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CONTACTS

Advertising Director:	Liza Lipson
Publisher:	Graham Burns
Assistant Editor:	Annabel Lee
Digital Designer:	Jamie Holden
Graphic Designer:	Lab 215

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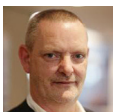
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TRANSPORT COMMITTEE INQUIRY

FURTHER RESPONSES TO VERBAL EVIDENCE: NPHTA FINAL SUBMISSION

Article by Dave Lawrie
Director NPHTA
dave@nphta.co.uk



SECOND HEARING

FIRST SESSION: IoL, Local Government Association and Transport for All

It was refreshing to hear the presentations from all parties involved. In particular, it was encouraging to see recognition from James Button representing the Institute of Licensing, who pointed out that much of the discussion often focuses on negative issues; but it must be stated that the majority of the taxi and private hire industry consists in fact of hardworking, professional individuals who take great pride in their role and in providing a high-quality service to their communities.

It was also reassuring to hear Transport for All clearly acknowledge the importance of a mixed fleet in more rural areas, in order to ensure affordability and service consistency. This is an approach we strongly support, as there is little justification for requiring 100% wheelchair-accessible vehicles in such settings.

During the presentation, it was suggested that the disabled community should be invited to be involved in the development of disability awareness training. We fully support this proposal and would go further by recommending that the taxi and private hire industry itself is also deeply involved in the design and delivery of such training.

Our experience shows that when courses are designed or approved by local authorities alone, they can be significantly lacking in practical suitability. Examples include the absence of guidance on electric wheelchairs, limited understanding of wheelchair warning labels (such as “do not hook”), and a lack of awareness of rear-loading wheelchair-accessible vehicles. This is particularly disappointing, as rear-loading vehicles are demonstrably safer for both passengers and drivers, especially when health and safety at work considerations are taken into account.

These shortcomings in training are largely the result of insufficient active engagement with both service providers and service users, all of whom have a critical role to play in ensuring training is effective, relevant, and safe.

The issue of cost and availability was clearly articulated by the Chair of the Transport Select Committee, Ruth Cadbury, who highlighted that wheelchair-accessible vehicles are extremely expensive. Current prices are in the region of £70,000 for a cash purchase, or approximately £90,000 when financed. Unlike the bus and rail sectors, the taxi and private hire industry receives no direct funding, making this an unsustainable business model. This, in turn, pushes drivers towards private hire licensing, where such vehicle requirements do not apply.

There was also a strong focus on enforcement, including the handling of reports, investigations, and complaints. These processes are significantly simplified where CCTV is in place, potentially saving both time and resources for local authorities.

We believe there should be far more active enforcement of the “triple lock” rule and Section 75(1)(a) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, which requires that drivers may only be passed a booking while within their licensed area. There is no justification for drivers routinely or predominantly waiting outside their licensed region without a booking to support their presence.

Without an **Intended Use Policy** - already proven to be highly effective in the hackney carriage (taxi) sector and enforceable at little to no cost to councils due to its evidence-based nature - there is no meaningful deterrent. As a result, licence shopping will continue regardless of the introduction of national standards or further devolution.

SECOND SESSION: Operators

During the second session, operators were asked by Elsie Blundell MP how many operating offices they maintain in each region in which they operate. Uber responded that they have offices in “all of them” and stated that they comply with the triple lock rule.

This assertion was challenged by highlighting that

TRANSPORT COMMITTEE INQUIRY

Uber has only one operating office in the City of Manchester, which covers the entirety of Greater Manchester and its ten constituent local authorities, including Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Bury, Stockport, and Salford. Furthermore, that same Manchester office also onboards drivers and vehicles licensed by authorities such as Rossendale, Wolverhampton, Burnley, Nelson, and others. This can be clearly seen in the lists presented to drivers when selecting the areas covered by the Manchester office.

This practice is fundamentally inconsistent with compliance with the triple lock rule, which requires that the operator, driver and vehicle are all licensed by the same local authority. This principle was clearly tested and upheld in **Milton Keynes Council v Skyline Taxis and Private Hire Ltd [2017]**, which reinforced the fact that the triple lock rule had not been affected or removed by the **Deregulation Act 2015**, and highlighted the requirement for proper alignment between licensing authorities.

Bolt stated that it operates multiple offices and has a large compliance team dealing with each local authority, making it therefore more compliant with the triple lock requirements, while **Veezu** declared that it maintains offices within all regions in which it operates, demonstrating full compliance with not only the triple lock rule, but also the “sub-contracting” provision of the **Deregulation Act 2015**.

When questioned by Dr Scott Arthur MP regarding false allegations made against drivers, and whether any compensation is provided for loss of income when such allegations are proven to be false, the app based operators stated that this does not occur. However, available evidence presents a very different picture.

Drivers are frequently accused of serious misconduct, including being the wrong driver, rape, theft, unlawful imprisonment, speeding and dangerous driving. In the overwhelming majority of cases where CCTV evidence is available, these allegations are proven to be false and are made solely to obtain a refund. It is therefore incorrect to suggest that false allegations do not happen.

We have direct experience of police forces and of course drivers, bringing CCTV hard drives to us for evidence review in cases involving extremely serious allegations. In one such case, a driver accused of rape was deactivated for two months pending investigation, only for CCTV review to show that no such incident occurred and that the passenger thanked and tipped the driver before exiting the vehicle.

This is not an isolated incident but a recurring widespread issue that significantly affects drivers' livelihoods and the continuity of service to the public.

In fairness, the same question must also be asked of local authorities. When drivers are suspended or licences revoked based on allegations that are later proven to be false - often made solely to obtain a refund - there is similarly no mechanism for compensation for lost income or reputational damage.

Mark Robinson of Vokes Taxis made clear that many areas are being inundated with out-of-area licensed vehicles, with little to no enforcement action taken to prevent this. He explained the detrimental impact this has on local communities, including the displacement of local drivers and services, and the erosion of public safety due to a lack of meaningful local oversight.

We remain firm in our belief that significantly more must be done to address this issue. Amending or “tinkering” with the **Deregulation Act 2015** will not resolve the problem, as the Act itself is not the cause.

Historically, prior to 2007, the issue of cross-border working predominantly involved hackney carriages operating out of area on private hire circuits. This was effectively addressed through the introduction of **Intended Use Policies**, which immediately reduced licence shopping by approximately 90% in all regions that adopted them, including Brighton, Rossendale, Newcastle, and others.

In Rossendale for example, the evidence shows that the number of licensed hackney carriage vehicles dropped from 3,196, right down to 157 within one year of adoption of the **Intended Use Policy**, since drivers became rapidly aware that such a licence was of no use to them if they could use it freely, or permanently, out of Rossendale.

The issue has since migrated to the private hire sector, where it has expanded rapidly due to the growth of large international ride-hailing operators. Given that this is now primarily a private hire issue, the most efficient and effective solution is to introduce primary legislation requiring all local authorities to adopt **Intended Use Policies** across all licence types.

By making **Intended Use** a statutory requirement rather than a local policy or licence condition, this approach would remove the risk of legal challenge, as seen in **Knowsley**, and provide a consistent, enforceable national framework to prevent licence shopping and restore effective local control.

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FINAL SESSION: Lilian Greenwood MP and Liz Wilson, DfT

I took many notes on the final session involving Lilian Greenwood MP and Liz Wilson, Deputy Director for Accessible and Inclusive Travel DfT, and submit the following observations and recommendations based on that discussion.

National licensing & standards

National licensing was previously proposed during the 2010 Office of Fair-Trading consultation, which explored whether responsibility should sit with a central agency such as the DVSA. While this was not progressed at the time, the current discussion around a national standard presents a renewed opportunity. A centrally administered licensing system, with enforcement carried out by police forces, would significantly reduce the regulatory and financial burden placed on local authorities, delivering meaningful cost savings while improving consistency.

During the session, the concept of a *“national standard”* was questioned as to whether it should be absolute. The dismissal of this approach, in favour of allowing local authorities to make regional variations, risks undermining the very purpose of a national standard. This approach mirrors the current framework under the LGMPA 1976, supported by the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (2020), where sections 47, 57, and 67 permit local variation. As such, this proposal would not materially improve consistency or fairness across the sector.

Fees, turnaround times & licence shopping

When Dr Scott Arthur MP asked whether national standards would include licence fees and application turnaround times, the response suggested this would be too complex. I respectfully disagree. Fee caps and efficiency benchmarks can be implemented through mandatory maximums, in the same way that MOT fees and Vehicle Excise Duty are nationally regulated.

Without addressing regulatory behaviour - including fees and processing times - licence shopping will persist.

As illustrated during the session, licences may be identical in substance due to there being a national standard, but drastic fee disparities (for example, £100 versus £600 for the same licence) make outcomes

predictable. Human nature and economic logic will always drive operators toward the lowest-cost authority or *“licence shop”* as the term has become known. A national standard that applies only to drivers, vehicles, and operators - but not to regulators - will therefore achieve very little.

DBS, safeguarding & medical standards:

DBS, safeguarding, and medical requirements are already national standards. However, the DBS system contains two significant flaws that merit urgent attention:

- 1. Renewal method:** DBS renewals rely solely on card payments rather than direct debit, leading to frequent lapses due to card expiry. Moving to direct debit would materially reduce compliance failures.
- 2. Duplicate DBS certificates:** Drivers are currently required to hold two DBS certificates: one for SEN transport and one for all other work. This distinction is based on the classification of SEN transport as *“regulated activity”*, yet all licensed taxi and private hire work is inherently regulated. There is no practical justification for duplicate checks and costs. This issue is the subject of an ongoing joint campaign by the **NPHTA** and the Institute of Licensing.

Trip radar & driver distraction

Trip radar-style on-screen trip offers were rightly identified as a safety concern. These systems encourage drivers to divert attention from the road to assess offers under time pressure. Such functionality should not be standard practice.

Trip offers should only be displayed once a driver has completed their current journey and the vehicle is stationary, a condition that can be easily identified, verified, and implemented into software through existing GPS and app technology.

CCTV in licensed vehicles

There was declared to be a clear and obvious appetite to include CCTV within national standards, given its proven benefits for both driver and passenger safety and its value in resolving complaints and allegations.

Concerns around privacy, data access and storage are already comprehensively addressed through existing ICO guidance, based on lawful basis and justifiable reason.

TRANSPORT COMMITTEE INQUIRY

Several local authorities have mitigated operational and data recovery issues by mandating that CCTV system providers act as authorised officers, reducing administrative burden and alleviating industry concerns about inappropriate access or *“big brother is watching me”*.

The principal remaining concern is cost. When Dr Scott Arthur MP asked whether government support would be available, the response stated that the department would issue guidance - despite such guidance already being issued by the ICO in April last year.

The question was clearly about financial support. Precedents already exist, with councils such as York, St Helens, Telford and Barnsley all being successful in securing funding for such schemes in the interest of public protection.

Cross-border working & intended use

While national standards and potential local authority expansion through devolution were cited as solutions to cross-border working and licence shopping, fee disparities remain the core driver. Without addressing this, the issue will persist.

Further measures are therefore required, including:

- Intended-use regulations
- National oversight of licensing fees
- The inclusion of regulators themselves within the scope of national standards

Enforcement powers

The proposal to grant licensing officers police-style stopping powers is, in my view, misguided. A more effective approach would be to grant police officers licensing enforcement powers. This model already operates successfully in areas with dedicated “Taxi Cop” schemes and avoids duplication of authority while enhancing road safety and compliance.

Devolution

The subject of devolution was mentioned a few times during the session, where it was stated: *“if this goes ahead”*.

We suggest that if and when this does come to approval stage, that there is one major concern that simply must be addressed:

Retain existing zones

The reason for this is very clear, and has not only been expressed, but also experienced within regions that have already amalgamated, including Herefordshire, BCP and others.

The potential effect on the end user

There could be a serious lack of provision within regions which suddenly become very large, due to migration to busier areas within the new region, leaving those in rural areas struggling to obtain such services.

Hackney carriage sector

Busier ranks could find themselves flooded by those who may now legally make use of taxi ranks within much busier areas.

Private hire sector and hackney carriage sector

The area that must be studied and tested for applicants would suddenly cover vast regions, which is not only unrealistic, but impractical as many of those drivers may never have any desire to work those larger regions.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Committee and its staff for creating such a welcoming and professional environment throughout this process. While participating was initially daunting, the approach taken by the Committee members and support team made the experience constructive, engaging, and genuinely positive.

Yours sincerely,

David Lawrie, Director NPHTA

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UBER UPDATE

UBER'S GREEN U-TURN: DRIVERS LEFT 'CARRYING THE DEBT' AS 2030 EV TARGET SCRAPPED

The App Drivers & Couriers Union (ADCU) has launched a blistering attack on Uber, labelling the company's decision to abandon its 2030 electric vehicle (EV) target a "massive betrayal" of its workforce. The union claims thousands of drivers were incentivised to shoulder the financial burden of Uber's environmental goals, only to be abandoned as the company retreats from its commitments. Many drivers entered into high-cost Personal Contract Purchase (PCP) agreements to switch to electric, a move the ADCU says was made in "good faith" based on Uber's long-term promises. The policy reversal comes during what the union describes as the "harshest operating environment in living memory." Drivers are currently facing a "perfect storm"

of financial pressures:

- **Algorithmic pay cuts:** new terms introduced on January 5 have undermined earnings and transparency.
 - **Regulatory costs:** the removal of the London Congestion Charge exemption for EVs has spiked daily overheads.
 - **Licensing delays:** significant backlogs at TfL have left drivers unable to work, leading to missed debt payments and, in some cases, vehicle repossession.
- ADCU President, Cristina-Georgiana Ionescu, accused the ride-hailing giant of using drivers as pawns for corporate image. "Uber has cynically used drivers to make itself look like an environmentally conscious company, and pushed drivers into expensive EV contracts to deliver its PR strategy,"

Ionescu said. "Now that strategy has collapsed, and it is drivers who are left carrying the debt, the risk and the consequences." The union argues that while Uber's corporate boardrooms are insulated from failure, the drivers are the ones "paying the price for bad decisions." The fallout from the EV policy shift has added fuel to the simmering labour dispute. The ADCU has called for a national strike on February 3, with plans to picket Uber's UK HQ. The protest will target "dynamic pricing" and the erosion of driver pay & conditions. The ADCU is now demanding that Uber take "immediate responsibility" for the financial damage caused to those who invested in EVs and is calling for a radical overhaul of how the company manages its algorithmic pay structures.

UBER GETS GREEN LIGHT TO ACQUIRE CROWN TAXI IN TAIWAN EXPANSION

Taiwan's Fair Trade Commission (FTC) has officially cleared the way for Uber to acquire local operator Crown Taxi, signalling further consolidation in Taiwan's competitive ride-hailing landscape. The decision, announced on 7 January, follows an assessment of how the merger between the U.S. tech giant's subsidiary and the Taiwanese firm would impact market dynamics. Despite Uber's global scale, the FTC determined that the acquisition "will not significantly change their share of the taxi dispatching service market."

Regulators noted that the two entities already maintained a pre-existing partnership, making the formal merger a natural progression rather than a disruptive market shift.

The commission's assessment concluded that Uber is unlikely to engage in anti-competitive behaviour. Specifically, the FTC found that the deal would not pose risks such as:

- "Unilaterally raising fares"
 - "Colluding with other companies to fix prices"
 - "Creating barriers to market entry"
- The approval comes at a time of

heightened competition in Taiwan. The FTC highlighted a robust field of rivals, including domestic heavyweights Taiwan Taxi Co. and yoxi, alongside Line GO and the recent 2025 entry of European competitor Bolt.

The commission classified the deal as both a horizontal and vertical merger, noting that Uber already "supplies the dispatching system used by Crown Taxi's drivers."

By formalising the union, the FTC expects the companies to "facilitate business integration and reduce administrative layers, so improving operational efficiency."

UBER UPDATE

'AN INSULT': DRIVERS UNION SLAMS TfL'S £500 PAYOUT OVER LICENSING CHAOS

The ADCU has hit out at TfL following the announcement of a £500 "goodwill payment" for private hire drivers hit by catastrophic licensing delays. The union dismissed the sum as "too little, too late," claiming it fails to address the financial ruin faced by thousands of workers.

The compensation offer follows months of systemic failures triggered by a September 2024 cyberattack, which left many drivers unable to work while waiting for licence renewals. The ADCU argues the crisis has been compounded by "over-licensing" within the sector.

ADCU President, Cristina-Georgiana Ioanitescu, reacted sharply to the figure, stating: "£500 does not even cover one week of repayments on a typical rent-to-buy or PCP vehicle contract.

"For many drivers who have been

unable to work for months because TfL failed to renew their licences on time, this amount is meaningless."

The union highlighted that while drivers were sidelined through no fault of their own, their fixed costs - including expensive vehicle financing and insurance - continued to mount.

According to the ADCU, the delay in government action has led to extreme consequences for its members. The union claims it was only after they took the issue to the media that TfL agreed to issue temporary licences in March 2025. The union described the payout as a "token gesture" that ignores the gravity of the situation:

- **Massive income loss:** drivers reportedly lost tens of thousands of pounds during the blackout periods.
- **Debt & repossession:** many have

had vehicles seized or are currently facing court action from leasing companies.

- **Systemic failure:** the union warns that without addressing over-licensing, these problems are "only set to get worse."

The ADCU is now demanding that TfL move beyond "sticking plaster" solutions and negotiate a compensation scheme that reflects actual losses.

"This doesn't touch the sides of the financial and emotional damage caused," Ioanitescu added. "Drivers have lost tens of thousands of pounds in income, been pushed into debt, had their cars taken away... Calling this compensation is an insult."

The union continues to lobby both TfL and the DfT for a settlement that accounts for the full scale of the "financial and emotional damage" inflicted on the workforce.

ISRAEL SET TO DISRUPT TAXI MONOPOLY AS BILL TO WELCOME UBER AND LYFT ADVANCES

Israel has moved a significant step closer to opening its roads to global ride-hailing giants Uber and Lyft, following the approval of a landmark bill by the Ministerial Committee for Legislation.

The proposed legislation seeks to dismantle a long-standing taxi monopoly by regulating phone-based applications that connect private drivers with passengers. While the bill must still pass several readings in the Knesset, it signals a major shift in the nation's transport policy, aiming to lower

costs and increase service.

"Our vision is to move Israel into an era of smart, accessible, and affordable transportation," said Transportation Minister Miri Regev. "Approval of the bill is a historic step that will dismantle old monopolies, reduce road congestion, create thousands of new jobs, and open the market to real competition that will lower the cost of living."

The bill is not without safeguards. To address safety and fairness, the Transportation Ministry has

included strict regulations regarding:

- **Driver screening/passenger safety**
- **Comprehensive insurance coverage**
- **Regular monitoring of vehicle conditions**

Recognising the "fierce opposition" from the local taxi sector - which successfully lobbied against such services for years - the legislation includes a compensation mechanism to support existing drivers through the transition.

100s MOURN 'GENTLEST SOUL' PH DRIVER AS COUNCIL PLEDGES ACTION AFTER FATAL BOLTON CRASH

Hundreds of mourners gathered in Blackburn last month to bid a final farewell to Masrob Ali, the 54-year-old private hire driver killed in a horrific head-on collision that claimed four lives and left five others injured.

The funeral at Masjid-e-Sajedeen was attended by an estimated 600 people, with friends and relatives travelling from across the UK to honour the father-of-four.

Mr. Ali died in the early hours of Sunday, January 11, when his Citroen C4 Picasso was struck by a Seat Leon on Wigan Road in Bolton.

Three teenagers in the Seat - Muhammad Danyaal Asghar Ali (19), Farhan Patel (18), and Mohammed Jibrael Mukhtar (18) - also perished at the scene. Their joint funeral was held in Bolton.

Mr. Ali, who emigrated from Bangladesh at age 12, was described by his eldest daughter, Humayra, as "the gentlest soul" and a devoted professional who took pride in road safety.

"Nobody has a bad word to say against him, he was so kind and the best dad," Humayra said.

"Dad was such a safe driver and even when we said we were worried something might happen he would say 'don't worry about me'."

A spokesperson for the Masjid Al-



Momineen mosque added: "He was a familiar and comforting presence in our mosque - a man of few words, but immense character... He leaves behind a space that feels noticeably emptier."

As the community mourns, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) are investigating the circumstances of the crash.

Detectives are reportedly probing video footage circulated online showing the Seat Leon travelling at speeds of up to 122mph in suburban areas just 24 hours before the fatal impact.

Bolton Council has responded to the tragedy by pledging to take "all necessary measures" to prevent future loss of life.

Councillor Rabiya Jiva, executive cabinet member for stronger communities, stated: "Our thoughts and condolences go out to the families and loved ones of those affected by this unimaginable loss. [The council is]

committed to ensuring all necessary measures are taken to prevent such incidents occurring again."

The tragedy has sent shockwaves through the regional taxi industry. Shaz Malik, chair of the Chorley Taxi Association, called the incident a "stark reminder" of the daily risks faced by professional drivers.

"No rush, no thrill, no moment of showing off can ever be worth that kind of loss," Mr. Malik said.

"When you press the accelerator, think about the people who love you... Driving just ten miles per hour faster can be the difference between stopping in time or not stopping at all."

Five passengers remain affected by the crash, including a 29-year-old woman with potentially life-threatening injuries. A surviving teenager from the Seat Leon attended the funerals earlier this week in a wheelchair.

GMP continues to appeal for witnesses and dashcam footage. They have strictly urged the public to refrain from sharing graphic CCTV of the collision on social media out of respect for the grieving families.

All at **PHTM** offer our heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of those affected by this tragic incident.



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FRAUDSTERS FOUND OUT

CUMBRIA CABBIE AMASSED £85,000 DURING DISHONEST UNIVERSAL CREDIT CLAIM

A cabbie who pocketed thousands of pounds in Universal Credit while sitting on a secret £85,000 “nest egg” has been sentenced.

Gergely Tomasovszky, 43, appeared at South Cumbria Magistrates’ Court where he pleaded guilty to dishonestly making a false statement to obtain benefit payments. The court heard how the Burton-in-Kendal resident failed to declare a massive influx of capital while continuing to receive government support for over three years.

Tomasovszky originally made a legitimate joint claim for UC in April 2020, declaring savings of

£6,000. However, his financial circumstances shifted dramatically. Prosecutor Lee Dacre explained: “Over a period of months, the defendant amassed savings of £85,000 which was above the legal threshold limit of £16,000. But the defendant failed to contact DWP about his change in circumstances.” Between April 2020 and July 2023, Tomasovszky wrongly claimed a total of £7,203.79. The DWP is currently working with the driver to recover the full amount.

The defence solicitor told the court that the money came from family members in Hungary and Poland

noting that Tomasovszky was “fully ashamed of himself” and had no prior convictions.

The court heard that Tomasovszky has since been working gruelling 70 to 80-hour weeks as a taxi driver to pay back the debt.

While Magistrates accepted that the driver was “not dishonest from the outset,” his future in the taxi trade now hangs in the balance.

Tomasovszky was handed a 12-month community order and ordered to complete 130 hours of unpaid work. He was also ordered to pay £85 in court costs and a £114 victim surcharge.

‘MIRACLE’ £50K DEPOSIT: BRADFORD UBER DRIVER LOSES APPEAL AFTER MYSTERY MONEY CLAIM

An Uber driver who claimed a total stranger “miraculously” transferred £50,000 into his bank account has failed to win back his PH licence.

Amar Rangzab, 33, appeared at Bradford Magistrates’ Court on 16 January, to appeal the council’s decision to revoke his licence following fraud charges brought by The Insolvency Service.

While Rangzab maintains the money was a gift from a stranger in a car park, authorities allege the funds were actually a Covid bounce-back loan that was subsequently gambled away.

The court heard an extraordinary account of how Rangzab was having tea in a car park while discussing financial woes when a man in another vehicle offered to help. “He told me he only needed my sort code, account number and

address. I gave it to him and thought ‘what’s the worst that could happen?’” Rangzab told the court under oath.

“A few days later I was surprised to see £50,000 in my account. I didn’t realise it was a bounce back loan.” When Waseem Raja, representing Bradford Council, asked if he expected the court to believe such a tale, Rangzab said: “That’s exactly what happened.”

The decision to strip Rangzab of his licence was triggered by charges involving a bounce-back loan intended to support businesses during Covid. Mr Raja stated: “These loans were on the condition the money should be paid back in full... but this money was not used it was spent on gambling, which made him unable to repay.”

Evidence also emerged about a

separate loan application for a £3,000 watch, where Rangzab allegedly claimed to own a property that actually belonged to his mother - an act he dismissed in court as an “innocent mistake.”

Mr Raja added: “I submit Mr Rangzab’s honesty falls below the standard required of a PH driver.” Despite Rangzab’s insistence that he is a “fit and proper person” who has driven for 10 years without fraud complaints, Magistrates sided with the council. Describing Rangzab’s evidence as “inconsistent” and the council’s case as “credible,” the appeal was dismissed. Rangzab, who has pleaded not guilty to the criminal fraud charges, is expected to stand trial in 2027. His PH licence remains revoked, and he was ordered to pay the council legal costs of £420.

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TAKE ME ONE

Article by Chris Thalha

Take Me Group Managing Director

<https://takeme.taxi>



Why corporate travel is consolidating with Take Me One

Corporate ground transport has evolved well beyond simply moving passengers from A to B. For businesses, public sector bodies and large organisations, it's now a critical operational function that requires efficiency, accountability, transparency and consistency. Despite this, taxi travel remains one of the most fragmented areas of corporate spend. Many organisations still rely on a patchwork of local suppliers, differing service standards, multiple booking methods, and numerous invoices each month. For procurement, finance, and operations teams, this fragmentation creates unnecessary administrative burden, limited visibility and reduced control.

Take Me One was created to address this challenge.

Consolidated approach to corporate taxi travel

Take Me One is a purpose-built corporate booking and management portal designed specifically for account based ground transport. It provides organisations with a single platform to book, manage, track and report on taxi journeys at a local, national and international level. Whether travel is being arranged for employees, contractors, patients, students, or customers, the system brings everything under one framework. By replacing phone calls, emails, spread-sheets and disconnected local accounts, organisations gain full visibility and control over their taxi usage. The result is simpler administration, improved oversight and more consistent service delivery across all journeys.

One invoice, one point of contact

At the core of Take Me One is consolidation.

Instead of receiving multiple invoices from different suppliers, clients receive one consolidated invoice covering all taxi travel. This significantly reduces workload for accounts payable teams, improves cost control and simplifies reconciliation. Clients also benefit from a single point of contact for account management and support, one set of agreed commercial terms and service standards, and a comprehensive reporting suite providing detailed journey data, cost analysis and full audit trails. For procurement/finance teams, this supports governance

and transparency. For operational teams, it delivers reliability, accountability and faster issue resolution.

Designed for corporate & public sector environments

Take Me One is not a consumer booking app adapted for business use. It has been developed specifically to meet the operational realities of corporate and public sector travel. Key features include centralised booking across departments, pre-authorised journeys and passenger profiles, live journey tracking and status updates, comprehensive reporting for compliance, duty of care and audit requirements. The platform scales easily, supporting organisations managing small volumes of weekly journeys to thousands of trips per month.

Collaboration, not displacement

A key principle behind Take Me One is collaboration. The platform is not designed to displace or undermine the major national aggregators, there is sufficient work across the sector, and the best outcomes for clients are achieved when operators, aggregators, and platforms work together. Take Me One is intended to enhance existing supply chains by adding structure, visibility and accountability, while preserving the strengths of both local and national partners. This collaborative approach creates a more resilient ecosystem that benefits operators, clients, and passengers alike.

Global reach with local accountability

While Take Me One supports worldwide travel, it retains the local operational accountability corporate clients expect. Journeys are actively monitored, service levels are enforced and issues are resolved proactively. The platform is underpinned by the operational experience of Take Me Group Ltd. This combination of technology-led booking and hands-on operational oversight ensures consistent standards, whether managing a local staff transfer or an international corporate journey.

A practical step forward

For organisations seeking to modernise the way they manage corporate and account-based taxi travel, Take Me One offers a practical, consolidated solution. By reducing fragmentation and improving visibility, it supports better governance, stronger duty of care and more efficient operations.

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DRUGS IN CABS

MIDDLESBROUGH CABBIE JAILED AFTER BEING PAID FOR DRUG DEALING IN CRACK COCAINE

A former Middlesbrough cabbie, who claimed he was paid for selling drugs in crack cocaine, has been sentenced to three years in prison. Abhad Ahmed, 38, appeared at Teesside Crown Court on January 16, where the court heard how his descent into the drug trade has cost him "his wife, his job and his home." The court was told of two separate incidents where Ahmed was caught distributing Class A drugs. In June 2024, police stopped Ahmed while he was behind the wheel of his taxi. Officers discovered over £1,000 worth of cocaine in the footwell, while Ahmed had a further 8.4 grams of crack cocaine "stuffed down his underwear." Despite being granted bail, Ahmed was arrested again in October 2025. Police followed him into a KFC drive-thru after witnessing a drug deal from a Volkswagen Golf.



During this second arrest, officers found bags of cocaine hidden in his socks and a further 32 individual deals inside the car. In mitigation, Ahmed's legal representative, David Taylor, argued that his client was not making a financial profit but was trapped in a cycle of addiction. Ahmed reportedly began using drugs six years ago following a devastating diagnosis of Hodgkin's Lymphoma, which is now in remission. "He was paid in crack cocaine, to

which he was addicted," Mr. Taylor told the court. "He also used it to medicate for his cancer." The court heard that since his arrests, Ahmed's life has unravelled. Having been stripped of his taxi licence, Mr. Taylor noted that the 38-year-old has "lost his wife, and house." Sentencing Ahmed to three years, Judge Nathan Moxon acknowledged the "devastating" nature of the defendant's health struggles but rejected them as a justification for criminal activity. "Many people are diagnosed with cancer and they don't deal drugs," the Judge told Ahmed. Ahmed, who pleaded guilty to two counts of possession of a Class A drug with intent to supply, is expected to serve 40% of his sentence behind bars before being considered for release.

PH DRIVER & PASSENGER ARRESTED IN WAKEFIELD AFTER POLICE SEIZE LARGE QUANTITY OF DRUGS

On Sunday 18 January 2026, PC Gale and PC Baker were conducting their routine patrols of the Flanshaw and Alverthopre areas of Wakefield when they spotted a suspicious male being picked up by a private hire vehicle. Recent community intelligence has been gathered regarding drug dealers using PHVs as a mode of transport to distribute drugs in this area and this has increased over the last month. The car was followed and was seen driving away from two suspect drug users.



The vehicle was stopped and both the driver, passenger and vehicle was searched. An estimated 140 wraps of crack cocaine and heroin was located plus a significant amount of cash. Both the driver and passenger were arrested for possession with

intent to supply crack cocaine and heroin. When searching the passengers' details through police systems, it was discovered that he was wanted for a

recall to prison and was arrested for this additional offence. Both were taken to Normanton police station where CID continued the investigation and the passenger will be going to prison whilst further enquires are completed.

DRUGS IN CABS

STOKE CABBIE & ACCOMPLICE JAILED AFTER USING PHV AS FRONT FOR COUNTY LINES DRUGS RING

Two Stoke-on-Trent men who led double lives as “high-level dealers” have been jailed for more than seven years combined after police dismantled their cross-border drug network.

Tahir Darr (left), of Burslem, and Saeed Malik (right), of Middleport, were key members of a county lines gang that funnelled crack cocaine and heroin from the Potteries into Crewe.

The operation, which involved daily trips down the A500, came to a halt when officers intercepted their Toyota Prius on December 13. The investigation began in October 2023 when Cheshire Police identified a new criminal network using “bulk text messages” to



advertise Class A drugs to local users. Following a period of surveillance, officers stopped the pair’s vehicle and discovered a mobile “graft” phone along with a significant haul of drugs.

Inside the car, officers found:

- £4,450 worth of heroin and crack cocaine on Darr’s person.
- An additional £3,050 worth of crack cocaine stashed in the rear.

- £1,600 in cash and Malik’s ID card located in the centre console.

Subsequent raids on their homes uncovered another £2,500 in cash and multiple mobile devices, providing what detectives described as a “catalogue” of evidence. Both men admitted to two counts of being concerned in the supply of Class A drugs and one count of possession of criminal property.

Darr was sentenced to five-and-a-half years, while Malik received 28 months.

A Cheshire Police spokesperson emphasised the scale of the operation: “In this case it was clear Darr and Malik were both high-level dealers involved in the supply of illegal drugs across the Crewe area.”

HELENSBURGH CABBIE STRIPPED OF LICENCES AFTER 4KG CANNABIS FOUND IN BOOT OF HIS CAR

A veteran taxi driver from Helensburgh has been stripped of his ability to operate after police discovered a massive stash of drugs hidden in his boot.

Gerald Murphy, 66, saw his career come to an abrupt end following a West Dunbartonshire Council licensing committee hearing.

The move follows a high-stakes traffic stop on the M6 in Cumbria late last year, where officers found approximately 4kg of cannabis in the boot of his car tucked inside a vacuum cleaner box.

The discovery was made on November 22, 2025, near junction 40 of the motorway. Alongside the drugs, police recovered £750 in cash. Murphy subsequently appeared at

South Cumbria Magistrates Court, pleading guilty to possession with intent to supply a class B drug.

In a formal recommendation to the council, Police Scotland’s Chief Constable raised “serious concerns” over public safety, urging the immediate suspension or revocation of Murphy’s licence. Appearing before the committee to plead his case, a remorseful Murphy claimed he had been pressured into the courier run. “I made a wrong choice,” Murphy told the committee.

“I felt a bit intimidated. I had two choices and I made the wrong one. I have never bothered the police before. I was completely out of my depth.”

Despite confirming this was his first offence, the committee remained unmoved by the scale of the criminal activity.

Committee Chair Lawrence O’Neill reminded members of their duty to ensure drivers are “fit and proper” for public service.

He noted: “If you are of the opinion that he is not a fit and proper person to hold the licence, the committee must consider if his licence is suspended or revoked.”

The committee unanimously decided to revoke both his taxi vehicle and driver’s licence, effective immediately. Murphy is currently awaiting sentencing for the drugs charge, which has been rescheduled for February 20, 2026.

ROUND THE COUNCILS - FEES

LEWES:

TRADE DECLARES WAR ON FEE HIKES

Taxi campaigners have launched an urgent petition against Lewes DC, demanding an immediate freeze on licensing fees and a comprehensive overhaul of the district's fare structures.

The move comes as the council's Licensing Committee voted to push forward with a fresh wave of fee increases - some exceeding 50% - despite claims that the trade is already "struggling" under the weight of rising overheads and a 66% hike implemented just last year. Lead petitioner and former councillor Sean Macleod warned that the cumulative impact of these costs is threatening the livelihoods of local drivers.

"It's clear the trade is struggling and after a 66 per cent fee increase last year to be hit with another 50 per cent in some cases this year is a clear kick in the teeth," Mr. Macleod stated. "It's time councillors stood up for the trade and listened to their demands as they quite frankly have been ignored for too long."

The petition highlights a "stagnant" fare tariff that has failed to keep pace with the "dramatic and ongoing increases in operational costs, including fuel, insurance, vehicle maintenance, and the overall cost of living."

The campaign outlines four "minimum steps" required to restore faith in the council's regulatory process:

- **Independent audit:** a demand for external scrutiny of "ring-fenced" licensing funds to ensure fees are not being "misapplied or diverted."
- **Prompt fare review:** an immediate increase in the tariff to reflect modern inflation.
- **Unmet demand survey:** a professional assessment to determine if the current number of hackney carriages meets public needs.
- **Fee freeze:** a total halt on increases until the audit is completed.

While the council has signalled that a fare increase is "waiting to be signed off," officials could not provide a timeframe, despite the process reportedly dragging on for nine months.

Lewes DC defended the fee hikes, citing a £140,869 budget deficit and the costs of managing CCTV systems. A spokeswoman stated that "proposed increases reflect the actual cost of administering the scheme," adding that "fee adjustments are never taken lightly."

However, following a Licensing Committee meeting on January 22, Mr. Macleod accused officers of providing "incorrect information" and dismissed a proposed

internal audit as the council "marking their own homework stating: 'The trade wants an independent audit as stated and why.'"

He added: "So disappointing... the four steps the trade is asking for are totally reasonable given the concerns the trade have. It makes the trade feel listened to and that their concerns are being addressed.

"And no unmet demand inquiry will be carried out as apparently they don't need to do one.

The taxi drivers and I will write to the licensing committee to fight back against incorrect information that was given and also state how disappointed we are in what was agreed.

With the Licensing Committee having approved the fees, the proposals now move to a full council vote.

UTTLESFORD:

ANGER AT PROPOSED LICENCE FEE HIKE

Local taxi and PH drivers have reacted with fury to Uttlesford DC's plans to increase licensing fees for the second consecutive year, with one driver branding the move "utterly ridiculous and pure greed."

The council argues that the increases are necessary to prevent a potential shortage of drivers and to ensure the licensing department remains financially viable. However, a recent consultation has revealed deep-seated resentment within the trade, as drivers struggle with rising operational costs.

Out of 18 formal responses to the consultation, the majority expressed fear that the new costs would push drivers out of the industry. One driver noted that the added expense, combined with surging insurance premiums, was "looking more like a scam."

The proposed changes would see:

- 3-year driver licences rise from £250.20 to £259.00.
 - 5-year operator licences increase from £539.84 to £556.00.
 - Annual vehicle licences jump from £161.27 to £167.50.
- Despite the backlash, the council maintains that the law requires the licensing service to be self-funding. Addressing the trade's concerns, the council added that they remain "committed to working constructively" with drivers and that all feedback will be reviewed by the upcoming Licensing and Environmental Health Committee.

However, some drivers remain cynical about the consultation process, with one respondent noting the fees seem "disproportionately higher than necessary, although once you've made your mind up, it's done."

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ROUND THE COUNCILS - FEES

WEST NORTHANTS:

LICENSING FEES CONSULTATION

Taxi and PH drivers, operators and wider stakeholders are being invited to share their views on proposed changes to licensing fees, as West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) launches a public consultation on plans to introduce a single, unified fee structure for taxi and PH licensing across the area.

The consultation launched on 8 January, forms part of the council's ongoing work to create a fair, consistent and transparent system for all taxi operators in West Northants. It will run until the end of Thursday, 5 February - click here: <https://shorturl.at/MzERZ>

Since the formation of WNC, the council has been working to align the different taxi and PH licensing processes previously used by the former district and borough councils of Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire. The proposed licensing fees would bring these historic arrangements together into one clear, consistent structure.

Subject to consultation feedback and approval by the Taxi and General Licensing Committee, the revised fees would replace the historic charges set by the former councils with a unified structure that would come into effect in the council's next financial year- 1 April 2026.

WYRE:

COUNCIL PROPOSES FEE RISE

Wyre Forest District Council proposes to vary the level of licence fees for taxis and PHVs. The council has published a public notice outlining the proposed fee changes which can be viewed on the Public Notice Portal via: publicnoticeportal.uk

If passed, the changes would come in on April 1, 2026.

A hackney carriage vehicle licence would cost £282, with a private hire vehicle licence at £254.

A temporary hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence is proposed at £132.

The cost of a five-year private hire operator's licence is set at £576.

Objections to the proposed fees must be submitted within 28 days from January 16 to the Licensing and Support Services Manager at:

Wyre Forest District Council
C/O Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way,
Kidderminster DY11 7WF

REDDITCH:

NEW TAXI AND PH LICENCE FEES

Redditch Borough Council has proposed changes to fees for hackney carriage, private hire vehicles, and private hire operators. The new fees would come into effect on April 1, 2026.

The proposed fee to obtain or renew a hackney carriage or PHV licence has been set at £318. A temporary licence for these vehicles would cost £238. For private hire operators seeking a five-year licence for up to three vehicles, the proposed fee is £730. Each additional vehicle would be subject to an extra fee of £19.

The public has been invited to comment, with written objections to be submitted no later than 28 days from January 14 to the Licensing and Support Services Manager, Redditch Borough Council, c/o Worcestershire Regulatory Services, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY11 7WF.

NEW FOREST:

TAXI AND PH FEES CONSULTATION

New Forest DC is proposing an increase to taxi and private hire licence fees to reflect the increased work and costs from implementing national changes in government guidance.

The proposed fees can be found below:

- PH or HCV licence (new or renewal 1 year licence) (inc vehicle plate): current fee: £167 / new fee: £177
- vehicle inspection: current fee: £60 / new fee: £63
- exec vehicle exemption (inc vehicle plate) (new or renewal 1 year exemption): current fee: £55 / new fee: £58
- vehicle stepped bracket: current fee: £30 / new fee: £32
- driver Knowledge Test: current fee: £50 / new fee: £60
- driver licence (new or renewal 3 year licence): current fee: £162 / new fee: £172
- PH operator licence (new or renewal 5 year licence): current fee: £520 / new fee: £533

If you object to the proposed fees, please email the Licensing Manager at licensing@nfdc.gov.uk by midnight on Thursday 12 February 2026, stating the reasons for your objection and title your email: taxi and private hire fees 2026/27.

If no written objections are received, the new charges shall come into effect on 1 April 2026.

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MAKING TAX DIGITAL: WHAT PRIVATE HIRE OPERATORS AND DRIVERS NEED TO KNOW

Article by Gary Jacobs
CEO Eazitax
020 8529 2600
www.eazitax.co.uk



eazitax

Making Tax Digital (MTD) is now on the doorstep for many self-employed taxpayers, including PH drivers and eventually operators. This reform is one of the biggest changes to income tax reporting in decades - replacing the annual self-assessment return with more frequent digital reporting and obligatory use of digital software. Being aware of when MTD takes effect, how it will impact your businesses, and what steps you need to take now, will be vital for a smooth transition and to avoid fines.

What is making tax digital?

MTD intends to make tax reporting more accurate and efficient (basically, so they know where you are and what you are doing!) It replaces the old paper-based or one-off annual tax return with a system where digital records are kept throughout the year, and information is submitted to HMRC quarterly via software.

MTD already applies to VAT-registered businesses, where digital submissions have been compulsory since April 2019. The next major phase extends these digital requirements to tax returns under £50,000 affecting many self-employed individuals for the first time.

When is MTD for income tax being introduced?

The phased rollout for MTD for income tax self-assessment (often called MTD for ITSA) is as follows:

- 6 April 2026 – mandatory for self-employed and landlords with total income (from self-employment and property) over £50k
- 6 April 2027 – threshold drops to £30k
- 6 April 2028 – threshold further drops to £20k

For PH drivers - the 2026 date is the first real deadline! In real terms, this means that from 6 April 2026, affected drivers must start keeping digital records and sending quarterly updates to HMRC using MTD-compatible software.

A final declaration, similar to a self-assessment tax return, will then be made at the end of each tax year.

How MTD will change tax reporting for YOU

Quarterly reporting, not annual only

Under the old self-assessment system, self-employed prepare and submit one annual tax return. Under MTD:

- You or your accountant will send **four quarterly updates** reporting income and expenses to HMRC
- After the year ends, a **final declaration** is submitted that reconciles those quarterly figures with any other income or reliefs

Compulsory digital records and software

The cornerstone of MTD is digital record-keeping not pen/paper, or spreadsheets, the old driver sheet is OUT. Instead, you must:

- Use HMRC-approved MTD software or tools that connect to HMRC's digital systems
- Create and maintain digital records of all income and allowable expenses
- Submit those records regularly throughout the year.

This change has major implications for PH drivers who might currently manage their books by hand. Bank statements and receipts can no longer just be saved in boxes or spreadsheets. Making the switch to digital will require planning but also brings you benefits of clear working and good sight of your own finances.

What it means for PH operators and drivers

1. More frequent compliance

Quarterly reporting means tax compliance becomes a regular discipline rather than a year-end task involving:

- Updating records soon after transactions occur
- Reconciling income from different platforms and account customers e.g. Uber, Bolt, Free Now, etc.
- Getting your bookkeeper or accountant to organise your expenses in a digital format

REMEMBER: Quarterly reporting enables the software to give an earlier insight into your expected tax bill.

2. Improved record-keeping

Keeping digital records daily/weekly rather than annually reduces mistakes and keeps you on top of:

- Fuel costs
- Insurance & licensing fees
- Vehicle maintenance
- Toll & congestion charges
- Other allowable business costs

Better records can also help in case of HMRC queries.

TAX TALK...TAX TALK...TAX TALK

3. Potential costs

There may be software costs and extra accountant fees to help with the transition and ongoing submissions - but if managed properly, the benefits in accuracy and planning often outweigh the cost.

How to prepare: a practical checklist

Here's a preparation plan for PH drivers and operators:

Get clear on thresholds

Work out whether your combined income from self-employment and (if relevant) property income will place you above the threshold for 2026. If your income is close to the £50,000 mark, prepare now.

Choose digital accounting software

Select MTD-compatible software that fits your business needs - ideally one that connects to your bank account and pre-sorts your transactions. Such as"

● Xero ● QuickBooks ● FreeAgent

● Other certified MTD tools

If you're unsure which is right for you, your accountant should help you choose and set it up.

Get it done

Even if it's not yet compulsory for you, start entering your income/expenses digitally. Early adoption gives you time to learn the system before deadlines bite. So:

Set a regular review schedule

Consider daily, weekly or fortnightly entry of receipts/invoices to spread the workload and reduce mistakes.

Understand what expenses you can claim

Talk to your accountant. Make sure you know which business expenses are allowable and how to record them within your software. Vehicle expenses are often a key part of private hire tax relief, so recording them properly throughout the year is essential.

Work with your accountant

Accountants provide value far beyond filing tax returns. Many practices are already helping clients prepare and maintain digital records and will ensure your quarterly submissions are accurate and timely.

Final thoughts

Quarterly digital reporting and mandatory software might seem daunting but by modernising your record-keeping, you reduce year-end stress, and stay compliant with HMRC's evolving requirements.

If you're unsure where to begin, the safest first step is to speak with an accountant who understands MTD and can help tailor a plan that fits your business.

This change isn't just about compliance - it's about taking control of your business.



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THREE STRIKES AND OUT: **BOLTON** PH DRIVER'S LICENCE SUSPENDED AFTER LATEST PHONE OFFENCE

A PH driver has been handed an eight-week suspension following his third conviction for using a mobile phone behind the wheel. The decision came after a 18 November meeting of Bolton Council's licensing committee, where the driver faced scrutiny over a series of repeated traffic violations. The committee's recently published minutes reveal that the

latest breach occurred on March 20, resulting in a fine and six penalty points. The committee took a stern view of the driver's history, categorising the incident as a "major traffic offence." Under standard licensing guidelines, the driver's history of recidivism put his career at significant risk. The committee noted: "A conviction of less than

three years would generally mean that the licence would be revoked." The driver also admitted to a further breach of his licensing conditions by "not wearing a seat belt" during the incident. The committee voted to suspend his private hire driver's licence for eight weeks but opted to take "no action" against his vehicle or operator licence.

UNLICENSED DRIVER HIT WITH HEAVY FINES AND PENALTY POINTS IN **GLOUCESTER**

A Cheltenham man who continued to pick up passengers despite having his licence revoked has been ordered to pay over £2,000 following prosecution by Gloucester City Council. Samir Jamshidi pleaded guilty at Cheltenham Magistrates' Court to operating a PHV without a licence and driving without insurance

between May 9 and June 1, 2025. The court heard that Jamshidi completed multiple journeys for a PH operator during this period, even though his HC driver's licence had already been stripped by a neighbouring local authority. The investigation, led by the council's licensing team with support from the Counter Fraud

and Enforcement Unit, highlighted a serious breach of public trust. The penalties for the illegal operation far outweighed the earnings from the unauthorised journeys. Jamshidi was fined £120, hit with £2,008 in prosecution costs plus a £48 victim surcharge. Jamshidi's also received eight DVLA penalty points on his licence.

SPEEDING **BRADFORD** LICENSED PH DRIVER DROPS APPEAL AFTER NAMING WIFE IN FAILED DECEPTION

A PH driver who attempted to blame his unlicensed wife for a speeding offence has abandoned his legal fight to keep his licence. Gebrebrahan Nayzgi, of Leeds, withdrew his appeal at Bradford Magistrates' Court last month confirming the permanent revocation of his right to operate. The decision follows a failed attempt to deceive authorities after his vehicle was caught speeding on the M1 last May. The

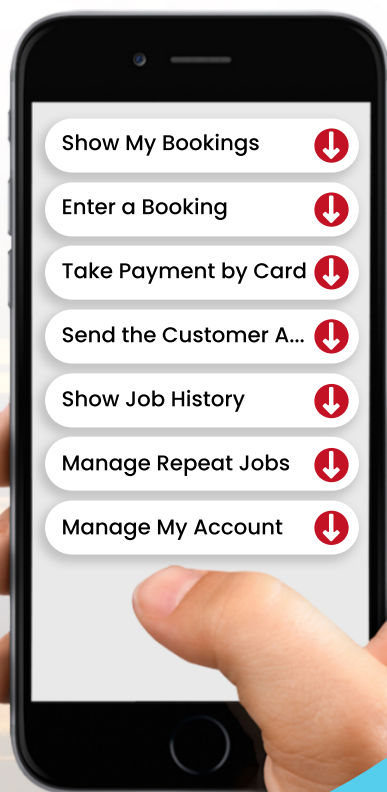
court heard that when South Yorkshire Police issued a notice regarding the offence, Nayzgi claimed his wife was driving. However, investigators quickly discovered that his wife held neither a taxi licence nor a standard driving licence. Nayzgi eventually confessed to the deception, stating "he was afraid of getting six points on his licence." Bradford Council moved to revoke Nayzgi's licence following the

revelation, arguing that the lie proved he was not a "fit and proper person" to serve the public. Magistrates ordered him to pay the council's legal costs of £220. While Nayzgi could have been pursued for perverting the course of justice, Waseem Raja, for Bradford Council, confirmed that the police would not progress the matter," despite noting that "some police forces take the matter quite seriously and would prosecute."

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FIT AND PROPER

BOLTON PH DRIVER REFUSED LICENCE AFTER HARASSING AND TEXTING FEMALE PASSENGER

A Bolton PH driver has been refused a private hire licence after harassing a passenger and texting her “asking if she was single”.

A council meeting heard the driver continued to message and harass the passenger after the initial complaint, and was found by Bolton Council’s licensing committee to have “acted in an

inappropriate way”.

The driver, who attended the meeting on November 18, “accepted this had been wrong”.

The committee also found he had not attended safeguarding training “despite reminders” and there was no evidence that he had completed it.

They added that he had also

breached his licence conditions by “plying for hire by returning to pick up the complainant without a booking via his PH operator”.

They said this would invalidate his PHV insurance.

The committee voted to refuse to grant a PH driver’s licence, but agreed for no action to be taken regarding his vehicle licence.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON PH DRIVER’S LICENCE SUSPENDED FOR BREACH OF LICENCE CONDITIONS

A driver licensed by Stratford-on-Avon DC has had his dual driver and PH operator licence suspended for 3 months following multiple breaches of licence conditions.

At a meeting last November, the Licensing Panel determined the driver, 46, had failed to comply with essential vehicle testing

requirements, had poor record keeping practices, and had continued to breach conditions despite several written warnings.

The driver also submitted vehicles for MOTs which subsequently failed, in further contravention of licence expectations.

The Panel also recommended that

the driver must: show what systems he will implement to ensure all paperwork is submitted within required time frames; undertake daily checks on his vehicles and reacquaint himself with licensing policies and conditions relating to PHVs, HCVs, and PH operator licences.

NO SECOND CHANCES: STOCKTON CABBIE DENIED LICENCE OVER CCTV CHAIN BRAWL

A veteran taxi driver has been stripped of his livelihood after councillors viewed “concerning” CCTV footage of him swinging a chain during a street disturbance. The driver, who served the borough for 16 years without a criminal record, applied for a new PH licence after his previous one was revoked in August 2024. However, Stockton Council’s licensing committee unanimously refused the application, concluding he was no longer a “fit and proper person” to transport the public.

The committee heard that Cleveland Police had arrested him on suspicion of “causing GBH with intent and affray.” While police ultimately took no further action due to “evidential limitations,” the disclosure of the incident triggered a review of the driver’s conduct.

Representing the driver, Simon Walker argued his client was of good character and had “transported thousands of passengers” safely. He maintained the driver “was trying to peacefully break up an incident, however was attacked

and then acted in self-defence.”

The turning point for the committee was CCTV footage showing the driver “moved towards the violence and took an active part, arming himself with a chain.” The committee found: there was “no evidence of peacekeeping”, the driver “intentionally swung the chain at a younger male”; he was “disingenuous during interview.” The committee ruled they were “not satisfied that they would allow people for whom they care to enter a vehicle” with the driver.

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2026: THE YEAR UBER CRACKS

Article by Rob Finlayson
Operations Manager
City Cars Glasgow
rob@citycarsglasgow.co.uk



For more than a decade the direction of travel in the UK private hire and taxi trade has been presented as inevitable. App based platforms will replace local operators. Algorithms will replace experience and scale will replace accountability. Anyone who's questioned the narrative has been dismissed as outdated or resistant to change.

As we move into 2026, that narrative is beginning to unravel, piece by piece.

This may well be remembered as the year the app only model finally shows its limits in the UK, and the year traditional private hire and taxis reassert themselves as a dominant force in the market, not out of nostalgia but because the fundamentals are starting to matter again.

Platforms such as Uber reshaped the market by offering frictionless booking, aggressive and sometimes unrealistic pricing and the promise of endless supply of both work for drivers and drivers for customers. For a time that model worked, particularly in major cities where driver numbers were high and losses could be absorbed elsewhere.

Across the UK driver supply is tightening and margins are thinning for drivers. Operating costs continue to rise, with insurance as well as new vehicles remaining stubbornly expensive. Government and licensing authorities are starting to tighten the rules and regulations surrounding the trade and despite still fragmented and wildly differing licensing standards across the country, there are early signs of a push towards greater consistency and enforcement. At the same time customer expectations have hardened and reliability is no longer a nice to have option. It is now the expected baseline. This is where the app based model begins to struggle.

Standards once tightly controlled by local operators are now diluted by scale. Vehicle quality varies wildly

and local knowledge is inconsistent at best and non-existent at worst. Accountability is often unclear. When something goes wrong customers are routed round in circles within in app support flows that prioritise efficiency over a beneficial resolution. Responses are templated, standardised and frequently disconnected from the reality the customer is experiencing. And very rarely will a decision be made on the grounds that is it "The right thing to do".

For UK customers this is an increasingly frustrating experience. A cancelled booking minutes before pickup, a sudden surge in prices with no obvious explanation, or a request for help that goes nowhere erodes trust. When the service is no longer the cheapest option, the tolerance for lower standards disappears quickly. It is easy to see why customers are now looking back to traditional alternatives.

Drivers are feeling the pressure even more than the customers they serve. Support for drivers has become increasingly remote and transactional. Issues that would once have been resolved by a phone call or a quick drive into the base are now filtered through support systems that are simply "computer says no". Decisions are opaque, the right of appeal is minimal, and communication is largely one-way.

Overlay that with commission structures that are becoming harder to fathom or predict and the strain on drivers is starting to show. Drivers increasingly report commissions that vary dramatically job to job, in some cases ranging from single digits to levels approaching 40-50% once fees and adjustments are factored in. When you simply don't know what you are paying on each job, a fixed weekly radio or settlement fee suddenly feels far more appealing than it did even twelve months ago. Flexibility, once sold as Uber's greatest strength, increasingly feels like volatility.

Local operators have always worked based in reality, operating within local regulations, understanding their geography and building services based on trust, communication and accountability with customers and drivers alike. They manage situations, prioritise work and speak to drivers. They use judgement and common sense rather than relying solely on algorithms.

2026: THE YEAR UBER CRACKS



In 2026 that is starting to matter again.

The economic factors matter too. Private hire in the UK is no longer a race for scale at any cost. Well-run operators are becoming more selective, focusing on reliability over volume, retention over churn and

sustainable margins over headline growth. Fewer, better supported drivers delivering a controlled service often prove more valuable and profitable.

This isn't a rejection of technology, far from it. Traditional operators now offer the same tools to customers and drivers as app-based services. The technological gap between local operators and global platforms has narrowed dramatically. That is not a bad thing. The industry owes Uber credit for forcing technology to the forefront and accelerating innovation and development on many fronts.

So the question becomes, when Uber no longer offers cheaper fares, lower costs for a driver or a clear technological advantage, what is left?

I'm not suggesting Uber will see an overnight decline or disappear from the UK market. It will remain a major player for years to come.

But 2026 marks the year Uber's dominant hold on the UK market cracked, and the year the trade began to rebalance. And when that happens, the industry as a whole will be better for it.

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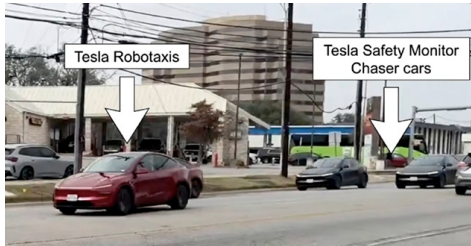
ROBO/FLYING TAXIS

TESLA'S DRIVERLESS ROBOTAXI CLAIMS CHALLENGED AS SAFETY MONITORS REAPPEAR IN CHASE CARS

A surge in Tesla's stock price following Elon Musk's announcement of "unsupervised" Robotaxi drives in Austin has been met with scepticism after video evidence revealed the vehicles are being shadowed by human-operated trailing cars.

On 22 January, Musk claimed on X that the company had "just started Tesla Robotaxi drives in Austin with no safety monitor in the car," a statement that triggered a 4 per cent jump in share value and optimistic headlines across the financial press.

However, critics argue the milestone is a "game of smoke and mirrors," as spotted Robotaxis were closely followed by black Teslas believed to be housing the very safety monitors Musk claimed to



have removed.

While Musk's statement that there is "no safety monitor in the car" is technically accurate, analysts suggest the implication of true autonomy is "misleading at best." Observers note that having a chase car follow an AV "defeats the entire purpose of autonomy" and indicates that Tesla isn't ready to match competitors such as Waymo, whose vehicles operate genuinely alone without trailing backup.

The controversy arises as Musk once again claimed to have "solved autonomy" during the World Economic Forum in Davos, a promise he has made annually for the last six years.

Industry experts argue that the use of chase cars proves the system "isn't ready to operate without a human safety net," suggesting the move is a marketing stunt designed to maintain Tesla's valuation. Critics maintain that the real objective of such announcements is to bolster the company's market cap, as the entire valuation thesis "depends on investors believing that full autonomy is right around the corner."

150MPH ELECTRIC FLYING TAXIS COULD LINK LONDON AIRPORTS TO CITY BY 2028

British firm Vertical Aerospace has announced plans for its electric flying taxi, the Valo, to begin commercial operations by 2028, with initial routes targeting rapid connections between London airports and city centres.

The Valo, designed for up to six passengers and capable of speeds reaching 150mph and a range of up to 100 miles, was showcased as a full-scale prototype in Canary Wharf on 10 December.

The company aims to secure regulatory approval from the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) within three years.

Vertical Aerospace chief executive Stuart Simpson said: "Valo is the aircraft that turns electric flight into a commercial reality – clean, quiet, fast and engineered for everyday service... It marks a new dawn in transport, one that will connect people in minutes, not hours."

Initial planned routes from Canary Wharf include London Gatwick, London Heathrow, Cambridge, Oxford, and Bicester.

Though the aircraft will initially launch with a four-seat cabin and be a "premium product used for airport transfers," a company spokesperson emphasised the long-term affordability goal: "The

aircraft is designed to be significantly cheaper than a helicopter, and to compete with ground transport... Ultimately, the potential is for this aircraft to be a similar cost as hiring an Uber."

Domhnal Slattery, chairman of Vertical Aerospace, added: "Valo sets a new standard – bigger, safer and more capable than anything in the sector... It's a breakthrough for aviation and a clear sign of the UK's leadership in aerospace."

The company plans to build seven certification aircraft in the UK for final testing before receiving the required Type Certification for commercial service.

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SURGEON AVOIDS JAIL AFTER HEAD ON DRINK DRIVE SMASH LEAVES CABBIE SERIOUSLY INJURED

A trainee consultant surgeon who was double the drink-drive limit has narrowly avoided immediate custody after causing a head-on collision in November 24, 2024

Nayer Youakim, 37, left a taxi driver with a fractured shoulder, broken arm, and suspected cracked ribs following the crash on Beach Road in North Shields. When questioned by police at the scene, Youakim claimed he had consumed "not too much, two pints."

The court heard that the cabbie had just dropped off a fare when he was suddenly "dazed by head-

lights coming towards him before being crashed into." The force of the impact spun the taxi into the opposite lane, while Youakim's vehicle mounted the pavement.

The victim, who faced a long recovery, noted: "I feel very lucky to be alive."

Youakim provided a breath sample of 72mcg per 100ml - significantly over the 35mcg legal limit. But, despite admitting to causing serious injury by dangerous driving and drink driving, his legal team described the event as an "extraordinary lapse of judgement"

and an "isolated incident."

Recorder Mark McKone KC opted to suspend Youakim's 18-month prison sentence for two years, citing the doctor's "important work" and the potential harm a prison sentence would have on future patients. He added: "Your status as a doctor is uncertain and your training as a consultant would end if you were sent to prison."

In addition to the suspended sentence, Youakim must complete 250 hours of unpaid work and has been banned from driving for two years.

HGV DRIVER JAILED FOR 10 YEARS AFTER M62 HORROR TAXI CRASH KILLED TWO RYANAIR PILOTS

A lorry driver has been sentenced to ten years in prison after his HGV crushed a PHV on the M62, instantly killing two young pilots being driven between airports.

Anthony Burns, 63, was travelling at approximately 56mph on July 11, 2024, when he failed to notice stationary traffic near Warrington. The court heard that Burns only applied his brakes one second before slamming into the back of a Toyota Auris PHV, pinning it against another HGV.

The victims, Captain Matthew Greenhalgh, 28, and First Officer Jamie Fernandes, 24, were travelling from Luton Airport to Liverpool John Lennon Airport and had "slept for the majority of the journey," until the moment of impact at 5:30 am.

The force of the collision was so severe that emergency responders

initially struggled to identify the wreckage. Prosecutor Damian Nolan told Liverpool Crown Court that PC Owens, the first officer on the scene, "initially did not recognise the taxi as a separate vehicle due to the damage sustained."

In a survival described as "remarkable," the PHV driver, Rashid Mehmood, was found alive within the crushed metal.

"PC Owens could hear a voice shouting for help, but at first he could not see anyone, before a hand appeared from the wreckage," Mr. Nolan told the court.

While Mr. Mehmood suffered broken bones and a fractured shoulder, the two pilots sustained



"catastrophic injuries" and died at the scene.

Investigations revealed that warning signs above the motorway had reduced the speed to 40mph due to a lane closure. Despite this, Burns maintained his speed until the final second.

The prosecution noted the lack of any clear reason for the lapse in attention but tests confirmed that there was no alcohol or drugs in Burns' system or evidence he was using a phone or mobile device. Vehicle defects did not contribute to the crash.

Burns, from Upton, Wirral, pleaded guilty to two counts of causing death and one of causing serious injury by dangerous driving.

In addition to his 10-year prison sentence, he has been banned from driving for 150 months and must take an extended re-test.



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ROUND THE COUNCILS

BLACKBURN w DARWEN: DRIVERS' MOT OPPOSITION IGNORED

Dozens of taxi and private hire drivers descended upon Blackburn with Darwen's council chamber on Thursday, January 8, in a heated but ultimately unsuccessful protest against the borough's restrictive vehicle MOT testing policy.

Despite a two-hour session of the authority's executive board and a "barrage of questions" from drivers and opposition councillors, Labour members voted to maintain the status quo.

This means the borough's 1,200 drivers remain legally required to use a single, local authority-run station at Davyfield Road for roadworthiness certificates.

The decision comes despite a consultation and subsequent report, where 94% of driver respondents expressed "significant dissatisfaction with the process," citing high costs and logistical delays.

Drivers challenged the council's logic, questioning why they are restricted to one site when vehicles licensed elsewhere operate locally using private garages.

Muhammad Saqib asked the board: "Has the council assessed the real-world impact of this policy on drivers' income, working hours and wellbeing?"

Meanwhile, Maqboul Hussain demanded to know: "Why was widespread opposition from licensed drivers not reflected in the final decision?"

Representing the trade, Ashraf Mangera, Chair of the Blackburn Hackney Drivers Association, asked: "What objective evidence shows that restricting taxi MOT testing to a single council run station is necessary to protect public safety?"

Environment boss Cllr Jim Smith remained firm, arguing that the centralised system ensures a "consistent, high-standard assessment" that private garages might not provide.

Defending the report against claims of inaccuracies, Cllr Smith stated:

"The recommendation is based on protecting public safety. We will always put public safety first."

"Fees are based on cost recovery."

To mitigate the burden on drivers, the council noted the introduction of an incentive where those who pass the MOT the first time received an "eight-month licence for the price of six months."

The policy passed with support from Labour executive members, but Council Leader Cllr Mustafa Desai notably abstained.

Following the meeting, Cllr Desai signalled a desire for reform, stating: "The safety of drivers and passengers is and should always be the top priority... Here is an opportunity to work together to make the MOT testing process smoother and more effective."

"I have put forward some recommendations with a view to improving the current system."

NOTTINGHAM: MANDATORY RETRAINING EVERY 3 YEARS

All hackney and private hire drivers licensed by Nottingham City Council will be required to undergo safeguarding training every three years following a damning national report that found current licensing arrangements are "not fit for purpose."

The proposal by Nottingham City Council follows a major investigation led by Baroness Casey into the sexual exploitation of children in England.

The report exposed a "link between taxi licensing and abuse," detailing how perpetrators have "exploited weaknesses in the current system" to target vulnerable youngsters.

Under the new plans, the council intends to scrap the current "one-and-done" approach, where drivers are only trained when they first receive their badge.

Instead, from 1st April 2026, all cabbies will be required to complete an online refresher course when they renew their combined driver's licence every three years, to help them "identify suspicious activities" and "recognise types of abuse."

A city council document outlining the shift stated: "Clearly the number of failings in areas shows how perpetrators have exploited weaknesses in the current system of setting and enforcing standards within the taxi trade."

To ensure the highest standards, the authority is also considering raising the examination pass mark to 100 per cent, replacing the current 70 per cent threshold. The council confirmed that the enhanced training will not be funded by the public, as the £20 fee will be paid for by the drivers themselves.

The curriculum aims to ensure drivers know exactly "how they can report concerns" to keep passengers safe from harm.

The council insists the policy change is essential to "aligning the frequency of the mandatory training with the good practice set out in the report" and restoring public trust in the trade.

ROUND THE COUNCILS

LEEDS:

DRIVERS FUND EXTRA TAXI MARSHALS

Taxi drivers have collaborated to fund taxi rank marshals on Fridays and Saturdays.

Drivers in the city say they fear customers and pedestrians are at risk from traffic, anti-social behaviour and unmarked cars at taxi ranks as they try to make their way home.

While using a rank, hackney carriage drivers are required to follow a queuing system on a first come first served basis.

The Leeds Taxi Volunteer Group says failure to follow these rules can lead to disorder and danger.

The group is pooling donations from taxi drivers to fund marshals at the ranks to help stop unauthorised parking and assist people who are trying to find their pre-booked cars.

Leeds City Council also employs street marshals as part of the authority's night safe initiative.

The council's marshals work for a security service, are fully SIA licensed and undergo rigorous training in de-escalation techniques, safeguarding and spotting vulnerable people.

They also focus on promoting women's safety and identifying risks associated with drug or alcohol use, according to the council.

However, the Leeds Taxi Volunteer Group says more marshals are needed.

A spokesperson for Leeds City Council says they are "aware and supportive of a trial of a taxi marshalling system".

"This is a positive development expected to help passengers access hackney carriage services in a safe and orderly manner, and which mirrors a successful, long-standing arrangement at Leeds Train Station, which is funded by the Hackney Carriage Joint Trade Committee."

SOUTH OXON/VoWH:

TAXI POLICY CONSULTATION

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are inviting residents, businesses and the taxi and private hire trade to share their views on proposed updates to their Joint Taxi Licensing Policy. The councils are proposing updates including:

- **Cashless convenience** – all taxis and private hire vehicles to accept card and mobile payments.
- **Cleaner, greener travel** – moving the zero-

emissions target from 2030 to 2045 – balancing environmental goals with affordability for drivers.

- **Safety first** – daily vehicle checks to keep passengers safe.
- **Tinted windows** – adjusting the rules to allow more flexibility while maintaining visibility.

Review the full policy and share your thoughts by visiting: southandvale.gov.uk/taxi-licensing-policy

The survey is open until Tuesday 10 March 2026.

After the consultation closes, the officers will review all feedback and present a summary to the licensing committees before publishing the final policy.

ROTHER:

COUNCILLORS BACK TOUGHER PENALTIES

Taxi and private hire drivers in Rother face a stricter disciplinary regime after councillors moved to overhaul the authority's penalty point scheme.

At a meeting on Monday, January 12, Rother District Council's Licensing and General Purposes Committee threw its support behind proposals that introduce new triggers for disciplinary action.

Under the current system, any driver or operator who "accrues more than 11 points is referred to a council licensing panel," which holds the power to decide if further sanctions are necessary.

The updated scheme targets modern nuisances and accessibility issues. New rules would penalise drivers for:

- **Vaping and Parking:** Both "vaping in vehicles" and "parking on pavements and/or disabled bays" would now result in three penalty points.
- **Assistance Needs:** In a move to protect vulnerable passengers, drivers would be penalised for "deliberately driving away from a taxi rank while a passenger with assistance needs is approaching." This offence carries a heavier six-point penalty.

The committee opted to toughen the original proposals regarding road safety. While the initial draft suggested a nine-point penalty for drivers caught using a mobile phone, councillors voted to increase this to 12 points.

This change essentially creates an "automatic panel hearing" for any driver caught using a phone behind the wheel, bypassing the usual cumulative warning system.

The revised scheme will now move forward to a final stage. Following the committee's endorsement, the "changes are due to be put to a full council vote" at the authority's next major meeting on February 23.

ROUND THE COUNCILS

ABERDEEN:

KNOWLEDGE TEST CONSULTATION

A high-stakes battle over the future of Aberdeen's taxi landscape has moved to the public arena, as city councillors green-lighted a consultation that could scrap the controversial "street knowledge test" for taxi drivers. Under current rules anyone seeking a licence as a taxi or private hire driver in the city has to sit the test. Some claim it is outdated and it has been seen as a barrier for Uber operating in the city.

Taxi operators say no change is needed as the current system is working, with more than 100 new drivers joining in the past year.

The consultation will ask whether the test should remain for both taxi and private hire drivers, an amended test for private hire applicants is introduced or the test is removed for only private hire applicants.

The decision to hold the consultation, made during a packed licensing committee meeting on Wednesday, January 21, comes despite fierce opposition from local taxi chiefs who warned that deregulation will trigger a "race to the bottom" and allow global giants like Uber to dismantle local competition.

The gallery was filled with approximately two dozen drivers who applauded Chris Douglas, head of Aberdeen Taxis, as he delivered a stinging rebuke of the proposed reforms. Mr. Douglas argued that removing the mandatory geographical test would erode service quality and eventually hand the keys of the city to "wealthy operators."

"History shows us that deregulation does not increase competition in the long term," Douglas warned. "Large firms with deeper pockets undercut smaller operators... Is that not the very definition of a monopoly?"

Local operators contend that the move does nothing to solve the city's most visible issue: long queues at taxi ranks. Since private hire cars are legally barred from picking up at ranks, Douglas argued that flooding the streets with new drivers would not help those waiting for a lift home in the city centre.

Conversely, business groups and lobbyists have labelled the test a "huge, outdated and unnecessary barrier" in an era dominated by GPS and satellite navigation. Uber, which has long advocated for the change to bolster its driver numbers, welcomed the opportunity for the public to weigh in.

An Uber spokeswoman stated: "Aberdeen has a long-standing and well-documented shortage of private

hire cars... This is an important step toward improving transport reliability for the city."

While the consultation will cover various policies - including vehicle age limits and merging the city centre taxi zone and the airport zone, which will allow city drivers to join the rank at the airport - the knowledge test remains the lightning rod for tension. Russell McLeod, managing director of Rainbow City Taxis, expressed scepticism about the democratic process, accusing councillors of being "bullied and harangued" into the review. "If this is going to be determined by a popularity vote based on myths, then we already know what the outcome will be," McLeod said.

Council officials have stressed that the consultation, which will run through February and March, is part of a routine review and that no final decisions have been made. A definitive ruling on the future of the knowledge test is expected in May.

NORTH NORTHANTS:

KNOWLEDGE TEST WOES

North Northamptonshire Unitary Council has suspended its new knowledge test after the first 20 drivers failed the test.

One angry driver told **PHTM**: "We've found out today that NNC is suspending all Knowledge Tests until further notice as it has been decided to review the test in its current new format.

"This is because all 20 applicants, who were all experienced professional drivers with 30-40 years in the trade and people who have safely served the public for decades and know their working areas inside out, failed the new introduced test on 19th January 2026.

"Despite concerns from the trade that this would happen, the council decided to still plough ahead with it, and it has ultimately failed.

"Drivers are now in limbo, unsure what to do as their licences approach renewal and those who took the test are out of pocket to the tune of £100 for taking a test that they were never going to be capable of passing.

To put this into perspective, North Northamptonshire now covers four legacy boroughs: East Northants, Wellingborough, Kettering and Corby - an area of around 300 miles with 111 towns and villages - and as for knowing routes to landmarks, it's an extremely historic area - there are landmarks everywhere!

ROUND THE COUNCILS

LANCASHIRE:

TAXI SAFEGUARDING STRENGTHENED

Lancashire's Police and Crime Commissioner, Clive Grunshaw, has brought together licensing officers from across the county for the inaugural meeting of Lancashire's Taxi Working Group, established to share best practice and improve safeguarding in the taxi sector. The meeting follows a countywide survey which highlighted taxi safety as a significant concern for women and girls.

Chaired by the Office of the PCC, the group discussed current safeguarding challenges, innovative approaches being used by local teams, engaging with the DfT through their ongoing taxi licensing consultation and opportunities for greater consistency across districts. Representatives attended from local authorities, MPs' offices, the University of Central Lancashire, and the Chorley Taxi Association. The Working Group builds on findings from the Commissioner's 2025 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) survey, which gathered insights from more than 4,000 women and girls across Lancashire and identified transport as a key area of concern.

The survey revealed that 43% of respondents felt unsafe travelling in a taxi at night, while 64% felt unsafe waiting at taxi ranks. Even during the day, 30% of participants reported feeling unsafe in taxis. In addition, 42% of respondents believed that statutory agencies could do more to improve safety when using taxis.

Clive Grunshaw, said: "My priority as PCC is to work with partners across Lancashire to increase safety for women and girls. Driver standards in the county remain high, but we know there is more to do. My Office is committed to working with police and local authorities to ensure robust safeguarding training is in place. Unlicensed drivers continue to pose the greatest risk, and I would strongly urge the public to always check that the taxi they are using is legitimate." "This inaugural meeting marks the first step in developing a more consistent approach across Lancashire, helping customers understand the differences between PHVs, hackney carriages, licensed taxis, and fraudulent drivers."

The Casey Report recently called on the Government to close the 'out of area' licensing loophole and improve taxi standards to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable people. The Government has since accepted all 12 recommendations.

Preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG)

remains a key priority in the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan. Recent months have seen £177,000 of money seized from criminals invested into 38 VAWG prevention projects, alongside the launch of #GetTheMessage, a behaviour change campaign aimed at tackling so-called low-level harassment and abuse.

SLOUGH:

PETITION AGAINST DIESEL BAN

A petition calling on Slough BC to delay the introduction of a new policy on diesel-fuelled taxis has gathered more than 1,500 signatures.

Back in 2021, Slough was awarded £370,035 from the Government's £5million Air Quality Grant. At the time, the council said this money would be invested in a project looking to accelerate the adoption of EVs by taxi drivers and private hire vehicle operators.

In 2023, the council adopted a vehicle age policy to reduce air pollution whereby taxi drivers with diesel vehicles can renew their vehicle licences until the vehicle is nine years old.

As part of Slough BC's new policy tackling the issue, it said it would only issue new taxi vehicle licences for applicants with non-diesel cars. The new policy was set to be introduced on January 1. But a petition calling on the council to delay this diesel taxi cut-off was launched on November 27 and has quickly gained 1,517 signatures since then. The petition urges the council to carry out a 'robust consultation' before a ban can be implemented on older vehicles because Slough's cut-off is 'stricter and more costly' than neighbouring local authorities.

The petition added that drivers and taxi operators will be asked to 'bear high costs' in order to upgrade their vehicles. A council spokesperson pointed out that private hire operators are free to set their own fares and the council's 'alternative to diesel initiative' will still allow taxi drivers to use petrol, hybrid or EVs.

The scheme had initially been set to get underway in January 2025 but the council opted to move the start date to January 2026.

The spokesperson added that the council has met with two trade reps and "discussions have been constructive and will continue in the new year." Also the council's petition scheme procedure will be followed in that any petition that surpasses the 1500-signature threshold will be debated at a full council meeting.

TAXI AND PH TRADE LEADERS SLAM GLASGOW COUNCILLOR'S CLAIMS AS FALSE AND DANGEROUS

A coalition of Scotland's leading taxi and PH representatives has issued a scathing joint rebuke of comments made by a Glasgow City Council councillor Audrey Dempsey, warning that her claims are "deeply insulting," inaccurate and risk inciting public fear.

The backlash follows a TikTok video posted in which she claimed that while drivers licensed in Glasgow undergo vetting and training, those licensed by other councils do not. She suggested that drivers outside Glasgow can "just apply and get a licence" without checks and that their vehicles may be "unfit" for service due to a lack of enforcement. The Scottish PH Association (SPHA), The East Renfrewshire Hire Car Forum (ERHCF), The North Lanarkshire PH Drivers Trade Group (NLPHDTG), and Edinburgh PH Drivers United (EPHDU) have all joined forces to challenge these claims, describing them as a smear on thousands of drivers.

John Paul Duffy, ERHCF Chairman, described the councillor's remarks as "completely untrue."

Mr. Duffy said "Every single driver must undergo a criminal records check before a licence is granted. That applies regardless of which local authority issues the licence."

Eddie Grice, SPHA General Secretary, went further, labelling the comments as a dereliction of duty regarding fact-checking.

"To claim that drivers outside of Glasgow are not vetted is so unbelievable that I am surprised a public official would speak without checking the facts first," said Mr. Grice. "Every single licensed driver in Scotland is vetted as a man-

datory part of their application, a process demanded by the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. These comments are deeply insulting to the thousands of drivers licensed outside Glasgow."

The sentiments were shared by David Graham of NLPHDTG and by Stewart Livingston of EPHDU.

Mr. Graham said: "To suggest that PH drivers operate without background checks in North Lanarkshire misrepresents the licensing system and undermines public confidence in a regulated service subject to rigorous oversight".

Mr. Livingston added: "I'm not sure how far beyond Glasgow the councillors' comments were intended to apply, but it's simply untrue to say that any licensed driver in Scotland hasn't been vetted".

Cllr Dempsey also alleged that vehicles from other areas could be operating with bald tyres or mechanical defects, suggesting that Glasgow's enforcement unit is powerless to stop them. She even claimed that in the event of an accident, insurance for these vehicles would be void.

Mr. Duffy dismissed this as misleading fear-mongering, noting that passengers are protected by the MIB as a statutory safety net.

"In regards to vehicle standards, every licensed vehicle in Scotland is required to undergo a strict inspection procedure," Mr. Grice noted. "Again, this is mandated by the same primary legislation that governs Glasgow. To suggest that neighbouring councils are letting 'unfit' cars on the roads is a fantasy." The trade leaders highlighted a glaring contradiction in the video

where Cllr Dempsey attempted to link her warnings to a recent high-profile criminal case where Uber driver, Dawitt Tessema, was jailed for sexual assault. However Tessema was licensed by Glasgow City Council itself.

The SPHA and ERHCF warned that telling the public to avoid vehicles with different coloured licence plates while claiming they "could be anyone" is a dangerous stance. Licence plate colours vary by authority for administrative reasons and have no bearing on the vetting status of the driver.

While the trade reps acknowledge that the licensing system requires modernisation, they argue spreading "myths" hinders progress.

Mr. Grice said: "The SPHA was recently part of a Scottish Government Task Force reviewing the primary legislation. We've put forward proposals for enhanced enforcement powers, national uniformity of vehicle standards and a radical overhaul of licensing zones. There are real problems that need real solutions.

"However, it's unhelpful for a councillor to undermine public trust by spreading falsehoods and could spark unnecessary public safety fears while damaging the reputations of law-abiding drivers." The trade bodies have now issued a formal invitation to Cllr Dempsey and her colleagues to move away from social media rhetoric and toward constructive dialogue.

"Let's discuss the facts and work together on solutions that protect the public and the trade, rather than attacking the livelihoods of our drivers based on fiction."



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AUTOLOGICA

MILESTONE FOR TAXIBOT

TAXIBOT HITS £500,000 IN BOOKING REVENUE, A MILESTONE THAT REDEFINES THE FUTURE OF TAXI AUTOMATION

By M2M TaxiBot
www.m2mtaxibot.com



In a major milestone for both M2M Data Connect and the UK taxi industry, TaxiBot has officially surpassed £500,000 in booking revenue for taxi operators across the country. What makes this achievement even more remarkable is how quickly it happened. TaxiBot went from zero to half a million pounds in completed bookings in a short period of time, proving beyond any doubt that messaging based automation has earned its place in the modern mobility landscape.

This isn't just a number it's a signal of a fundamental shift in how passengers want to book taxis and how operators can grow without adding operational strain.

A new revenue channel that doesn't cannibalise app bookings

One of the biggest concerns operators had early on was whether TaxiBot would simply divert bookings away from their existing app. The data tells a very different story. TaxiBot has not reduced app bookings at all. Instead, it has created an entirely new revenue stream by engaging customers who were previously unreachable or unwilling to download yet another app. This is incremental growth not redistribution.

Passengers who prefer messaging apps are now converting at higher rates, and operators are benefiting from a channel that works alongside their existing digital tools rather than competing with them.

Average booking value twice national average

Perhaps the most striking insight from TaxiBot's performance is the average booking value. Across the UK, TaxiBot bookings have consistently come in over twice the national average fare. Why? Because messaging-based journeys attract a different type of customer:

- Travellers booking longer distance trips
- Passengers who value convenience over price
- Users who prefer WhatsApp/Instagram over traditional apps
- Customers booking on behalf of others

These are high value journeys that operators often struggle to capture through apps or phone lines. TaxiBot is filling that gap with ease.

Reaching new demographics & new markets

TaxiBot's success is rooted in its ability to meet customers where they already spend their time inside WhatsApp, Instagram and Messenger. These platforms cut across age groups, languages and digital habits, giving operators access to demographics that traditional channels simply don't reach, including:

- Younger passengers who avoid downloading apps
- Older passengers who prefer simple messaging
- Tourists who rely on WhatsApp while travelling
- Occasional riders who won't commit to an app
- Communities underserved by traditional digital tools

TaxiBot has become a bridge to these audiences, turning casual interest into confirmed bookings.

From zero to £500,000, proof of market fit

Reaching half a million pounds in booking revenue isn't just a milestone; it's validation. TaxiBot has proven:

- There is strong demand for app-free taxi booking
- Messaging channels convert at high rates
- Voice notes and simple chat journeys reduce friction
- Operators can grow without increasing admin
- Automation can deliver higher value bookings, not just more bookings

TaxiBot has earned its place in the market not as a replacement for apps, but as a powerful new channel that expands the operator's reach and strengthens their digital ecosystem.

A milestone that marks the beginning, not the peak

£500,000 is a landmark, but it's also a launchpad. As more operators adopt messaging-based automation and more passengers discover the convenience of booking through chat, Taxi Bot's growth trajectory is only accelerating.

The future of taxi booking is conversational, app-free, and customer-centric and TaxiBot is leading that transformation.

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VALENTINE'S DAY: SPREADING THE

HOW COLLABORATION, KINDNESS, & NETWORKING BUILD A STRONGER BUSINESS

Article by Rev'd Paul Newbery
The Elite Family
www.elite-liverpool.co.uk
family@elite-liverpool.co.uk



Introduction: love on the road

Valentine's Day, often associated with romantic gestures and heartfelt messages, offers a unique opportunity for people in every industry to rethink how they share kindness and build connections. Nowhere is this more powerful than in the private hire and taxi trade, where every journey is more than just a ride - it's an encounter, a chance to make someone's day, and a moment to strengthen the bonds that keep the wheels turning.

While flowers and chocolates abound in February, the spirit of Valentine's Day in our trade is expressed through community, professionalism, and the shared pursuit of excellent service. It's about uplifting one another, working together with other firms, and showing appreciation for colleagues, partners, and customers alike. After all, the road is always brighter when travelled together.

Let's take the time to explore how sharing the love - through jokes, support, and collaboration - can help grow businesses and nurture lasting relationships in the taxi and private hire world.

The power of kindness - why love matters in the trade

Kindness is the universal language of the private hire and taxi business. Drivers greet countless faces each day, and even the smallest acts of goodwill - whether it's a warm hello, a patient ear, or a friendly joke - can transform an ordinary fare into a memorable experience. On Valentine's Day, this spirit is especially meaningful, reminding us that a little humour and generosity can build bridges and encourage return business.

Here are some taxi-themed jokes to bring some light-hearted fun to your day and remind everyone that love is best shared with a smile:

- Why did the taxi driver fall in love with their car? Because it always took them for a ride but never steered them wrong!
- What did one taxi say to the other on Valentine's Day? "You drive me crazy - in the best way!"
- Why did the couple choose a private hire to get to their romantic dinner? Because love is best enjoyed with a smooth ride and no meter running!
- How do taxi drivers say 'I love you'? "I'll always take you to your destination, no matter the traffic!"
- What do you call a romantic taxi? A cab-oodle!

These moments of shared laughter not only make the day brighter but also foster loyalty and word-of-mouth recommendations. Customers who are greeted with humour and warmth are far more likely to return, refer friends, and leave glowing reviews. In a business where reputation matters, kindness can be your strongest asset.

Collaboration and networking - building a stronger community

Beyond individual interactions, the taxi and private hire trade thrives when firms work together. Valentine's Day, with its message of unity, offers a timely reminder that sharing the love also means sharing opportunities. Networking jobs between companies, supporting one another during busy periods, and teaming up for large events or emergencies elevates the entire industry.

Collaborating with other operators has immediate and long-term benefits:

- **Coverage:** by pooling resources, firms can meet surges in demand, keep wait times low, and offer more reliable service to customers.
- **Expertise:** sharing tips, best practices and business insights helps everyone improve and adapt quickly to changes in technology or regulation.

LOVE IN THE PH AND TAXI TRADE



- **Trust:** when firms have a track record of helping one another, relationships deepen and partnerships flourish, leading to mutual referrals and shared success.
- **Resilience:** by building a network of support, businesses are better equipped to weather unexpected challenges, from breakdowns to major local events.

Networking isn't just about exchanging jobs - it's about creating a culture of collaboration. Drivers and operators who know they are part of a supportive community work with greater confidence, and customers feel reassured knowing their ride is backed by a dependable local network. These bonds, formed over time, are the backbone of a vibrant and competitive trade.

Consider the example of two companies working together to cover a large wedding or festival. Instead of fighting for fares, they coordinate pickups, share resources, and ensure everyone gets home safely.

This not only leads to better customer reviews but also opens the door to future collaborations and growth. In the end, what begins as a simple act of sharing the love can blossom into a long-lasting partnership that benefits both businesses and their customers.

Making love go further - practical ways to celebrate & collaborate

On Valentine's Day, there are many creative ways taxi and private hire firms can show their appreciation and build connections. Here are some

practical ideas for sharing the love across the industry:

- **Joint promotions:** partner with another firm for special Valentine's offers, such as discounted rides for couples or shared loyalty rewards.
- **Driver appreciation:** organise a small event or social gathering for your drivers, giving them a chance to bond, share stories, and exchange laughs and jokes.
- **Social media shoutouts:** use your platforms to highlight acts of kindness, collaborative efforts, or stories of firms supporting each other. Encourage customers to share their positive experiences.
- **Community service:** work together with other companies to provide free or discounted rides for elderly passengers, hospital visits, or local charities as a gesture of goodwill.
- **Open job networks:** create a messaging group or platform where operators can easily share overflow jobs and support each other during peak times.

These efforts not only help business grow but also strengthen the sense of camaraderie within the trade. When operators and drivers take the initiative to recognise each other's contributions and provide mutual support, the benefits extend far beyond Valentine's Day.

In closing, let's remember that every journey - whether brief or long - is an opportunity to share a little love. By embracing kindness, collaboration, and humour, firms and drivers in the private hire and taxi trade can create meaningful connections, grow their businesses, and build a stronger, more supportive community.

This Valentine's Day, let's keep the spirit alive all year round - because when we drive together, we thrive together.

If you want to share the love and community that we at the Elite Family have for each other, then no time like the present! Roses and chocolates not needed, just a spirit of working together and a good ethos. Email: family@elite-liverpool.co.uk

A DECADE AFTER LAUNCH MINICABIT IS NOW PART OF CMAC GROUP

minicabit
The UK cab network

Minicabit is now part of the CMAC Group. This follows the signature of an asset purchase agreement on 3 December 2025.

This brings minicabit's online comparison capability and transport network into CMAC Group's established aggregation platform, further strengthening their position as a leading transport network aggregator.

Peter Slater, CMAC CEO, stated: "I am delighted that minicabit is now part of CMAC to enhance our ability to provide aggregated services to our customers and clients.

"Our model of connecting suppliers with customers continues, expanding our offerings in the UK, EU & Worldwide."

Amer Hasan, founder/CEO of minicabit stated: "I'm excited that after over a decade since we launched, minicabit is now a part of CMAC Group, unlocking more opportunities for our platform,

cmac.

suppliers, travel partners and customers."

With over 18 years of continuous operation, CMAC Group partners with more than 3,000 private hire and taxi operators nationwide. Their reputation is built on scale, reliability, and trust, supported by a strong and consistent track record of paying fleets and suppliers in full and on time.

GETT EYES \$50 MILLION UK EXIT MONTHS AFTER TAKEOVER AS FOCUS SHIFTS TO ISRAEL

Less than half a year after its acquisition by a heavyweight investment consortium, taxi app Gett is in advanced negotiations to offload its UK operations to a local competitor for approximately \$50m.

The move, first reported by Calcalist, marks a swift strategic pivot by the new owners to shed the loss-making British wing and consolidate the company's position in its home market.

The negotiations are being spearheaded by Gett Chairman Ran Guron, following the \$188 million acquisition of the company last August by a consortium including Leumi Partners, Mizrahi Tefahot, and the Phoenix.

While Gett maintains a significant presence across major UK cities,

Gett.

including London, the division has struggled to find its footing. The UK operations "have been unprofitable for most of the past several years," and the new ownership group reportedly agreed even before the takeover was finalised that the "UK activity should be sold."

If the \$50 million deal crosses the finish line, it would significantly de-risk the investment for shareholders.

Following the sale, Gett would retain only its Israeli operations, holding "net assets of roughly \$70 million."

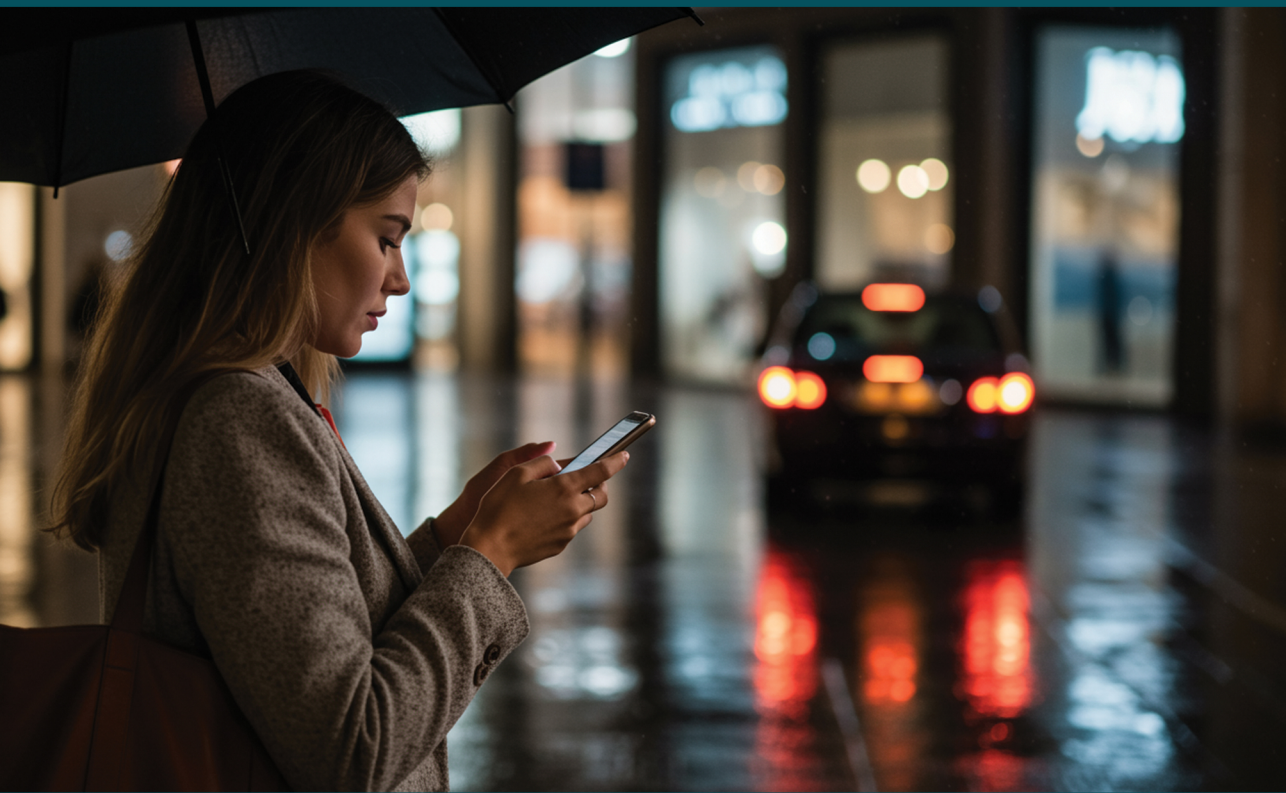
The decision to focus exclusively on Israel comes at a volatile time for the domestic market. Transport Minister Miri Regev is currently moving to facilitate the entry of ride-hailing giant Uber into Israel - a move that poses a direct threat to Gett's dominance.

Reports suggest the Ministry of Transport is targeting a September 2026 launch for Uber. This looming competition "could erode Gett's revenue, given its position as the largest player in the local taxi market."

While the UK sale offers a quick injection of capital, Gett must now prepare for a high-stakes battle on its home turf as the Director General of the Ministry of Transport continues "examining the implications of Uber's entry into the Israeli market."



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RESPONSIVE SERVICE KEY TO REDCAR TAXIS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TAXI INSURER

Article by The Taxi Insurer
0121 296 3092
www.taxiinsurer.co.uk



"How long should it take to add or remove a vehicle? 24 or 48 hours, maybe? But to wait a week or two? It's costing you money!"

Ibby Hussain, general manager at Redcar Taxis in Redcar, is comparing his firm's former insurance provider with his current one, The Taxi Insurer. To do so, Ibby is using the example of mid-term policy adjustments to illustrate the stark difference in service levels he has received from the two companies.



The importance of relationships

To emphasise the importance of relationships in business, Ibby points to response times to illustrate his point. As a customer, he values being able to speak to an account manager in a timely manner.

"If you've got an issue, you just want to be able to reach out to your insurance provider and get it resolved. But you can't reach out to someone you can't get hold of. We all get busy from time to time, but the most important thing is to maintain that business relationship."

Frustrated by the unresponsive nature of the service he experienced with his previous insurance provider, Ibby took his business to The Taxi Insurer last year and has not looked back. Asked to describe the relationship he enjoys with his new provider, he's quick to settle on one adjective.

"Easy. Easy is a good choice of word. There's no beating around the bush. There's never, ever a problem. And I can get hold of anyone I need to speak to very easily."

Having returned to the theme of communication, Ibby elaborates on why he's so pleased to partner with The Taxi Insurer. Whenever he now needs to make changes to his policy, he's confident they will be actioned quickly and efficiently.

"If I was to take three vehicles off now, at 10:49am, via email, I know for a fact that those vehicles will be removed from our policy by the end of the day, the premium will be corrected and I'll have the new figures in front of me. That's all I want."

Not the best time to start a taxi business!

Redcar Taxis began in 2020 with 12 drivers. Ibby admits that the early days of the business were stressful due to the lack of demand during Covid, but he and his partners always believed that brighter days were just around the corner.

That belief was confirmed when they received a pickup request from the operator of a rival firm that had gone bust in July 2020. Taking that as a sign that demand for their service still existed, Redcar Taxis ploughed on and were eventually rewarded for their efforts.

The company has grown steadily over the last six years until it now employs 90 drivers and manages account work for a number of schools and care homes in the surrounding area. It's not something that Ibby takes for granted, and he's always keen to give something back to the local community.

"We visited GP surgeries and dental practices around Christmas," he explains, "and gave out chocolates to get a bit of festive cheer going. It was our way of thanking their staff and customers for using our service and cementing those relationships."

Ibby believes that creating and nurturing relationships is key to long-term business success, which is where this conversation began.



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JUST DESERTS

WREXHAM TAXI PASSENGER JAILED FOR FOUR YEARS AFTER RANDOM ATTACK AND ROBBERY

A Wrexham man has been handed a four-year, two-month prison sentence after admitting to the robbery of a taxi driver in a “random attack” earlier this year. Jordan Roberts, 27, of Wrexham, appeared at Mold Crown Court on November 25, where he pleaded guilty to robbery. According to a North Wales Police statement, the incident occurred

in March when Roberts was a passenger in a taxi near Rose Hill in Wrexham.

“In March earlier this year Roberts was a passenger in a taxi near to Rose Hill in Wrexham when he



suddenly attacked the taxi driver, punching him to the head and stealing his phone before running away,” the statement read. Roberts was located and arrested later the same day. Following the sentencing, DC Harriet Simmons condemned the violence, stating: “This was a random attack on a person who was just trying to do his job.”

SWINDON COUPLE JAILED AFTER TAXI CCTV EXPOSES COCAINE SIDE HUSTLE

A Swindon couple who moonlighted as drug dealers after finishing their day jobs have been jailed after a taxi's internal CCTV helped police dismantle a significant cocaine operation. Jordan Williams, 35, and Donna Midgeley, 32, were sentenced at Swindon Crown Court on 16 December, following a Serious and Organised Crime Unit investigation. Williams received a sentence of four years and eight months, while Midgeley was jailed for four years and three months.

The investigation began in May 2022 after officers witnessed a suspected drug deal in an Aldi car park between Williams and Malcolm Dennis, 50. Dennis was then seen to supply onwards an ounce of cocaine to a local taxi driver named Daniel Wells, 43. Both Dennis and Wells were stopped and arrested.

Helpfully, Wells' CCTV cameras in his vehicle captured the transaction. Both men were subsequently charged and pleaded



guilty to drugs offences, for which they were given suspended prison sentences.

The CCTV footage provided a vital link for detectives to pivot their focus toward Williams and Midgeley. Surveillance soon revealed the pair were conducting “multiple suspected drug deals every evening after finishing work.” The investigation reached a breakthrough at a self-storage unit rented by Midgeley. During a raid in October 2022, police discovered a filing cabinet containing:

- Over 750g of cocaine (valued up to £75,000)
- Scales and drug paraphernalia
- Midgeley's work uniform and name badge

“This was simply a case of greed – both Midgeley and Williams had full-time jobs and a roof over their head,” said DS Hilton of Wiltshire Police's SOCU.

“While they attempted to conceal their activities... Midgeley's uniform and name badge being stored in the filing cabinet, with the cocaine, was too much for them to argue.” Despite their attempts to hide the operation, forensic investigators recovered Williams' fingerprints from the drug packaging. Police noted the couple used their illegal profits to fund a lifestyle of “executive vehicles.”

DS Hilton confirmed that the police will now move to “recover their earnings by selling the cars and property seized from them under the Proceeds of Crime legislation.” The officer added a warning: “Selling drugs will always attract the attention of the police. We continue to encourage people to report anything suspicious, no matter how small, as every small piece helps us to build a case.”

JUST DESERTS

GRIMSBY MAN'S "DAFT" TAXI DISPUTE ENDS IN COSTLY COURT APPEARANCE

A Grimsby man's decision to flee a taxi over a minor dispute proved to be a "very expensive argument" this week, resulting in a court bill totalling hundreds of pounds. Gavin Jeavons, 33, appeared before Chester Magistrates Court on December 23, where he pleaded guilty to making off without payment and using threatening or abusive words. The charges stem from a November 22 incident while Jeavons was working in Chester. The court heard that Jeavons was being driven to the Mercure Hotel when he requested a stop at a Co-

op to purchase cigarettes. When the driver informed him the store was closed and refused to stop, the situation turned hostile. According to the prosecution, Jeavons called the driver a "f****r" before jumping out of the vehicle and refusing to pay the £15.90 fare. Defence solicitor Chris Hunt told the court that Jeavons was "heartily ashamed" of his conduct. Hunt emphasised that the defendant recognised "the poor example he had set to his children. He's got into a daft argument with a taxi driver just doing his job." The defence noted that the legal

proceedings had already become a significant financial burden for Jeavons, who had to spend £100 on travel, lose a day's wages, and pay for hotel accommodation just to attend the hearing. Magistrates opted for a financial penalty, citing his long period of staying out of trouble. However, the argument carried a heavy price tag comprising: fine of £266; victim surcharge of £106; prosecution costs of £85 and restitution of £15.90 for the driver. In total, Jeavons was ordered to pay £472.90 - nearly 30 times the cost of the original taxi fare.

ROAD RAGE MAN WHO TRIED TO GOUGE ABERDEEN CABBIE'S EYE AFTER FIVE-DAY BENDER IS JAILED

An Aberdeen man has been jailed for 30 months after a "shocking" road rage incident in which he attempted to gouge out a taxi driver's eye following a five-day drinking binge. James Smith, 41, appeared at Aberdeen Sheriff Court for sentencing following the violent confrontation in August last year. The court heard that the incident began when Smith, who was heavily under the influence, crashed into the back of a taxi stationary at a set of traffic lights. The situation escalated rapidly when the taxi driver exited his vehicle to challenge Smith about his fitness to drive. Fiscal depute Callum Gordon told the court that when the cabbie attempted to call the police, Smith charged at him, knocking the phone from his hand.

"The accused then pushed him against the vehicle door and repeatedly punched him to the head," Mr. Gordon said. "He then put his arm around the cabbie's neck and inserted a finger into his eye socket and applied pressure." Following the assault, Smith returned to his vehicle and struck the taxi a second time before careering into several bollards and fleeing the scene. Police later intercepted Smith's significantly damaged car. Officers noted he was "unsteady on his feet and smelling of alcohol." The aggression continued during his arrest as Smith lashed out, attempted to headbutt officers,



and spat at one individual. The court heard that even while being processed at the custody suite, Smith remained combative, adopting a "fighting stance" and launching into a volley of verbal abuse while charges were read. Defence solicitor David Sutherland stated: "A five-day bender culminated in this shocking incident," Mr. Sutherland said, adding that Smith was now in a "better place" after spending time on remand away from drugs and alcohol. Sheriff Ian Wallace sentenced Smith to 30 months' imprisonment. In addition to the jail term, Smith has been banned from driving for 60 months and is required to pass an extended driving test before regaining his licence.

SHAME SHAME

PH DRIVER ARRESTED IN **LIVERPOOL** AFTER SMASHING INTO PARKED VAN AND REVERSING INTO DRIVER

A private hire driver reportedly smashed into a parked van in Huyton on New Year's Eve.

The owner of the van then approached the driver of the car to remove his keys, but the car reversed into him, knocking him to the ground and he sustained a minor head injury and was taken to hospital.

Merseyside Police were called to

the scene shortly after 9.05pm and stopped the private hire vehicle and detained the driver.

A 41-year-old man from Toxteth was arrested on suspicion of drink driving, careless driving and failing to stop after a collision. He was taken into custody and then conditionally bailed.

Roads Policing Chief Inspector Stuart McIver said: "When drivers

get behind the wheel of a vehicle having drunk too much alcohol or taken drugs, they take a huge risk with the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and other motorists, as well as themselves.

"I want to take this opportunity to commend the actions of the van owner who recognised the suspect had potential to cause further harm and tried to stop him."

LIVERPOOL CABBIE AND DAD-OF-SIX SPARED JAIL AFTER POLICE FIND COCAINE STASHED IN SHORTS

A Liverpool private hire driver who turned to drug dealing after losing a £3,000 bet was spared an immediate prison sentence on 7 January, despite being caught with cocaine hidden in his clothing.

Joseph O'Neill, 39, was apprehended by police in Woolton on July 19, 2024, after officers witnessed a suspected transaction outside a pub. Upon being searched, police discovered £590 in cash and a bag containing 12 wraps of cocaine "sticking out of the leg of his shorts."

Confronted by officers, the father-of-six from Norris Green made a candid 11-word admission: "I only did it because I need money for the bills."

He further explained his situation at the scene, stating: "I have six kids... I pass it to the lad. He passes me more stuff. That's how it works. I started last week to get more money." However, investigators later found WhatsApp messages suggesting O'Neill's involvement in



the drug trade dated back to April. During the hearing at Liverpool Crown Court, defence barrister Julian Nutter argued that O'Neill was a "minnow" in the supply chain who had succumbed to the pressure of a class A drug addiction and mounting family stresses.

Describing the defendant's domestic life as a "horror story," Mr. Nutter highlighted O'Neill's responsibilities as a carer for a step-daughter with cerebral palsy and a 20-month-old son requiring surgery.

"He has realised what a fool he has been and has been off those drugs since his arrest," Mr. Nutter added.

"In my respectful submission, sometimes cases arise where compassion is exceptionally appropriate."

O'Neill pleaded guilty to possession of cocaine with intent to supply and being concerned in the supply of cocaine.

While such offences typically carry heavy custodial terms, Recorder David Knifton KC cited O'Neill's previous good character and his vital role as a carer as reasons for leniency.

Handing down a two-year sentence suspended for two years, Recorder Knifton told the defendant: "Those who choose to involve themselves in the supply of class A drugs must, save for in wholly exceptional circumstances, expect to receive substantial sentences.

"You can consider yourself exceptionally fortunate."

O'Neill was also ordered to complete 240 hours of unpaid work and adhere to a three-month electronically monitored curfew.

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JAILED **GLASGOW** UBER DRIVER BRANDED A 'GROSS BREACH OF TRUST' AFTER TEEN ASSAULT

A Glasgow Uber driver has been sentenced to two years in prison after being found guilty of sexually assaulting a vulnerable teenage passenger. Dawitt Tessema, 46, targeted the 19-year-old victim in the city's Woodlands area in September 2023 after picking her up from a city centre nightclub in the early hours of the morning.

The court heard that the victim was "very drunk" when she entered Tessema's vehicle. During the trial, prosecutor Lauren Sangray detailed how Tessema first attempted to touch the girl from the driver's seat before

moving into the rear of the vehicle to continue the assault. "Tessema parked up and put his hand through the centre console and tried to touch her on the body and leg but could not reach," Sangray told jurors. "He then went in the back of the car and touched her under her pants that were still on."

Following the incident, Tessema attempted to contact the victim, texting her: "I'm really sorry, please



forgive me, please, please." Upon his arrest, the first-time offender admitted to police officers, "I have to stop, I made a big mistake."

In sentencing Tessema on 23 January, Sheriff John McCormick condemned the driver's actions as a predatory exploitation of his position. "You accepted the trust of a passenger in your vehicle," the Sheriff stated. "There, you had a 19-year-old female who had drunk alcohol to excess. You took advantage of her in your taxi which was a gross breach of trust."

Tessema was also placed on the sex offenders register for 10 years.

DEVON CABBIE JAILED FOR FOUR YEARS AFTER SEXUALLY ABUSING CHILD IN EXCHANGE FOR FARE

A 79-year-old taxi driver who sexually abused a teenage girl in his car after she was unable to pay for a lift has been sentenced to four years in prison.

Terence Round, of St Giles on the Heath, appeared at Truro Crown Court on Monday 19 January, following guilty pleas to engaging in penetrative sexual activity with a girl who was aged under 16 and causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity.

The court heard that the victim had been unable to pay a £30 fare and had offered Round "anything he wanted" in exchange for the journey.

After a series of text messages, Round drove the girl to a secluded location in Cornwall where he locked the vehicle doors.

Prosecutor Heather Hope told the

court that Round was aware of the victim's age, having previously texted her that it was a "shame she was not 16."

During the ordeal, the victim was "terrified" and "froze," the court heard. Following the abuse, Round told the girl to get dressed and "act like nothing happened," reminding her not to tell anyone before completing the journey.

Defending Round, Emily Cook acknowledged the "clearly very serious offending" but argued that the 79-year-old was not a future risk. She suggested that Round initially interpreted the offer of "anything he wants" to mean "cleaning his car."



Ms. Cook also highlighted the impact a prison sentence would have on Round's dependent wife, noting that his "career has ended" and he no longer works as a driver. In his sentencing remarks, His Honour Judge James Adkin noted the breach of trust inherent in the defendant's profession. "You were a taxi driver, you gave her a lift and took her to an isolated spot," the judge said.

Acknowledging the victim's trauma, he added: "she said she was terrified."

While Judge Adkin took Round's lack of previous convictions and home circumstances into account, he determined that a custodial sentence was necessary.

In addition to his four-year jail term, Round will remain on the sex offender register for life.

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Brighton & Hove Cab Trade View

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Transport authorities

At the recent Trade Forum meeting here that's attended by various trade reps, councillors, licensing officers and guests, I strongly highlighted that the biggest threat to the trade that the government has thrown at us all is 'Transport Authorities'.

I put it bluntly to the labour councillor, who is a cabinet member for transport, and everyone else at the meeting, that these trade meetings will not exist in the future and that we will be under a faceless entity and thrown into a huge pot with our local identity destroyed.

This is even more crushing for us here in the south east because unlike surrounding areas we uniquely have a dedicated taxi/PH licensing office with five full-time licensing officers who know the drivers, and we all work closely together for the benefit of the local trade and the city's taxi/PH service.

I will be very clear and make no apologies for constantly repeating myself: this government despises localism, which is evidenced by looming devolution and the destruction of local councils. It wants to treat the local taxi/PH trades the same way with its pathetic remedy for curing cross-border hiring by removing borders. Yep, take the borders down, bowing to the cause of ten years of chaos created by Uber.

The reason why I brought this up at the trade meeting was because I wanted full assurance that the council will take part in the consultation. I was pleased to have this confirmation from the head of licensing at the meeting that:

- the council will be making a submission acknowledging the government's intention to reduce the current 263 licensing authorities to just 70 and the importance of the subsequent effect on local licensing control and service provision.
- the proposal will be studied in detail and will take into consideration the impact to the trade and passenger safety, safeguarding local standards and enforcement, operational and financial impact.

However, I very much doubt the government will take any notice and that a decision has already been made to hand all licensing control to faceless Transport

Authorities which will have absolutely no concept of how local taxis and private hire work. Effectively we are going through the standard 'box-ticking' exercise.

It is certainly going to be extremely interesting to find out what the reaction will be from other local licensing authorities.

Transport Select Committee: Jan 14 2026

A couple of points on this:

Lilian Greenwood stated: *".....It is absolutely clear to everyone that the current legislation is archaic and fragmented.... We have the Town Police Clauses Act 1847, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, and then we just have a series of sticking plasters really to try to make that legislation fit for purpose. It would be far better to do a comprehensive reform and start-"*

I keep reading and hearing this, but at no time has anyone actually dissected either of the Acts to show what is '*archaic and fragmented*'? I will be writing to her asking her to precisely specify where this is the case. Also, note that there is no mention at all of the London Private Hire Act 1998.

I found it quite bemusing that when asked by Dr Scott Arthur MP about not setting 'minimum standards' but instead setting 'absolute standards' her reply was:

"To just have absolute standards and not allow licensing authorities to have any variation or anything that takes local circumstances into account does not feel like the spirit of devolution."

She continued: *"I would not necessarily want to rule out that local licensing authorities could have discretion to have additional things that meet their particular issues."*

To me this smacks of hypocrisy where she stated '*local circumstances*' because the government is hell bent on tearing down the borders to 'cure' cross-border hiring by reducing the 263 local licensing authorities to just 70 to completely destroy local licensing authorities! She needs to look at what 'local' actually means.

Fortunately, Dr Arthur is astute and picked up on this and replied: *"Setting minimum standards is just going to amplify the issue, is it not? People are just going to search for where they can get a licence easiest, and that is not at all in the best interest of consumers, is it? Are you aware of the issues?"*



Brighton & Hove Cab Trade View

He was absolutely right! Why bother setting any minimum standards, which is the government's thinking that will stop 'licence shopping', when local authorities (if there are actually going to be any) can also set other local conditions of licensing? Are these people actually capable of having the privilege of hosting a functioning brain?

I could go through the whole of the meeting and pick things out, but I must be really stupid in not being convinced by the statement from Lillian Greenwood where she stated: *"One of the potential advantages of moving from 263 licensing authorities to a smaller number is the potential for economies of scale and for them to be more efficient in the way that they offer that."*

Dear Lillian, do you really see it being more economic and more efficient for say two-thousand drivers going to one single Transport Authority to apply for/renew driver licences/vehicle licences than four or five individual local licensing authorities? You are certainly not going to save on staffing costs for a start. Especially when I keep reading that even Wolverhampton renewals are getting longer waiting times now.

It's so evident that the local trades are well and truly doomed with the government clearly, in my opinion, set to ensure that global faceless apps will completely dominate and take over.

Electric U-turn

It seems to be that U-turns are quite a trend nowadays, so no surprise that Uber recently announced its own U-turn by reneging on its all-electric fleet 'policy' by 2030. This has been reported to have upset a lot of Uber drivers who have already made the change.

The reason as to why I am bringing this up is because around 2018 a Green councillor here put forward an out-of-the-blue proposed policy that all Brighton & Hove licensed vehicles should be fully electric by 2020! I hit the roof on this and demanded an extraordinary Trade Forum meeting to challenge this.

Uber turned up as a trade member with a couple of 'suits' fully supporting this policy and went into typical lengthy 'Uber-speak' in an attempt to catch the attention of the councillors who attended the meeting.

The Uber 'suit' stated that all of the Brighton & Hove private hire vehicles on its platform would be fully electric by 2020. Well, that would have been news to those drivers here! I scoffed at this saying not to believe

a word that Uber says as anything it states is only for appeasement and to suck up to councillors. However, fortunately the proposed policy was withdrawn from the Green councillor. Did all the Brighton & Hove Uber private vehicles become fully electric in 2020? Did they heck!!!

Licensing fees

One topic that was spoken about at the Transport Select Committee meeting was the subject of licensing fees. So, this fits in nicely with the recently proposed rise in such fees by Lewes District Council next door to us where most of its 400 or so private hire drivers predominantly work in Brighton & Hove. Yep, the drivers pay Lewes licensing to predominantly work in Brighton & Hove, instead of those licensing fee being paid to Brighton & Hove. The same as Chichester, Southampton, Portsmouth, Havant and New Forrester drivers do.

I know that the local trade Lewes reps are exasperated over this rise and I can see why.

B&H: dual driver licence £380 going to £400 in April
Lewes: dual driver licence £472.50 going to £567

B&H: HCV licence £230 going to £240 in April

B&H: PHV licence £200 staying at £200

Lewes: HCV/PHV licence £308.50 going to £340 in April

How on earth can a driver's dual licence for three years be £567!

I cannot see any justification for this, especially as Lewes District Council does not even have a dedicated taxi/PH licensing department unlike Brighton & Hove. In fact, Lewes licensing covers everything from sex shops to poodle parlours and ice-cream vans... and the rest.

The ex-chair of Lewes licensing has set up a petition setting out various demands about the justification for the proposed increase in fees. I had battles with him three years ago before he stood down, where I was raising the serious issues of his PH drivers removing/not displaying rear licence plates/door livery and so on, whilst predominantly working in Brighton. It got to the point where he told me that communications would not continue. However, good for him for sticking up for the Lewes trade.

Lastly, happy 2nd/3rd birthday to all the potholes in Brighton and Hove and hello to all the new ones that are being born at this time of the year!

ALL THINGS LICENSING

Article by Mike Smith, Senior Specialist for Licensing and Community Safety at Guildford Borough Council and Vice-Chair of the Institute of Licensing South East Region.

Please note that this article represents my own views which are not presented as the views of the Institute of Licensing or Guildford BC.

The new year of 2026 is very much starting in the same vein as we have had since mid-2025, with yet again significant consultations being launched on moving licensing responsibility to local transport authorities and further potential legislative changes through devolution on the horizon. In this month's article I will explore both frameworks and their implications for licence holders as well as local authorities.

DfT Consultation: local transport authorities to oversee taxi/PHV licensing?

Firstly, following the Government response to the Casey report which recommended closing the 'loophole' practice of out of area working, the Department for Transport (DfT) has launched a consultation proposing a significant restructuring of taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing in England: transferring statutory licensing responsibilities to local transport authorities (LTAs).

The consultation opened on 8 January 2026 and closes at 11:59pm on 1 April 2026.

This move follows the English Devolution White Paper's direction of travel, which signalled government intent to tackle persistent inconsistencies in standards and the enforcement difficulties created by cross-boundary working, as identified in the Casey report discussed in previous editions of **PHTM**. The idea is that administering licensing across a larger, transport-led footprint could deliver more consistent rules, stronger compliance, and fewer incentives for "out of area" licensing.

Why change the system?

As we know, at present, taxi/PHV licensing is largely handled by district councils (with Transport for London responsible for the capital). This has produced a patchwork of approaches to driver vetting, vehicle specifications, accessibility requirements, compliance

activity and fees; differences that many stakeholders say confuse the public and the trade alike. The DfT's consultation explicitly seeks views on whether LTAs should become the single, accountable bodies for licensing in their areas, while noting that London would remain unchanged.

Parliamentary scrutiny has highlighted the issue of cross-border licensing, where drivers obtain licences in one authority but primarily work elsewhere; Wolverhampton has often been cited as an outlier receiving applications from across England. The Transport Committee has queried whether a more standardised, rational regime could better protect passengers and provide clarity for drivers and operators.

What does this consultation propose?

1. Make LTAs the taxi/PHV licensing authorities

All LTAs in England, including combined authorities, would assume the statutory functions currently exercised by district councils, bringing licensing into the same strategic space as buses, highways and local transport planning. London's existing TfL model would continue as is.

What this could achieve:

- Consistency of standards across wider geographies
- In theory, the potential for effective enforcement across wider areas, with the scale to coordinate operations. However, it is important to note that moving licensing to LTAs would not prevent out-of-area working.
- Administrative efficiencies, leveraging economies of scale in application handling, policy development, and compliance teams.

2. Address cross-border working and raise standards

By aligning policies and enforcement at LTA level, government believes it can reduce the incentive to "shop around" for the least onerous licensing regime and, in turn, improve passenger safety and confidence.

3. Integrate licensing with wider transport objectives

Bringing taxis/PHVs into broader network planning could support accessibility, congestion and decarbonisation goals, positioning the sector as a more deliberately managed part of local transport systems.

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There are of course potential implications for both licensing authorities and licence holders:

Implications for licensing authorities

1. A larger statutory role and a bigger operational footprint.

LTAs would see a substantial expansion of responsibilities, inheriting end to end licensing operations (policy, processing, compliance and enforcement) and needing to build capacity, particularly for intelligence led enforcement across wider geographies.

2. Transition from district/borough councils.

Current licensing authorities may lose direct control of taxi/PHV policy and operations, a change the government acknowledges is “significant” and wants feedback on, especially around governance, staffing transfers, and cost recovery models. Many local authorities currently run small teams which administer all of the authority’s licensing functions, including taxi and PHV, and there is a concern that there could be resilience challenges if resources from these teams are reduced.

3. Toward consistency and best practice.

While this consultation focuses on an administrative level, it sits alongside long-running efforts to standardise expectations, such as the DfT’s **Best Practice and Statutory Standards Guidance** work to strengthen areas such as safeguarding, disability awareness, and enforcement toolkits. Guidance has previously emphasised a more consistent and strategic approach through justification of standards, inclusive service planning, joint enforcement and information sharing. This is obviously easier to deal with on a larger scale.

4. Stronger, area wide enforcement.

With a larger footprint, LTAs could coordinate proactive checks, share intelligence, and resource

specialist compliance operations more effectively. This is obviously an area where committee inquiries have flagged inconsistencies and gaps.

However, as previously discussed, unless there is legislative change, moving licensing responsibility to LTAs would not prevent out-of-area working which remains a principle concern.

Implications for the licensed trade

1. More consistent requirements.

Drivers and operators should expect clearer and more uniform standards across broader areas, making it easier to understand expectations on the “fit and proper” test, training, vehicle specifications, and accessibility. This could lower uncertainty but also reduce the scope to choose a more permissive authority.

2. A shift in licensing behaviour.

If LTAs align standards and improve enforcement, out-of-area licensing may become less attractive or viable, affecting some business models that rely on cross-boundary work patterns.

3. More professionalised service from the LTA

On a larger scale, economies of scale, shared expertise and good practice will hopefully improve the service licence holders receive from the licensing teams. In addition the trade may experience more frequent, more uniform compliance activity, raising overall standards but increasing scrutiny.

4. Strategic integration with local transport

Expect taxis/PHVs to be more deliberately woven into local transport strategies, for example, as part of first/last mile solutions or provision of service to more rural communities where bus services are limited, accessibility commitments, school transport routes or night time economy plans, potentially creating new opportunities but also clearer obligations to support wider public policy outcomes.

5. Looking ahead to automation

Separate work on automated passenger services (APS) indicates authorities will likely have a role in permitting and shaping driverless taxi/PHV services. While not part of this consultation, the direction of travel suggests future licensing frameworks will need to accommodate automation.

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Key questions the consultation poses

The consultation has a number of question themes:

- **Governance and accountability:** how should LTAs be held to account for licensing performance and safety outcomes across large areas?
- **Transition and resourcing:** what's the best way to transfer staff, systems, and casework from districts to LTAs without disrupting services or disadvantaging applicants?
- **Consistency vs local flexibility:** how far should standards be harmonised, and where should local discretion remain (e.g. vehicle age policies, local conditions)?
- **Enforcement powers and collaboration:** what joint-working arrangements and powers are needed to tackle non compliance and cross-border issues effectively?

What should you do now?

The DfT is seeking views from all stakeholders. Obviously the trade and local authorities will have different approaches in their response. However, there does appear to be an increasing desire from all parties for more consistency.

Licence holders may wish to assess how harmonised standards might impact operating models, cross-border work, and investment decisions (e.g. fleet specifications and accessibility features); prepare constructive feedback on where consistency helps and where local flexibility is vital.

Licensing authorities will need to review current capacity, enforcement arrangements, and digital systems; map how functions could scale to an LTA footprint; and prepare evidence on costs, benefits and transition risks to include in their response.

Timeline and how to respond

The consultation opened on 8 January 2026 and closes at 11:59pm on 1 April 2026. Details on how to respond are on the consultation pages at:

<https://shorturl.at/R13kK>

In addition to the consultation regarding moving licensing responsibility to LTAs, the English Devolution Bill continues to attract interest, particularly with regard to proposals around national standards and potentially legislating to reduce concerns around out-of-area working.

Reforming taxi and PHV licensing: what the English Devolution Bill changes mean for councils and the licensed trade

Potentially significant changes to taxi and PHV licensing are moving through Parliament as part of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment (EDCE) Bill. These reforms seek to address a long-standing national problem: the rise in out-of-area licensing, where drivers are licensed in one authority but operate predominantly in another.

For both local authorities and the licensed trade, these proposals represent the most substantial shift in licensing policy in over a generation.

Why change is being proposed

Concerns around safety, safeguarding, and inconsistent licensing standards have been gathering pace nationally. A key driver has been Baroness Casey's national audit into group based CSE, which highlighted weaknesses in the current taxi/PHV licensing framework, particularly around vetting and oversight.

The government responded by committing to strengthen licensing laws through the EDCE Bill. At its core is the reduction in variation between authorities to prevent individuals exploiting regulatory differences by licensing in areas with minimal requirements.

The problem: out of area licensing

Out-of-area working has become central to the national debate. In some regions, most PHV drivers are licensed elsewhere, limiting councils' ability to enforce standards and protect passengers.

- Greater Manchester, for example, reports that 49% of PHV drivers operating locally are licensed by Wolverhampton City Council, far outside the region. Local leaders, including GM Mayor Andy Burnham, describe this system as "broken", warning that councils cannot regulate drivers they don't license, making safeguarding and enforcement significantly harder.
- Indeed, DfT statistics for last year show that over 11% of all PHVs in England are now licensed by Wolverhampton, up from less than 0.5% a decade ago.

What the EDCE Bill proposes

1. National minimum licensing standards

The most significant amendment is the introduction of national minimum standards for taxi and PHV driver and operator licensing.

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What's included?

- Mandatory standards, details of which will be decided via further consultation, on vetting, training, and safety requirements.
- A legal duty for the Secretary of State to introduce these within one year of the Bill passing.
- Licensing authorities empowered to refuse licences to applicants failing to meet the standards.

These measures were reinforced by a government amendment tabled in November 2025 giving the Transport Secretary explicit powers to set these standards.

Why it matters

National minimum standards aim to reduce the incentive for drivers to seek licences in areas with lower requirements, in theory levelling the national playing field and improving public safety.

2. Strengthening passenger safeguarding

The reforms directly address safeguarding concerns highlighted in recent national reports. According to government statements, the new standards aim to ensure:

- Rigorous, consistent checks on drivers
- Greater accessibility and protection for vulnerable passengers

This includes tackling situations where inconsistent local practices allow unsuitable individuals to obtain licences in areas with minimal compliance expectations.

3. Addressing out-of-area working - but not eliminating it (yet...!)

Although the EDCE Bill introduces national standards, it does not currently ban out-of-area licensing. This has drawn strong criticism from peers and local leaders during parliamentary debates.

Key concerns:

In the House of Lords, out-of-area working has been described as a “major safeguarding issue” as local

authorities cannot effectively enforce safety or vehicle standards on drivers they do not license. As laudable and much needed as consistent standards are, they alone may not resolve the risks associated with cross-border working.

There has also been significant political pressure for stronger action in some areas. Greater Manchester, for instance, has led national calls for a further amendment to the Bill to end out-of-area licensing entirely, contending that the current system undermines local control, weakens enforcement, and damages community confidence. Local MPs have backed proposals to explicitly include an out-of-area licensing ban within the EDCE Bill.

What this means for local authorities

1. Stronger national framework

Local authorities will need to align with a new set of national standards, reducing policy variation and introducing a more structured enforcement environment.

2. Potential changes to enforcement roles

While national standards may help reduce cross border distortions, authorities may still face challenges enforcing against non locally licensed drivers unless further legislative amendments are made.

3. Strategic authority involvement

As discussed above, LTAs may play a larger role in licensing frameworks, complementing existing devolution arrangements.

What this means for the licensed trade

1. More consistent expectations

Drivers and operators across England will face firmer, standardised requirements on vetting, training, and safety.

2. Reduced advantage in licensing “elsewhere”

National minimum standards may reduce incentives to seek a licence in more permissive authorities.

3. Greater professional scrutiny

The trade can expect more uniform compliance activity and higher expectations around safeguarding and customer protection.

4. Possible future restrictions on where work can be carried out

If additional amendments succeed, cross-border working could become more limited, creating a more localised licensing regime.

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Conclusion

The EDCE Bill marks a decisive step toward reforming a system widely acknowledged as inconsistent, open to exploitation, and difficult to enforce.

National minimum standards represent a major milestone, but many leaders and industry voices argue that only a full reassessment of out-of-area licensing will provide the public confidence and fair operating environment the sector needs.

As the Bill progresses, whichever amendments are carried forward or not, both local authorities and the licensed trade should prepare for a more standardised, safety focused, and potentially more locally controlled licensing landscape.

Finally, the start of 2026 has also seen the Government unveil its new Road Safety Strategy. This is the first new strategy in over a decade and sets out sweeping reforms designed to dramatically cut the number of people killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads. The Government is aiming for a 65% reduction in fatalities and serious injuries by 2035, with an even more ambitious 70% reduction for children under 16.

This long-awaited overhaul responds to a decade of stalled progress in UK road safety. Despite historically ranking among Europe's safest nations, Britain has recently fallen behind, with 22 European countries making greater improvements in reducing road deaths over the past decade.

For the taxi and private hire sector, an industry whose livelihood depends on safe, predictable, and well-regulated roads, the strategy brings both opportunities and challenges.

A systemic approach to road safety

The Government's strategy is built around four core themes:

- 1. Supporting road users:** improving education, training, and targeted interventions.
- 2. Technology, innovation and data:** mandating new vehicle safety technologies and improving post-collision care.
- 3. Safe infrastructure:** upgrading road design and road markings; ensuring consistency across the network.

- 4. Robust enforcement:** tougher action on speeding, drink/drug driving, illegal plates, and uninsured vehicles.

This "safe system" approach, already used successfully in other countries, positions road safety as a shared responsibility; not only for drivers, but for vehicle manufacturers, planners, enforcement bodies, including licensing authorities, and government itself.

Major reforms of note for the licensed trade

1. Tougher drink driving measures

The Government will consult on lowering the drink drive limit, currently the highest in Europe. Preventative technologies such as alcolock devices, which prevent a vehicle starting if alcohol is detected, are also under consideration.

For the licensed trade, this ensures safer roads for professional drivers, particularly those working late nights and weekends. It may reduce the number of intoxicated private motorists, potentially increasing demand for taxi services.

2. Minimum learning period for new drivers

A proposed three- or six-month mandatory learning period aims to ensure new drivers gain experience in varied conditions such as night driving, bad weather or heavy traffic before taking their test.

This may mean that new taxi/PHV driver applicants may arrive with stronger foundational driving skills, as currently the **Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976** requires applicants to hold a driving licence for a minimum period of a year. This will hopefully also mean safer roads overall as inexperienced drivers develop resilience before qualifying.

3. Mandatory eye tests for drivers over 70

With an ageing population, the Government will consult on mandatory eye tests (and potential cognitive tests) for drivers over 70.

This will hopefully support safer interactions between professional drivers and older road users. In addition, for any licensing authorities which have not adopted the **DVLA Group 2** standards for drivers, which require drivers to have an annual medical from the age of 65 years, this may prompt them to update medical fitness guidelines for professional licence holders.

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4. Stricter enforcement on uninsured and unsafe vehicles

The strategy includes targeted action on illegal number plates, uninsured vehicles and cars without a valid MOT, all of which are identified as significant contributors to collision risk.

Again, this should help protect legitimate operators from unfair competition by non-compliant drivers, and will enhance passenger confidence in the regulated taxi and PHV sector, helping level the playing field on enforcement.

5. Mandatory vehicle safety technology

A landmark change is the plan to mandate 18 new vehicle safety technologies, including autonomous emergency braking (AEB) and lane keeping assistance, aligning UK standards more closely with EU regulations.

This may mean that future taxi and PHV fleets, including hybrids, EVs, and purpose built vehicles, will benefit from improved safety features. Consequently, fewer collisions may mean reduced insurance premiums and less off road downtime. Technologies, such as AEB, are particularly beneficial for stop start urban driving where taxis spend most of their time.

6. Work related road safety charter

A new National Work-Related Road Safety Charter will set standards for businesses whose staff drive for work, including improved risk management and reporting.

For the licensed trade, Taxi and PHV operators may be encouraged, or even required, to adopt higher safety management standards.

The taxi and PHV industry operates on the frontline of road safety. Every shift exposes drivers to variable weather, high density traffic, vulnerable road users, and unpredictable passenger behaviour.

The new strategy offers several clear benefits:

• Safer road environment

Tougher enforcement and improved infrastructure will make daily driving safer for professional drivers.

• Enhanced public confidence

Passengers are more likely to choose regulated transport services when they trust the roads and the vehicles using them.

• Potential for lower operating costs

Mandatory safety technologies can reduce collision frequency, insurance claims and vehicle downtime; all of which directly affect trade profitability.

• Increased demand

As lower drink drive limits and stronger enforcement may push more people, especially nighttime travellers, towards taxis and PHVs.

• Clearer National Standards

As the Work Related Road Safety Charter and consistent guidance on driver fitness could unify licensing expectations nationwide, reducing inconsistency between local authorities.

Conclusion

The UK Government's new Road Safety Strategy represents one of the most significant shifts in transport policy for more than ten years. With its emphasis on safer vehicles, better trained drivers, improved infrastructure, and stronger enforcement, the strategy has the potential to transform the operating environment for taxis and PHVs.

While some reforms may introduce additional compliance requirements, the overall direction; safer roads, clearer standards, and more predictable regulation, is overwhelmingly positive for the licensed trade. The sector now has an opportunity to align closely with national safety ambitions and position itself as a central pillar of safe, sustainable urban mobility.

Therefore, with so much change again on the horizon it is vital that the licensed trade keep up to date with one of the best ways being joining the Institute of Licensing.

For full details, please visit:
www.instituteoflicensing.org

THE NATIONAL
HACKNEY
FARES TABLE

FEBRUARY 2026

RISE IN 2026	
RISE IN 2025	
RISE IN 2024	
RISE IN 2023	
RISE IN 2022	RISE IN 2019
RISE IN 2021	RISE IN 2017
RISE IN 2020	RISE IN 2015
NO SET FARE	

UPDATED DAILY
www.phtm.co.uk

NATIONAL AVERAGE
2 MILE
HACKNEY FARE
TARIFF ONE
7.40

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
17	HERTSMERE	£9.08
18	CHELTENHAM	£9.00
19	EDINBURGH	£9.00
20	MAIDSTONE	£9.00
21	MID SUSSEX	£9.00
22	ORKNEY	£9.00
23	READING	£9.00
24	TONBRIDGE & MALLING	£9.00
25	BRENTWOOD	£8.90
26	EAST LOTHIAN	£8.90
27	MIDLOTHIAN	£8.90
28	REIGATE & BANSTEAD	£8.90
29	SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE	£8.90
30	STROUD	£8.90
31	UTTLESFORD	£8.90
32	VALE OF WHITE HORSE	£8.90
33	TORRIDGE	£8.79
34	BRIGHTON & HOVE	£8.70
35	EAST DEVON	£8.70
36	RESTORMEL	£8.70
37	SEVENOAKS	£8.70
38	SWINDON	£8.70
39	WOKING	£8.70
40	CAMBRIDGE CITY	£8.60
41	TEST VALLEY	£8.60
42	TUNBRIDGE WELLS	£8.60
43	WEST BERKSHIRE	£8.60
44	BCP	£8.52
45	PENWITH	£8.52
46	ARUN	£ 8.50
47	CLACKMANNAN	£8.50
48	EAST AYRSHIRE	£8.50
49	SLOUGH	£8.50
50	WYRE	£8.50
51	COLCHESTER	£8.40
52	EAST SUFFOLK (NORTH)	£8.40
53	EASTLEIGH	£8.40
54	LEEDS	£8.40
55	MEDWAY	£8.40
56	SOUTHAMPTON	£8.40
57	WATFORD	£8.40
58	DARTFORD	£8.30
59	HUNTINGDONSHIRE	£8.30
60	LINCOLN	£8.30
61	RUNNYMEDE	£8.30
62	SWALE	£8.30
63	TORBAY	£8.30
64	WILTSHIRE	£8.25
65	BASINGSTOKE & DEANE	£8.20
66	BROXBOURNE	£8.20
67	EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE	£8.20
68	EAST HERTS	£8.20
69	GRAVESHAM	£8.20
70	HART	£8.20
71	MANCHESTER	£8.20
72	NORTH HERTS	£8.20
73	WOKINGHAM	£8.20
74	FOREST OF DEAN	£8.13
75	HASTINGS	£8.10
76	IPSWICH	£8.10
77	OXFORD CITY	£8.10
78	PLYMOUTH	£8.10
79	MOLE VALLEY	£8.08
80	BRECKLAND	£8.00
81	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	£8.00

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
82	CHICHESTER	£8.00
83	COVENTRY	£8.00
84	EAST LINDSEY	£8.00
85	HARLOW	£8.00
86	HORSHAM	£8.00
87	NORTH YORKSHIRE	£8.00
88	NOTTINGHAM	£8.00
89	RIBBLE VALLEY	£8.00
90	RUSHCLIFFE	£8.00
91	SHROPSHIRE	£8.00
92	SOUTH AYRSHIRE	£8.00
93	SOUTH GLOUCESTER	£8.00
94	TANDRIDGE	£8.00
95	YORK	£8.00
96	DENBIGHSHIRE	£7.90
97	HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH	£7.90
98	ROTHER	£7.90
99	STEVENAGE	£7.85
100	ADUR	£7.80
101	BRACKNELL FOREST	£7.80
102	DORSET	£7.80
103	EASTBOURNE	£7.80
104	GLOUCESTER	£7.80
105	LEICESTER	£7.80
106	NORTH SOMERSET	£7.80
107	ROCHFORD	£7.80
108	RUSHMOOR	£7.80
109	SOUTHEND ON SEA	£7.80
110	SOUTH HAMS	£7.80
111	STOCKPORT	£7.80
112	SURREY HEATH	£7.80
113	WAVERLEY	£7.80
114	MELTON	£7.75
115	DUNDEE CITY	£7.72
116	CHELMSFORD	£7.70
117	DACORUM	£7.70
118	HIGH PEAK	£7.70
119	NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE	£7.70
120	WEALDON	£7.70
121	WINDSOR & MAIDENHEAD	£7.70
122	STRATFORD ON AVON	£7.68
123	NORTH TYNESIDE	£7.65
124	RENFREWSHIRE	£7.65
125	WARWICK	£7.65
126	SHETLAND ISLES	£7.62
127	ASHFORD	£7.60
128	BIRMINGHAM	£7.60
129	BRISTOL	£7.60
130	CONWY	£7.60
131	DUMBARTON & VALE OF LEVEN	£7.60
132	FIFE	£7.60
133	GREAT YARMOUTH	£7.60
134	ISLE OF MAN	£7.60
135	KERRIER	£7.60
136	KINGS LYNN & WEST NORFOLK	£7.60
137	MONMOUTHSHIRE	£7.60
138	SCOTTISH BORDERS	£7.60
139	SOLIHULL	£7.60
140	SOMERSET	£7.60
141	THREE RIVERS	£7.60
142	WEST SUFFOLK	£7.60
143	WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND	£7.60
144	WINCHESTER	£7.60
145	BATH & N. E. SOMERSET	£7.50
146	MILTON KEYNES	£7.55

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
1	LONDON (HEATHROW)	£13.60
2	LUTON AIRPORT	£12.60
3	EPSOM & EWELL	£12.00
4	TfL	£12.00
5	GUILDFORD	£10.00
6	JERSEY	£9.65
7	CARADON	£9.60
8	NORTH CORNWALL	£9.60
9	SPELTHORNE	£9.50
10	ELMBRIDGE	£9.50
11	EXETER	£9.50
12	GLASGOW	£9.30
13	CARRICK	£9.20
14	ST ALBANS	£9.15
15	GUERNSEY	£9.10
16	WORTHING	£9.10

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
147	BEDFORD	£7.50
148	ANGUS	£7.50
149	CARDIFF	£7.50
150	CHESTER	£7.50
151	EPPING FOREST	£7.50
152	GOSPORT	£7.50
153	MID SUFFOLK	£7.50
154	SHEFFIELD	£7.50
155	SOUTH NORFOLK	£7.50
156	TAMESIDE	£7.50
157	THANET	£7.50
158	BRAINTREE	£7.40
159	CANTERBURY	£7.40
160	EAST HAMPSHIRE	£7.40
161	EAST RENFREW	£7.40
162	LEWES	£7.40
163	LIVERPOOL	£7.40
164	PORTSMOUTH UA	£7.40
165	S. LANARKSHIRE (CAMBUS/R'GLEN)	£7.40
166	STAFFORD	£7.40
167	TEWKESBURY	£7.40
168	WEST LOTHIAN	£7.40
169	WEST OXFORD	£7.40
170	WIRRAL	£7.40
171	NEW FOREST	£7.35
172	NEWARK & SHERWOOD	£7.32
173	BLACKBURN	£7.30
174	DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL	£7.30
175	KINGSTON-UPON-HULL	£7.30
176	NORTH DEVON	£7.30
177	NORTH KESTEVEN	£7.30
178	NORWICH	£7.30
179	SOUTH CAMBRIDGE	£7.30
180	VALE OF GLAMORGAN	£7.30
181	MORAY	£7.26
182	TEIGNBRIDGE	£7.26
183	NUNEATON & BEDWORTH	£7.25
184	PERTH & KINROSS	£7.25
185	CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE	£7.25
186	BASILDON	£7.20
187	CASTLE POINT	£7.20
188	DERBY	£7.20
189	FAREHAM	£7.20
190	HAVANT	£7.20
191	LUTON	£7.20
192	NORTH WARWICK	£7.20
193	SUNDERLAND	£7.20
194	SOUTH LAKELAND	£7.20
195	WEST NORTHANTS	£7.20
196	CHESTERFIELD	£7.16
197	TAMWORTH	£7.14
198	ARGYLL & BUTE	£7.13
199	CANNOCK CHASE	£7.10
200	COTSWOLD	£7.10
201	CRAWLEY	£7.10
202	DOVER	£7.10
203	HIGHLAND	£7.10
204	ISLE OF WIGHT	£7.10
205	OLDHAM	£7.10
206	RUGBY	£7.10
207	HARBOROUGH	£7.09
208	ABERDEENSHIRE	£7.06
209	BABERGH	£7.00
210	BROMSGROVE	£7.00
211	CARLISLE	£7.00

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
212	CARMARTHENSHIRE	£7.00
213	INVERCLYDE	£7.00
214	MACCLESFIELD	£7.00
215	NEWPORT	£7.00
216	PEMBROKESHIRE	£7.00
217	SWANSEA	£7.00
218	WELWYN HATFIELD	£7.00
219	COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR	£7.00
220	SANDWELL	£6.92
221	BURY	£6.90
222	CLYDEBANK	£6.90
223	FYLDE	£6.90
224	NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME	£6.90
225	EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE	£6.90
226	WORCESTER CITY	£6.90
227	ABERDEEN CITY	£6.80
228	BARROW IN FURNESS	£6.80
229	BLACKPOOL	£6.80
230	BOSTON	£6.80
231	BRIDGEND	£6.80
232	BROXTOWE	£6.80
233	CEREDIGION	£6.80
234	EAST STAFFORDSHIRE	£6.80
235	EAST SUFFOLK (SOUTH)	£6.80
236	EDEN	£6.80
237	ELLESMERE PORT	£6.80
238	MANSFIELD	£6.80
239	MID DEVON	£6.80
240	NORTH NORFOLK	£6.80
241	NORTH NORTHANTS	£6.80
242	SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE	£6.80
243	TENDRING	£6.80
244	TRAFFORD	£6.80
245	WIGAN	£6.80
246	WOLVERHAMPTON	£6.80
247	CHARNWOOD	£6.75
248	WALSALL	£6.75
249	MALVERN HILLS	£6.72
250	BLABY	£6.70
251	CONGLETON	£6.70
252	OADBY & WIGSTON	£6.70
253	ROTHERHAM	£6.70
254	STIRLING	£6.70
255	DUDLEY	£6.60
256	FOLKESTONE & HYTHE	£6.60
257	KNOWSLEY	£6.60
258	LANCASTER	£6.60
259	NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE	£6.60
260	S. LANARKSHIRE (E. KILBRIDE)	£6.60
261	SOUTH TYNESIDE	£6.60
262	ST HELENS	£6.60
263	WAKEFIELD	£6.60
264	BASSETLAW	£6.50
265	CALDERDALE	£6.50
266	DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY	£6.50
267	EREWASH	£6.50
268	GEDLING	£6.50
269	HALTON	£6.50
270	ROSSENDALE	£6.50
271	SEFTON	£6.80
272	TORFAEN	£6.50
273	DONCASTER	£6.48
274	HYNDBURN	£6.42
275	BLAENAU GWENT	£6.40
276	COUNTY OF HEREFORD	£6.40

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
277	CREWE & NANTWICH	£6.40
278	DERBYSHIRE DALES	£6.40
279	NORTH AYRSHIRE	£6.40
280	NORTHUMBERLAND	£6.40
281	SALFORD	£6.40
282	WEST LINDSEY	£6.40
283	EAST RIDING	£6.35
284	WARRINGTON	£6.35
285	ANGLESEY	£6.30
286	BARNSELY	£6.30
287	DARLINGTON	£6.30
288	GATESHEAD	£6.30
289	SOUTH HOLLAND	£6.30
290	SOUTH RIBBLE	£6.30
291	REDDITCH	£6.25
292	CHORLEY	£6.20
293	COPELAND	£6.20
294	FALKIRK	£6.20
295	FENLAND	£6.20
296	NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE	£6.20
297	S. LANARKSHIRE (HAMILTON)	£6.20
298	WYCHAVON	£6.20
299	WYRE FOREST	£6.14
300	BRADFORD	£6.10
301	NEATH PORT TALBOT	£6.10
302	S. LANARKSHIRE (CLYDESDALE)	£6.10
303	NORTHERN IRELAND	£6.06
304	ALLERDALE	£6.00
305	BOLTON	£6.00
306	GWYNEDD	£6.00
307	KIRKLEES	£6.00
308	NORTH WEST LEICESTER	£6.00
309	PETERBOROUGH	£6.00
310	POWYS	£6.00
311	PRESTON	£6.00
312	RHONDDA CYNON TAFF	£6.00
313	TELFORD & WREKIN	£6.00
314	THURROCK	£6.00
315	HARTLEPOOL	£5.90
316	NORTH LANARKSHIRE	£5.90
317	STOKE-ON-TRENT	£5.90
318	VALE ROYAL	£5.90
319	AMBER VALLEY	£5.80
320	FLINTSHIRE	£5.80
321	LICHFIELD	£5.80
322	MERTHYR TYDFIL	£5.80
323	NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE	£5.75
324	CAERPHILLY	£5.70
325	STOCKTON ON TEES	£5.70
326	ASHFIELD	£5.60
327	MIDDLESBROUGH	£5.60
328	WREXHAM	£5.60
329	PENDLE	£5.50
330	REDCAR & CLEVELAND	£5.50
331	ROCHDALE	£5.50
332	SOUTH KESTEVEN	£5.30
333	STAFFS MOORLANDS	£5.20
334	WEST LANCASHIRE	£5.20
335	CHERWELL	£5.08
336	BURNLEY	£5.00
337	BOLSOVER	£4.60
338	MALDON	N.S.F.
339	RUTLAND	N.S.F.
340	SOUTH DERBYSHIRE	N.S.F.
341	WEST DEVON	N.S.F.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

NEW ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY

On 7 January, the Government announced its landmark Road Safety Strategy, outlining several proposed changes to road traffic laws with the overall aim of reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on roads in Great Britain by 65 per cent.

This has been described as the biggest change to Britain's traffic laws in decades. However, it is important to note that at this stage nothing has been confirmed. The Government consultation period runs until at least March, and even after that, before any proposals become law, there will need to be debates, re-drafts, and further discussion – all of which take time.

That said, what we do know is that at some point in the near future many of the proposals below, if not all, are likely to become law.

To achieve its aims, the Government has identified four key areas: Supporting Road Users; Technology, Data and Innovation; Safe Infrastructure; and Tougher Enforcement. Below, we examine the main points within each area that drivers need to be aware of. In particular, the first and fourth areas are likely to bring about the most significant changes for road users and professional drivers.

1. Supporting road users

This area focuses on education and *“lifelong learning”* to ensure that all road users are competent and responsible.

New drivers: the Government is consulting on the introduction of a minimum learning period for new drivers to help them develop skills in a variety of conditions. This could involve a mandatory 3 - 6 month gap between the theory and practical tests, allowing drivers more time to build experience, together with requirements to learn to drive in different conditions before taking the practical test.

Older drivers: there are proposals for mandatory eyesight testing every three years for drivers aged over 70, with failure resulting in refusal of a driving licence.

2. Technology, data & innovation

This part of the strategy emphasises the use of data and technology to predict risk and to prevent incidents before they happen.

It focuses primarily on vehicle manufacturing rather than new traffic laws and outlines the potential introduction of up to 18 new safety technologies, such as intelligent speed assistance and autonomous emergency braking, which will be mandatory for all new vehicles.

3. Safe infrastructure

This pillar aims to design roads that are more *“forgiving”* of human error and that prioritise vulnerable road users. There is relatively little here for drivers to be concerned about, as the focus is largely on road and junction design rather than changes to traffic law. Instead, it proposes updating design manuals to reflect modern research, including collision risks at crossings and roundabouts.

4. Tougher enforcement

This is the area where the most significant changes are likely to affect everyday driving.

Lowering the drink-drive limit

There is no definitive proposal yet, but it is likely that the drink-drive limit will be lowered to 22 micrograms of alcohol per 100ml of breath. The current limit is 35 micrograms, which - depending on factors such as sex, height, weight, and metabolism - equates to around two units of alcohol. Lowering the limit to 22 would reduce this to approximately one unit and bring England and Wales in line with Scotland. There is also a suggestion that the limit could be reduced even further, potentially to 10 micrograms, for drivers within the first two years of passing their test.

Reviewing penalties for drink and drug driving

While there is no confirmation of what will change, the strategy suggests a consultation on whether minimum sentences should be increased. Currently, a

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

conviction for drink or drug driving carries a mandatory minimum 12-month disqualification, sometimes reducible by up to a quarter for completing a course. Whether this minimum period will be increased remains to be seen.

Alcohol interlock devices

The strategy explores the introduction of sentences for drink drivers requiring the mandatory installation of alcohol interlock devices, which require a driver to provide a breath sample before the vehicle will start. These are already used in parts of Europe, particularly France.

Suspending licences pending proceedings

The Government is considering new powers to suspend licences for those charged with drink or drug driving, pending their first court hearing, as well as for those under investigation for drink or drug driving causing serious injury or death. Currently, neither the police nor the courts have the power to impose an immediate disqualification pending a charge, meaning that someone may continue driving for months or even years while under investigation. Such measures would undoubtedly be controversial, particularly for those wrongly accused, as they could result in the loss of licences for months/years – and therefore the loss livelihoods and homes – before guilt is proven. And if those people then have charges dropped, or are acquitted at trial, we will see countless lives ruined for nothing.

Drug-driving evidence collection

At present, suspected drug drivers must be taken to a police station where a blood sample is taken by a healthcare professional and sent to a laboratory for analysis. This process is complex, time-consuming, expensive, and regularly sees cases take months to get to court. The Government is exploring alternative technologies to streamline and speed up this process.

Seat belt offences

There are proposals to introduce penalty points for failing to wear a seat belt. Currently, this offence carries a fine only. The Government is considering introducing three penalty points for drivers who fail to wear a seat belt and for drivers who fail to ensure that child passengers are properly restrained.

There is no mention of changing existing exemptions, so it is hoped these will remain in place.

Failing to stop or report collisions

Currently, failing to stop at the scene of an accident or failing to report an accident carries between 5 and 10 penalty points, with disqualification or imprisonment reserved for only the most serious cases involving severe injury. The strategy lacks detail on whether new laws will be introduced or whether enforcement of existing laws will simply be strengthened, but it clearly signals a tougher approach to drivers who leave the scene without exchanging details.

Unlicensed, uninsured, or unroadworthy driving

Driving without a licence currently carries 3–6 penalty points, driving without insurance 6–8 points, and driving without an MOT carries no penalty points at all (just a fine). While specific changes have not been confirmed, the strategy suggests tougher enforcement and potentially harsher penalties for those who drive unlicensed, uninsured, or without a valid MOT.

Illegal and 'ghost' number plates

The use of illegal and so-called “ghost” number plates – plates that appear normal but disappear when photographed – is becoming increasingly common. At present, enforcement is limited to offences such as using a defective number plate, which carries a fine only, or more general criminal offences such as fraud/perverting the course of justice. The Government is considering introducing specific offences targeting illegal and ghost number plates, with tough penalties.

As you will see, there are potentially a large number of new offences and procedures being proposed. The precise details and implementation timelines remain unclear, but many of these measures are likely to be introduced within the next year or two.

As always at Patterson Law, we will continue to monitor developments closely and update **PHTM** readers as more information becomes available.

If you need any advice on motoring matters, email advice@pattersonlaw.co.uk or call 01626 359800 for free legal advice.

PattersonLaw
THE DRIVER DEFENCE SERVICE

from Italy



ITALIAN TAXI STRIKE TURNS VIOLENT AS DRIVERS CLASH WITH POLITICIAN

A nationwide taxi strike paralysed major Italian cities on January 13, as thousands of drivers protested against multi-national ride-



hailing apps in a demonstration that descended into violence outside the national parliament.

Eighteen unions coordinated the 14-hour walkout, demanding tighter regulations on platforms such as Uber. The protest, which snarled mobility from Milan to Naples, saw a massive convoy travel from Rome's Fiumicino Airport to a sit-in near the seats of government at Palazzo Montecitorio.

The atmosphere in the capital turned hostile when Matteo Hallissey, the 22-year-old president of the liberal +Europa party, arrived at the protest carrying a sign that read "No more lobbying." In a provocative move, Hallissey held up a POS card machine - a reference to frequent complaints that Italian drivers refuse electronic payments to avoid taxes.

The gesture sparked a "wave of insults and threats" from the crowd, who threw smoke bombs and chanted "Uber, Uber, F**k off." Hallissey was forced to flee as the situation escalated. "They chased us across the piazza and attempted to outrun the police to reach us, spitting and kicking," Hallissey told reporters, describing the taxi sector as a "25,000-strong lobby." Union leaders argue that the "aggressive entry" of digital platforms threatens the traditional regulated taxi industry. Nicola Di Giacobbe, coordinator of the Unica Taxi Filt Cgil union, warned that the current system is being challenged by "platforms driven by algorithms and profit-driven logic."

The unions are demanding:

- Stricter licence enforcement and "geofencing" to prevent out-of-town pickups.
- "Clear rules for digital platforms, preventing the excessive power of algorithms."
- Caps on dynamic pricing to protect the model of "rates set by the municipality."

The protest follows months of friction over a draft

mobility law aimed at liberalising the sector, a move unions claim would undermine "safety obligations and specific responsibilities towards users."

The tension shows no sign of cooling. If the Ministry of Transport fails to reach an agreement with union representatives, organisers have threatened "rolling 24-hour stoppages during the February fashion-show season," a move that could devastate Italy's luxury and tourism sectors during a critical trade period.

In response to the day's chaos, Transport Minister Matteo Salvini has moved to convene an emergency meeting with sector representatives to prevent further escalation.

from Australia



MELBOURNE BARTENDER WAGES WAR AGAINST 'DODGY' CABBIE

A Melbourne bartender has ignited a fierce discussion on transport ethics after admitting to sending a taxi driver on "wild goose chases" in retaliation for alleged price-gouging and harassment.

The dispute began when a 13cabs driver reportedly "refused to use the meter," demanding \$40 for a trip that typically costs half that amount. When the worker refused, he claims the driver began sabotaging his future transport by repeatedly accepting and cancelling his bookings. Frustrated by the "scam," the bartender used false names to lure the driver to locations, only to cancel upon his arrival, noting it was "entertaining nonetheless."

The conflict escalated into "verbally abusing and threatening" phone calls. While 13cabs eventually banned the bartender, he argues there must be "better systems in place to protect their customers" from predatory pricing.

In response, 13cabs emphasised that "using the meter is not optional" and stated they have "zero tolerance for drivers working off the meter." The company is now lobbying for technology that locks payment terminals to the meter, ensuring "the driver can only charge what the meter records."

To combat such misconduct, the Victorian Government is implementing a "two-strikes policy." Under these new regulations, drivers who commit two serious fare-related offences will "lose their accreditation," providing a formal pathway to remove those who engage in illegal fare negotiation.

WORLDWIDE TAXI FOCUS

from Greece



FRESH STRIKES BY GREEK CABBIES AS DISPUTE OVER REFORMS ESCALATES

Commuters and travellers in Greece's major hubs faced significant transport disruptions last month as taxi drivers launched a new wave of strike action



protesting a controversial government bill.

Following a three-day walkout the previous week, the Attica Taxi Drivers' Union (SATA) initiated a new 48-hour strike on January 20 and 21. Drivers in Thessaloniki joined the fray with a 24-hour stoppage starting Wednesday at 5am, paralysing taxi services in the country's two largest cities.

The dispute centres on a series of transport reforms, including a mandate for electric vehicles and new tax policies. In a strongly worded statement, the union accused the Transport Ministry of refusing dialogue and "imposing policies without consultation." Union leaders have described the strikes as a necessary "road of resistance" against what they see as the "steady erosion of their profession and rushed lawmaking that ignores their concerns."

Taxi operators are pushing back against several government measures, calling for:

- A gradual shift to EVs rather than a "forced transition."
- A clear regulatory framework to distinguish traditional taxis from private hire cars.
- Curbing "unfair competition from multinational transport platforms."
- Permanent access to dedicated bus lanes for taxis carrying passengers.
- The abolition of "presumptive taxation" practices they consider excessive.

In Athens, striking drivers gathered for a mass briefing at the Peristeri Exhibition Centre on Tuesday morning. Meanwhile, in Thessaloniki, the city's taxi association took a unanimous decision to strike, planning a vehicle convoy to the airport and regional government offices to draw attention to their plight. Union representatives warned that the industry "will not remain silent," signalling that further protests could follow if the government fails to offer concrete changes.

from South Africa



UNLICENSED DRIVER ARRESTED AFTER CRASH CLAIMS 12 YOUNG LIVES

A community in Gauteng is mourning the loss of 12 learners following a catastrophic collision on Monday morning, 19 January, that has exposed a "serious failure" in school transport safety.



The tragedy occurred on the R553 when a minibus taxi, ferrying children to school, collided with a side tipper truck. While the investigation is ongoing, the Gauteng Department of Transport has revealed a damning preliminary finding: the driver behind the wheel did not hold a valid licence to operate the vehicle.

The scene on Monday was one of utter devastation. Police have since confirmed that "twelve learners died at the scene of the crash." As families begin the agonising process of preparing for funerals, emergency workers and chaplains have been deployed to assist parents with the harrowing task of identifying their children.

Gauteng Department of Health spokesperson Lesiba Mpya noted that while the findings are preliminary, the taxi itself may not have been properly registered to transport students. "Police investigations are ongoing and final details will be shared once everything is confirmed," Mpya stated.

The driver of the minibus taxi was arrested on Tuesday immediately following his discharge from the hospital. According to Lieutenant Colonel Mavela Masondo, the driver is expected to appear before the Vanderbijlpark Magistrates' Court. He faces a staggering legal battle, including "twelve counts of culpable homicide and reckless and negligent driving."

While five learners were initially hospitalised, medical staff confirmed some children have already been discharged to their families.

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has reacted with outrage, stating that this tragedy highlights systemic issues within the industry. The organisation is now calling for "stricter checks and stronger enforcement to protect children travelling to school" to ensure that such a preventable disaster never happens again.

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THE COCKEREL TO CROW AGAIN AS FRANCE AIMING TO RETAIN THEIR COURONNE (CROWN)

In a sport where home field advantage (sounds American?) is critical, this year's Six Nations, surely the most respected Rugby Union tournament in the world, will be retained by **FRANCE**, who this year, not only play three of their five matches at home, but also host Ireland and England, arguably their two toughest opponents in Paris.



The Six Nations begins next week, on Thursday 5 February, so get on early and take the 4/5 on offer. I appreciate the price is skinny but to me it is an absolute shoo-in.

In a great night for sports fans, the Premier League darts begins in Newcastle and this year it looks a block busting tournament with only Gary Anderson and Nathan Aspinall missing out.

The new kid on the block (no not the Nuke) but **GIAN VAN VEEN** can strike a blow for the Dutch and is offered a sporting bet at a tempting 7/1. He should qualify for finals night at the O2 and is a big stage player. Obviously Littler is the most likely winner and 4/5 is not too skinny for the same reasons as above, so I would not put anyone off the rugby/darts double at 9/4.

But, there is also a market on who comes last, and I would put up debutante **JOSH ROCK** at a universal 12/1 for small stakes.

SUPERBOWL

Superbowl 60 climaxes this Sunday and followers of this column will know I was sweet on **SEATTLE** to take Vince home (Lombardi) and the 7/2 advised is long gone, but the above double, if combined/extended to a treble with the Seahawks enhances the 9/4 to 4/1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

The order has now been finalised for the knockout stages of the Champions League, with the top 8 at a greater advantage over clubs 9-24 in the rankings by virtue of playing one knockout round less.

It goes further - clubs that have qualified 1-4 not only have the advantage of playing the lowest ranked surviving club from the knockout last 24 round, but also have a further advantage of playing the second leg at home, and now that there is no away goals rule, extra time after a full 180 minutes favours the home team. Cappiche?

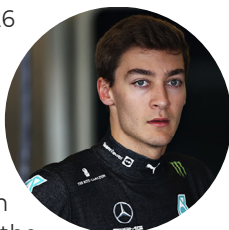
That said the all powerful **FC HOLLYWOOD (Bayern Munich)** look excellent value at 5/1 to give us a good run for our money.



Those more patriotic, can back the winner coming from any of the six English teams at a shade of odds against (11/10) with Bet Victor. Not for me though, but just saying. A decent bet, but not enough dragons!

FORMULA ONE

In little over a month the 2026 Formula One season gets underway in Australia. It only seems like November since the last one finished! Hold on, it was!! But it's all changed because new regulations mean that the Papaya will not have the best car or the best driver this year, at least at the start, and the Silver Arrows are widely tipped to re-establish their dominance. For the less enthusiastic or knowledgeable, that's Toto Wolff and **MERCEDES**. One driver who outperformed his car last year was **GEORGE RUSSELL** and in what could be a seismic year, take Russell to win the drivers' crown at a juicy 11/4. They are available for the Constructors Championship at a tempting 13/8.



So until next month.....where I will be focusing on Cheltenham and the Festival....



Good punting

Bernie the Book



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