

Taxi Licensing Scrutiny Review

Summary of Consultation Findings

Response Rates

40 surveys were issued by post/email with a closing date of 12 January 2011.
10 responses were received resulting in a 25% return.

The survey was also included on the council's online consultation facility, generating a further 8 responses.

Question 1 - Should the Council continue with its controlled growth approach? i.e. the issue of two new hackney carriage vehicle licences every 6 months.

Yes = 9 (50%) No = 5 (28%) Not answered = 4 (22%)

Question 2 - If we continue to limit the number, is the current limit right?

Yes = 6 (33%) No = 8 (45%) Not answered = 4 (22%)

Question 3 - If you think the number should be raised, please state to what number and give reasons why?

- Controlled slow growth; quality not quantity; New hackneys should be high specification, wheelchair accessible and eco-friendly. De-regulation would cause chaotic scenes at official ranks. Illegal ranks would spring up and emission issues would rise
- Should be raised in line with unmet demand surveys x 2
- 6 per 6 months in line with growth of city and its population
- although we maintain there is no unmet demand the Equality Act may mean extra wheelchair accessible taxis will be required above the current level of 41 (23% of total fleet). This level will increase to 43 in Jan 2011. If more are required to satisfy Equality Act, then controlled growth would cause less harm to the trade
- Unable to scientifically comment but two seems very low even to take account of turnover of drivers, unless this is a net increase. Evaluation of a number of factors such as availability of service, working hours of existing drivers and sustained income for existing drivers needs to be taken into account. Perhaps there should be consideration of seasonal or temporary licenses should be considered for events such as race days, Christmas, New Year etc where demand almost always exceeds supply.
- I think about 220 would be about right. It is noticeable that there are still high queues at the ranks so the current level is obviously too low. Also, an increase in Hackney plates does not unnecessarily increase the overall number of taxis on the road as some current private hire drivers will become Hackney drivers

Question 4 - Should the council cease to restrict the number of hackney carriages it licences and let commercial considerations regulate numbers?

Yes = 5 (28%) No = 10 (55%) Not answered = 3 (17%)

Question 5 - The Government is soon to announce a minimum quota for the number of licensed wheelchair accessible hackney carriages. It is anticipated there will need to be a percentage increase in York, if so how should this be achieved?

a) by licensing more additional wheelchair vehicles

Yes = 12 (67%) No = 3 (16%) Not answered = 3 (17%)

b) By enforcing a change of vehicle type within the existing fleet numbers

Yes = 6 (33%) No = 9 (50%) Not answered = 3 (17%)

Question 6 - Has the city got enough taxi ranks?

Yes = 7 (39%) No = 7 (39%) Not answered = 4 (22%)

Question 7 - Are the taxi ranks in the right place?

Yes = 7 (39%) No = 7 (39%) Not answered = 4 (22%)

Question 8 - Do the taxi ranks operate at the right times?

Yes = 2 (11%) No = 5 (28%) Not answered = 11 (61%)

The number of respondents who appear not to have answered this question is high because the question was missed from the online consultation.

However, 1 online respondent having seen the paper version of the form, chose to provide an answer to this question elsewhere on the electronic form.

Question 9 - Please provide any suggestions you have for additional taxi rank locations.

8 (45%) Responses received

- Outside the train station x 4 (possible use of bus stops after 11pm)
- Blake St / Lendal Loop x 2
- On all main roads in and out of the city
- Station Rise vicinity x 3
- University
- New tear drop site
- New stadium
- Blossom St / Micklegate

- Acomb
- Duncombe Place to be open 24/7
- Piccadilly, Queen street & Railways Station to be open to all Hackney Carriages

Question 10 - What incentives from the council do you believe would encourage the taxi trade to move towards using a more eco-friendly vehicle e.g. a hybrid or electric car?

9 (50%) Responses received

- Fee reduction for hybrid/LPG/electric vehicles and ensure all new vehicles are eco-friendly
- Awards towards purchase of such vehicles
- Lower fees
- Financial incentives should be offered if a 'practical for taxi use' vehicle was available
- Substantial cash rewards should be offered and drivers should be given a reasonable time to convert
- Grant licences based upon the condition of meeting certain environmental standards
- Allow a period of time e.g.3 yrs during which time no fee is charged by the council for the licence and provide charging points at each rank
- Provide charging points at each rank x 2
- Priority use of inner city ranks,
- Reduced licensing cost / variation of licence fee. Increased availability of Hackneys particularly those which can be hailed to encourage taxi use rather than PH use, with an eco benefit
- Financial assistance with purchasing such vehicles
- Reduced testing and licensing fees for such vehicles

Question 11- The council receives complaints regarding the supply of accessible vehicles particularly for wheelchair users. Please let us have your views on the availability and suitability of such vehicles in use in the City.

14 (78%) Responses received

- CYC are awaiting quota from Government. Currently 23% of Hackneys are wheelchair accessible, and all licensed vehicles have luggage space to take a folding wheelchair
- Nearly all wheelchair users prefer booking a PH car rather than waiting on ranks x 2
- Incentives could be given to PH drivers to buy wheelchair vehicles i.e. lower licence fees
- See Qu.5 competition through demand
- Currently wheelchair drivers so not pick up passengers in wheelchairs
- Currently 1 in 5 wheelchair vehicles in the Hackney fleet. As most are not on radio circuit they can only be hailed in the street or accessed from a rank

- Are complaints about PH companies or Hackneys? Very few wheelchair accessible vehicles in PH companies
- The elderly and ambulant frequently refuse to travel in a wheelchair accessible taxi as they are harder to get in to
- Don't know about the current level of availability
- Exclude these vehicles from the controlled increase in numbers until an adequate number is reached, to encourage applicants to swap to this vehicle type
- In my previous city (Salisbury) all new cabs had to be accessible and this worked well
- Although number has increased there is increasing confusion about council policy. Many have rear access but this is not now recommended unless escape is possible from the side. However, sideways travel is not safe and turning some chairs can be difficult. Rear facing is safest and used on buses but others are saying forward facing is a requirement. 'London' taxis are normally large enough to turn in of seats are folded up and back against the luggage area. Further discussion is needed
- Issuing new licences would resolve this issue

Question 12 - The council receives complaints of overcharging by drivers often involving the application of incorrect meter tariffs. Please tell us your views on the use of calendar controlled meter and the automatic printing of receipts

13 (72%) Responses received

- Given the technology available and for the protection of consumers we should aim to have all meters in hackneys calendar controlled so tariff rates change automatically and facilities for credit cards and receipts
- Drivers have been reported for mis-use of meters with statements / evidence given but no action against them is ever taken. There should be more enforcement of the rules and penalties
- + point = regulated charges and proof of correct charges being made; - point = cost which might raise fares
- In favour of calendar controlled meters but not auto printing receipts
- We are all in favour of calendar controlled meters; receipt printers would not be practical or affordable. When you consider the number of complaints in relation to journeys, it is not a major problem
- Problem with small minority of drivers in both sectors. In accordance with I.T.A. policy of improving image of trade. I.T.A. favours calendar controlled meters. Demand for receipts is low and 99% of passengers and happy with written receipts. Proposal for receipt printers is not justified either in demand or cost
- At least half if not substantially more of complaints received by PH companies on overcharging are ill founded. No qualms about calendar meters and see no real need for printed receipts and can see no reason why this would reduce overcharging. I do know of drivers who had the ability to print receipts but had reliability issues with the equipment. I also carried a credit card machine for some time but no one would pay the small excess so I withdrew the facility

- I don't believe I have been overcharged. I don't think you need to waste resources looking at this
- Good idea x 2
- All new meters should be of this type, although punitive loading on certain days may be seen as profiteering by visitors. A single year round tariff that reflected effort might be better, combining distance and time anyway such that loading for race days etc became unnecessary
- This could be a problem for blind or partially sighted passengers
- I think this is a very good idea – it would eliminate the possibility of mistakes (or dishonesty) and would give the customer confidence that the tariff is both fair and correct

Question 13 - It maybe that hackney carriages and private hire vehicles can help meet community transport needs in alternative or by innovative ways. Please provide any suggestions you may have?

5 (28%) Responses received

- Local Transport Act 2008 allows for this
- We have not looked at this but would be willing to discuss any ideas with the Council. We are open to opportunities which increase work for us
- There may be some relevance in the already available method of operating 'Taxi-buses' in more rural communities of course. However, in general terms it may well be that the ability to travel by private hire vehicle may be better communicated to the travelling public as a viable option in certain cases. For example many journeys across the suburbs require a us journey into the city centre to change routes and another out again. It may be almost as cheap and a lot quicker to do this journey by private hire "taxi".
- Enabling those with travel concessions to use them at a significant discount or even free might mean that those in inaccessible locations such as villages could access a service rather than running a bus for one or two passengers. This might additionally be extended to those in shift work who could purchase a "season ticket" to dissuade from personal car use just because no public transport exists. Some companies especially in London already do this through use of contracts for taxis for out of hours workers.
- More use of shared minibus type vehicles should be explored. This works on the Continent.

Question 14 - Your views are important to us - please provide below any further information you want the Scrutiny Committee to consider.....

15 (83%) Responses received see below:

14 Your views are important to us - please provide below any further information you want the Scrutiny Committee to consider.....

① AS PEOPLE TEND TO TELEPHONE PRIVATE HIRE COMPANIES, PERHAPS THEIR NUMBERS OF W.A.V'S NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED

Re. Q1 THE 6 MONTH ISSUE WAS FOR A 2 YEAR PERIOD, UNTIL 8 HAD BEEN ISSUED THEN AN UNMET DEMAND SURVEY WOULD BE CARRIED OUT, WHICH I AM CONFIDENT WILL SHOW THERE IS NO UNMET DEMAND,

Q5 IT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT THESE %'S WOULD BE. IT MAY WELL BE THAT 23% WOULD BE SUFFICIENT,

WITH THE HISTORY BETWEEN THE TRADE & THE DEAN COURT, I AM AMAZED THAT HE SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN SOMETHING THAT COULD HAVE AN IMPACT OF SO MANY PEOPLES LIVELIHOOD , A

14 Your views are important to us - please provide below any further information you want the Scrutiny Committee to consider.....

② City of York Council is committed to social inclusion and ensuring a wide variety of opportunities is available to disabled residents to enjoy a high quality of life. Without the ability to travel; people with disability are denied access to life opportunities. This access to education, shopping, employment, health care as well as social and family life is significantly improved when journeys become accessible. For this reason the Council considers it important that people with disability have access to all forms of public transport.

Accessibility is therefore an important consideration in respect of vehicles licensed as hackney carriages. Await quota. direction from Government.

③ Please get Dancombe Place closure sorted!

④ I would like to be more involved in the work of S.C.

14 Your views are important to us - please provide below any further information you want the Scrutiny Committee to consider.....

5

Q 4

Continue to restrict the number of Hackney Carriages.

York is not suitable for an unrestricted number of Hackney Carriages. Similar towns & Cities as mentioned in your report continue to restrict and so should York.

There is not enough rank space for unlimited Cabs, there is not enough work for them all and standards would fall.

The problems with plates being rented and disputes about ownership happened because the Council over the years allowed it to happen.

Clearer rules about proof of ownership are needed - Insurance, reg. documents should be in the owner name. Other councils manage to regulate Licence and vehicle ownership details without de-restricting numbers.

Please return your completed questionnaire by 12 January 2011 to:

Scrutiny Services
City of York Council
The Guildhall
York
YO1 9QN



14 Your views are important to us - please provide below any further information you want the Scrutiny Committee to consider.....

6 The number of taxis goes hand in hand with the number of taxi ranks and number of spaces at each rank. Long established popular ranks will, if numbers were to rise dramatically, attract even greater numbers which will then likely have a knock on effect to the surrounding network.

Current compliance with the Duncombe Place part time rank has been raised as a problem. What practical options for enforcement are in place, or could be put in place, for part time ranks?

There is competing demand for the limited road space in the central area (Bus stops, cycle racks, etc) hence requests for additional ranks should ^{if not} be viewed in isolation.

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Q14. Your views are important to us - please provide below any further information you want the Scrutiny Committee to consider.

7 Taxi's are just other peoples cars and shouldn't be considered any different. It makes no difference whether I travel as an individual in a taxi or my own car. Keep taxis out of the centre of York and stop them using bus lanes.

8 the current system works, the balance of hackneys to private hire is about right. the problems in the past about plate ownership is caused because over the years the council allowed it to happen, and turned a blind eye to the renting of plates. the proving of ownership is easy (bill of sale, registration document and insurance) other councils can regulate this without de-restricting licences.

9 The city needs to be welcoming to visitors and residents alike and the current gridlock cannot be allowed to continue. Much of this is the way vehicles including taxis circumnavigate the city to allow people a few yards off their journey. Making roads within the inner ring road a pedestrian zone might help reduce cross city traffic, disabled/accessible vehicles might be permitted access but far more stringent control is needed as some put pedestrians in danger by their poor driving.

10 Disabled people all want a good taxi service, but they will only use it when they are confident it will be available when they most depend on it, when their train or flight has been delayed, and it is wet and cold, and the driver will not look for any excuse to get them home or to an unfamiliar destination.

(11)

Item 14 – The ITA views we wish the scrutiny committee to consider

The ITA represents the interests of many independent taxi owners and drivers who work the taxi ranks and most have no connection to any ‘taxi company’. The taxi trade is made up of self-employed individuals working hard to support their families; many have financially committed themselves to the trade.

Many of our views are given in the questionnaire but these are some others we would wish to bring to your attention”. Paragraph 3 of the report states that “each authority sets its own policy based on its own specific requirements. Therefore little would be gained by looking in detail at the Taxi Licensing Policies in place elsewhere.” Having stated this, several comparisons have been made regarding taxi provision in other towns. As a further comparison we have compiled the table below showing taxi provision in surrounding towns and cities.

Taxis per head of population (All restrict taxi numbers)

Council	No/Taxis	Population	Ratio	Taxis/1000 pop.
York	179	191,000	1 per 1067 people	0.94
Harrogate	149	157,900	1 “ 1059 “	0.94
Hull	170	262,400	1 “ 1543 “	0.65
Leeds	537	715,404	1 “ 1332 “	0.75
Bradford	225	506,800	1 “ 2252 “	0.44

To compare York with these towns, using Leeds as the benchmark:

York and Harrogate have 25% more taxis than Leeds

Hull has 13% less taxis than Leeds

Bradford has 41% less taxis than Leeds

It can be seen from Annex A that in general larger towns and cities have a restricted taxi policy and smaller towns and rural areas do not.

We consider that the survey system is the best method available to measure taxi demand and should be retained along with the restricted numbers policy. We feel sure that the Spring 2011 survey will show no unmet demand.

We have shown that York compares very well with taxi provision compared to other local towns and cities but we appreciate that more WAV’s may be necessary to achieve government guidelines regarding the Equality Act. If this is the case then a controlled approach should be implemented until a quota is reached.

We are sure the option of derestriction would be a disaster for the taxi trade and also the City of York and should be dismissed.

A J Davies

For the Independent Taxi Association – York

10-01-11