after expiry. Observation times range from five to a maximum of 10 minutes, depending on the situation.

We were reminded that parking offences are no longer a criminal offence and that Lancashire County Council needs to tell the Government where the revenue from parking enforcement goes

and that it can't be profitable - every penny is ploughed back.

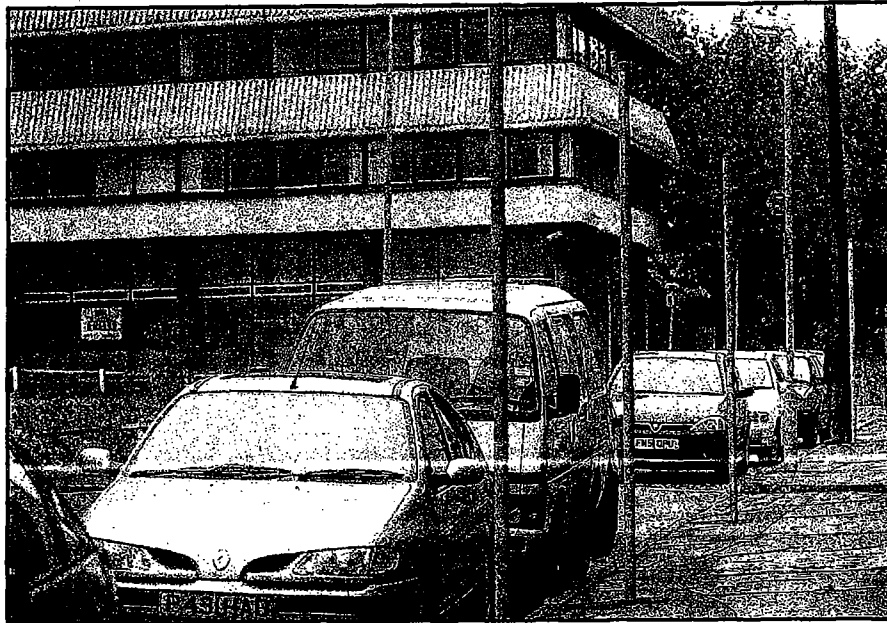
Many trainees questioned the way the system works. NCP gets a fee for its service. All the revenue goes to the council. But trainees point out surely it is key that NCP

fights back



KENT STREET: Scene of several disturbances

...occasionally too literally



VANDALISM: Derby Street, Preston, has no time plates informing people where they can park and for how long

WARDENS patrolling a busy Preston street are being caught up in heated exchanges with motorists. Kent Street, Deepdale, is a popular road for people who want to park up and visit nearby mosques. But wardens have also identified it as a hotspot for tickets because many of the drivers park in contravention of the rules. As a result, there has been a number of clashes between motorists and wardens with numerous flashpoints reported by wardens. On one occasion, the police were called when a warden was surrounded by an angry mob who said he was unfairly targeting people in the area. The warden, who can't be named, was forced to call a Code Red - a request for immediate police backup - when a car was driven at him. The situation has now got so bad that the wardens are now nicknaming

Kent Street and the surrounding area "Grief Beat". On other occasions, Parkwise supervisors have been called to the scene to try to calm violent situations and to explain to motorists why they have received tickets. Wardens have also been blinding motorists who park on single yellow lines to visit a supermarket on Kent Street. The residents and people who own businesses near Kent Street have also confronted wardens and claimed motorists who park in contravention on Saturdays - and then go off to watch Preston North End - don't get tickets.

TOMORROW:
Why life on the streets is more like a war zone

'In five years people will see wardens in a whole new different light'

- NCP trainer who tries to get the message across that the job isn't about ticket numbers

"How you doing?"

"Got six."

"Got four."

"Got eight."

"Got 11."

"Got 12."

- three pairs of traffic wardens chatting to each other at the end of a shift

DAY RECAP:
"Six tickets in an hour"

The countdown is on to our final exam and we are being

bombarded with information as today is the last day in the classroom before our exam. Most of the day was spent learning and revising all the rules and regulations. But, ironically, it is during breaks I find out the most today.

In the staff room it became clear just how many tickets these guys issue. One guy boasts of six in an hour. As most contraventions (bar one) need at least five minutes' observation time before a warden can issue a ticket this warden must have gone from ticket to ticket.

And the revenue being made here? It's frightening. Yet, despite the huge number of tickets issued, I also learned that wardens feel the public are getting wiser and they are becoming much more difficult to ticket.

Back in the classroom we were briefed in ways people will try and con us. One is a student trick of letting down tyres (to within 10% of being flat as a pancake) and leaving a note saying they are broken down, only to inflate them when they return and drive off without a ticket.

Later, when I chat to a warden about this trick, he tells me a funny story. A week ago a student came running up to him

and said: "Oi mate, have you just ticketed a car round here?"

"Yes," replied the warden, "it is on a double yellow line".

"Oh," replied the student,

"...well could you tell me where it is please". He was so drunk he couldn't find his car after being in the pub. The warden directed him to the nearest taxi rank.

During the afternoon we were given a final pep talk by our trainer ahead of the big exam. As I go home for the weekend and revise I reflect on the training I have received.

But one thing is clear: we were trained properly. Our trainer has acted with integrity and taught us the rules.

He has admitted to us that some wardens don't always play by them but how can he control that?

He has taught us to play by the rules once we get out on the street.

As I leave for the day I witness three pairs of wardens coming in from those streets to end of their shift.

What was the first thing each pair said to each other?

"How you doing?"

"Got six."

"Got four."

"Got eight."

"Got 11."

"Got 12..."

And the council just got richer.

keeps a good flow of revenue for the council, otherwise once the contract ends they will be out. The group also questioned where the revenue goes and our trainer agreed local authorities want to make a profit. We were told about streets in Preston where cars can't be booked on double yellow lines if they display a permit. It is the only place in the UK where this is the case and that the local council, which set all the rules, decided it should be so.

During lunch, the talk was about the car park at Avenham, the multi-storey. Today it is announced NCP has not got the contract back this year and a new firm, Euro Car Parks, has taken over.

The rumours in the staffroom are that people who park there each day will see a massive increase in their parking fees as ECP are thought to be a firm which charges higher prices for all day parking.

During the afternoon, our lesson is a simple one. Be fair. Be consistent. Be correct. Our trainer tells us to do things right and play things by the book. Once again we were assured getting loads of tickets is not the aim. "We must get away from that image. In five years people will see wardens in a whole new different light," we were told.

IN September 2004 the job of dealing with parking enforcement shifted from the police and into the hands of Lancashire's town halls. National Car Parks and Parkwise won the contract for a seven-year period to cover the whole county. In the past 12 months the Evening Post has been inundated with letters and calls from people accusing attendants of being unfair. Investigative reporter **NICK OWENS** went undercover to find out the truth of life as a parking warden

Hussshhh

Secrets: we didn't tell you this, but...

● **Valve positions:** Wardens record whether your car has moved or not by noting the positions of valves on tyres. Using the tyre like a clock face, they will record the positions of valves on the front and back wheels. This can prove whether a motorist had returned to a bay before they are allowed to.

● **Observation times:** You can park without showing a pay and display ticket for 10 minutes. If you are in a one-hour free bay - you can't get a ticket until you are on the sixth minute AFTER your free bay time is up. Cars displaying an expired pay and display ticket should not get a parking ticket until at

least six minutes after ticket expiry time.

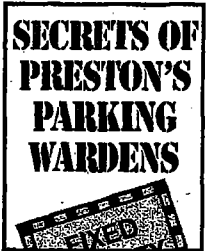
● **Ties:** Wardens are issued with clip on ties - they are told this is to prevent members of the public grabbing them or from them getting dragged along by cars.

● **On your bikes:** All Preston wardens are now being encouraged to take up the free scooter training courses. Parkwise are desperate to get wardens on to scooters and up to areas like Goosnargh and Beacon Fell to enforce rules. Many wardens already use cars to get around the city quicker.



Tickets:

THE HOLY GRAIL



TRAFFIC wardens in Preston come under pressure to issue a certain amount of tickets, the Evening Post can reveal.

The widely-held belief that wardens are on bonuses for issuing tickets was found to be a myth in our special undercover investigation, but wardens revealed they feel under internal pressure from bosses to come back with a certain amount of tickets each day. One warden claimed he has been shouted at by his supervisor for not getting enough tickets - despite being told tickets did not matter when he took the job on.

I was told: "I came back with no tickets one day and they (the supervisors) had a go at me for it. They say it's not about tickets, but it really is. It really is in a way. But they can't say that. But if I had one bad day they should not do that should they?"

Another spoke of the pressure wardens feel under to bring in a certain amount of tickets each day.

I was told: "The bosses do whinge if you don't get a certain amount of tickets. Just don't let the pressure get to you."

Many wardens also commented that a lot of the pressure to issue tickets comes from a feeling of not "wanting to let the team down".

The talk and banter in the staff room at the Preston HQ is often focused around tickets.

I was told: "Getting tickets is ground into you. You come in for lunch and you hear it. How you doing? At first you will say fine thanks and they are like, no, I mean how many!

"Your sandwich has not even touched the back of your throat and they are



'They say it's not about tickets, but it really is...'

— one warden who said he had been carpeted for not issuing enough parking fines

asking you. At first you will be really keen to get tickets, it's all that matters, but I don't care anymore."

Our investigation revealed a practice often spoke of among wardens called "poaching". This occurs when wardens go on to other people's beats in order to pinch tickets from colleagues to help boost their numbers each day. Preston's parking wardens have identified a number of places where they know they can get a lot of tickets each day. These include areas outside school gates; the Bus Station car park in the evenings, Winckley Square, Kent Street, near Deepdale, and Avenham Street and Theatre Street, both near the city centre, which are all popular "ticket hotspots".

During our investigation, wardens were often doubled up on hotspots and wardens were drafted in from Lancaster and Burnley to help blitz the areas.

And this all equates to high revenue for Preston City Council. Between September 6 last year and June 30 this year, 25,676 tickets were handed out in Preston, creating a potential revenue of more than £1.5m. In South Ribble, a total of 3,837 tickets worth more than £230,000 were issued. Wardens are told never to reveal the amount of tickets they have issued to the public.

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THE morning began with a warden laughing in the staff room that he ticketed someone yesterday when he was in the wrong. "Let the bosses deal with the flak," he said. I can't help thinking this is not ticketing when 100% sure, as we are being taught upstairs. Today's teaching revolved around customer care, dealing with people, facing confrontation and basic customer service. We were trained in explaining why we might issue a ticket to a motorist and taught the skills of decency, advice and being helpful.

A rosy picture was painted of how wardens help reduce crime in residential areas when they patrol because people are less likely, our trainer said, to steal from cars.

We were reminded never to tell the public a lot of things. Certainly not how many tickets we issue, that is a sensitive topic, or

DAY FIVE:
"Get ready to ticket your mother"



where the HQ is - it could get firebombed. There are also other rules the public can't be told which I am to learn throughout this week.

We are trained that there is always a ticket to be got and to be prepared to issue to our mother - we must be fair and even-handed.

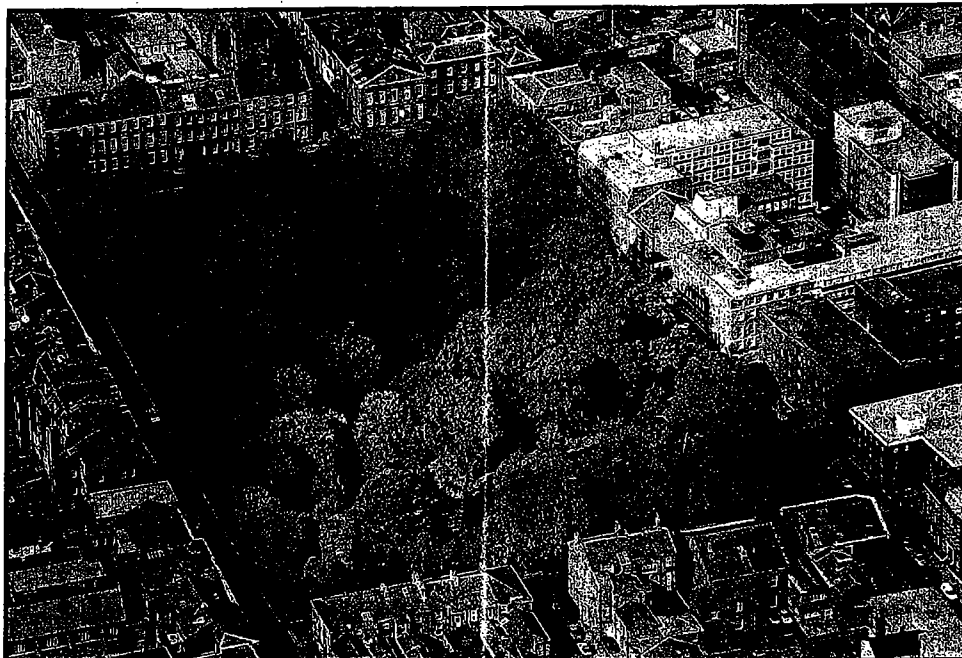
We were encouraged to go to certain places at certain times. "There is no point going to a school at 11am. You need to be there at 8.50am or 3pm otherwise how are you going to get any tickets?" we are told. We learned of problems with the relationship with Preston

Council and the way they change the rules sometimes day-to-day, making it hard for the wardens to enforce these on the street and build up any kind of relationship with motorists. The goalposts are constantly shifting. But, our trainer insisted, NCP has nothing to hide and we should be as open as possible with people - but a warning is given to always be on red alert for reporters.

Afternoon was about conflict management training. How to speak, how to stand, how to look, what to say and how to say it when on street in uniform. "All to stop you getting a punch in the mouth," we were told. The pocket notebook was highlighted as our legal proof of what happens on street and that we must always take good evidence images on our digital cameras when we have ticketed

a car. But if these lessons I am sitting in are about the rules, then downstairs, and on the street, I am meeting wardens who quickly become prolific in being able to issue tickets. It's like flicking a revenue switch. On-street experience breeds tickets and big bucks for the council.

But what I can't accept is this line about traffic flow. Tips on blitzing schools, advice on how to get disabled drivers who are running late, sticking up confusing signs in ticket hotspots. What's all that about? Is this really helping ease congestion in Preston or is it simply making a profit out of congestion? And where is all this money going? I am watching 200 tickets coming into HQ each day minimum, a potential revenue of £18,000. There are big questions to be answered. Which reminds me, I have an exam first thing tomorrow morning.



Preston's Winckley Square is a warden's idea of heaven

THE formula Preston's brigade of wardens follows to get tickets is a square route... Winckley Square to be exact.

The exclusive address in the centre of Preston is the biggest ticket hotspot in the city by a long way.

It yields so many tickets for wardens that there is always at least two wardens circulating the area.

Wardens split the square into north, east, south and west and all roads are paved with tickets.

On the north of the square, dozens of drivers are fooled each week by a confusing sign

which appears to allow pay and display parking but is actually for permit holders only. Wardens have a field day.

In the east, where there are pay and display places, motorists are often caught out if they are running late getting back from the city centre.

On the south of the square, free one hour bays often yield tickets because wardens are prolific in logging in vehicles and religiously returning to check cars and vans have not



overstayed. On the west side, drivers who park on the single yellow line, some to pop into the businesses close-by, often

return to find a ticket flapping on their windscreen.

One person who works on the square, but asked not to be named, told me: "Wardens are all over the square like a rash. I have had two tickets.

One was my fault and the other was wrong and I appealed to get it cancelled.

We should be encouraging people to visit here, it's the nicest place in Preston. Instead it is blitzed with wardens to make money."

● What do you think? Please let us know your views at the Evening Post: e-mail lep.newsdesk@lep.co.uk or write to us at Oliver's Place, Fulwood, Preston PR2 9ZA

DAY SIX: "Warden Bashing"

It happened for the first time today, six days in, and if my father finds out he'll kill me and then let the neighbours at me. I started to believe I was a traffic warden. A "Little Hitler". I totally forgot I was here undercover and felt the most relaxed I have in days.

The morning was all about our first exam. It lasted for an hour and a half and contained 50 questions. Some long, some multiple choice.

I passed. Everyone passed, but apparently this group, the class of August 2005 is the best yet. All the trainees spoke about working nights. Some wardens work through till 10pm.

Someone quips: "Oh yeah that's great can you imagine the pubs. Out spill the lads, can't find a bird, can't get a kebab, can't have another beer and they see me: warden bashing. Wallop! They will love it."

We all laugh and the supervisor pokes his head round the door wondering what is going on. He smiles...

All's well at Preston NCP. For the rest of the day we worked through a folder listing the rules and regulations and I soon realise how many loopholes the public have if they want to appeal for a ticket. In the afternoon yet another warning was given never to disclose confidential information like this, "it will come back and bite you on the bum," we are told.

Secrets leak out because so many people jack the job in and then spill the beans to their

mates. Word quickly spreads. But while we are wardens we must never tell people how many tickets we have issued, "it will end up on the front of the paper".

And never reveal the names of your colleagues - "it is too risky".

We must always say no to offers of free drinks, money or gifts - people are always willing to bribe us, apparently.

We were given an official note of the things a warden can't do. It included offering opinion on the need for parking regulations, offering opinion on the effectiveness of regulations, not commenting on the position of signs, revealing the extent of contraventions at a particular site and any other matters prejudicial to the local authority - I have seen all of these breached. We are told to beware also of what we say when out socially

and, if we do think we have let something slip in the pub, to tell a manager as soon as we can. We were trained in how to issue tickets in a quick-period and how to make sure our time is optimised in order to get the most tickets.

We are told to be firm but fair. Disabled badges must be the right way up but check sun visors for badges which aren't displayed.

As the trainees file out, everyone is clear that these rules are being drummed into us for a reason. D-Day, first day on street, is fast approaching and we need to know what we are doing.

Downstairs, wardens talk of a particularly bad day of abuse on the streets.

All the trainees gave each other a look. Just what are we letting ourselves in for here?

RIGHT OF REPLY

Tim Cowen of NCP said:

"We never put any pressure, financial or otherwise, on parking attendants to issue tickets where they have seen nobody parking illegally. However, we do not expect parking attendants to ignore illegally parked vehicles which cause congestion, road safety hazards and public nuisance."

"A lot of our training is designed to equip our staff to deal with the public professionally and diligently in a number of different situations."

**TOMORROW:
The public fights back... sometimes too literally**

RIGHT OF REPLY

Tim Cowen of NCP said:

"There is no legislation allowing fines to be issued by parking attendants to people who swear on the street.

"There are powers that allow PAs to be retrained to issue fixed penalty notices for littering, for example, but there are no plans at this stage to introduce that in Preston.

"Our training focuses quite heavily on customer focus - we are there to help people park legally. Of course that involves issuing tickets to drivers who park in contravention, but it also involves giving directions to people who want to know where to park legally and advising people of the regulations.

"And we hope that we always do it in as friendly and approachable fashion as possible.

"Like all private employers, we are not legally allowed to do criminal records checks. When we discovered one of the trainees had a criminal record, we felt it was inappropriate to allow him to continue with us."

Husssshhh Secrets: we didn't tell you this, but...

● **Sounds appealing:** If you display a pay and display ticket face down on the dash and you get a ticket, but it is your first ticket, you are likely to win an appeal if you write to Parkwise.

● **On the buses:** Preston wardens get free bus travel to work - they just have to make sure they are wearing their uniform.

● **Too close to home:** Wardens are kept off beats close to their homes in case of repercussions for them or their family.

● **A car ticketed for being outside a bay must be out of the bay by one-third to get a ticket.**



IN September 2004 the job of dealing with parking enforcement shifted from the police and into the hands of Lancashire's town halls. National Car Parks and Parkwise won the contract for a seven-year period to cover the whole county. In the past 12 months the Evening Post has been inundated with letters and calls from people accusing attendants of being unfair. Investigative reporter **NICK OWENS** went undercover to find out the truth of life as a parking warden

SECRETS OF PRESTON'S PARKING WARDENS



'We need to get away from the old image of the traffic warden...Talk to people. We want people to see you are human' - advice on how to behave with members of the public

'Da-da-da-da I'm loving it' - how one warden behaved as he waited to issue a ticket to a confused motorist

Language

Wardens may fine you for cursing on the street

NEW powers could be handed to traffic wardens in Preston allowing them to fine people who swear or drop litter. The potential changes, which are being widely talked about within the traffic management industry, were uncovered by the Evening Post's special investigation into life as a traffic warden. There are around 25 wardens in the city and the rumours of the potential change in nature of their job has reached the staff room at the Preston HQ. It has not been well received and many wardens are worried about the changes saying it will make their job even worse. They fear it will decay relations with the public and put people off applying for a job as a traffic warden.

● **What do you think? Would you back moves allowing wardens to fine litterbugs and people who are mouthing off? Please let us know your views at the Evening Post: e-mail lep.newsdesk@lep.co.uk or write to us at Oliver's Place, Fulwood, Preston PR2 9ZA**

The Evening Post was told by one concerned warden: "We have heard we might be fining people for dropping litter but now we have also heard we might be fining people for swearing. It would be a nightmare and I am not sure I would want to stick around." Trainee wardens were told about the potential changes during training sessions to get them ready for the job. They were told that a pilot scheme seeing wardens fining people for dropping litter is set

to be trialled in Manchester before being introduced in Lancashire. Preston City Council, the authority which employs the wardens, has well publicised schemes set up which aim to reduce the amount of litter, cigarette ends and chewing gum dropped on the city's streets. Those who do this have been warned in council campaigns to expect fines. But the town hall has been criticised for not enforcing the rules strictly enough, with re-

ports of only a handful of fines being issued to litterbugs. The Evening Post understands that traffic wardens could be used to link in with these schemes to help enforce the penalties more effectively. Controversial moves to fine people who swear is a bid to help tackle the huge amount of verbal abuse traffic wardens are subject to on the streets each day. During our special investigation the Evening Post learned that verbal abuse has been accepted as part of the job. Trainee wardens are told on arrival for the job: "You are going to get ****. People will tell you to **** off sooner than to say hello."

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Little Hitlers? Not us...

Trainees told role in life is not to be ticket happy



WE are not "Little Hitlers". That is the message being drummed in to Preston's parking wardens during training sessions in a bid to improve the relationship they have with the general public. Workshops to prepare wannabe-wardens for life on the street are focused around the need to change the negative image of the traffic warden. Trainee wardens are being instructed: "We don't just slap tickets on, we want to get away from this." Wardens are encouraged to never issue tickets unless they

are 100% sure a contravention has occurred, to go out of their way to check sun visors for disabled badges which might not be displayed on dashboards and to give motorists the full observation time they are entitled to before issuing tickets. Wardens are told: "We need to get away from the old image of the traffic warden being a Nazi. That is in the past. Talk to people. We want people to see you are human." Trainee wardens are also given a list of rules and regulations - secrets - that can't be disclosed to the public.

Be careful...it can be a war zone out there

Today started with drama and the news that one of my fellow trainees was escorted from the building yesterday afternoon. Criminal checks showed he has convictions for armed robbery. So he is gone. But he leaves a few questions. Most notably why was a convicted armed robber allowed to work for two days in a building that handles thousands of pounds of cash from pay-and-display machines? Today, I was on two beats in the city centre with Warden C. I am told to note the hun-

DAY THREE: "Highway Robbery"



dreds of disabled badges across the city. I was given tips on the best ways to snare disabled drivers and the roads where badge holders can only park for a certain time.

"When you start on the street and it is a quiet day you can log these vehicles in, come back and get tickets," I am told. Warden C was fearless. He tackled a White Van Man for knocking down a street cone. "Pay respect to street furniture," he told him.

By about 10am it was emerging into a quiet morning. Warden C says you "get days like this". But when he found out there were possibly five others on his beat he became unhappy. This is a common theme: wardens become precious of the area they are assigned to each day. The less of their teammates, the more chance for them to bag the tickets. It is like a group of separate ice cream sellers all vying for the best spot at the village fete. They all want to be next to the best ride but, when they find out they are next to the coconut shy, frown lines appear on their head.

On Winkley Square, identified as one of many ticket hotspots, a motorist parked in the wrong spot came within a minute of a ticket. The motorist is confused. He was parked on the north of the square in a permit holders only bay but had bought a pay and display ticket. Warden C, singing the McDonalds theme "Da-da-da-da I'm loving it" gets ready to issue a ticket and began the six minutes of observation he must give (something I was told not to reveal to the public).

The motorist returned with one minute to spare. "Ignorance can cost you £30 sir," Warden C tells him. But then he suggested to the motorist the council should "paint the roads, permit bays, pay and display and disabled spaces different colours - it would make it easier for people to spot the places they can park." That idea sounded great to me, anyone got the number for Dulux? Later, I overheard Warden C slating the council to a workman saying he feels awkward about issuing tickets on the north of the square because people are often confused. There is a clear tension between the wardens on the frontline and the Parkwise council staff in the office.

On the way back to base for lunch we run into another warden on a nearby beat. Despite the fact Warden C thinks he is coming on to his beat to "poach" tickets there is good banter between them.

After lunch on Preston Market there was a flashpoint.

We arrived at 3.27pm. There are bays there for disabled parking which, at 3.30pm, become loading bays for the market traders to clear up. Some had put trestles in empty bays to enable them to put their vehicle there. Warden C is having none of it and removes them. One man goes ballistic and people close by shook their heads and say these wardens are getting well out of order. I ended the day - my three days of shadowing over - reflecting on what I think of these wardens.

Are they on targets? Not officially. Do they get a thrill out of issuing? Some clearly do. Are they the "Nazis" they are often branded? No. I have watched many act with incredible friendliness with the public, going out of their way to help, give directions and be fair minded. But, what I have witnessed are just cute, clever workers. Wardens going back to the same places, grabbing the same kind of people over-and-over.

Yet how much of this is actually helping ease traffic flow - the Parkwise aim? There are tickets to be had and the brigade of 25 or so Preston wardens know how and where to get tickets each day. Next week, in the classroom, I will be trained how to do that too.

Success! Face-to-face interview passed, documents approved and "shadow-warden" work complete, I was today offered a contract... and became a number. I am now PR 112...no longer Nick Owens.

I also ordered my uniform. For the next five days I am training in the classroom. There are 11 trainees and four, including me, will be based in Preston.

The group is a mixed bunch from a wide range of backgrounds. The slogan on the overhead projector in class read: Parking made simple.

We also got that daily health warning about the dangers of being a warden from our trainer. "You are going to get ****. People will tell you to **** off sooner than say hello. But people don't realise what would happen if we were not around. It would be chaos."

I must take two exams in order to pass this course and there is page-upon-page of rules and regulations to learn. We all have to give an icebreaker speech and draw four images under four topics of me at work, me outside work, my past and my passion.

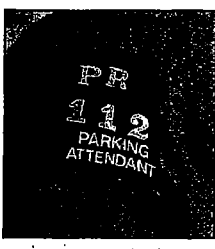
I gave mine. I told people I am Nick. I scribbled a picture of a smiley face showing I like to be nice to people in my job; a foot-

DAY FOUR: "PR112"

ball pitch and a pint of lager which showed my hobbies outside of work; a globe and a book to describe my past of travelling and education and a picture of my family to illustrate my passion in life. We all have to give a cheesy quote. Mine is "the grass isn't always greener on the other side". My trainer nods his approval.

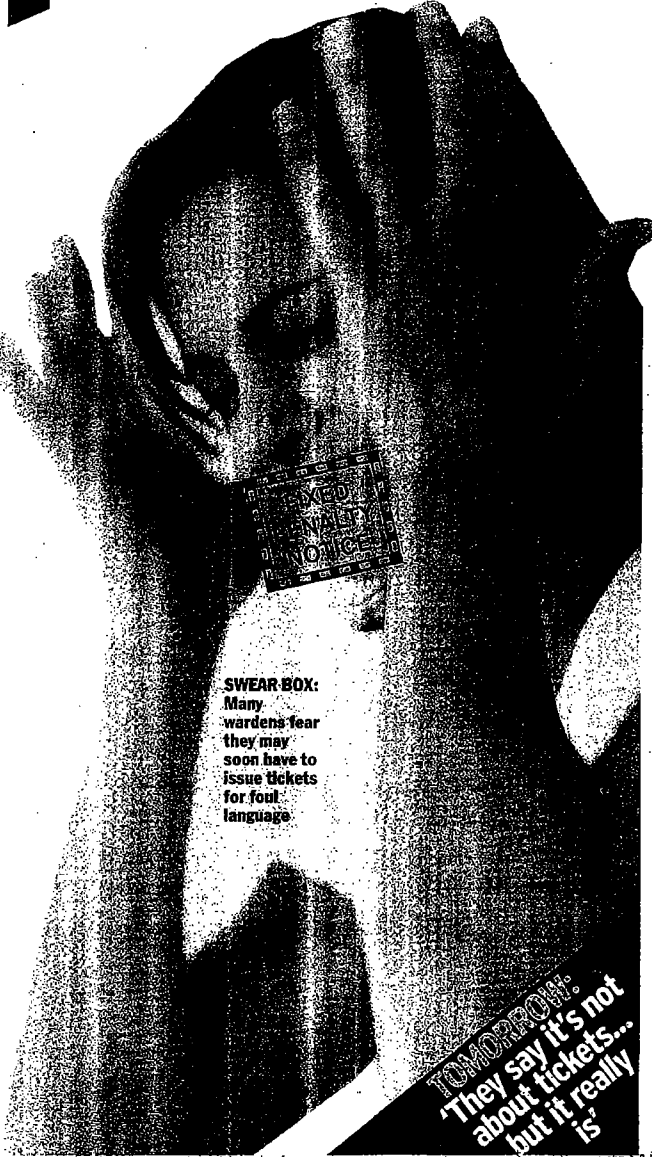
One of the things highlighted over and over in training is consistency - wardens must be consistent. We were told to be firm, but fair. We were told not to sneak up on people. We were told to stand tall and stand proud and do our job no matter what people coming past on the bus are calling us. We were told not to disclose certain secrets to the public. And, most importantly, we were told if we aren't 100% sure don't ticket.

On the issue of ticket quotas we were told there are none but warned questions might be asked if colleagues are getting 20-odd tickets on a beat and you keep coming back with one. That wouldn't go down well...



I DID IT: Nick's number

police?



SWEAR BOX: Many wardens fear they may soon have to issue tickets for foul language.

TOMORROW: They say it's not about tickets... but it really is.

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 Wallace and Gromit's triumphant return: Page 3  Two tokens on Page 4 



INSIDE



M6 horror kitten gets a new life

THINGS could be on the up for Gouranga the kitten, who lost a leg after being thrown from a motorway bridge, after a police worker offered him a home.

Cat lover Lyn Tonarelli has offered to take him into her Fulwood home and look after him for the rest of his life.

The tabby made front page news after sick yobs flung him from a motorway bridge near Bamber Bridge into the path of a passing car.

● Full story - Page 2

ROAD RAGE

Shot, spat at, attacked with baseball bats...we go undercover with Preston's most hated people

SECRETS OF PRESTON'S PARKING WARDENS


FOR the past 12 months, Lancashire's parking wardens have come under intense public scrutiny.

Since Parkwise took over the running of the county's parking wardens the number of tickets issued has rocketed.

Despised...and they know it: Pages 12-13

The Evening Post sent a reporter undercover to see how the system really works.

Some of our discoveries were shocking - we witnessed one warden ignoring a council vehicle parked illegally and discovered that Preston's wardens

almost constantly run a gauntlet of hate.

We heard tales of one warden being shot at on patrol on a city housing estate and another being threatened with a baseball bat.

The city's 25 wardens are told

to hot foot it across roads for fear of them being run over by angry motorists.

Parking bosses are also considering issuing wardens with medicated handkerchiefs so they can wipe spit off their faces.

If you have ever been slapped with a £60 fine, this is a week-long investigation you will not want to miss.

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DNA KIT: Here soon?

Clearing up after a disgusting protest...

TRAFFIC wardens in Preston could soon be issued with medicated handkerchiefs to wipe spit from their faces.

Spitting is one of the most common forms of abuse that wardens in Preston are subject to each day, the Evening Post has learned.

The handkerchiefs are already used by traffic wardens in the south of England and trainee wardens in the county are being advised they could soon be introduced in Lancashire.

Wardens, undergoing training in Preston, were told: "The handkerchiefs are already being used in London and it won't be long before they are introduced here. There is nothing more disgusting than being spat at, but you have to be prepared for anything in this job once you get out there on to the street."

And further help could be on hand to help IDENTIFY those responsible. A year ago, traffic wardens in Edinburgh were issued with DNA kits which help the police identify spitters. These kits could be rolled out across the UK in a bid to help reduce the number of incidents which pose a clear health risk to those affected.

RIGHT OF REPLY

Tim Cowen of NCP said today: "The Parking Attendant was shot at with an air rifle and, while not hurt, was very shaken up. We work very hard to ensure our staff are safe on the street, but there is a very small minority of people out there who think that it is acceptable to assault parking attendants. We will do whatever we can to ensure that such people are brought before the courts and prosecuted.

"We offer training and confidential counselling to staff who have been involved in incidents of this kind.

"We are also rolling out DNA spit kits nationwide, after a successful trial period in London, Brighton and Manchester - these kits have been shown to be a very effective deterrent against attacks on staff working in high profile public services such as ours.

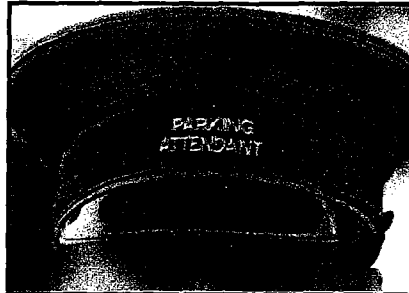
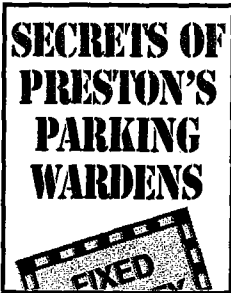
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Investigative reporter **NICK OWENS** went undercover to find out the truth of life as a parking warden



Despised: And they know it...

My first day in the job, shadowing a warden on the street, began like any other working day - in the staff room at 8am with all the other wardens.

Each warden is assigned a beat, an area of Preston which usually changes from day to day. Each warden admits their relationship with people living within these beats is a love-to-hate-you relationship. Before leaving for their beat, wardens are told of important information they need to keep in mind that day. This usually comprises cars or vehicles that have been exempt from prosecution for various reasons.

Also, today, wardens were given a light-hearted warning. Yesterday, a member of the public phoned to complain that a warden was sunbathing all day in the park. This was found to be untrue, he was just on his lunch break and fancied soaking up a few rays.

But the complaint illuminated a clear point to me: attendants are clearly despised across the city and they know it. During quieter moments in the staff room briefing, many told me the abuse they have to put up with each day and speculated

DAY ONE: "Double Standards"

what might lie ahead today. I was told by one warden: "People call us Hitler and say we are Nazis.

"I have a skinhead but I am always fair with people and give them the benefit of the doubt." Come 8.30am it was time for me to step out of the safety of the staff room and into the unknown. For the next three days, I will shadow a warden. Observe their work; take notes; learn. Then, I will be sent into the classroom to learn the rules wardens have to abide by and to sit two exams.

My shadowing - which I will do dressed in plain clothes (you don't get a uniform until you pass) - began when I joined Warden A on city centre beat three.

As well as a thick wedge of sticky envelopes to put tickets in, Warden A was armed with a

notepad, radio and a handheld computer.

The computer means all attendants are now tracked via satellite navigation systems which helps ensure their safety. Parkwise bosses are keeping an eye on the wardens every step of the way.

As we stepped across beat three, Warden A showed me how to keep an accurate record of the roads we go down and how to log a car which is either parked in contravention, or needs to be monitored over the next hour or two to see if a ticket will be slapped on the windscreen.

But, as well as issuing tickets, Warden A said his job is to keep the traffic flowing. "People should be thanking me for it rather than giving me abuse."

And he gets plenty of abuse. There are the verbal volleys - "get a proper job" being the common insult thrown in his direction; there's the Anne Robinson eye-balling from members of the public and passing motorists and there's the shaking of heads from people who walk on by, seemingly disgusted at the sight of a warden. There was a bit of tension in the air.

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Warden A issuing tickets and learned how it was done. The words to write in the notebook buttons to press in the handheld computer and the digital photos on the camera to take.

One ticket issued by Warden A was particularly interesting. It involved a Preston Council vehicle left off, despite being parked in contravention opposite the Town Hall. Warden A did everything by the book. He logs the number plate and car model and gets on his radio to query it with his supervisor.

"Leave that vehicle alone" was the message which came back. But the other tickets issued by Warden A across the city centre remain attached on windcreens. As I headed home, my first day on street behind me, couldn't help thinking double standards were at play...

DAY TWO: "Pressure for tickets"

Today began as it did yesterday with a shout out of any cars exempt from being ticketed.

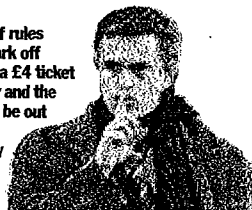
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- **Hat's off:** If a warden is not wearing a hat when issuing, the ticket does not count.
- **Hill Street Car Park:** There

has been a change of rules regarding this car park off Friargate, if you buy a £4 ticket for an overnight stay and the ticket says you must be out at 8am then the warden can't actually issue a ticket until 10am.



When anger turns to hatred

A TRAFFIC warden was forced to run for cover when a job started shooting at him. The police were called following the shocking incident which happened in daylight on the Callon Estate in the Fishwick ward of Preston. The male victim, who cannot be identified, was patrolling the area to check for illegally parked cars when an air rifle was aimed at him by a member of a group hiding across the road. The warden spotted the rifle and was able to run clear of the area as pellets were aimed at his head and body. The incident came to light as a result of the Evening Post's special investigation into the life of a traffic warden. Many of Preston's wardens have now refused to go on to the Callon Estate and the matter was raised at a recent staff-management meeting and wardens are keen for more police back up. The incident on Callon is one of a catalogue

of attacks that wardens in Preston have been subjected to in recent months. Wardens have been told to take care on New Hall Lane after two wardens walking through the area were stoned by a group of jobs on a passing bus. The stones were hurled from the top of the double decker and the victims were forced to run for cover. And Sedgwick Road, near Deepdale, has been declared a no-go zone by wardens after a member of the public, angry at getting a ticket, ran at a female warden with a baseball bat. Wardens are given specific instructions on how to deal with violent situations. A Code Yellow – a request for help from a supervisor, or a Code Red – a request for immediate help from the police can be called via a radio at any time by a warden.

But even before setting foot on the streets, wardens are given basic training in self-defence, of how to handle hostile situations and explained about how to use "reasonable force to protect themselves". It is also drilled into wardens to take extra time when crossing the road because there has been dozens of wardens reporting attempts by furious drivers to mow them down. Trainee wardens are told: "Once you start this job you will never cross the road the same again. We are there for the public's amusement. People will scare you. If it normally take 10 seconds to cross the road give yourself 20."

● What do you think? Let us know your views at the Evening Post: e-mail lep.newsdesk@lep.co.uk or write to us at Oliver's Place, Fishwood, Preston PR2 9ZA

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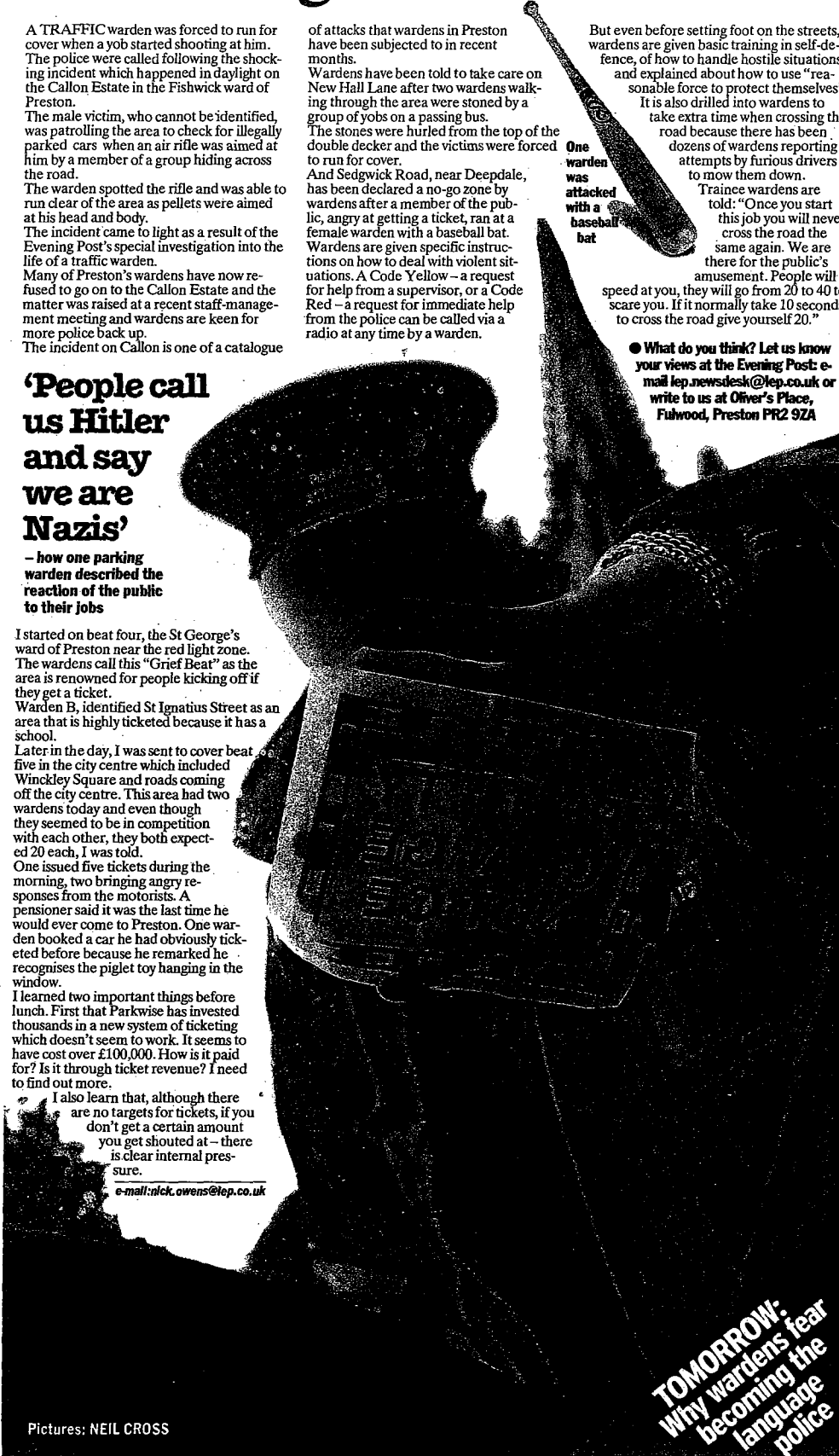
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e-mail: nick.owens@lep.co.uk

Pictures: NEIL CROSS

**TOMORROW:
Why wardens fear
becoming the
language
police**



Should the government intervene over fuel prices?

VOTE HERE: www.chorleytoday.co.uk www.leylandtoday.co.uk

Last
chara
tees
Yes:

Guardian 5/10/05

Come off it, council

On the rare occasion I visit Chorley town centre these days I always check that my trousers are smartly pressed - jacket fresh from the cleaners with labels secured and as they should be (right way up and right way round) - my tie firmly held in place by a stout reliable pin - check nails, check hair, empty pockets (can't be seen dropping anything at 50 quid a go), quick twirl in the mirror and a faultless image steps forth.

Good job too - for one wouldn't want to offend the delicate sensibilities of the eagle-eyed team of Parkwise wardens.

No doubt otherwise very nice people who with the donning of their intimidating 'battledress' or should I say 'punishment suits', can spot a reversed disabled badge from 50 metres or more (even apparently when skulking in the bushes) and come down upon the poor culprit with the mighty weight of the law, whatever their state of health. Guilty until proven guilty eh?

"Tell the council what you think?" Don't be silly - forgive my cynicism, but a third of a million windfall in no time at all is surely too big a temptation for any 'servant of the people' to resist. So what's the betting that the outcome of this 'political spin' sees Chorley council congratulating itself on a job well done. No change there then!

JGD
Chorley Road
Withnell
(Full name and
address supplied)

Let Parkwise catch yobs

If you spend your evenings smashing nursery windows and generally acting like vermin, there's a good chance you won't get caught - there not being enough police officers to patrol every hotspot all evening.

If you encroach on another parking space, you are immediately given a fine, because there are ample Parkwise wardens hiding in the shrubbery.

If you are caught being a vandal, you are eventually given a fair trial and then an ASBO - ie a polite request not to do it again.

If you are caught five minutes after your Pay and Display has expired, there is no trial, you are immediately given a swift punishment - a fine - which would rise if you did wish to have your day in court.

Why don't we keep the wardens, rename them Yobwise, and secrete them in the bushes near vulnerable buildings and parks, where they could use their honed pouncing skills to dish out on the spot fines for loutish behaviour and vandalism - no messing about. Two problems solved!

Angela Newman
address supplied

26/10/05

CitizenLetters

Wardens are like Gestapo

of the day. I live here so what can I do?

Peter Speakman
Harpers Lane, Chorley

Regarding the letter in the Citizen, October 19, Wardens in Hiding.

I live next to the bus stop where Nigel Warburton received his parking ticket on Harpers Lane.

I have seen a female Parkwise warden in a car taking up the only available parking space near the bus stop.

She then waited until a car stopped and the driver popped into the newsagent and she jumped out and booked the car. She then drove away and returned to the same spot an hour later.

I have myself received a ticket from these Gestapo-type wardens and risk a ticket daily because of employees from the laundry, newsagent, betting shop and pub parking in front of my house most

September
Guardian

Why don't you tell us?

Chorley council is asking the public for our views on the lamentable Parkwise initiative, presumably to make us feel that we're all in this together.

Well they needn't bother.

They chose to join the initiative so it's up to them to explain just what splendid benefits the town of Chorley now enjoys thanks to its army of parking wardens.

Come on councillors, tell us how Chorley is now a much better place to live, work and play in ... how Parkwise has transformed lives by freeing up residential streets and putting cash into local tills because shoppers find this town such a welcoming place to visit.

I shall not be holding my breath because the simple truth is that Parkwise has served only to alienate vast numbers of people without improving anyone's life in the process.

I note the council chief executive is retiring. Virtually the first thing he did when he took up his post was to change the borough motto from 'Beware' to 'Be Aware'. Could he change it back before he leaves, please?

Thanks to Parkwise and this money-grabbing scheme, the old motto is more appropriate than ever it was.

Not Fooled
Name and address supplied

We just don't shop here now

With regard to your article Parkwise - council/what do you think?

I was glad to read the figures of the amount of tickets issued in your article because it has intrigued me as to how many Parkwise have been dishing out.

Of the 5,084 tickets issued on the off-street car parks, overall my family received 11 of them.

All the tickets were issued in the first three months of them taking over the contract, and all but one, were five minutes over the allotted time.

The one that ran over the five minutes was due to witnessing an accident and was 11 minutes overdue!

As you might well imagine, this all has had a knock on effect with my family and since the end of October last year, none of us now shop in Chorley at all.

It seems daft when most of us work in the town, but there seems to be an 'atmosphere' about now which was never there before.

Horwich is now the place we all shop. There are plenty of places to park, more shops, no 'atmosphere' and more disabled parking.

So if there are any council workers reading this, does this not speak volumes?

PS Please don't tell Parkwise Horwich exists!

A Thompson
Highfield Road North
Adlington

Parkwise wait out of sight

Re Parkwise - What do you think? I object to the home helps being booked. They are doing good work and it's awful when they get booked, even though I have a pass.

I'm an invalid and when friends and visitors come, it's awful also to know they have to pay a fine if they over-stay.

Parkwise must wait out of sight until the time is up and then pounce. One minute they are there, and the next the fine is there. Where they come from, you tell me.

So help us please to see some smiling faces in Chorley, a place I have lived for 89 years.

Mrs N Singleton, Chorley

Where parking is free

I've recently returned from a caravan holiday in France.

It was most enjoyable. No radio, no television, no newspapers, no politics and no Parkwise!

Then I got a text message, "Parkwise are holding a review meeting, did you tell them that you have left the country?"

I replied, "No, I forgot to tell them but they must have found out! Please will you attend in my place?"

Over our entire holiday it was notable that we only had to pay for parking twice, and even then it was at a relatively low cost. What a difference now we're back home!

It's nice to see that the new Booths supermarket is open and I hope this will encourage more shoppers into the town.

Meanwhile, Parkwise seems as indifferent as ever. The town hall rebuilding costs have risen.

Construction of the new toilets on the market are behind schedule and the re-paving of Chapel Street has been in disarray because they ran out of bricks!

In addition to all this, I understand that the markets are to be privatised.

What a way to run a council!

Graham Archer
Chorley

The Citizen Wednesday, October 19, 2005 11

Write to: Letters, The Citizen, 45-47 Pall Mall, Chorley, PR7 3LT, fax to 01257 275038 or email gmccully@chorleycitizen.co.uk

Wardens in hiding

Last Wednesday at lunch time I pulled up outside the newsagents at the top of Harpers Lane.

Two minutes after buying a newspaper I came out of the shop to find a Parkwise traffic warden printing a ticket off with a £60 penalty.

While I admit I was maybe parked a foot into the bus mark-

ings, there was 100 yards of free space and 99 per cent of the bus area free.

Add this to the fact that there was no bus due, and nobody waiting for a bus, then you can see that I was pretty annoyed.

What has happened to basic common sense? This is obviously not a requirement of working for Parkwise.

If Chorley Borough Council are taking silly totally unnecessary actions on people like myself, it must mean that they are doing a wonderful job elsewhere that they have plenty of resources

available to stick a traffic warden at the top of Harpers Lane on a Wednesday hiding behind walls in the hope they can rip people off.

Rat infested areas are being created because we can't have the resources to empty bins regularly, but that's okay as long as we create plenty of funds to keep our council running.

Chorley Borough Council? I wonder if they are related to the Dick Turpin council.

Nigel Warburton
Chorley

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14/09/05 Guardian

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Chorley

FAO. Shelley Wright

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Community Newspaper of the Year

MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2005

35p



WERE WE GO! WIN FANTASTIC SPORTING GEAR

Wallace and Gromit's triumphal return: Page 3

Two tokens on Page 4



Shot, spat at, attacked with baseball bats... undercover with the traffic wardens

FOR the past 12 months, Lancashire's parking wardens have come under intense public scrutiny.

Since Parkwise took over the running of the county's parking wardens the number of tickets issued has rocketed.

The Evening Post sent a reporter undercover to see how the system really works.

Some of our discoveries were shocking - we witnessed one warden ignoring a council vehicle parked illegally and discovered that Preston's wardens almost constantly run a gaunt-

let of hate. We heard tales of one warden being shot at on patrol on a city housing estate and another being threatened with a baseball bat.

The city's 25 wardens are told to hot foot it across roads for fear of them being run over by angry motorists.

Parking bosses are also considering issuing wardens with medicated handkerchiefs so they can wipe spit off their faces. If you have ever been slapped with a £60 fine, this is a week-long investigation you will not want to miss.



SECRETS OF PRESTON'S PARKING WARDENS

Despised...and they know it: Pages 12-13

When anger turns to hatred

A TRAFFIC warden was forced to run for cover when a job started shooting at him. The police were called following the shocking incident which happened in daylight on the Callon Estate in the Fishwick ward of Preston.

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The incident came to light as a result of the Evening Post's special investigation into the life of a traffic warden.

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Trained wardens are told: "Once you start this job you will never cross the road the same again. We are there for the public's amusement. People will speed at you, they will go from 20 to 40 to scare you. If it normally take 10 seconds to cross the road give yourself 20."

What do you think? Let us know your views at the Evening Post: e-mail lep.newsdesk@lep.co.uk or write to us at Oliver's Place, Fishwood, Preston PR2 9ZA

'People call us Hitler and say we are Nazis'

- how one parking warden described the reaction of the public to their jobs

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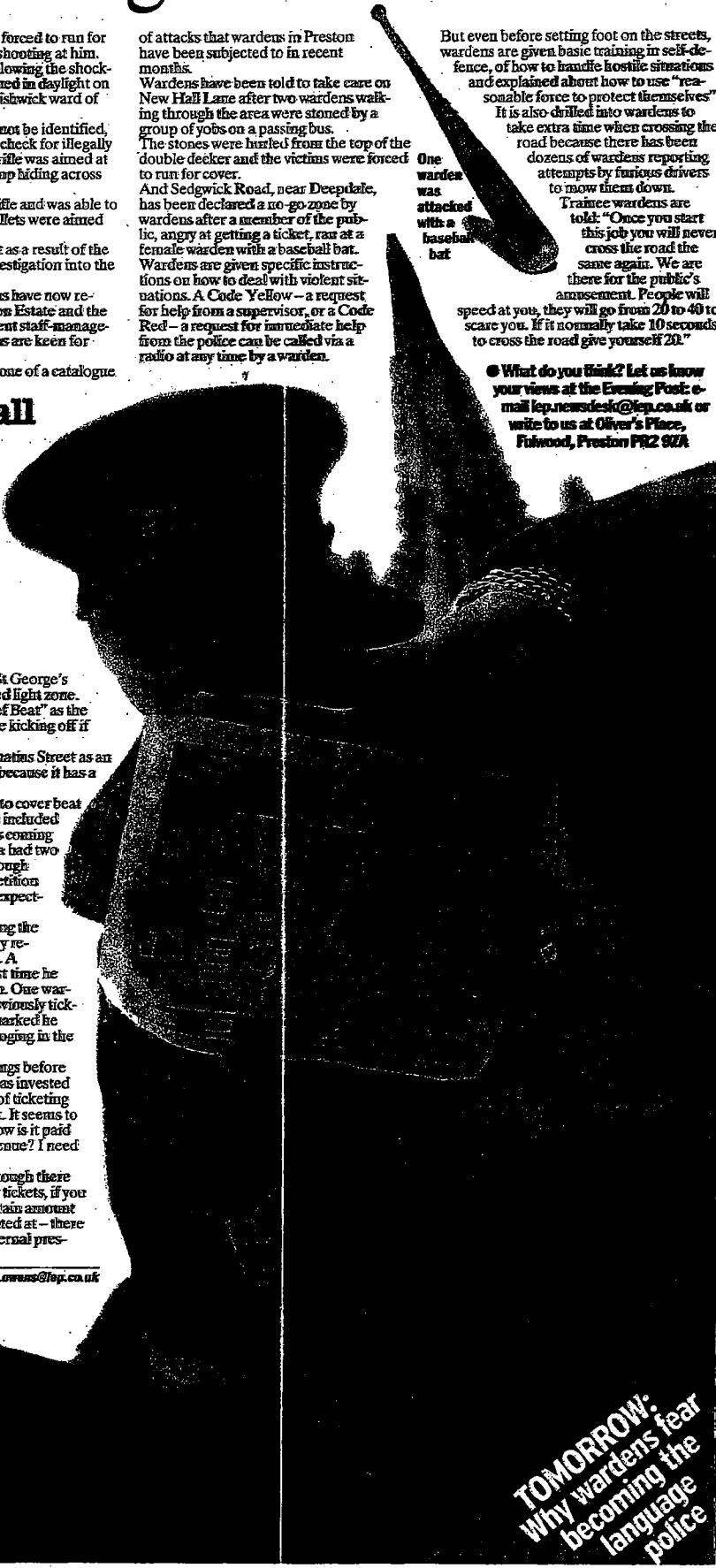
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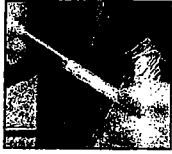
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TOMORROW:
Why wardens fear
becoming the
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DNA KIT: Here soon?

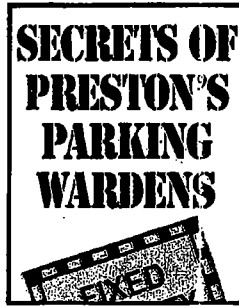
Clearing up after a disgusting protest...

TRAFFIC wardens in Preston could soon be issued with medicated handkerchiefs to wipe spit from their faces. Spitting is one of the most common forms of abuse that wardens in Preston are subject to each day, the Evening Post has learned. The handkerchiefs are already used by traffic wardens in the south of England and trainee wardens in the county are being advised they could soon be introduced in Lancashire. Wardens, undergoing training in Preston, were told: "The handkerchiefs are already being used in London and it won't be long before they are introduced here. There is nothing more disgusting than being spat at, but you have to be prepared for anything in this job once you get out there on to the street." And further help could be on hand to help IDENTIFY those responsible. A year ago, traffic wardens in Edinburgh were issued with DNA kits which help the police identify spitters. These kits could be rolled out across the UK in a bid to help reduce the number of incidents which pose a clear health risk to those affected.

RIGHT OF REPLY

Tim Cowen of NCP said today: "The Parking Attendant was shot at with an air rifle and, while not hurt, was very shaken up. We work very hard to ensure our staff are safe on the street, but there is a very small minority of people out there who think that it is acceptable to assault parking attendants. We will do whatever we can to ensure that such people are brought before the courts and prosecuted." "We offer training and confidential counselling to staff who have been involved in incidents of this kind." "We are also rolling out DNA spit kits nationwide, after a successful period in London, Brighton and Manchester - these kits have been shown to be a very effective deterrent against attacks on staff working in high profile public services such as ours." "The issue of a Preston council van is the kind which often raises public comment." "The truth is that local authority vehicles have dispensation to park in certain restricted areas if they are on official council business - clearly this was the case here since it was parked directly outside the council offices. Our PA quite rightly checked and, had it not been delivering or collecting from the offices, he would have issued a Penalty Charge Notice."

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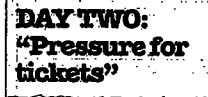
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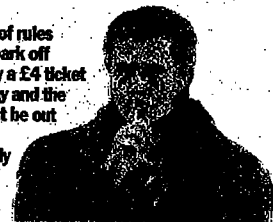
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- **Hat's off:** If a warden is not wearing a hat when issuing, the ticket does not count.
- **Hill Street Car Park:** There

- has been a change of rules regarding this car park off Friargate, if you buy a £4 ticket for an overnight stay and the ticket says you must be out at 8am then the warden can't actually issue a ticket until 10am.



Parkwise spoiled my perfect shopping day

THE town centre deserters need a new excuse.

When asked over the past few years, the droves of former Chorley centre shoppers now taking their custom to out-of-town supermarkets have invariably claimed that, since they could no longer obtain the range of food they need, they have to travel.

Having done so, they contend, they might as well buy the other things on their list. The opening of the new Booths has surely torpedoed that tale.

Bang in the centre and bang on with its vast range of products, the store is now a key feature of the campaign to woo shoppers back.

If that happens more retailers will be attracted and the prospect of Chorley becoming the world centre of charity shops, estate agents, and accident claim centres will recede.

Although the new addition to the world of Edwin Booth and his forebears is much larger than the long-standing version on Market Street, it still has that unique feel of a family firm that puts its customers first.

When I waddled in on day one,

DENNIS BENSON

a manager was busy directing shoppers to the shortest queue, whilst another was having a word with all and sundry.

Given the significant increase in the size of the aisles it is now possible to sort out Iraq, Blair, and the NHS without blocking the path of those with other diversions in mind.

I confess that the initial new store chinwag did go on a bit and it was this that led to a glimpse of the flip-side of the town centre renaissance.

Expire

Having glanced at his watch, one of our number commented that he had to go since his parking ticket was about to expire.

It surely didn't matter since the Flat Iron park was by now near empty. Wrong!

As he approached his car one of the dreaded wardens was writing out a ticket. He was two min-

utes over. Clearly the task of Parkwise goes far beyond keeping spaces clear when there is demand.

Those in authority are remarkably coy about incentives, but it is impossible to believe other than that the increasingly angry atmosphere in the town centre is down to a perceived need to go well beyond ensuring orderly parking and to hammer every visitor on any pretext.

The arrival of the new store can be an enormous boost.

But, if our councillors continue to allow the growing sense of persecution, it will be back to the distant car parks where neither charges nor people in uniforms exist.

The planners had the courage to get this project right, but have their colleagues the courage to say enough is enough before the deserters find a new excuse

Sands of time are disgrace

NOT surprisingly many in Adlington are sick and tired at the procrastination of County Hall over the plans for a sand quarry.

The date for the application has been deferred for the fourth time which is three too many for all those who genuinely believe that the plan would lead to destruction of everything that they hold dear.

Exactly what is going on?

● Donna Hall is to be the new Chief Executive at the town hall and she can be sure of a friendly welcome.

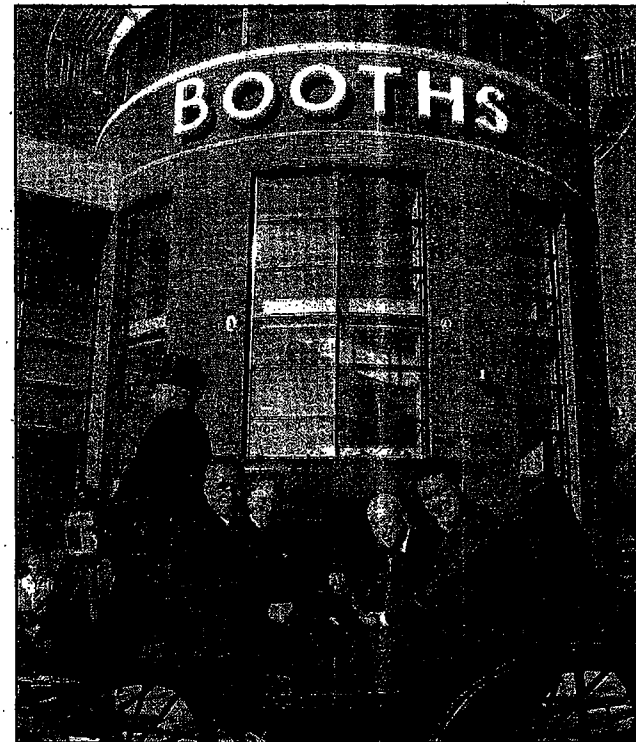
However, many will miss Jeff Davies who has dragged Chorley into the modern age and I am not merely referring to his giving us a more modern motto.

Even more to the point, he is a great guy. I shall miss his impish sense of humour and willingness to help.

As the local saying has it, they don't make 'em like Jeff any more.

● When opposing an ASBO a local solicitor reportedly remarked that it was unjust to exclude anyone from an area as large as Chorley.

Advocates have a job to do but one frequently wonders if they have ever lived within range of abuse and behaviour calculated to ruin the lives of innocents!



TOP SHOP: The opening of the new Booths store in Chorley

H.A.O. Sheller

LANCASHIRE Chorley Evening Post

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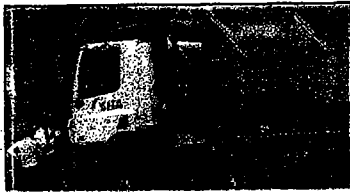
Community Newspaper of the Year

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2005

NEWS INSIDE:



Boy, 17, killed in 60ft factory roof fall Page 2



Man crushed to death under lorry Page 3



Fury ops in si

Disabled motorists fined for upside-down badges

TURNING LOGIC ON ITS HEAD



Disabled parking fines anger

● From Page 1
finger at the council - it was a farce.

Chorley Council has now gone on a fact-finding mission to get advice from other authorities in the region on how to improve the Parkwise scheme.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is also considering handing out educational leaflets to disabled drivers to let them know how to display the blue badge correctly.

A spokesman for Chorley Council said: "People who are issued with a disabled badge will receive full instructions about how to display them correctly. When they receive them, they should read these instructions carefully.

"The reason the rules are in place is to make sure that people who have forged or who use expired badges are not parking in spaces reserved for people with disabilities. We want to make sure that blue badge holders get the parking spaces they need.

"If people follow these instructions they should not have any problem with Parkwise. If they feel that tickets are wrongly issued there is an appeals procedure that people can use."

ANGRY disabled motorists in Chorley have launched a campaign to stop parking wardens issuing "petty" penalty fines, including penalising drivers who display badges upside down.

They claim it is unfair to penalise drivers who display their blue badge the wrong way around and they are urging operator Parkwise to change the rigid stance.

The call comes in the light of Chorley Council's review of the Parkwise scheme in response to mounting complaints from motorists.

The blue badge policy for disabled motorists was also highlighted by the council's Overview and Scrutiny Panel which launched the probe into parking earlier this year.

By Martin Steinmetz

Steve Hoomans, spokesman for disabled action group Chorley Wheel Deal Forum, said: "A lot of people from Chorley have been complaining to me and they are still complaining. It indicates that not much has been done since the Parkwise review started.

"It's petty-mindedness - that's what it comes down to. Some of the parking attendants really love their job and making people's life a misery.

"Maybe Parkwise should change the blue badge because the rules say the disabled sign and issue number should be on top. But then the photo and name of the driver is not displayed and the parking wardens won't know who the driver is. It could be open to fraud.

"Apart from the disabled issue, Parkwise are keeping people from doing their shopping in Chorley town centre.



"I did speak out at the scrutiny meeting and I was actually told I was the first member of the public to speak at one of their meetings for six years. I was made to feel very welcome at the meeting. Trying to meet half way with Parkwise is going to be the issue because neither side is going to budge. It's about time something was done about it."

Ian Dickinson, 42, of Hallwood Road, has backed the campaign after being involved in a two-year legal battle with the parking authority.

He parked outside the job centre in Hamilton Road in 2003 on yellow lines and displaying his blue badge as there were no parking spaces for disabled drivers available at the time.

Mr Dickinson appealed against a fine for displaying his disabled badge the wrong way around.

While the legal battle was going on, Parkwise took over issuing tickets from the police in September last year and parking bays for disabled motorists at the job centre were provided.

He said: "I used my blue badge to park outside the job centre because there was no disabled parking available. When I first got the ticket, I wanted to cancel it and the parking warden said I had to get in touch with the police. The police pointed the

● Turn to Page 2

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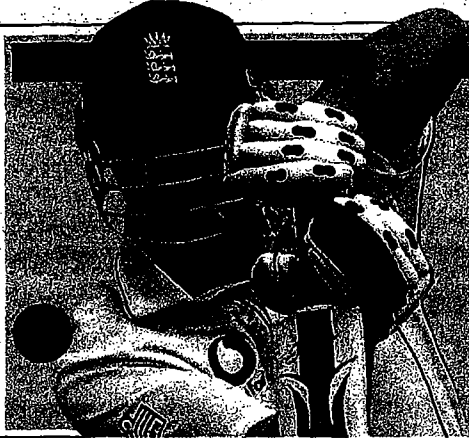
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Community Newspaper of the Year

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2005



INSIDE

FREEMAN FREDDIE

Page 5

PLUS



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Council takes action on disabled parking and it could be..

JUST THE TICKET

By Martin Steinmetz

COUNCIL bosses are to take action after the town's parking permit scheme came under fire from disabled drivers.

Disabled motorists feel they have been unfairly fined for displaying the badge the wrong way around.

Now Chorley Council is planning to hand information leaflets to disabled drivers, as part of a review into the Parkwise scheme, which was set up in September last year when police handed over the issuing of £30 fines to traffic wardens.

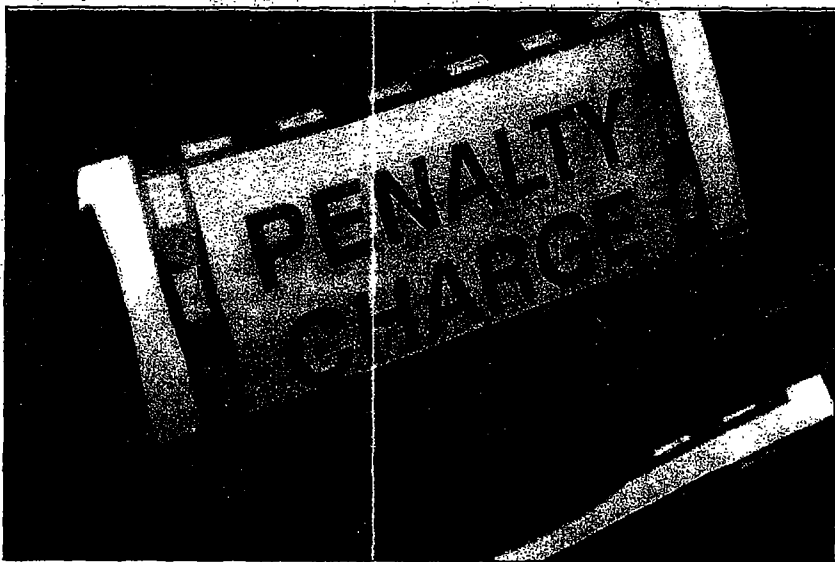
The badge scheme was set up to allow disabled drivers to park for free in town centre pay and display car parks and on the street on single and double yellow lines for up to three hours.

But it has attracted widespread criticism.

Steve Hoomans, 37, of Bolton Road, has been given a fine for displaying his badge the wrong way around and was also cautioned for parking on a single yellow line outside his home.

He has a degenerative spinal disease and also has a nerve disease which affects his feet making it painful to walk.

He said: "The council should be embarrassed. Parkwise are



PAYING THE PENALTY: Tickets like these could become a rarer sight in Chorley after the council issued new leaflets to advise disabled drivers on how to use their parking permits

● Turn to Page 2

P. 2

Town to review disabled parking

● From Page 1

actually owned by NCP and are the only company in the country which will not give disabled people concession on parking. Disabled campaigners have lobbied them for ages but they just won't budge.

"I've had all sorts of problems with parking on disabled parking spots and even if you display the badge in the right way, it doesn't help.

"Everyone else uses the spaces and, for example, Morrison's is the only supermarket that put slips on the windscreens of cars which park on disabled spaces without a badge.

"I think Parkwise should get rid of this silly rule of having to display the blue badge in a certain way because I feel it's officialdom gone mad. But I also think they are handing out blue badges too easily.

"The whole Parkwise system needs to be looked at, not just because of people who have a blue badge. It's very bad for the prosperity of the town and people don't want to shop in Chorley anymore."

Display

The badge shows the stamp of the local authority and the serial number of the badge holder on one side while the other side shows a photograph of the driver as well as their name and signature.

Coun Iris Smith, who urged the council to review the Parkwise scheme after its rules were criticised for being too rigorous, said: "I think a leaflet explaining how to display the badge is a good idea.

"Most of the disabled people I have spoken to were very upset about getting fines in the first place.

"If they have got a badge surely that should be enough. What would also be a good idea would be to have all the information on the same side."

A spokesman for Chorley Council: "Chorley Council has a strict monitoring procedure for disabled spaces to ensure that they are kept for genuine disabled drivers and the guide which is issued to all blue badge holders clearly states the correct way for the badge to be displayed.

"Parkwise has a clear appeals procedure which we would actively encourage any driver to use if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

"However, to ensure that we are providing an effective and fair service, the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be investigating the impact that the scheme has had on the people of Chorley, so that we can make meaningful recommendations for improvement.

"Part of the review will examine ways in which we can help educate drivers on the correct way to display blue badges so that they can avoid being fined."

Parkwise: Tell the council what you think

CHORLEY residents are to be quizzed on what they think of the town's army of parking wardens.

Town hall bosses are to issue questionnaires to the public as part of their review of the controversial attendants.

The news comes as it was revealed motorists in Chorley and South Ribble have been slapped with more than 13,000 parking tickets since Parkwise took control of handing out penalties last year.

The firm has made at least £390,000 in revenue for both local authorities which signed up to the scheme almost exactly one year ago to decriminalise parking offences.

In Chorley, traffic wardens issued 5,084 tickets in off-street car parks and slapped 4,920 tickets on cars parked on the street between September 6 2004 and August 27 this year.

And in South Ribble a total of 3,837 tickets, worth more than £115,000, were issued in the same period.

Complaints have been made about tickets stuck on windcreens of disabled drivers who displayed disabled badges back-to-front.

A review of Parkwise by Chorley Council is underway to clarify the parking policy after the scheme was

By Martin Steinmetz

criticised for unfairly prosecuting motorists.

While local authorities use the money made from parking fines to improve highways and infrastructure, market traders have said over-zealous ticketing is damaging business.

Chorley Coun Iris Smith, who runs a stall on Thursday's crafts market, said: "There are far too many tickets being issued and in some cases for the wrong reason.

"For example, disabled people who get tickets for having the disabled badge the wrong way around - a warning would be enough and so many tickets are going to be challenged anyway.

"It's a waste of Parkwise's time and everybody else's time. It has created a strange atmosphere in Chorley and it frightens people as well.

"A lot of my friends who pass by my stall on the market for a chat say 'I've got to go, my parking ticket is running out'.

"I feel the scrutiny committee is doing a good job and are looking at everything to do with Parkwise.

"They are also looking to hand out a questionnaire to people to ask

them for their opinion on the parking situation.

"I certainly hope something comes of the Parkwise review."

Further complaints were made about drivers parking on pay and display car parks being fined for not staying within the marked parking bays.

Parkwise took over control of parking penalties from the police in 12 districts across Lancashire last year.

A spokesman for Chorley council said: "We are interested to hear from people in Chorley so we can understand how the scheme affects them and to make meaningful recommendations for improvement with regards to Parkwise.

"This is part of the review of the scheme but we have not got the results yet so it is inappropriate to comment further at this point. We cannot comment on individual cases."

The meeting of the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel, where the Parkwise review will be discussed, is to be held next Wednesday (September 7) in the committee room of Chorley town hall at 6.30pm.

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Ch Guardian 31/8/05

Opinions



Under fire: A Parkwise warden

Warned about the warden hiding in bush

I would just like to thank the gentleman who stopped to inform me that while I was parking my car in St Georges St on Friday morning the August 19, a traffic warden was lying in wait hiding in the bushes near St. George's Church, he immediately started writing out my ticket (I thought this was illegal).

Admittedly I was in the wrong, my two front wheels were just on the yellow lines, but I was trying to park as near to Burtons as I could. I needed to collect suits for my nephews to attend their father's funeral and with a three-year-old granddaughter in tow and two suites to carry I was desperate.

I do not make a habit of parking illegally, I have already suffered the consequences for being six minutes late returning to my car a few months ago and having to pay a £30 fine.

The gentleman did save me a

fine this time, I immediately put my granddaughter back in the car and drove off but forgot to thank him, I was not myself that day, the sudden death of my brother was a terrible shock.

Perhaps Chorley council would like to reconsider their parking policy, as this hounding of motorists is driving trade and local people like myself out of town.

And to the traffic warden ... you know who you are. I know who you are, and next time you are hiding in those bushes, preying on some unsuspecting motorist who may also be going through a terrible ordeal like myself, may your God be watching you.

Mrs P Midgley
11 Rosklyn Road
Chorley

■ Council seeks opinions on Parkwise - Page 2

LEP 30/8/05

to sales: 01772 838026

Wardens hand out 10,000 fines

By Martin Steinmetz

TRAFFIC wardens in Chorley have issued more than 10,000 parking tickets in just 12 months.

The wardens have issued 5,084 tickets in off-street car parks and slapped 4,920 tickets on windcreens of cars parked on the street between September 5 2004 and August 27 this year.

Motorists across the borough have been slapped with the £30 fines as part of a move to decriminalise parking offences, which has generated at least £300,000 for Chorley Council.

And while the money is used to improve highways and infrastructure, the scheme has come under fire from motorists who feel they are being wrongly prosecuted.

Complaints have been made about tickets on windcreens of disabled drivers who displayed disabled badges back-to-front.

A review of Parkwise has now been launched to clarify the parking policy in Chorley, where market traders have said over-zealous ticketing is bad for business.

Coun Iris Smith, who runs a stall on Thursday's crafts market, has urged Chorley council to review Parkwise. She said: "There are far too many tickets being issued and, in some cases, for the wrong reason."

"For example, disabled people who get tickets for having the disabled badge the wrong way around – a warning would be enough and so many tickets are going to be challenged anyway."

"It's a waste of Parkwise's time and everybody else's time."

Complaints

"A lot of my friends who pass by my stall on the market for a chat say 'I've got to go, my parking ticket is running out'."

"I certainly hope something comes of the Parkwise review."

Further complaints were made about drivers parking on pay and display car parks being fined for not staying within the marked parking bays.

The new-look parking attendants have been feared by motorists ever since Parkwise was set up last September, when 12 districts across Lancashire took over control of parking penalties from the police.

Between September 6 2004 and June 30 2005, the men in grey have handed out 21,076 on-street fines and 4,600 off-street penalties across the county.

In South Ribble a total of 3,837 tickets worth more than £230,000 were issued in the same period.

In Preston alone, 25,676 tickets have been handed out, creating potentially more than £1.5m in revenue.

At Preston market, traders say they are having difficulty loading and unloading their stalls before Parkwise staff issue tickets.

One tradesman, Keith Smith, was issued with a parking ticket just 17 minutes after arriving in the market service bay.

Derek Walsh runs Derek's Books on the covered market. He said: "They say if you have stopped for more than five minutes it is not classed as loading, it is classed as parking."

"There have been instances where traders have been virtually loading out of the back and they are out the front writing a ticket."