



Policy Consultation Update

As you maybe aware the Council's policy in relation to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles, Drivers and Operators is currently under consultation following changes suggested by the Licensing Committee.

The Committee have decided that until these revisions have been ratified any application for a vehicle licence that does not meet the proposed specification will be deferred pending the outcome of the consultation exercise.

A full copy of the policy document can be viewed on our website at www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton.

We would welcome your comments on the draft policy, in writing to the address above by 12th December 2008.

Taxi Trade Meeting

At the Taxi Trade Meeting held on Thursday 11th September 2008 the following items were discussed:

1. **Notes of Last Meeting** – Agreed
2. **Matters Arising**
Tariff increase has now been implemented
3. **Scrutiny Report**

Brief update given – reports have been through Licensing Committee and agreed to complete review of policy first. Scrutiny committee will pick up any items after policy has been implemented. A panel will be appointed and the trade will be asked for their views.

Update: It is proposed that the Review will be undertaken by the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee starting February 2009.

4. Policy Review

Consultation has been carried out and the report is currently being written. The report will include procedures and conditions and will be put before the Licensing Committee for consideration.

The Trade asked following questions:

- What is meant by accessibility? – confirmed this was disabled access into cars.
- Could main ranks have an easy access step facility like buses so people can be wheeled into the cars instead of using ramps? – confirmed to introduce a fixed height step facility the vehicle specification for wheelchair accessible would have to ensure that all vehicles have the same height floor, this will be considered as part of the review.

5. High Street Access

Brief update given on access to high street.

As no officer was available to answer the following questions it was agreed that a written answer and update would be given in the next Trade Times.

Question 1

Has there been any developments of the use of bus lanes. Would the Council consider the use of bus lanes by taxis after 6.00pm. Is there a compromise, do not require access 24 hours a day?

Answer:

No positive development at the moment. The topic is still under consideration. Permitting hackney carriages and/or private hire vehicles 24 hour, or a lesser period of access, would require amendments to the existing agreed and Council made Traffic Regulation Order.

Question 2

Is there any reason that the roads into or out of the High Street could not be opened up to other traffic?

Answer:

Traffic management together with the current Council policy in relation to the High Street would make this difficult.

(See article overleaf for latest update)

6. Any Other Business

The Trade asked the following question:

- Drivers do not have any access to toilets etc, could anything be done? – confirmed that officers would contact Care For Your Area to see if anything could be arranged.

Update: Officer have contacted Care For Your Area and can confirm that public toilets are available at Stockton Shambles, Norton, Yarm and Billingham Town Centre. These toilets are open 9.00am until 5.00pm Monday to Saturday. The Council do not currently have any other public facilities available.

- What is happening with vehicles licensed by other authorities ranking on high street? - confirmed that action has been taken and will continue to be taken. Trade agreed that although they see cars “ranking up” they have seen some changes to the Yarm Lane/Swallow Hotel end of the High Street.
- Could something be done to let the public know if they use these cars without booking they may not be insured etc? – confirmed that a full campaign was ready to go out to the public about taxis and safety etc, but the association questioned the costs so it was put on hold.

Officers confirmed that if drivers are wanting to know about enforcement activities and what has been happening within the trade, minutes from Licensing Committee are published on the Council’s website.

Discussion took place about Drivers Licences and the procedure to obtain a licence. A letter has been sent in covering the points raised and officers will reply in due course.

The next meeting for the Trade with Officers of the Council will be 12.30pm – 1.30pm, on Thursday 4th December 2008, at Stockton Central Library Lecture Hall, Church Road, Stockton on Tees.

If you have any items you wish to place on the Agenda please notify us in writing by Monday 24th November 2008.

Private Hire Operators and Drivers

As you will be aware we do not send out reminders for the renewal of licences.

A number of Private Hire Operators have not yet submitted their renewal forms, can you please ensure you renew your licence before the expiry of your current licence. Failure to do so may result in your vehicles being suspended.

Renewal forms are available from our website at www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton or can be collected from our office at the address overleaf.

The following is a quick reminder of when licences are due for renewal:

Licence Type	Renewal Date
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	30 th September every year
Private Hire Vehicle	31 st October every year
Private Hire Operator	30 th November every year
Driver Badges	Check your licence – There is no set date for renewal of driver badges

Due to the Christmas closure we would recommend drivers whose licence expire at the end of December 2008, to submit their renewal application before 15th December to ensure new licences and badges are available for collection before the office closure.

Access To Stockton High Street

The Traffic Order controlling vehicles in Stockton High Street has changed. The amendments to the order do not cover everything the Trade has requested, as mentioned elsewhere in this issue.

The south bound side of the high street remains a 24 hour bus only lane, the north bound side now allows permit holders access during the course of the day.

Hackney Carriage Proprietors may apply for a permit for their vehicle if they undertake to use the section of the High Street for the purpose of taking passengers to, or collecting them from, a point in the High Street between the southern loop and the northern loop. The permit does not allow you to use the High Street as a through route.

Permits will be available from Gloucester House, Church Road and applications may be made from 1st December 2008.

An administration fee of £10 is required for each vehicle, permits will last for one year and are assigned to a vehicle and not the driver. Only Stockton Hackney Carriage Vehicles will be eligible for a permit.

Christmas & New Year Opening Hours

22nd December 2008 to 23rd December 2008
Normal Hours

24th December 2008
8.30am – 12 Noon

25th December 2008 to 4th January 2009
Closed

5th January 2009
Normal Hours