



Consumer news

We want you

Investing for children

Are you a parent or grandparent investing for a child's future?

Are you using child trust funds, or savings accounts or share-based investments

such as unit trusts?

When are you planning to let the child have control of the money?

Details to Nick Kirby.

Being in hospital

What makes a hospital experience a good one, apart from medical care? Is the way you're treated by staff an issue? Sara Apps would like to hear your experiences.

Male/female divide

Do you think you've ever paid more because you're male/female? Did you think it was fair? Tell Bob Tolliday your experiences.



Money from property

Are you retired and thinking about releasing money from your home, but unsure whether to downsize or go for an equity release scheme? Let Rebecca Fearnley help you weigh up your options.

Financial products

If you've recently bought a financial product from a supermarket and would like us to compare it with our Best Buys to see if we can get you a better deal, write to Rebecca Fearnley.

Please include full contact details and a daytime phone number

■ helpwanted@which.co.uk

Parking off site when you fly won't always save you money

The hunt for cheap parking

TRAVEL

Travellers hoping to save money by using less convenient off-site airport parking may not get the good deal they hope for.

We checked prices of on- and off-site parking for seven days at the UK's 11 biggest airports and found that at London Stansted, it's at least £18 more to use an off-site car park than parking in the airport.

Independent operators have a tough time here because the local authority Uttlesford Council gives only limited planning permission for off-site car parks.

At Belfast and Luton airports, it was also slightly more expensive to park off site, even though off-site car parks are further from the terminal.

But it's still worth checking prices before you travel because savings can be made off site at some larger airports, such as Edinburgh, London Heathrow and Manchester. At Manchester it's more than £19 cheaper off site at just over £28, while at Gatwick's north terminal parking is at least £15 cheaper off site.

Independent operators have voiced fears that UK airport owners want to squeeze them out of the market. The Independent Airport Park and Ride Association, which represents the operators, said it will lead to reduced choice for the consumer.

BAA, which operates seven airports including Edinburgh, Gatwick, Glasgow, Heathrow and Stansted, said that it wasn't aware of any difficulty and that restrictions 'will remain on the number of companies operating...due to the lack of space and capacity'.

TAKE ACTION!

Book ahead

■ Compare prices and book ahead to get a good deal. To compare prices visit www.airport-parking-shop.co.uk, the individual airport's site, or www.baa.co.uk/parking



Stansted: it's £18 more to park off site than on site

AIRPORT	PRICE DETAILS			
	ONE WEEK ON SITE (£)	ONE WEEK OFF SITE (£)	OFF-SITE SAVING (£)	CHEAPEST QUOTE
BELFAST INT'L	21	24	-3	BCP Long Stay
BIRMINGHAM	43.40	35.60	7.80	APH Summer Parking
BRISTOL	37	33.50	3.50	Purple Parking
EDINBURGH	34.30	24	10.30	Edinburgh Quality Parking
GATWICK SOUTH	44.70	43.60	1.10	Courtlands
GATWICK NORTH	56	40.90	15.10	Holiday Parking Gatwick
GLASGOW	29.40	20	9.40	Parksafe
HEATHROW	58.80	48.65	10.15	Courtlands
LUTON	50.40	51.20	-0.80	NCP Long Term Parking
MANCHESTER	47.60	28.35	19.25	Global Airport Parking
NEWCASTLE	38	33	5	Callerton Outdoor Parking
STANSTED	50.40	69	-18.60	Pink Elephant

Prices correct at 13 to 14 June 2006 for a booking from 1 to 8 July 2006. Off-site car parks quoted are within ten minutes transit of the airport. Cheapest quote may vary depending on date of booking. Prices exclude credit card charges of up to 2 per cent.

200,000

DIY accidents a year result in
a trip to casualty

CONSUMER SAFETY BULLETIN

3.3 billion

texts sent by UK mobile phone
users in May 2006

MOBILE DATA ASSOCIATION

5%

of people consider estate
agents 'fair'

MINTEL



This iPod
could cost
you £105
more than
the ticket
price



Avoid Argos easy shop card

BORROWING AND DEBT

Want to pay £405 for a £300 iPod? That's what it will cost if you use the Argos easy shop card and pay it back over 27 weeks with its annual percentage rate (APR) of up to 222.7 per cent.

The card is from Bradford-based credit company Greenwood Personal Credit. It's also available from Provident Personal Credit, but with an APR of up to 152.3 per cent. Both are owned by Provident Financial.

You could buy the same iPod on Argos' own store card and pay no interest if you paid it back in less than nine months. The Argos store card also has a lower, but not cheap, APR of 25.9 per cent if you borrow on it.

Provident defended its rates: 'We lend small amounts, typically £50 to £500, with weekly repayments collected door to door by specially trained agents. We don't charge anything for late payments.'

Argos said: 'Argos is not involved in managing the card, marketing or promoting it.'

From April 2007 a revised Consumer Credit Act will make it easier to challenge unfair credit agreements and this could include challenging interest rates.

TAKE ACTION!

Avoid expensive credit

If you want to borrow money, there are far cheaper options than doorstep lending or store cards. For the best deals on credit cards and overdrafts, see www.which.co.uk

Recalled Bausch & Lomb lens solution linked to UK victim

Infection risk from contact lens fluid

HEALTH

A soft contact lens solution that was recalled across the globe after being linked to a debilitating eye infection may have claimed its first UK victim.

In May Bausch & Lomb ordered the worldwide recall of its ReNu MoistureLoc solution following a rise in fusarium infections among users in Hong Kong, Singapore and the US. Fusarium is a fungal infection which causes pain, blurry vision, discharge or swelling and even blindness in severe cases.

At the time of the recall British consumers were reassured that the lens solution sold in the affected areas had come from Bausch & Lomb's US plant. European stocks came from a plant in Italy and both British health officials and Bausch & Lomb said there had been no fusarium cases reported in the UK.

'I woke up one morning and could not open my eye. I was admitted to hospital'

TAKE ACTION!

Return it to the shop

Bottles of Bausch & Lomb ReNu MoistureLoc have been recalled worldwide. If you still have an old bottle, dispose of the contents and exchange the empty bottle for an alternative where you bought it.

But Michelle Scholes from Hull came down with the fusarium infection in March, weeks before the recall. It caused painful ulcers on her eyes and Michelle, who regularly used ReNu MoistureLoc, spent five agonising days in hospital undergoing treatment and tests.

She explained: 'It started in mid-February, when I woke up one morning and could not open my eye. It was very sensitive and streaming. I went to A&E and they gave me drops and sent me away. But about a month later it came back in both eyes and I was admitted to hospital.'

'It was very painful. I had to have eye drops every half hour during the night. I have to wear glasses now for at least a couple of months and then I'll be able to see whether I can wear lenses again.'

Bausch & Lomb told Michelle she might be the first case in this country.

The company told us it was investigating a few reported cases of fusarium keratitis in the UK and once its investigations are complete it will be reporting the findings to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

It added: 'Although fusarium infections are rare, especially in the UK, it would be expected that a number of cases would be reported each year.'



Michelle Scholes had been using ReNu MoistureLoc