



How IPS & CPS Delivered a Pop-Up Parking Solution for the World's Biggest Irish Music Festival



Belfast
City Council



Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 – Belfast

How International Parking Systems (IPS) & CPS Delivered a Pop-Up Parking Solution for the World's Biggest Irish Music Festival

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Section 1: Background & The Challenge

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 marked a historic milestone — the first time the world's largest Irish music festival had ever been held in Belfast. With hundreds of thousands of visitors expected to descend on the city, the logistical demands were immense.

IPS were approached by their contact, Gavin Bell, at Belfast City Council in the weeks leading up to the event. The Council had made significant preparations — organising Park & Ride car parks, pedestrianising key areas, and working with their established payment partner RingGo — but had not considered that RingGo alone may not be sufficient to handle the volume of demand expected across the Fleadh Car Parks.

With approximately **six weeks to go**, the Council turned to IPS. An order was placed for **11 MSX Parking Terminals** to be deployed across the festival footprint.

As planning progressed, it quickly became clear that enforcement capability would also be required. IPS Regional Director **Newton Keenan** introduced **Gavin Bell from Belfast City Council** to **Andrew Burnside at CPS** (a private parking operator and established IPS partner). **Kerry McMullan, Operations Lead from Belfast City Council's Fleadh team** was also brought into the conversation, ensuring all key decisions were aligned.

CPS put forward a comprehensive event management proposal covering three pillars:

- **Terminals** — MSX Parking Terminals supplied by IPS
- **Enforcement** — on-the-ground management by CPS
- **ANPR Infrastructure** — Automatic Number Plate Recognition coverage

This proposal was confirmed and agreed with approximately **3.5 weeks** remaining before the Fleadh opened.

Section 2: The Solution

Despite the compressed timeline, IPS and CPS moved quickly to deliver a complete, integrated parking solution.

IPS deployed 11 MSX Parking Terminals across the festival's **17,000 parking spaces**. IPS Technical Manager **Tony** was on-site throughout, with Field Service Engineer for Ireland, **Johnny**, on hand across the festival weekend to ensure seamless operations.

Recognising the scale and diversity of the expected audience, IPS rapidly designed and rolled out **Scan to Pay QR codes** to complement the existing **Park Smarter** mobile payment options. These proved highly effective, offering visitors a fast and familiar payment method without the need to download an app.

The **Park Smarter** platform supported a full suite of payment options:

- **App payments** via the Park Smarter app
- **QR / Scan to Pay** codes at each location
- **Terminal payments** via the MSX machines

A key enabler of the entire approach was the **MSX terminal's lightweight and compact design**, which made a true '**lift & shift**' / **Pop-Up Car Park** model possible — a capability unique to the MSX product. Car parks could be established,



configured, and operational with minimal infrastructure, exactly what a festival environment demands.

CPS provided full event management support, including enforcement personnel and ANPR infrastructure, ensuring the car parks operated safely and efficiently throughout the festival.



Section 3: The Results

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 exceeded all expectations — and the parking operation delivered to match.

According to **Belfast One Business Improvement District**, total recorded footfall in the Belfast city core reached **1,653,999 visitors** between Sunday 2 August and Sunday 9 August 2026. This figure:

- **More than doubled** the initial estimate of 800,000+ visitors
- Represented an **89% increase** in footfall compared to the same week in 2025 (874,925 visitors)
- **More than doubled** the 750,000 visitors achieved at the 2025 Fleadh in Wexford

Against this backdrop of extraordinary demand, the parking solution performed with distinction:

- **Over 4,500 transactions** were completed across the festival using the MSX Terminals, Park Smarter App, and QR/Scan to Pay codes
- While the opening days were relatively quiet, the **final weekend saw a significant surge** in car park usage and mobile payment transactions
- Despite a high volume of complaints relating to Translink train services, complaints regarding the Park and Ride provision were few and **not a single complaint was received** regarding the Park Smarter payment options or MSX Terminals
- The MSX Terminals **performed as expected** throughout the entire festival period

Section 4: Voices from the Project

Andrew Burnside, CPS (Private Operator Partner)

"No complaints, successful delivery — Scan to Pay was a brilliant alternative to the RingGo app and even to the Park Smarter App. The uptime of the terminals and Park Smarter options was very successful."

Newton Keenan, Regional Director, IPS

"Both IPS and CPS were agile in their response, given the timeframe. We were able to create the Pop-Up Car Parks requested by the Council due to the lightweight and compact design of our MSX terminals and the associated software that Park Smarter brings. The MSX allows for a 'lift & shift' approach to parking, making it unique. Success to me looked like having all the preparation in place with staff on the ground along with the alternative Text and Scan to Pay options that Park Smarter brings. We already had a strong relationship with CPS and the Council — which ensured communications were always simple."

Gavin Bell, Belfast City Council

"Despite the challenging timescales, IPS successfully commissioned, manufactured, and delivered the MSX terminals to Belfast within the required timeframe. Installation and testing were completed without issue, and all

equipment performed as expected throughout the event. Users provided positive feedback on the simplicity and convenience of the Text-to-Pay functionality, and no technology-related complaints were reported during the event.”

Kerry McMullan, Belfast City Council

“The Fleadh, which is the world’s biggest celebration of Irish music and culture, was hosted in Belfast for the first time with an estimate of attracting 800,000+ visitors. In anticipation of visitors travelling from across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, we established three event Park & Ride sites. It was important for us to encourage uptake of Park & Ride to reduce congestion. IPS offered a user-friendly and efficient process to choose to pay on arrival through IPS cashless parking machines and Park Smarter app including Text and Scan to Pay options and was well received by users.”

Section 5: Looking Ahead

The success of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 has set a strong foundation for the future. **The Fleadh is returning to Belfast in 2027**, and both IPS and CPS are eager to once again serve as critical partners for the event — building on the relationships, learnings, and infrastructure established this year.

One key lesson stands out for festival and event organisers: **plan the parking strategy earlier**. With more lead time, even greater visitor experience outcomes are achievable, and the full potential of the IPS and CPS partnership can be realised from the outset.

Looking further ahead, an exciting innovation concept is already being explored: a **dedicated parking platform built on the back of a flatbed trailer**, with MSX machines pre-configured and ready to deploy at events across the country. This would enable organisers to create an **instant 'Pop-Up Car Park' anywhere** — arriving on-site fully equipped, with minimal setup time and maximum flexibility. A truly mobile parking solution for a mobile world.

Section 6: About IPS / About Park Smarter

International Parking Systems (IPS) is a leading provider of smart parking technology, delivering innovative solutions to local authorities, private operators, and event organisers across the UK and Ireland. With a portfolio including the MSX Parking Terminal and the Park Smarter mobile payment platform, IPS enables

flexible, reliable, and user-friendly parking experiences — from city centres to large-scale events.

Footfall figures sourced from Belfast One Business Improvement District, 10 August 2026.