

# Bureaucracy and its effect on innovation in the UK parking industry and how this affects technological development and advancement within both public and private sectors.

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This research question is essential to ensure the effective management of a city or other urban area on both a local and strategic level. One of the principal motivations for this study was a research gap identified by the BPA's commissioned project Researching the Research.

Through its John Heasman bursary the BPA funded Richard McAlpin who undertook this research as part of his Masters in Leadership and Management at the University of South Wales; during this time he was completing a seven month graduate scheme as Business Development & Marketing Manager at Capita's subsidiary company ParkingEye.

The principal aims of Richard's research are:

- Raising awareness of some of the current issues preventing technological advancement in both the private and public parking professions.
- Analysing the level of bureaucracy and how this affects innovation in the profession and to provide a recommendation to the BPA on how best to improve this.
- Investigating how public and private sector companies work together in the profession and whether they could work better in relation to innovation and collaboration on providing new technologies.
- Analysing the effectiveness of the BPA as a leader within the profession in order to help them plan for the future.

## The BPA and the John Heasman Bursary

As the largest, most established and trusted professional association representing parking and traffic management in Europe the BPA is frequently asked questions about the profession and its scope by the media and government consultations.

The BPA promotes and encourages research through its John Heasman Bursary. Set up in 2006, it recognises the contribution made by John Heasman (former BPA President and Director General) to the parking sector, with the express aim of promoting research and encouraging professionalism in the parking sector. With greater information, best practices can be identified to improve parking services and parking management and it is hoped that this will lead to further investment in parking research.

The parking and traffic management sector is an under-researched area despite it being such an integral part of our daily experience. It is essential to study parking and its processes; it is a growing area of interest which at present brings together diverse traditions from the social sciences.

## Key Findings

Through semi-structured interviews and analysis of the profession and leadership style of the BPA the following summary of results has emerged:

### The current use of technology:

The most widely used technology in the UK currently is Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and secondly, bay sensors. These have been deployed, among other reasons, to improve the UK's carbon footprint and reduce inner city congestion and bay abuse.

*“ANPR is the most used car park management and enforcement tool in the private sector but local authorities cannot use it for enforcement and the inefficiency of their service could be as a result of this.”*



**“In the UK we have 35 million vehicles<sup>2</sup>, 95% of which park twice a day and spend the majority of time stationary, this is a problem that needs technological expertise to find a solution.”**

Recognised by the majority of interviewees as the most widely used technology in the private sector, ANPR has been a market changing technology but is unable to be used on public land for enforcement purposes due to the Deregulation Act. The interviewees in the study recognised that this indicates that there is still room for innovative technologies. Two thirds of people questioned agreed that there is currently a transition phase in the industry, with various private sector companies fighting to establish the next best product and potentially the next disruptive technology could be around the corner.

They stated that we are already seeing ANPR cameras used for different purposes in addition to enforcement such as data collection and trend analysis.

### The current issues for the UK parking profession:

The majority of interviewees believe that current regulations and legislation are having an adverse effect on the parking profession stifling innovation within the industry and reducing the possibility of change.

Three current issues were also identified by interviewees:



**The negative public perception and negative press**



**A lack of funding**



**The increasing number of vehicles**

The majority of interviewees decided public perception and negative media attention is a key issue for the UK parking profession that the BPA has yet to resolve.

Some of the interviewees stated that the promotion of the Safer Parking Scheme by the BPA continues to improve the public's confidence and educates them.

### How should the public and private sector work to create a better industry?

The relationship between public and private is of interest, with a key theme highlighted as a lack of funding available for pilot schemes, alongside legislation making it difficult for companies to work together.

Interviewees want to see:



**An increase in funding**



**More pilot schemes of new technologies**



**Knowledge and sharing of best practice**

### How does the BPA lead the industry?

During interviews, the BPA discussed how it strives to achieve this with regular events, workshops and meetings to promote and inform members of changes and new ideas. By creating a code of practice and offering a range of training opportunities and qualifications for parking professionals, the BPA is helping to raise standards across the parking sector.

The BPA has:

- Adapted its structure over recent years to become better suited to a changing profession.
- Led by example in the sharing of knowledge and best practice.

It was clear in interviews that the BPA is highly regarded among its peers in the UK parking profession.

**“The BPA is currently trying to influence changes within the industry and lobbying the UK government and its ministers in order to create a better parking sector for everyone. This is essential to the lives of many as parking affects everyone, not only motorists.”**

**The BPA “offers support such as the Professionalism in Parking Accreditation and this is not purely a certificate or box ticking exercise. This is to encourage best practice and to share it. This helps people act as sponsors of best practice for their companies.”**

### Recommendations

There is certainly a need to develop further research into the wider bureaucratic practices. Based on the research and analysis Richard made the following recommendations:

- The BPA should continue to lobby the UK government for additional funding and place more emphasis on innovation using the Innovate UK and Catapult schemes.
- The BPA should continue to lobby the public sector to realise the benefits of Automatic Number Plate Recognition and to eradicate the rules prohibiting its use by local authorities.
- The BPA should continue to lead by example and share best practice among parking professionals to ensure further success in the UK parking profession.

For more research into parking visit:

[www.britishparking.co.uk/Parking-Reports-and-Research](http://www.britishparking.co.uk/Parking-Reports-and-Research)

For more information on the John Heasman Bursary visit:

[www.britishparking.co.uk/John-Heasman-Bursary](http://www.britishparking.co.uk/John-Heasman-Bursary)

<sup>2</sup> Government License Statistics (2013)