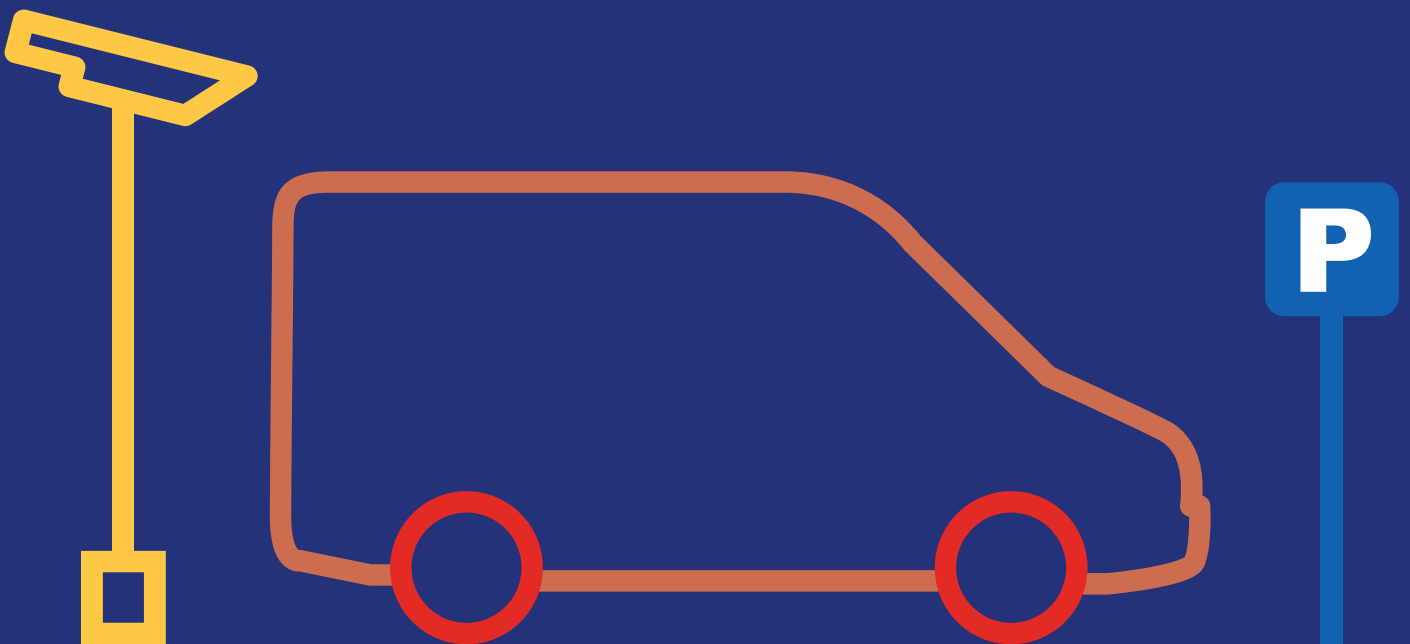


# Parking on Private Land Appeals

Annual Report 2020 | Appendix I

- POPLA operational performance





## POPLA team setup

Our assessors showed great flexibility in 2020. Not only did they continue to successfully manage our case volumes whilst all colleagues worked from home, they contributed to the wider Ombudsman Services business outputs once all new appeals were placed on hold and existing appeals completed.

Instead of furloughing our colleagues we redeployed all POPLA operational colleagues to assist our ombudsman schemes in the energy and communications sectors. Our redeployed colleagues provided excellent levels of customer service to consumers, some of whom were vulnerable, as their complaints moved through to resolution.

The POPLA assessors remain supported by two team managers, a head of area, a sector expert and the lead adjudicator.

## Calls

Between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2020, we handled 14,555 inbound calls – answering 98% within 30 seconds.

The POPLA team continues to receive calls and emails about many issues including queries about logging appeals, requests for advice about the best way to appeal, or complaints about the outcome of an appeal.

## General approach to appeals

It is important to remind motorists and parking operators that POPLA does not follow an investigative process when deciding appeals.

The motorist has an opportunity to submit their reasons for appeal and it is for the parking operator to prove the validity of the parking charge by producing evidence to rebut those reasons. The motorist also has an opportunity to comment on the parking operator's evidence before an assessor decides the appeal.

POPLA assessors do not have a remit to seek further information, evidence or appeal reasons from motorists – or to ask parking operators for further rebuttal reasons or evidence. Probing one party or the other for further evidence could prejudice the outcome. Accordingly, we can only consider evidence provided by the parties during the process.

This means appeal outcomes are incredibly sensitive to the appeal reasons and evidence – and the response of the parking operator. The same circumstances in the same car park can result in a different outcome if motorists submit different reasons for appeal, or the operator submits a different response.

On a similar note, it is important to point out that an allowed POPLA appeal does not necessarily mean a parking charge was issued incorrectly. It means the parking operator's evidence did not rebut the motorist's appeal reasons and/or justify the validity of the parking charge.

## Key performance indicators

POPLA has a KPI requiring most decisions are issued within 55 days of the motorist's appeal submission. 28 days of this period is taken up by the time allowed for the operator to respond and a motorist to comment on the operator's evidence pack.

We were performing well from October 2019 to March 2020, but the decision to adjourn all new and existing cases from 6 April 2020 until 3 August 2020 expended considerable time and effort.

This resulted in more than 13,000 parking appeals being put on hold for several months and impacted our KPI performance, as the time that passed from the original submission was not adjusted.

Our focus from April 2020, as agreed with the BPA, was on placing each new appeal on hold manually and supporting motorists and parking operators throughout the adjournment period, until appeals were restarted from 3 August onwards.

Most appeals were already in excess of the 55-day timeframe by the time we were able to resume our normal operational processes, which meant that adhering to our usual KPI was no longer possible.

We are working hard to reduce the average appeal assessment time and are recruiting additional POPLA assessors to support this.

Month	Appeals assessed			
	within 55 days	%	outside 55 days	%
Oct 2019	5,624	98.2%	102	1.8%
Nov 2019	6,284	98.1%	122	1.9%
Dec 2019	3,853	99.3%	29	0.7%
Jan 2020	5,477	97.6%	132	2.4%
Feb 2020	4,598	97.6%	115	2.4%
Mar 2020	4,891	98.1%	95	1.9%

## Website and system development

During 2020 POPLA delivered both website and system improvements for the benefit of motorists, parking operators and the wider industry, including:

- The relaunch of our website with a focus on a simpler user journey: [www.popla.co.uk](http://www.popla.co.uk)
- New website content including FAQs making it clearer how to appeal, what the process is and what to expect from POPLA
- Revised outbound communications clearly managing expectations around next steps and timescales for all appeals at key stages reducing the need to contact POPLA
- The introduction of a website contact form, enabling a user to contact the POPLA team via the website
- The publication of several appeal case studies, giving motorists and parking operators a greater understanding of how we arrive at our decisions

