

## Taxi Licensing Scrutiny Review

### Information Gathered In Support Of Review Objectives

#### Objective (i) – Understanding public need & future allocation of hackney carriage licences

##### 1. Number of Hackney carriages per population

Authority	Population	Restricted?	No. Hackney Carriages	Ratio
Chester	120,000	De restricted	130	1/923
Cambridge	121,000	De restricted	303	1/399
Oxford	149,000	Restricted	107	1/1393
YORK	191,000	Restricted	178	1/1073
Brighton & Hove	256,000	Restricted	520	1/492
Nottingham	301,000	Restricted	411	1/732

2. The total number of Licensing Authorities in England & Wales is 343. As at 03/11/2010, the number of those that restrict hackney carriage numbers is 87 (25.36%).
3. In June 2004 the Department for Transport (DfT) asked 151 of those Licensing Authorities to review their policy of Quantity Control. Of those, 84 decided to retain restrictions. This figure became 87 by virtue of the fact that Sheffield City Council, Derbyshire Dales District Council and Birmingham City Council made a decision in 2008, to change their policy from that of 'unrestricted' to 'restricted'.
4. Therefore, the total number of Authorities that do not restrict or have voted to remove restrictions at a future date is 256 (74.64%). 68 of those originally restricted their number of hackney carriages but have since removed or given a firm commitment to remove licensing restrictions.
5. It should be noted that some Local Authorities are going from quantity control to quality control on hackneys as they try to raise standards and increase wheel chair assessable vehicles.
6. De-regulation - Benefits & Disadvantages for York  
The identified benefits and disadvantages are listed below:

#### Benefits

Council not involved in commercial market regulation  
Increases proportion of accessible vehicles  
More accountability with fewer rented vehicles  
Meets DfT objectives  
All can obtain licence / no waiting list  
No disputes over vehicle ownership

#### Disadvantages

Initial disruption to existing trading patterns  
May lead to additional traffic congestion and pressure on ranks  
Overprovision may lead to deterioration of standards  
Loss of investment value for those who bought a licensed vehicle (Value up to £40k)

More vehicles for customers  
No further costly surveys required

### Objective (ii) – Taxi Ranks

#### 7. Number of ranks, and number of spaces on ranks

Authority	No. of Hackneys	Rank Spaces	Ratio
Oxford	107	17+6 at railway station	1/ 4.7
Chester	130	90	1/1.4
YORK	178	Full time 34 + station 20 Inc part time 87	1/ 3.3 1/1.3
Cambridge	303	Full time 21 + 25 at station Inc. Part time 13	1/6.6 1/5.14
Nottingham	411	200 (unknown if station included)	1/ 2.1
Brighton & Hove	520	58 (unknown if station included)	1/ 9

#### 8. In York, Hackney Carriage ranks are situated at the following locations:

Full-time Ranks	Spaces	Part-time Ranks	Spaces
Clifton Moor Cinema	3	Clifford Street (for Gallery Nightclub)	4
Haxby	2	Clifford Street (opp. Gallery Nightclub)	4
Queen Street	4	Micklegate (for Ziggys Nightclub)	3
Tower Street	4	Rougier Street 10.30pm - 6am	3
The Crescent (Blossom St)	1	Toft Green (for Tru Nightclub)	4
St. Leonard's Place	4	Duncombe Place – 7.30am - 10pm	8
St. Saviourgate – Rank A	12	St. Sampson's Square 8pm - 6am	8
St. Saviourgate – Rank B (feeder rank)	4	York Racecourse (Race Days only)	12
		Exhibition Square 8pm - 6am	3
		Piccadilly – 11am - 6am	4

9. Ranks at railway stations are difficult to compare as many stations have dedicated parking for hackneys waiting to go onto the rank ie 'feeder ranks'. In York, vehicles can wait in the overspill car park. Ranks are often on land owned by railway companies who often introduce permit systems to limit the number of taxis allowed to use those ranks. This is true in York where 117 permits are issued.

#### 10. Usage of ranks and info from Halcrow on waiting times at ranks

The following table provides information from February/March 2008 detailing the average delay in minutes at ranks and the level of demand

Rank	Passenger Departures	Taxi Departures	Average Passenger Delay	Average Taxi Delay
Clifford St (Gallery)	4,387	1,880	1.07	3.20
Clifford St (Opp Gallery)	2,700	1,207	0.84	1.57
Railway Station	7,679	5,293	3.80**	7.46
St Saviourgate	5,681	3,509	2.55	5.86
Tower Street	0	18	0.00	5.00
Duncombe Place	1,028	594	2.28	5.68
St Leonard's Place	15	15	0.00	15.00
Piccadilly	5*	0	2.50	0.00
Rougier Street	1,832	932	12.32	1.69
Micklegate	180	72	1.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,685</b>	<b>13,519</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>5.42</b>

\* - At Piccadilly, the 5 passengers left the rank without obtaining a taxi.

\*\* - At the Railway Station, the figure of 3.80 has been amended to reflect the poor throughput of taxis at the Railway Station rank. It is recognised that passengers are waiting longer for a vehicle (4.17 mins) but this is not as a result of the restricted policy, more to do with the traffic management layout at York Railway Station.

11. The table below shows totals from February/March 2009 for comparison purposes:

Rank	Passenger Departures	Cab Departures	Average Passenger Delay	Average Cab Delay
Clifford St (Gallery)	1,127	605	0.84	1.46
Railway Station	4,801	2,988	0.94	7.51
St Saviourgate	3,181	2,432	0.70	8.45
Rougier Street	2,102	1,170	0.75	5.25
<b>2009 Totals</b>	<b>11,211</b>	<b>7,195</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>6.95</b>
Equiv ranks 2008	19,758	11,613	3.61	5.82

12. Raising Public Awareness of Little Used Ranks

At the last meeting the Task Group questioned how to raise public awareness of little-used ranks in the city centre e.g. Piccadilly, Tower St and Queen St. Officers plan to look at this in the future. It will also require the trade to service the ranks for the public to stand at them and this is something that could be

addressed as part of the consultation with Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licence Proprietors & Hire Drivers, and Private Hire Operators.

**Objective (iii) – Conditions attached to licences: accessibility, emissions etc**

13. Officers are awaiting a Government announcement on the quota requirements for number of wheelchair accessible taxis etc. However, in order to gauge feedback from social inclusion groups on the changes / improvements introduced by CYC over recent years, the Task Group may choose to discuss the issues with relevant parties ahead of the Government's announcement at the planned consultation event at the next meeting of the Task Group.
14. Type of Meters In Use In York  
At the present time whilst it is a requirement for all hackney carriages to be fitted with a meter to calculate the journey fare, there is no specification in relation to the meter itself. However, following the issue of a European Measuring Instrument Directive, new regulations were introduced in 2006 for the protection of the public. The Measuring Instrument (Taximeters) Regulations 2006 provide standards and specifications that manufacturers have to meet for taximeters produced after 30 October 2006.
15. Some Meters can be calendar controlled and locked and sealed by the manufacturers/suppliers so that tariff rates change automatically and cannot be tampered with manually by a driver. In addition, some private hire firms have introduced meters connect to GP mapping.
16. However, some meters can be manually controlled by a driver to change between tariff rates i.e. from tariff 1 to tariff 2. This can and has led to complaints of over charging by some drivers who set an inappropriate tariff rate for either time of day or the day itself e.g. Christmas Bank Holidays, Races.
17. The Task Group may wish to consider addressing this issue in their suggested revisions to the council's policy. for example, Darlington Borough Council state the following in their policy:

*'A new specification will apply to taximeters i.e. the taximeter must comply with the Measuring Instruments (Taximeter) Regulations 2006 and must be of the calendar control type which is locked and sealed by and approved manufacturer and supply and or installer.*

*The specification will initially apply to new vehicle applications only and subsequently will apply to all existing vehicles, both hackney and private hire(where fitted) with effect from.....'*

**Objective (iv) – Enhanced provision using innovative ways**

18. Innovative Vehicles  
It is now generally accepted that modern diesel engines are not delivering the levels of NOx reduction that were previously anticipated. Research indicates that overall quantities of NOx emitted have not decreased significantly and that the

proportion emitted as nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) has actually increased. As nitrogen dioxide is the main pollutant of concern in York, a policy of encouraging taxi drivers to upgrade their diesel vehicles to newer Euro standards is unlikely to have the desired impact on local air quality and could potentially make the situation worse.

19. At the current time the most appropriate policy for reducing emissions from taxis would appear to be incentivising the use of fully electric and / or hybrid vehicles. There are already a number of mainstream fully electric vehicles available and more to follow shortly. The latter include larger vehicles such as the Nissan Leaf which may be of use to private hire operators in the future. The main issue with fully electric vehicles remains the operating range between charges which may remain a barrier for use as general taxis in York.
20. A fully electric vehicle has no emissions at the point of use, but still gives rise to emissions at the power station (use of a green electric tariff can reduce these emissions). There are fully electric black cab style taxis available but we have limited knowledge of their success elsewhere or how feasible they would be for use in York. At the moment most hybrids are petrol / electric e.g. the Toyota Prius and these vehicles are being successfully used as private hire vehicles. For example, in New York there were 2019 hybrid taxis in operation in 2009 and in London one company use only hybrid vehicles - see [www.greentomatocars.com](http://www.greentomatocars.com) . It should be noted that some operators have looked at using hybrid vehicles but the available vehicles have failed to meet other local licensing requirements such as tinted windows and luggage capacity.
21. Hybrid black cab style vehicles are also in operation in London and still under development - see <http://www.eco-rally.org/evo-electric-plug-hybrid-black-cab> and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/3771679.stm>.
22. However, diesel / electric hybrids are becoming available in other countries and may eventually offer a promising alternative for use as taxis in the UK. Plug in hybrids are also now available where the vehicle can travel almost predominantly on electric but still have diesel capacity to increase the range if needed.
23. Introduction of Low Emission Zone  
At the present time efforts to reduce emissions in York are being focused on the development of a Low Emission Strategy (LES) which uses incentives to encourage the uptake of cleaner vehicles and technology. At the present time there are no plans to introduce a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) for all vehicles (including taxis), although the possibility of a LEZ for buses only hasn't yet been ruled out. Any LEZ for buses would be focused on increasing the uptake of hybrid and /or electric vehicles rather than tightening Euro standards. As has already been outlined above, improving the Euro standard of a diesel vehicle does not necessarily lead to a reduction in nitrogen dioxide concentrations and is not something we would wish to endorse at this time.
24. Potentially there is an option to 'enforce' the uptake of electric / hybrid vehicles within the taxi (and general vehicle fleet) by the use of Low Emission Zone (LEZ) style controls requiring the use of hybrid vehicles but this is a long way in the

future and unlikely to happen until hybrid vehicles become more accessible and affordable to the general population.

25. In the short term the emphasis should be on doing what we can to promote the use of hybrid, and to a lesser extent electric vehicles. This needs to involve some lobbying of government to try and secure financial assistance for purchase of these types of vehicles by taxi drivers and the provision of as many local incentives as we can. Any ideas on this would be much appreciated

26. Personal Safety

This authority seeks to promote the protection and safety of the public and taxi drivers. To achieve this in relation to driver safety, in 2008 the authority introduced:

- i. Approved installation of driver shields
- ii. Amended conditions of tinted windows
- iii. Adopted DfT guidance on driver safety (shown at Annex B)
- iv. Review of crime statistics every 3 months
- v. Approved installation of CCTV camera to licensed vehicles subject to certain criteria as outlined below:
  - *'Personal safety' – when fitted, a camera lens and equipment should present no impact danger to passengers*
  - *The quality of recorded images should be of sufficient quality during all lighting conditions to continually demonstrate their strong deterrent value*
  - *Passengers should be aware that they are being recorded. The vehicle will carry appropriate signs, approved by the council, informing the public that camera surveillance is active in the vehicle*
  - *Encryption of images stored. The images contained in the recording device may only be downloaded by an authorised officer of the council or police officer. The manufacturer will supply the council with de-encryption software free of charge.*
  - *Appropriate activation device*
  - *The recording system and memory card or other image memory recording system will be securely stored within the vehicle and away from public access'*

27. Issuing of Receipts & Alternative Payment Methods

All drivers whether hackney or private hire will issue receipts on request. These invariably are hand written. However, technology does exist for receipts to be issued directly from a printer on a meter. This gives clear accountability and would greatly assist in reducing overcharging. It would however be an additional cost to the driver or vehicle owner. It should be noted that not all private hire vehicles are fitted with a meter and some companies operate off mileage charts.

28. The council places no restriction on drivers installing debit or credit card readers in their vehicles but request that customers are made aware of any surcharges imposed for paying through this route.