



## transport matters: park and fly!



A study into Northern Ireland  
airport car parking costs



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## Consumer Tips for Airport Car Parking

- ( There may be discount available by pre-booking your car parking space in advance using the telephone, Internet or travel agent.
- ( Shop around. If there is more than one car park operator at the airport, compare the prices and the services each offers.
- ( Most airports have more than one type of car park eg short stay or long stay. Check which car park is cheaper for your particular length of stay.
- ( Car parking at airports for a long period of time can be expensive, so check out the alternatives such as public transport or getting a lift from friends or relatives.

- ( Business travellers should check whether there is business car parking available and decide whether this meets their needs.
- ( Consumers with disabilities should contact the specific airport in advance. Many have designated spaces close to the airport at discounted rates.
- ( It is important that when looking for the cheapest option, the distance between the car park and the terminal is considered. This means that you can ensure enough time is allowed to actually get from the car to the check-in desk.

## Executive Summary

### Issue

The General Consumer Council has a statutory duty to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers.

### Scope

Our specific focus in this report is on airport car parking charges.

### Method

We compared charges throughout the UK and Ireland using daily, weekly and fortnightly rates; we examined pre-booking discounts and specific issues arising from concessionaire parking.

### Conclusions

For daily, weekly and fortnightly rates, car-parking charges at Northern Ireland airports are among the lowest in the UK and Ireland.

Northern Ireland charges are the cheapest, when compared with similar sized UK airports.

Within the island of Ireland, charges at Cork, Shannon and Knock airport car parks are lower than those at the airports in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland prices are also more expensive than those at all other airports in Ireland for a one-day stay. However, Dublin Airport charges are more expensive than Belfast International Airport and City of Derry Airport for a one-week stay and more expensive than those at all three airports in Northern Ireland for a two-week stay.

Limited price variance exists between different operators at Belfast International Airport and only slight differences exist between levels of services. There appears to be scope for more innovative pricing including greater use of pre-booking discounts.

Overall, airport car parking charges in Northern Ireland compare favourably with those in Great Britain and Ireland.

# 1 Introduction

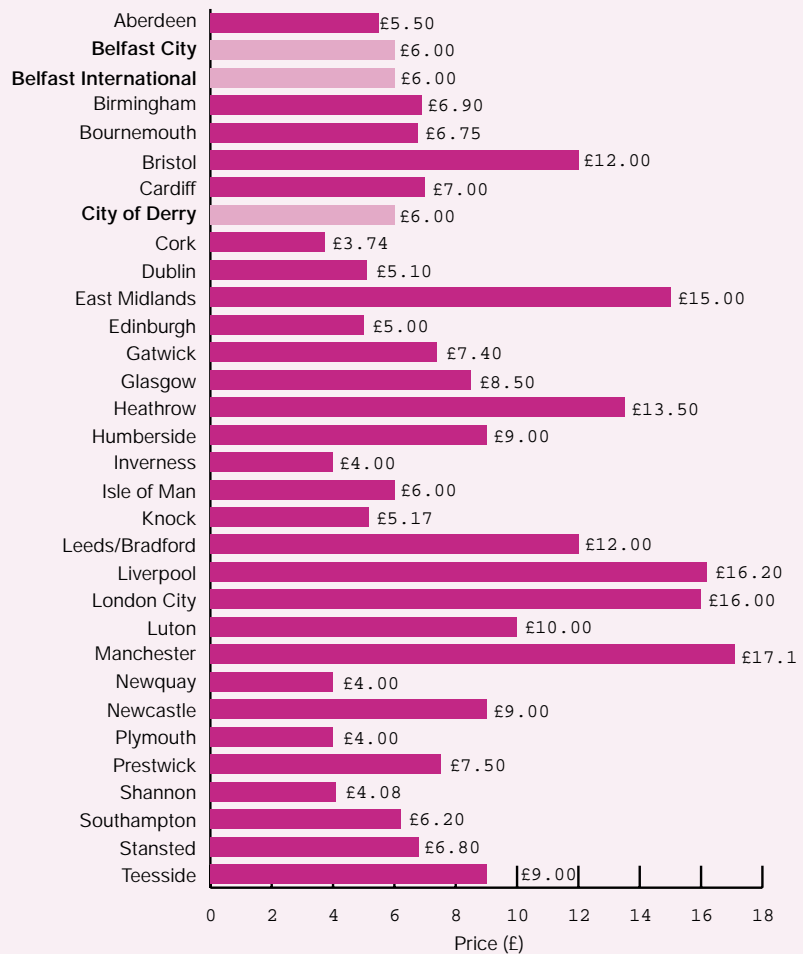
The General Consumer Council has a statutory duty to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers. As the transport passenger representative, the Council has specific responsibilities in this area. With the air market becoming increasingly competitive, many passengers are concerned about add-on costs such as travel to the airport and car parking charges.

This paper looks at the cost of car parking at airports across the UK and Ireland. It compares charges at Belfast City Airport, Belfast International Airport and City of Derry Airport with other airports across the UK and Ireland, including airports of a similar size using daily, weekly and fortnightly parking rates.

## 2 Daily Rate Comparisons

Figure 1 illustrates the cheapest price available at the main airports in the UK and Ireland for a one-day stay or up to 24 hours in either the short or long stay car park. This does not take into account distance from the terminal, the length of time it takes to reach the terminal or the number of spaces available. Some airports specify the minimum length of stay in the long stay car park and so it may not be suitable for a one-day stay. In these cases the short stay car park is the only option available. At other airports the long stay car park was calculated to be the cheapest option but may be a considerable distance from the terminal.

**Figure 1-**  
**Daily Rate**  
**Comparisons**

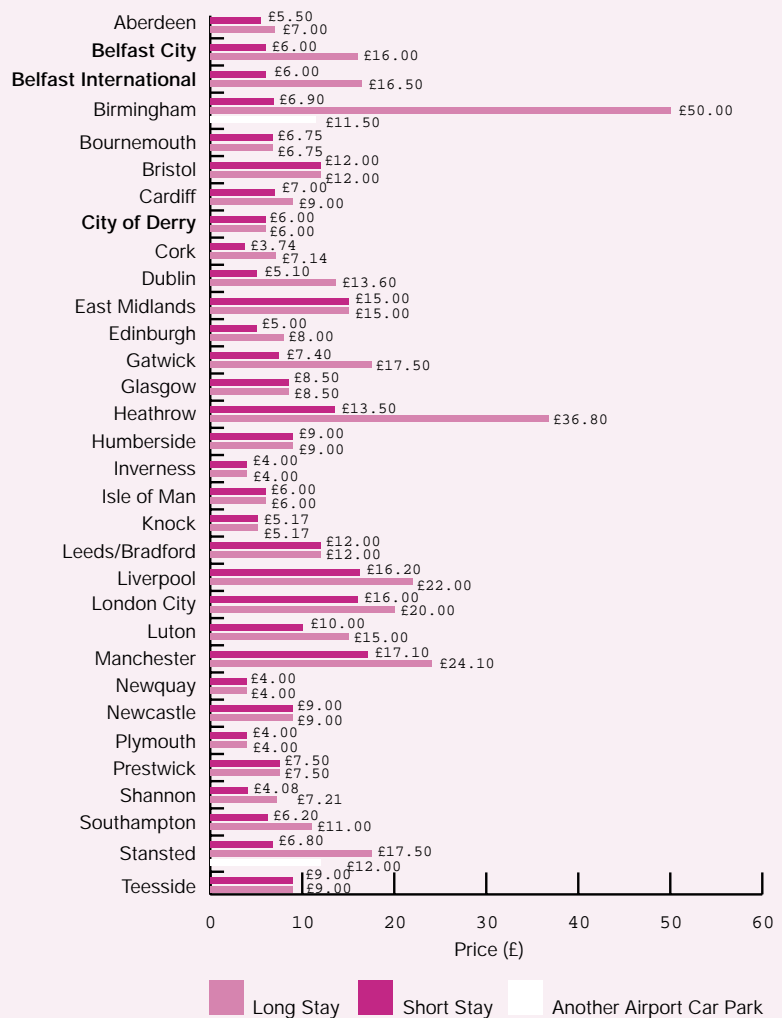


Prices for one day range from £3.74 in Cork to £17.10 in Manchester. The average price for a one-day stay across the airports is £8.14. All three airports in Northern Ireland charge £6.00 per day.

If using the car park for a one-day stay, some passengers such as those on business, may not have time to travel the distance from the long stay car park to the terminal. As a result they might use the short stay car park even though it may be more expensive. Figure 2 illustrates some of the price differences for daily rates between long and short stay.

Prices can vary considerably between the types of car parks. For example, parking for one day at Birmingham can range from £6.90 to £50.00 depending upon which car park is used. Belfast City Airport and Belfast International Airport cost £16.00 and £16.50 respectively for a one-day stay in the short stay car park compared with £6.00 in the long stay car park. City of Derry airport charges £6.00 per day for both the short stay and long stay car parks.

Figure 2- Long Stay v Short Stay for One-day Stay



### 3 Weekly Rate Comparisons

Figure 3 illustrates the cheapest weekly rate for the main airports in the UK and Ireland. Prices for one week range from £11.56 in Cork to £112.00 in London City. The average price across the car parks is £38.20. Belfast City Airport charges £30.00, Belfast International Airport £21.00 and City of Derry £19.00. All three Northern Ireland car parks charge below average prices for one week. The five London airports (Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and London City) are among the top six prices ranging from £45.50 at Stansted to £112.00 at London City.

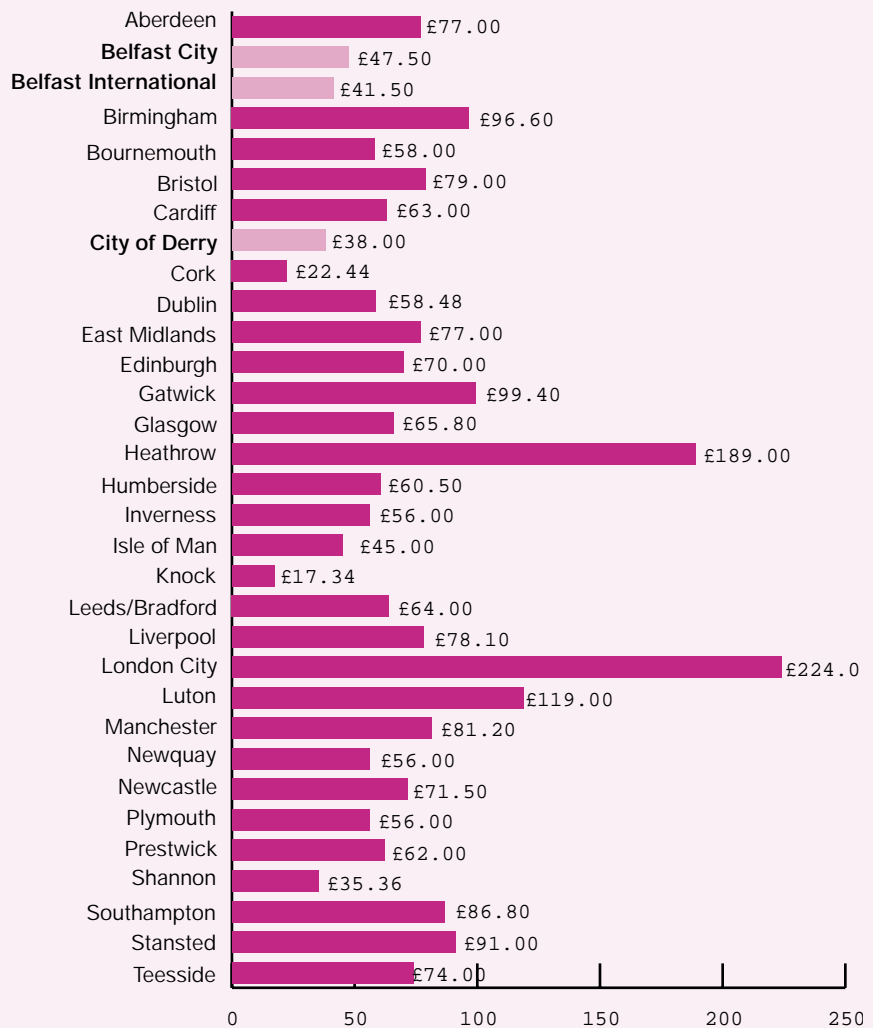
Figure 3- Weekly Rate Comparisons



## 4 Fortnightly Rate Comparisons

Figure 4 illustrates the lowest priced two-week rate for the main airports in the UK and Ireland. Prices for two weeks range from £17.34 at Knock in the Republic of Ireland to £224 in London City. The average cost across all airports for two weeks is £73.66. Belfast City Airport charges £47.50, Belfast International Airport charges £41.50 and City of Derry charges £38.00. All three are below the average price for a two-week stay across the UK and Ireland. Five of the six most expensive are London airports. Costs in the capital's airports range from £91.00 at Stansted to £189.00 at Heathrow and £224.00 at London City. Birmingham has the fifth highest rate at £96.60 for two weeks.

Figure 4- Two Week Rate Comparisons



## 5 Comparisons with Similar Sized Airports

Figure 5 highlights the price of car parking at airports with a similar number of annual passengers as Belfast International Airport. Refer to Appendix A for the number of terminal passengers at each airport. All four airports have around three million passengers annually.

Belfast International Airport is the cheapest of the four airports in each of the categories. Charges for a one-day stay at Newcastle, Bristol and East Midlands are 50%, 100% and 150% higher respectively than the £6.00 rate at Belfast International Airport when comparing the least expensive daily tariff. The price for a one-week stay at Bristol and East Midlands is twice that of Belfast International Airport and Newcastle is over one and a half times more expensive. There are also huge differences in the prices for a two-week stay, with Belfast International Airport charging at least £30.00 less than the other three similar sized airports.

Figure 5- A Comparison of Belfast International Airport Prices with Other Similar Sized Airports

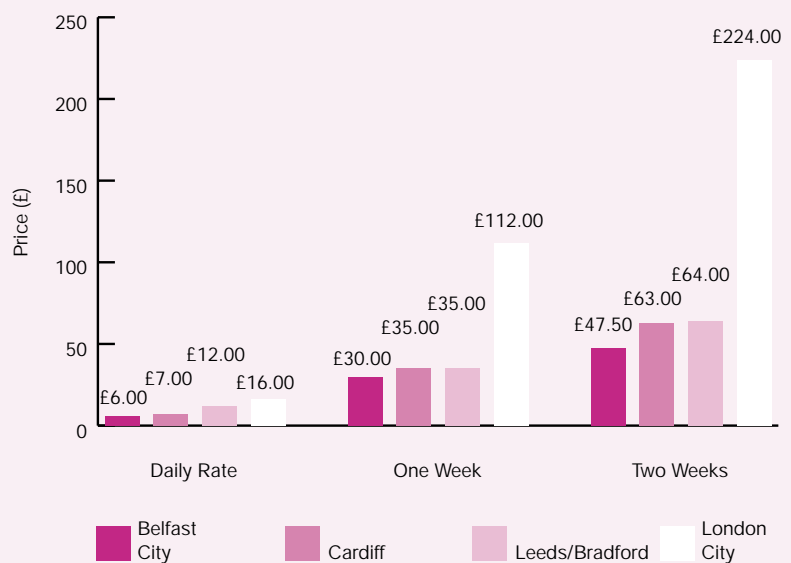


Figure 6 illustrates the price of car parking at airports with a similar number of annual passengers as Belfast City Airport. These four airports carry approximately 1.5 to 2 million passengers annually.

Belfast City Airport is the cheapest of the four airports for each length of stay. Although a one-day stay at Cardiff Airport is only £1.00 more expensive than Belfast City Airport, Leeds/ Bradford is double the price and one day at London City is over two and half times more expensive than one day at Belfast City Airport when using the least expensive daily tariffs.

One-week stays at Belfast City Airport, Cardiff and Leeds/Bradford are similarly priced but London City is more than three times more expensive than charges at other airports. The figures also illustrate that a two-week stay would cost less at Belfast City Airport compared to the other similar sized airports. Both Cardiff and Leeds/Bradford are approximately £15.00 more expensive and London City charges four and half times more than Belfast City Airport for a two-week period.

Figure 6- A Comparison of Belfast City Airport Prices with Other Similar Sized Airports

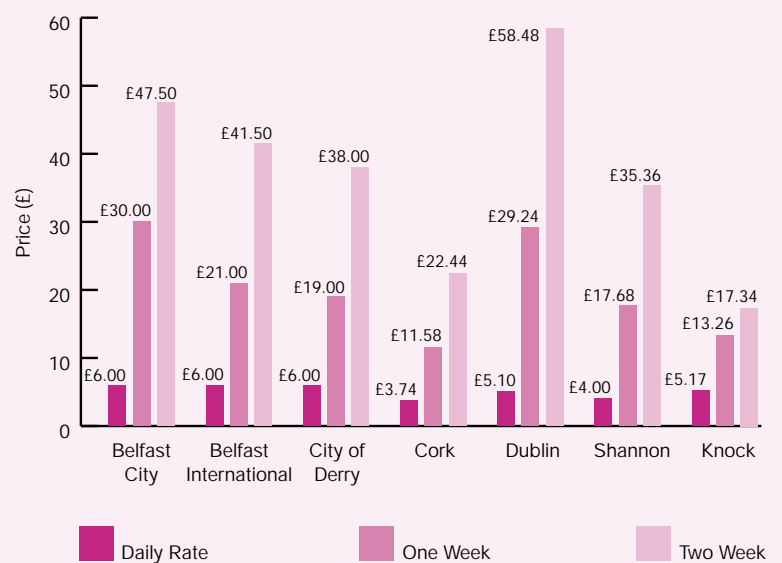


## 6 Car Parking in Ireland

When comparing the prices at airport car parks throughout the island of Ireland, the results revealed that Cork, Shannon and Knock airport car parks are cheaper than those in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland airports charges are also more expensive than all those in the Republic of Ireland for a one-day stay when comparing each airport's cheapest daily rate.

Dublin Airport's car parking charges are more expensive than Belfast International Airport and City of Derry Airport for a one-week stay and more expensive than all three airports in Northern Ireland for a two-week stay (refer to Figure 7).

Figure 7- A Comparison of Car Park Prices in Ireland



## 7 Pre-booking Discounts

Many airports, including Belfast International Airport, have a facility for pre-booking in advance by telephone or Internet. Many offer a discounted rate (as much as 25%) if the car park is pre-booked. Some airport websites set out clearly the discount if pre-booked; Figure 8 and Figure 9 are examples of the discounts available at Cardiff and Luton Airport.

In both these cases the discount is available for each of the periods of time. Pre-booking a two-week car park stay at Cardiff airport would save the consumer £21.00 and pre-booking a one-week stay at London Luton would save the consumer £10.50.

Other airports, such as Belfast International Airport, offer a facility to get a quotation for pre-booking. The discount may depend on the dates of stay and the current promotional offer. For a one-week stay from 26/01/04 at Belfast International Airport, the quotation was £19.00 – a saving of £2.00. For a two-week stay from the same date the quote was £38.00 – a saving of £3.50.

Figure 8- Pre-booking Discounts at Cardiff Airport.

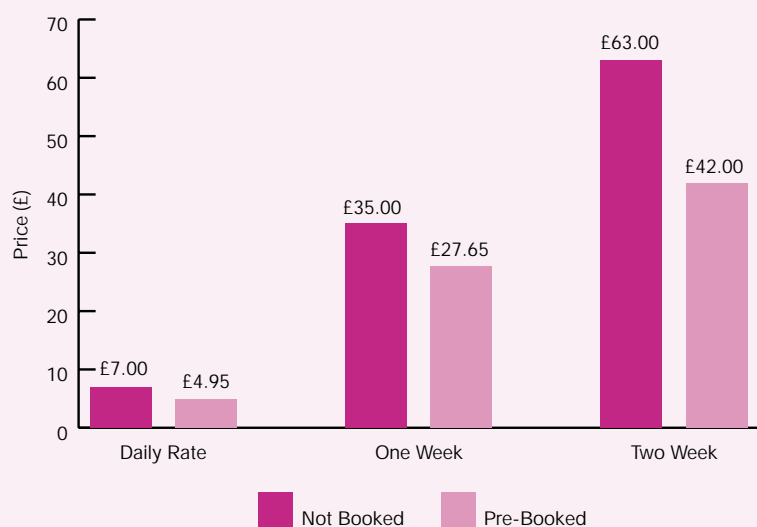
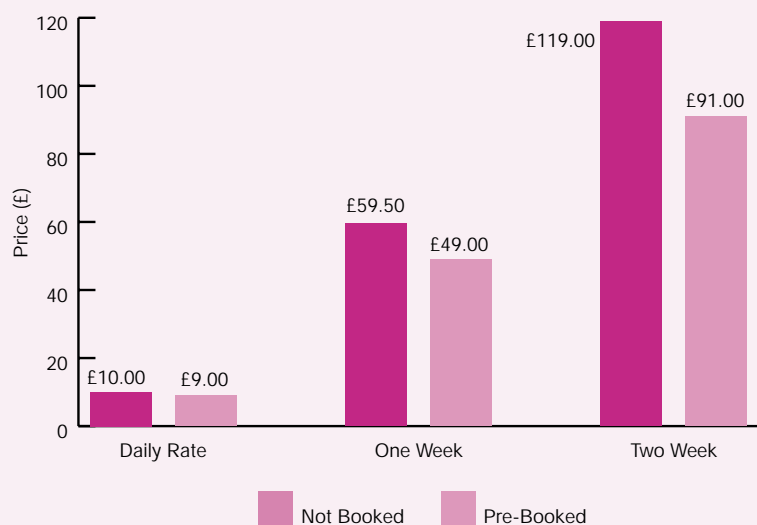


Figure 9- Pre-booking Discounts at Luton Airport.



## 8 Concessionaire Parking

There are four different car parks at Belfast International Airport, including the main airport car parks. Figure 10 outlines the prices of each for a one-week and two-week stay. Pre-booking discounts were not taken into account.

Prices are very similar at each of the four car parks and there seems to be scope for more innovative pricing such as pre-booking discounts. Cosmo Car Park is the least expensive of the four for both a one-week and two-week stay, although each car park offers a range of different services. Figure 11 outlines the different services each car park advertises.

While there is limited price variance between companies offering car parking at Belfast International Airport, this research illustrates that charges in Northern Ireland are among the lowest in the British Isles.

Figure 10- Car Parks' Prices at Belfast International Airport

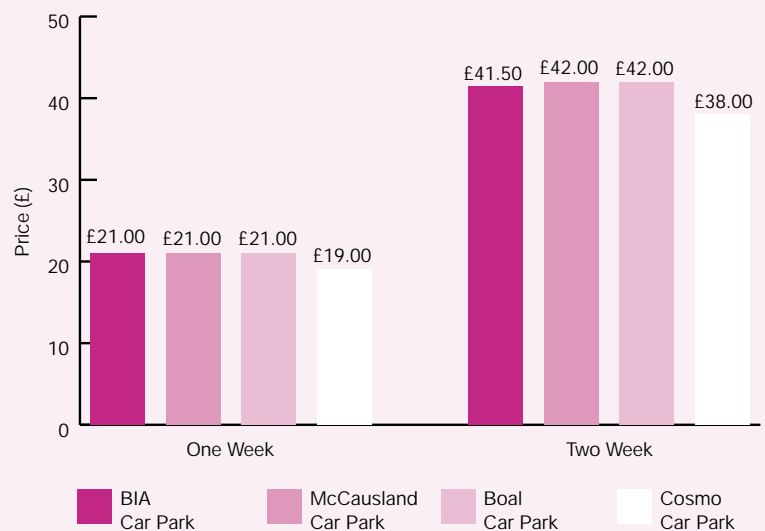


Figure 11- Services Offered at Each Car Park at Belfast International Airport

Car Park	Services Advertised
Belfast International Airport car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>( Ticketless car parking (pay by credit card)</li> <li>( More than 7000 spaces</li> <li>( Closest car parks to terminal building</li> <li>( CCTV</li> <li>( Staffed 24 hours a day</li> <li>( Pre-booking available</li> </ul>
McCausland car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>( 24-hour service</li> <li>( Free transport to and from terminal</li> <li>( Car cleaning and valet service</li> <li>( Repair and service available</li> <li>( Free fit of tyres and exhausts</li> <li>( Video recorded security system</li> <li>( Free starting service</li> </ul>
Boal car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>( 24-hour service</li> <li>( Free transport to and from terminal</li> <li>( Car cleaning and valet service</li> <li>( Repair and service available</li> <li>( Free phone to contact car park in airport terminal</li> </ul>
Cosmo car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>( 24-hour service</li> <li>( Free transport to and from terminal</li> <li>( Car cleaning and valet service</li> <li>( CCTV</li> <li>( Ensure your car will start upon return</li> <li>( Undercover parking available</li> </ul>

## 9 Transport Links to Northern Ireland Airports

The alternative to driving to any of the three Northern Ireland airports is to consider other transport options, including public transport and taxi services. The links to all three local airports are outlined below:

### Belfast City Airport

#### Bus:

A direct bus links the airport terminal to Belfast Europa Bus Centre approximately every 40 minutes. The service operates between 06.00 and 21.50 during the week, between 06.00 and 21.10 on Saturdays and from 07.30 to 21.50 on Sundays. The service costs £2.00 for a single journey. The No 21 Citybus also operates from Sydenham to City Hall. It is a five-minute walk from the airport terminal to the bus stop. The *Airporter* service operates coaches daily from Clarendon Street, Derry to the airport and costs £15.00 for a single journey. It operates between 06.00 and 18.00 during the week, 06.30 to 15.30 on Saturdays and 10.30 to 17.30 on Sundays.

#### Train:

A shuttle bus service operates between the airport terminal and the adjacent rail station at Sydenham. There is an approximately twice-hourly rail service (06.00-18.00) Monday-Friday to Central and Victoria Street Stations. The service is approximately hourly after 18.00 and on Saturday and Sunday. The cost to Central Station is £1.10. Connections are available from Central Station to the rest of the rail network in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

#### Taxis:

Approved taxis operate from the airport taxi rank directly outside the terminal building. All taxis are wheelchair-friendly. The approximate cost to Belfast city centre is £6.00

## Belfast International Airport

### Bus:

The Airbus service operates between the airport and Belfast city centre every 30 minutes, Monday to Saturday and at 30 or 60 minute intervals on Sundays. This service operates between 05.45 and 23.20 Monday to Saturday and 06.15 to 21.30 on a Sunday. It costs £6.00 for a single journey. The *Airporter* service operates coaches daily from Clarendon Street, Derry to the airport and costs £15.00 for a single journey. It operates between 06.00 and 18.00 during the week, 06.30 to 15.30 on Saturdays and 10.30 to 17.30 on Sundays.

### Train:

There is a train station located at Railway Street in Antrim situated about 0.5 miles from the town centre. It is served daily by the Belfast to Antrim service and costs £3.10 for a single journey.

### Taxis:

Approved taxis are available for hire outside the terminal building. A list of sample fares is displayed in the exit hall of the terminal building.

## City of Derry Airport

### Bus:

Connecting bus services are available at certain flight times to the city centre, Limavady and Coleraine. Other Ulsterbus and Translink services from throughout Northern Ireland, including the Maiden City Express from Belfast, terminate in the city's main bus station at Foyle Street.

### Train:

Derry train station is located at Duke Street in the Waterside area of the city and is served daily by the Belfast to Derry service, which costs £8.20 for a single journey. This train stops at various towns en route including Ballymena, Coleraine, Portrush, Castlerock and Limavady.

### Taxis:

A taxi rank is located immediately in front of the airport terminal with taxis available for hire. Typically, a fare from the airport to Derry city centre is £8.00.

## 10 Conclusions

- ( For daily, weekly and fortnightly rates, car-parking charges at Northern Ireland airports are among the lowest in the UK and Ireland.
- ( Northern Ireland charges are the cheapest, when compared with similar sized UK airports.
- ( Within the island of Ireland, charges at Cork, Shannon and Knock airport car parks are lower than those at the airports in Northern Ireland.
- ( Northern Ireland prices are more expensive than other airports in Ireland for a one-day stay using the cheapest available daily rates. However, Dublin charges are more expensive than those at Belfast International Airport and City of Derry airports for a one-week stay and more expensive than those at all three airports in Northern Ireland for a two-week stay.
- ( There is scope for shopping around between short stay and long stay car parks. However, passengers should take into account the distance to the terminal when looking at the lowest price.
- ( Limited price variance exists between different operators at Belfast International Airport and only slight differences exist between levels of services. There appears to be scope for more innovative pricing, including greater use of pre-booking discounts.
- ( Overall, airport parking charges in Northern Ireland compare favourably with those in Great Britain and Ireland.

## Appendix A

### UK Airports by Number of Terminal Passengers in 2002

	Airports	Passenger Numbers (thousands)
1	Heathrow	63035
2	Gatwick	29518
3	Manchester	18618
4	Stansted	16049
5	Birmingham	7911
6	Glasgow	7769
7	Edinburgh	6911
8	Luton	6474
9	Belfast International	3551
10	Bristol	3415
11	Newcastle	3387
12	East Midlands	3233
13	Liverpool	2835
14	Aberdeen	2549
15	Belfast City	1890
16	London City	1602
17	Leeds/ Bradford	1526
18	Cardiff Wales	1416
19	Southampton	788
20	Teesside	669
	City of Derry Airport	199
	All Other Airports	5416

Source: Transport Statistics 2003 Department for Regional Development/  
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency



## Passenger Numbers at Airports in the Republic of Ireland in 2002

	Airports	Passenger Numbers (thousands)
1	Dublin	15085
2	Shannon	2354
3	Cork	1874
4	Knock	199

Source: Aer Rianta, 2002 Department of Transport, Ireland

## Methodology

The airport car parking charges for a one-day, one week and two week stay used in this study were researched using an Internet or telephone survey in October 2003. Some airports only have one car park and so the prices are shown in the report as the prices for long and short stay car parks.

Except where specified, the lowest price available was used for each scenario irrespective of other factors eg distance from terminal.

There are several other airports throughout the UK and Ireland not included in the study due to the smaller number of passengers. All public transport prices were checked by telephone or Internet on 23 October 2003.

The euro exchange rate at the time of the research was €1=£0.68.





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