New Parking Guidance Information System in Limerick

Boosting business in the city centre

A large-scale electronic Parking Guidance Information System has recently been installed in Limerick to assist motorists in locating available parking spaces at twelve city-centre car parks.

The new system, commissioned by Limerick city council, and funded under the Dept. of Transport's Sustainable Transport Programme, comprises some twenty-six on-street Parking Information Displays at key intersections throughout the city centre, and a further ten full electronic information displays on the main approach routes to the city which can display traffic, event and general information to motorists.

Based on 3G and GPRS mobile communications

Static signs were installed as route confirmatory signs at junctions where dynamic PGI was deemed excessive. At these locations drivers would not benefit from the provision of dynamic PGI. The car park interfaces and signs use a combination of 3G and GPRS mobile communications depending on the sign type and data requirements.

The Full Matrix Signs are 3-colour displays (red, amber and green) and are used to provide both event and incident information. Traffic information and parking space availability information within the city are also displayed on these signs. The dynamic PGS signs also use tricolour LED displays, however in this instance the colours are used to highlight the status of the car parking availability (green for spaces or open and red for closed or full).

Self-diagnosing system

The PGS management software is installed on a server within the LCC offices and is accessible to administrative staff via an internet browser behind the LCC firewall. The GUI consists of a map of the city with icons indicating the location of each sign and car park. The system is self-diagnosing and monitors the health status of all elements of each sign and car park interface unit. Should an issue arise with any element the relevant icon on the GUI displays a red X and the user may then interrogate the system to assist the resolution of that issue.

The system comprises:

- 12 car Parks
- 10 full Matrix VMS Signs
- 26 parking Information Displays
- wireless Modem Links
- full Management Software Package
- 11 static Car Park Information Signs

Manufactured and supplied by Clare-based smart electronic sign company, Data Display Ltd., the system was installed by parking guidance specialists A.G.K. Ltd. Information is collected automatically at each of the parking facilities and relayed to a central management computer in Limerick city council offices, and transmitted to motorists via the strategically-located On-Street Signs, and system communications are effected by wireless modem links.

Official launch of the new Parking Guidance Information System in Limerick city centre: (l-to-r) Tom Cooney, Limerick City Council, Dara O' Callaghan, Q-Park Ireland, Jim Kenny, Arthur's Quay Shopping Centre, Phil Collins, Cornmarket Square Car Park

"Enhance the visitor experience"

Speaking at the launch, Rory McDermott, Senior Roads Engineer with Limerick city council, stated: "We are delighted to have implemented this key piece of ITS infrastructure for Limerick and we are confident it will enhance the visitor experience of our city while providing significant benefits to the city centre business community which is particularly important in the current difficult economic circumstances".

Keith Gavin, Secretary of the Irish Parking Association, stated that: "It has been estimated that up to 30 percent of traffic in urban areas is searching for available parking spaces and this new electronic parking information system will be of significant benefit to car park operators in Limerick, as it will greatly assist drivers' in their parking search decision process, thereby improving traffic flow and overall customer satisfaction with the parking facilities in the city centre".

The new system highlights the availability of parking in Limerick city and will therefore encourage customers to use these facilities and will be of significant benefit to city centre businesses. ■