

MEMBER PROFILE: PARKFOOT GARAGE & CONVENIENCE STORE, WEST MALLING



A WINNING FORMULA



David Charman

PRA member and former Car Wash Association chairman David Charman was kind enough to meet with the PRA/CWA's commercial manager Gordon Balmer recently and show him his new vehicle valeting facilities at the award-winning Parkfoot Garage & Convenience Store in West Malling, Kent. Here, Balmer describes his visit:

David Charman's multi-award winning Parkfoot Garage is a third-generation family business, which is well known in the petrol retailing industry for being forward-thinking and innovative.

The site in West Malling, Kent – which is open

24-hours a day, 365-days a year – is on a very large plot, with a Spar shop and vehicle washing facilities located to the rear.

The Spar store itself is one of the largest I have visited on a forecourt and comprises of an extremely comprehensive convenience retail offer, food to-go, an off-licence and even a butchery.

As we admired his new giant walk-in fridge, Charman explained: "As soon as we near Christmas, the whole space is taken up with fresh turkeys".

In fact, we understand that our CWA chairman, a certain Mr Madderson, gets his from Parkfoot, so they must be top class!

Moving outdoors, Charman explained that the area was once a quarry, then vehicle workshops and latterly used for two open air Jet washes and two rollover washes.

Recently Charman completed a substantial investment in four jet wash bays and vehicle vacuum facilities.

The state-of-the-art equipment is supplied by a company called Adriatech and branded "Aquatech" and is certainly very impressive.

Features that stood out are that the concrete pad of the bay is actually heated, meaning the water won't freeze in winter, thus eliminating the risk of slips and falls.

Payment can be made by an easy-to-use app, whereby the user buys tokens via the app and then selects level of service they require making it a "cash-free" transaction. This is particularly important given the recent spate of thefts from Jet wash cash boxes, [as reported recently](#).





In addition to this, the water is supplied from Parkfoot's very own bore hole and all chemicals used are biodegradable.

The cost of the service ranges from £2/£5 depending on the level (£2 buys customers four minutes of service).

Charman gave a running commentary on the service and how to use the equipment as he washed my car. Thank you David!

The full service at £5 comprises of a pre-wash to get the grit off the paintwork and wheels, a hot water wash with the water being heated to 40°C, a foam brush to get any remaining dirt off and a cold-water rinse combined with polish.

This compares with around £8 for a hand car wash and took around five minutes. The result: a sparkling clean car.

I visited on a Wednesday morning and there was a steady trade of customers and Charman reported that business is up by 100% compared to the old roll overs.

Although Charman has advertised in the local trade press, many users have heard about it by word of mouth and Parkfoot Garage is now attracting vehicles from the local car dealership and also taxis.

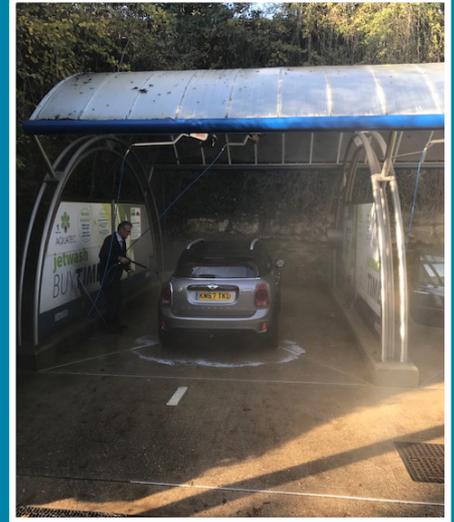
This vindicates the old adage that "if you build it then they will come".

On the way home I passed what looked like a non-compliant hand car wash with no adequate drainage and evidence of workers living on the site.

They had no customers and looked like they had thrown in the sponge for the day.

With modern day slavery now constantly in the press and some high-profile police raids on illegal hand car washes, motorists are becoming more aware of what to look for in a legitimate hand car wash, and what to avoid.

This is encouraging new investment into vehicle washing facilities around the country, and Parkfoot Garage is setting a great example of best practice.



A nearby hand car wash looked like it had given up for the day!

