

CONSULTATION ON IMPROVEMENTS TO TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING IN OLDHAM

The consultation paper includes proposals to:

- (a) Phase out the use of saloon cars in the hackney carriage fleet by March 2008 towards the use of purpose built vehicles to improve accessibility for disabled people, increase vehicle capacity, improve the recognition of hackney carriages in the Borough and comply with proposed taxi accessibility regulations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- (b) Relax the rules on advertising on purpose built hackney carriage vehicles to improve business opportunities for owners, remove unnecessary regulation on small businesses, contribute to a more colourful urban environment and deliver cost savings for passengers;
- (c) Introduce stricter emissions standards for all licensed vehicles, with a view to achieving the Euro 3 standard by September 2011, thus reducing noxious pollution, improving air quality and contributing to the reduction in asthma sufferers in the Borough;
- (d) Phase in additional licensed hackney carriages to the fleet at the rate of 10 plates per licensing period until demand for market entry and thus additional vehicles diminishes where the limit will be removed. This is in order to remove barriers to market entry and ensure adequate supply of licensed vehicles at peak times, particularly late at night at weekends, improving competition, local economic development and regeneration;
- (e) Change the fares structure for licensed hackney carriages (private hire fares are not fixed by the Authority) to be permitted maximum fares rather than mandatory fixed fares to improve competition, provide for discounts for pre-booked hackney carriage journeys and encourage consumer choice;
- (f) Introduce a Vehicle Queuing System for Oldham Town Centre on weekend nights as a part of a Dispersal Management Plan, to include the use of taxi marshals, dispersal points, access restrictions and passenger safety measures;
- (g) Develop a best practice recognition scheme for licensed vehicle drivers, owners and operators and link membership of this scheme to reducing the regulatory burden on drivers, owners and operators through less frequent inspection and control measures;
- (h) Amend the conditions for private hire operators relating to the keeping of records for bookings and strengthening of mandatory door sign conditions for vehicles; and
- (i) Upgrade the driver's proficiency test to provide for a written test in addition to existing arrangements.