

Taxi Newsletter 2021

Welcome to our taxi and private hire newsletter

Inside this issue you will find:

- D4Drivers
- PHO licence conditions
- 6 Monthly DBS checks for drivers
- From 2025 all new vehicle emissions must be less than 50g/kms
- Compliance test centres in Hart
- Electric Vehicles

Tell us what you think...

Please take a few minutes to read through and keep up to date with taxi and private hire matters.

We welcome your feedback so please email the Licensing team at licence@hart.gov.uk if you would like to make any comments.

Public Liability

The licensing authority recognises that licensed drivers often perform duties other than driving passengers from A to B as part of their daily business e.g. carriage and loading of luggage, assistance of passengers (including the elderly and wheelchair passengers)

For this reason, the licensing authority will require

new applicants and existing drivers to provide and maintain a suitable policy of public liability insurance that adequately covers any damage, loss or injury to any third party (e.g. customers and other members of the public) or property that may arise during the course of a driver's day to day activities.

This may be included on existing insurance provisions but if not will need to be added.

Electronic Forms and Adhesive Plates

Officers are investigating future taxi and private hire applications being able to be made online and the possibility of using adhesive licence plates on licensed vehicles. We will keep you updated about these measures.

Safeguarding and Disability Awareness Courses

Licensed drivers play an important role in the community and have a vital role in spotting and reporting abuse, exploitation or neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

It is important for drivers and operators have sound awareness about the signs of potential abuse and who concerns should be reported to. All new driver

applicants have to undertake safeguarding and disability training before their applications can be determined.

Existing drivers will need to complete this training before the end January 2022.

Licensed drivers are required to book their own courses (Disability Awareness and Safeguarding)

online directly with the council's approved course provider, the Blue Lamp Trust here: <https://bluelamptrust.org.uk/>

If you have any issues you may call them on **0300 777 0157**

D4Drivers

Since the COVID-19 pandemic restriction began in March 2020, the NHS has been under enormous strain which has affected services local medical practices have been able to provide.

With GP's unable to carry out taxi related medicals, drivers have been temporarily permitted to self-certify to confirm if there were no symptoms or changes to their health which might have affected their fitness to act as a private hire/hackney carriage driver and meet DVLA group 2 medical standards. Since May 2021 we have commenced a trial medical service with 'D4Drivers'.

D4Drivers operate as a specialist medical examination provider for vocational driving professions and operate over 200 trained GMC registered doctors across 85 sites in the UK.

If you are unable to obtain a medical with your own GP, you may use D4Drivers. Please note, you will have to request and obtain a summary of your medical records from your GP surgery (which you are legally entitled to) which you would need to take to the medical with the councils examination form. Payment for the medical (£55) is made to D4Drivers.

Drivers book their own appointments either via a call centre or online booking site. Hart's closest clinic is Reading <https://d4drivers.uk/locations/reading/>.

Once completed, the medical examination form needs to be returned to the Council offices with the £33 payment for the Council's independent medical advisor to certify driver fitness.

Penalty Points

As part of the council's aim to offer fair and transparent enforcement of its statutory functions, we are introducing a penalty points scheme.

Points can be issued to licence holders for breaches of licensing conditions or non-compliance with the law as an alternative to prosecution.

A total of 12 points accredited to individual licence in any 12 month period will result in a review of their licence by the Licensing Sub-committee.

The full scheme can be found in the Hart HC and PH Policy.

Enforcement action will be taken to

- Ensure public safety
- Support the policies of the council
- Respond to individual public and trade complaints
- Support partnerships with other agencies like the Police and vehicle inspectorate
- Complement the council's enforcement policy

PHO licence conditions

The primary objective in private hire licensing matter is to promote public safety and those using licensed services.

New operator licence applicants must provide an up to date basic DBS disclosure.

We use enhanced disclosures where operators also hold a driver licence. Where private hire operators trade as a limited company the council may also require the directors and company secretary to undertake a basic DBS check.

Private hire operators need a good working knowledge of the area for which they are licensed.

The law requires customers to be transported by the shortest and cheapest route.

In order to maintain the high standards expected of operators, the council will not grant an operator's licence until the applicant has passed the knowledge test and satisfied the team they are 'fit and proper'. The test will cover:

- Local geography
- The highway code
- hackney carriage and private hire licensing law and the council's policy
- basic mathematics for handling money

An additional condition of the private hire operator's licence will include a register of staff, updated regularly to reflect changes in personnel. The operator will need to obtain a basic DBS check on all staff and maintain records of those checks.

Electric vehicles

In April, Hart declared a Climate Emergency in Hart. By declaring a Climate Emergency, the Council has acknowledged that it needs to act on the causes and impacts of climate change.

The motion agreed by the Council is:

“Following the successful adoption of Hart’s Climate Change Action Plan, this Council now wishes to declare a climate emergency, which commits us to putting the reduction of CO2 in the atmosphere at the front and centre of all policies and formal decision making, particularly Planning, and will:

1. Pledge to make Hart District carbon neutral by 2040 whilst bringing forward the current 2040 target to 2035 for areas under direct control of Hart District Council.

2. Report to full Council every six months setting out the current actions the Council is taking to address this emergency and the plan to measure annual District wide progress towards meeting the 2040 target.

3. Meaningfully engage with the local community and to work with partners across the District and County to deliver these new goals through all relevant strategies and plans drawing on local, national, and global best practice.

4. Actively work with Hampshire County Council and the Government to provide the additional powers and resources needed to meet the 2040 target

5. Actively encourage and push for Hampshire County Council to reduce its target for net zero Carbon to 2040, acknowledging that 2050 is too far away for such an emergency.”

Compliance test centres in Hart

In the near future (date to be confirmed) all vehicles licensed or renewed will be required to be compliance checked at one of the designated test centres in Hart.

The council is currently undergoing a test centre procurement exercise and will approve testing stations which all hackney carriages and private hire vehicles must be taken to for testing purposes. When approved and compliance testing commences, testing centre

details will be made available on the council’s website.

Vehicles less than one month old and with less than 1500 recorded miles at the time of its first licence application will be exempt from a compliance test.

Tests will include; a full mechanical and cosmetic assessment, meter check, whether the fare tariff card is displayed and the roof sign operates correctly.

6 Monthly MOT & TT for Hart vehicles over 5 years of age

In line with the Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards issued in July 2020, vehicles aged up 5 years old (from date of registration) require an annual compliance check.

Vehicles older than 5 years will require compliance checks every six months.

Mandatory card payment

Consultation ends 23.8.21

Following comments received during the last HC & PH Policy update and through the Coronavirus guidance from the Department for Transport, a consultation is currently underway regarding the introduction of mandatory card payment facilities in all vehicles.

It is proposed card payments will be a mandatory requirement.

6 monthly DBS checks for drivers

In line with the Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards issued in July 2020, all licensed drivers will now be required to undertake an enhanced DBS check every 6 months.

It is therefore imperative that all drivers are signed up to the DBS update service otherwise you will be required to submit an application form, all your documents and pay £40 every 6 months.

No driver’s licences will be issued or renewed without a current Enhanced DBS certificate or one checked through the Update service. See www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service

Once registered, officers will be able to undertake future criminal checks online saving drivers having to visit the offices which will represent a time and cost saving.

Hackney carriage Roof Signs/lights

Once a vehicle is licensed by us, it remains licensed throughout the licence term.

This means it can only be driven by a Hart licensed driver and that licence plates and roof signs must remain on the vehicles at all times.

We have received an increasing number of reports of licensed vehicles seen on the highway and not displaying the taxi roof sign.

The only exceptions to the roof light being affixed and displayed are:

1. when the vehicle is parked off the street at a proprietor's home or in a private taxi office car park for security reasons, or
2. when the vehicle is

undergoing maintenance work or being cleaned.

In both cases the roof sign must be put back on the vehicle before it can be used as a licensed vehicle and used on the highway. The requirements for roof signs are:

- the minimum dimensions are: length 45 cm (18 inches), width 15 cm (six inches) and the height 15 cm (six inches)
- the roof sign must be connected to the taximeter (or equivalent) and it must be automatically controlled.
- the roof sign must be lit when the taximeter is not active or when the vehicle is plying for hire and not lit when the taximeter is in use or the vehicle is not available

From 2025 all NEW vehicle emissions must be less than 50g/kms

The council has declared a Climate Emergency. From 1 January 2025 all vehicles being licensed for the first time must have CO2 emissions of less than 50 g/km. All vehicles licensed prior to this date will be relicensed provided they have been continuously licensed. Vehicles licensed before 1 January 2025

whose emissions are 50 g/km or above will not be licensed after the 7 year or 10 year age limit (as appropriate). Licensed, or previously licensed, vehicles converted from private hire to hackney carriage will remain subject to an age limit of 7 years from date of original registration.

Tax Conditionality - New requirements on licensing bodies

The Finance Bill 2021 contains a clause introducing tax conditionality to taxi and private hire driver licence applications and private hire vehicle operators from 4 April 2022.

Hart Licensing Authority will need to direct NEW applicants to HMRC's published guidance about their tax obligations, which will be on www.gov.uk

A tax check will be carried out at renewal to confirm whether an individual or company is appropriately tax registered and whether income from the licensed activity has been reported on tax returns. HMRC is developing a simple digital service that will enable licence applicants to complete the tax check and will provide assistance for applicants who are digitally excluded. This service will also enable licensing bodies to confirm that a tax check has been completed. The licensing body will need to obtain confirmation that the applicant has completed a tax check before they determine renewal applications. Further information may be found www.gov.uk

Message from South Western Railway - Rail Community Officers

We have been contacted by the recently formed Rail Community Officers from South Western Railways and been asked to cascade the below message:

'We are the South Western Railway Community Team and we cover Basingstoke through to Farnborough. We are a team of 5 and are accredited with British Transport Police (BTP) through

the Rail Safety Accreditation Scheme (RSZS). We can deal with most low level Anti-Social Behaviour.

If an issue has already occurred and you wish to report it retrospectively, we can submit an intelligence report to the BTP on your behalf. Working with the community is a big part of our role and we are always looking

for new ways to engage with the community. If you would like to report any of the above to us, please contact us on RCO.Southampton@swrailway.com. If you see us at your local station, then please say hi and introduce yourself, we are quite distinctive in our high-viz vests. Alternatively if you would like to meet us in person, please send us an email to the above address and we will arrange a meeting. We are here to help you."