

We intended to have a short & pleasant stay at Llangrannog.

On arrival my husband (65 yrs old) parked the car and walked to the payment machine by the entrance.

He first tried to pay for parking by card but the machine wouldn't accept payment. He came back to the car to search for some correct change to pay by cash. He then had to queue for several more minutes at the payment machine waiting behind a woman who was also unsuccessfully trying to pay for parking.

After the women gave up trying to pay, he paid £1-90 in cash for a max 1 hour stay. Unfortunately, the machine took the coins but didn't issue any ticket. As there was no notice saying that the machine was faulty, he put in another £1-90 but again no ticket was issued. He then unsuccessfully tried to get his coins back from the machine.

He went on to read the rather confusing sign to see how else to pay & needed to return to the car again to get his reading glasses!

The only other ways to pay is either by down loading a Parking App onto your mobile phone and using the App to pay or by phone using the number on the sign. Unfortunately, mobile phone coverage is poor in this part of Wales and he couldn't get a mobile signal so couldn't pay by phone.

He then read that he could access free WiFi for 10 minutes to download the App. He had some difficulty registering for the WiFi, searching & downloading the app, as well as filling in the reg details & time etc. To download the app from the Apple store he needed his apple password which he couldn't remember, so again he had to return to the car to ask me for it. Unsurprisingly (& also given his age & lack of speed, especially using mobiles & downloading these new apps) it took 13 minutes from when we entered the carpark to finally pay another £1-90.

It actually caused him some stress & he was then not in the best mood, so we actually had had enough of Llangrannog & left the carpark shortly afterwards. So our total time in the carpark was less than 25 minutes at a total cost of £5-70 (13 minutes of this 25 minutes was taken up trying to pay 3 times) to then later receive a PCN !

The signage was unclear & the limited information about the "grace period" was in small writing & not highlighted. There was a lot more information on the signage about what would happen if you didn't pay rather than how you could pay.

Clearly, we had no intention of not paying. Also, it was unclear when the grace period actually commenced (was it when the car was parked or when you started the paying process etc) We had actually started the process of payment 3 times within the first 10 minutes and were unable to complete the first two methods (Debit Card and Cash) through no fault of ours. It was the defective machine supplied and operated by OPS that frustrated these attempts to pay.

Given the issues above I feel that the grace period time is insufficient in this particular car park with its problems.

I've since learned that the terms "fine" & "penalty" should not have even been used on the Signage that OPS put up.

In addition, OPS only sent me a general & pro forma (not individual) response rejecting my appeal. They made no mention of the mitigating circumstances I had outlined in my appeal, or about the £3-80 overpayment we had actually made to them due to their faulty machine.

So, our brief visit to Llangrannog proved to be stressful & costly, despite us trying to do the right thing. I now see that sadly there are long-standing issues with this carpark & OPS.

In summary

1. There was unclear & inappropriate signage (doesn't comply to Section 19 para 3 of the BPA code of conduct).
2. There was limited & unclear information, in small writing, about the grace period.
3. There was no faulty sign displayed on the payment machine. Technically their contract is breached if all of their machinery is not in working order.
4. No account was taken of our mitigating circumstances in their response to my appeal.
5. Given the numerous issues encountered I feel that the grace time is insufficient.
6. You could argue that the contract conditions with only a 10 minute grace period, discriminates against some of the older generation or those with disabilities, who are slower with reading & taking in all of the information required to proceed. Also, those who don't have internet access on their phones etc. Or those who just had cash or card with them.
7. It is clear we never had any intention of avoiding payment for using the car park and that the reason we were just 3 minutes over the grace period was as a result of the defective OPS payment machine.
8. I feel that the PCN was a disproportionate charge. We had paid for a full hour & were only parked there for less than 25 minutes.
9. OPS made no mention of the £3-80 we overpaid them. They also didn't specify how many minutes we had exceeded over the grace period.
10. There was no warning about the lack of internet or mobile phone coverage in that area & no working alternative.
11. There is a history of numerous problems with this carpark & OPS. It would appear the payment machine is regularly out of order & the lack of phone signal makes it virtually impossible to pay within 10 minutes unless you already have the parking app loaded on your phone. Maybe they should consider having a second payment machine at the car park so there is an alternative if one is faulty!
12. Finally, given all of the above points, I don't believe that OPS have behaved "reasonably" as required in their contract (clause 7a)

Thank you.