



CHARGES PROTEST: Naeem Azam, Yorkshire branch president for the GMB's Professional Drivers' Branch, and Javaid Akhtar, Yorkshire branch secretary, with their petition over parking fees at Leeds Bradford Airport, *inset*

Anger at 'greedy' airport managers

BY SAM CASEY

TAXI drivers are lobbying "greedy" airport bosses to scrap new drop-off charges.

As reported in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, anyone wanting to drop off or collect passengers outside the terminal building at Leeds Bradford Airport now has to pay £2, no matter how brief their stop.

The move has attracted widespread criticism from the public. Coun Andrew Carter, leader of the Tory group on Leeds City Council, branded the charge a "rip-off".

Now the Professional Drivers' Branch of the GMB union has launched a petition demanding that the charges are dropped.

Yorkshire branch secretary Javaid Akhtar, also a Leeds councillor and taxi driver, said: "The sad thing is that the airport management have become so greedy.

"It's about time the people of this city and region stood up and said something."

Under the new system, cars' number plates are recorded by cameras as they enter the short-stay car park outside the terminal.

The driver's fee, which rises to £5 after half an hour, is calculated when they leave and can be paid in cash or by card.

Security staff are posted at the exit barriers to ensure fees are paid.

Naeem Azam, Yorkshire branch president for the GMB's Professional Drivers' Branch, said cabbies had no choice but to

add the cost of the new charge to fares. It's an extra £4 for a two-way trip," he said.

The airport has introduced a free drop-off facility in the long-stay car parks half-a-mile from the terminal. A shuttle bus runs on a continuous loop to ferry passengers to the terminal and back.

Private hire drivers can pay an annual £25 subscription to use the short-stay car park for up to 15 minutes.

But Mr Akhtar said: "We want the airport to stop penalising people. They are giving the airport business and yet, ultimately, they are being pushed elsewhere."

The petitions will be placed in taxi offices and cabs for passengers to sign.

The airport did not wish to comment.

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