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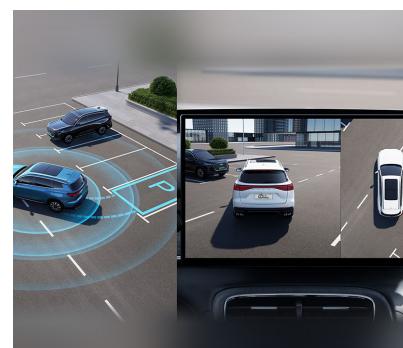
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NPHTA: THE YEAR AHEAD

OUT WITH THE OLD – IN WITH THE NEW WHAT ARE WE HOPING FOR IN 2026?

Article by Dave Lawrie,
Director NPHTA
info@nphta.co.uk



As 2025 drew to a close, the taxi and private hire industry was left reflecting on a year dominated by VAT, legal rulings, policy debate and widespread misunderstanding - and asking a single pressing question: what happens next?

VAT on private hire fares

Thankfully following two successful court cases, the autumn budget and the long-awaited government response to the VAT consultation on private hire fares, there was welcome relief across much of the sector.

No change for the majority of operators who use the agency model for cash fares, although greater clarity is still needed for traditional, small-to-medium size London operators; also no change for private hire drivers themselves and the standard 20% VAT rate continues to apply to fares charged by VAT-registered businesses.

However, from 1 January 2026, PHV operators, such as the ride-hailing platforms, will no longer be permitted to use the Tour Operator Margin Scheme (TOMS) when accounting for VAT.

We eagerly await to see how the government's decision will reshape the competitive landscape for all our industry.....

Policy discussions and devolution

Meanwhile the **NPHTA** has been actively engaged in the Transport Select Committee inquiry, covering licensing reform, cross-border working (or predominant out-of-area use), national standards, service provision and enforcement; and we look forward to reading the inquiry report and its recommendations which we hope will be published by March 2026.

At the same time, the Devolution White Paper continues its passage through Parliament, having completed its third reading in the Commons and its second in the House of Lords.

It is important to understand what devolution actually means for our industry. The vast majority of the legislation relates to wider local authority functions - planning, education, social care, policing, highways and leisure services. Taxi and private hire licensing occupies only a small section.

The hope within the trade is that devolution will deliver genuine efficiencies: reduced costs passed on to licence holders, faster and more consistent application processing, and critically - improved enforcement.

That enforcement must be meaningful. It must address unlawful plying for hire by private hire vehicles, the illegal occupation of taxi ranks, and the growing problem of abuse and false allegations against licensed drivers.

The Casey Report and cross-border working

The national rollout of the Casey Report, originally published in 2012 following events in Rotherham, has added further momentum to calls for licensing reform. This updated version includes 12 recommendations, only one of which makes reference to the taxi and private hire sector.

Within that single reference, it is claimed that cross-border working is the core issue and that it stems from the Deregulation Act 2015. This is factually incorrect as the Act was introduced three years after the original report was published. Despite this factual error, the report has been debated in both Parliament and the House of Lords, with a clear commitment to adopt all recommendations - including ending cross-border hiring.

That sounds great and the intention is welcome, but the critical question remains: how will it be achieved?

Will national standards fix cross-border working?

The short answer is no.

National standards alone will not prevent licensing "*shopping around*". A simple analogy explains why. A jar of Nescafe coffee is the same product wherever you buy it in the UK, but price differences mean you might buy it from ASDA one week and Tesco the next. That is basic economics - and licensing is no different.

NPHTA: THE YEAR AHEAD

As long as costs, efficiency and enforcement vary, operators and drivers will continue to gravitate towards the cheapest and least efficient authorities. Standardisation without addressing cost and processing structures will not solve the problem.

Will unitary authorities end cross-border working?

Again, no.

In fact, creating larger unitary authorities may simply result in even bigger operating areas - including for hackney carriage drivers, who would then be able to ply for hire across vast regions. Unless existing licensing zones are retained (which has not yet been confirmed), this risks making the problem worse rather than better with concentration of vehicles in high-demand areas and little availability in quieter areas

What about enforcing Section 75(1)(a) of the LGMPA 1976?

On its own, this will not work either.

Reliance on Section 75(1)(a) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 is equally unrealistic. This provision has existed for over 50 years and has never been properly enforced. If authorities already struggle to enforce unlawful parking on taxi ranks, expecting this section alone to resolve cross-border working without additional support and mechanisms is optimistic at best.

A cap on private hire numbers?

Once again, the answer is no.

Even for hackney carriages, caps can only be imposed following an independent unmet demand survey, as set out in the Deregulation Act 2010. Extending this to private hire is neither practical nor lawful under the current framework and if it is considered, the same costly and complex survey requirements apply.

Intended use policies – a proven solution

Intended use policies currently apply only to hackney carriage licensing, but where they are in place, enforcement is relatively straightforward because it is evidence-based.

There is no fixed percentage or time period. Enforcement is not routine or habitual and does not require officers to trawl through booking records at every renewal. Investigations only occur when reports are received. No reports means no investigation.

When evidence shows that the majority of work is being carried out outside the licensing area, action can

be taken not only against the licence itself, but also through prosecution for making a false declaration to obtain a licence - a matter of fraud

This approach supports and reinforces Section 75 1(a) and provides a realistic, enforceable framework. Expanding intended use policies to all licence types would significantly reduce area flooding and out-of-town predominant use.

The NPHTA dream list

As our industry looks ahead, I believe the priorities are clear:

- Extend intended use policies to all licence types
- Reduce flooding of areas and out-of-town predominant use
- Introduce a minimum per-mile rate for private hire drivers, tackling unsustainably low fares which will reduce the number of trip rejections and flooding of vehicles in busy areas
- Implement national standards to remove excessive variation between local authority conditions
- Retain existing licensing zones within any new unitary structures to protect local service provision
- Deliver real enforcement, not just legislative headlines

Above all, the trade needs a licensing system that is fair, affordable, enforceable and proportionate - one that protects operators, drivers, passengers and the integrity of the licensing regime itself.

Without meaningful reform, regulation will continue to erode, oversight will weaken, and the industry will be left fragmented and vulnerable.

Change is not optional, change is urgently needed

And we need it now!

Watch out for consultations, engage with them, and make your voice heard. Otherwise, the industry risks waking up too late, wondering what went wrong and how it could have been prevented.

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HMRC'S VAT CONSULTATION: A POLICY BUILT FOR PLATFORMS, NOT THE PRIVATE HIRE TRADE

Article by Gary Jacobs
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The Government's recent Budget and HMRC consultation on VAT and private hire services has sent a clear message to the largest ride-hailing platforms - but a far less clear one to the rest of the industry.

By removing access to the Tour Operators' Margin Scheme (TOMS) for ride-hailers such as Uber and Bolt, HMRC has confirmed what many suspected: that it now sees these businesses as principals in the supply of transport rather than mere intermediaries. At the same time, the consultation briefly acknowledges that VAT applies to private hire fares in London following the Supreme Court decision in *Uber v Aslam*, the subsequent *Uber v ADCU* case, and the later *Sefton* ruling.

What is striking, however, is not what the consultation says - but what it fails to address.

A policy built around Uber

The consultation reads as though it has been written almost exclusively with multinational app-based operators in mind. Uber and Bolt are name-checked, their operating models clearly understood, and their legal position effectively accepted as the benchmark.

That approach ignores a fundamental reality of the UK private hire market: the vast majority of London's 1,300+ licensed operators do not operate like Uber.

Outside London in particular, most operators act as agents. They introduce passengers to self-employed drivers, take bookings, and in many cases never touch the fare at all. The contract for transport is between the passenger and the driver. The operator's income is a booking fee or weekly rent, not the fare itself.

Yet HMRC's consultation makes little attempt to grapple with this distinction. By focusing on the high-profile court rulings involving Uber, it risks imposing a tax framework designed for platform giants onto small and medium-sized operators, who operate under very different commercial and legal structures.

The London problem – and the Sefton ripple effect

The situation is further complicated by the position in London.

Following *Uber v ADCU*, Transport for London made clear that operators licensed in the capital are responsible for the provision of the journey. The later *Sefton* case reinforced the view that where an operator accepts a booking, it is the principal in the supply of transport.

HMRC has taken this as confirmation that VAT is due on private hire fares in London.

What has not been properly addressed is how far that interpretation extends beyond London, or how it applies in cases where:

- the driver sets or collects the fare
- payment is made in cash
- the operator never receives the fare
- or the operator's terms explicitly define them as an agent

For many operators, particularly outside TfL licensing, the suggestion that they are now liable for VAT on the full fare is not just unclear - it is commercially existential.

The unanswered question: cash fares

Perhaps the most glaring omission in HMRC's response is the treatment of cash.

Thousands of private hire drivers, even in London, still accept cash payments. In these cases, the operator may never see the money, never process it, and never have visibility of the final fare beyond what is recorded for licensing or dispatch purposes.

If VAT is to be charged on the full fare:

- who accounts for it?
- how is it calculated?
- how is it enforced?
- and how does an operator remit VAT on money it never receives?

TAXING MATTERS

The consultation offers no practical answer. This is not a technical detail - it goes to the heart of whether the proposed approach is workable at all.

Without clarity, operators face the risk of being held liable for tax they cannot collect, on income they never received, in respect of transactions they did not control.

A two-tier industry in the making

The combined effect of these changes risks creating a two-tier private hire market.

Large platforms with:

- centralised payment systems
- in-app fare control
- sophisticated tax teams
- and the ability to restructure quickly

can adapt.

Smaller operators - often family businesses serving local communities - cannot.

For many of them, absorbing 20% VAT on the fare is not commercially viable. Passing it on to passengers risks pricing them out of the market. And restructuring overnight is neither simple nor cheap.

The danger is that well-intentioned tax reform ends up accelerating consolidation in the sector, pushing independent operators out while strengthening the market position of the very platforms that the policy was supposedly designed to regulate.

What can operators do?

While clarity from HMRC is still lacking, there are steps operators can at least consider.

1. Reviewing licensing arrangements

Some operators are already exploring licensing outside Transport for London, where the regulatory framework does not automatically treat the operator as the principal.

While this is not a universal solution, it may provide greater flexibility in how services are structured and how VAT liability is assessed. Any such move must, of course, comply fully with local authority licensing rules.

2. Re-establishing the agency model

Uber's own response to adverse rulings is instructive. Following the Supreme Court decision, Uber

restructured its model to emphasise its role as a booking agent rather than a transport provider - with drivers contracting directly with passengers and Uber charging a service fee.

Smaller operators may need to consider similar steps:

- clearer contractual terms
- transparent agency relationships
- explicit separation between fare and commission
- and robust documentation showing the operator does not supply the journey

While this does not guarantee immunity from HMRC challenge, it strengthens the argument that VAT should apply only to the operator's commission, not the full fare.

3. Reviewing payment flows

Operators may also need to reconsider how payments are taken.

If the operator processes card payments, HMRC is more likely to argue that it controls the supply. Where payment flows directly to the driver, the argument for agency is stronger - though still not settled.

Clear audit trails, driver agreements, and passenger terms will become increasingly important.

The need for clarity - and consultation that listens

The private hire sector is not asking for special treatment. It is asking for clarity, consistency and recognition of how the industry actually operates.

HMRC's current approach appears to assume that what works for Uber works for everyone. It does not.

Without clearer guidance, the industry faces years of uncertainty, inconsistent enforcement, and potentially damaging retrospective claims. For smaller operators in particular, this is not an abstract policy debate - it is an existential one.

If the government wants a fair, compliant and competitive private hire market, it must engage properly with the full breadth of the industry, not just its biggest players.

Until then, operators are left navigating a VAT landscape that feels increasingly shaped by case law, not common sense.

WHEN IS A TAXI NOT A TAXI?

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A HCV AND PHV LICENCE IN ENGLAND AND WALES

We are seeing an increasing number of private hire drivers breaking their licensing conditions by:

- sitting on taxi ranks
- plying for hire
- asking within Whatsapp groups if can they offer a price for a job

These may be new drivers who are making mistakes as they are confused or unaware of what all the licensing conditions mean OR it may be drivers intentionally breaking the rules because they just don't care - let's hope it's the former.

David Lawrie, Director **NPHTA**, clearly explains the differences between the two types of driver licences. There are two very different licence types - private hire and hackney carriage - whilst BOTH transport the public for hire and reward, the law restricts how they work in a regulated way.

Private hire

- According to licensing rules these are **NOT** taxis
- PHVs do **NOT** need to have a taximeter installed
- **CANNOT** make use of taxi ranks - anywhere
- **CANNOT** ply for hire - anywhere
- **CANNOT** have a top light
- **CANNOT** accept their own bookings or offer quotes
- **CANNOT** pick up jobs that are not pre-booked
- **MUST ONLY** receive jobs from a private hire operator that is licensed by the same council that issued their private hire badge and plates - triple lock rule
- Their fares are set by the private hire operator
- Are **ONLY** exempt from wearing a seatbelt whilst actively carrying passengers

Hackney carriage

- According to licensing rules these **ARE** taxis
- Hackney carriage vehicles are fitted with a taximeter to calculate the fare according to distance travelled
- **CAN** sit on a taxi rank within their licensing or 'controlled' district to wait for the next passenger
- **CAN** be flagged down whilst they are within their licensing or 'controlled' district by the public when they are passing without passengers on board
- **CAN** accept their own bookings from any source including any licensed taxi or private hire operator

- **MUST** have a top light
- **MUST** have a taximeter fitted that is calibrated to the council set tariffs
- Their fares are regulated by the licensing authority that issues their licence
- Are **NOT** subject to the triple lock rule
- Are **EXEMPT** from wearing a seatbelt at all times when on duty - including travelling to a pick up a fare

Dual badge

- A driver can have a dual badge - both hackney and private hire **BUT** the vehicle **CANNOT** be dual plated
- So if driving a hackney carriage you can make use of ranks etc. and act as a taxi driver
- But if driving a private hire vehicle you **CANNOT**

Taxi ranks

These are legally adopted and are the lawful waiting place for taxis. They are **ONLY** to be used by hackney carriages and are paid for out of hackney carriage licence fees **NOT** from private hire licence fees.

Private hire drivers caught sitting on ranks

- you risk being accused of plying for hire
- you could be fined
- you could get points from your licensing authority
- you could also have your private hire licence suspended or revoked

Private hire drivers caught plying for hire

If you ply for hire - you, your vehicle and your passengers are **NOT INSURED**

- you will be prosecuted in court for unlawful plying for hire and for no insurance - as your private hire insurance does not cover you acting as a taxi - big fines, court costs and points on your driving licence
- you could also have your private hire licence suspended or revoked

Be warned!!

Breaking your licensing conditions is serious and has consequences.

Please stick to the rules ... Don't take the risk, it simply isn't worth it....



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The 100% Cleaner Vehicle Discount (CVD) ended on 25 December 2025. From Friday 2 January 2026 private hire EVs have to pay the Congestion Charge when driving in central London during charging hours. PHVs will need to pay if you drive within the Congestion Charge zone during the following times: 7:00-18:00 Mon-Fri / 2:00-18:00 Sat-Sun and bank holidays.

The daily Congestion Charge is £18 if paid on the day of travel or in advance or £21 if paid within 3 days after travel.

There is a new 25% reduced daily charge for EVs registered on Auto Pay of £13.50. If your vehicle isn't registered for Auto Pay, the discounted charge will not apply.

How to get your CVD:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/auto-pay>

- Register for a London Road User Charging account
- Register for the Auto Pay service
- Ensure the vehicle you drive in the zone is added to your Auto Pay service
- There's no fee to set up Auto Pay or to add your vehicles.
- You don't need to apply separately for the CVD.

If you're already registered for Auto Pay and your vehicle details are correct, you don't need to do anything. Once your EV is on Auto Pay, we'll apply the discounted rate. You can add or remove vehicles by selecting: 'Manage

Auto Pay' when you're logged in to your account.

Private hire vehicles that are designated as WAVs will keep the exemption, but only when carrying out a private hire booking for a TfL-licensed private hire operator.

PHVs are designated as WAVs at the point of the vehicle licensing inspection, and this is noted on the vehicle licence.

Hackney carriages are exempt from paying the Congestion Charge when actively licensed by TfL. A vehicle will be removed from the register of exempt vehicles on the surrender, expiry or revocation of the licence.

Check TfL congestion charge zone: <https://shorturl.at/fyNXC>

DURHAM TAXI DRIVERS DEMAND ACCESS TO £8M UNSPENT NEWCASTLE CAZ GRANT CASH

Cabbies from outside the Tyne & Wear region are calling for a reversal of plans to close a grant scheme for cleaner vehicles, arguing they should be eligible for the remaining £8m of government funding.

Newcastle City Council recently announced that applications for CAZ upgrade grants, worth up to £16,000, will close on January 30. The scheme was designed to help switch high-polluting vehicles that incur the CAZ charge for compliant models. Despite issuing over 1,100 grants since 2022, approximately £8m of the original £15m provided by the Government is unspent.

This surplus cash is now expected to be redirected to help bus companies upgrade their fleets.

Members of the Durham Taxi & PH Association are pleading for the scheme to be opened to them, having been excluded thus far.

Currently, only cabbies in Newcastle, Gateshead, and North Tyneside have been eligible for up to £3,500 per vehicle. Non-compliant taxis from other areas face a £12.50 per day charge to drive into Newcastle city centre.

Mike Anderson, chair of the association, highlighted the financial pressure on drivers: "If you are taking a job from Durham into Newcastle and you aren't Euro 6 compliant, you're paying £12.50. "A lot of people have had to make arrangements to drop people off outside the CAZ area, or otherwise

you are having to add £12.50 to the passenger's bill. Either way, it makes it uncompetitive."

Mr Anderson, who wants the grants opened to taxis in Durham, South Tyneside, Sunderland, and Northumberland, expressed concern that the residual funds would benefit "the multi-million pound bus companies, not to the sole traders and small companies."

A spokesperson for Newcastle City Council defended the initial focus, stating: "Funding for taxis is targeted towards those most likely to be affected by the CAZ, including those who have no choice but to operate within the zone and those more likely to make regular journeys into the zone."



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PEOPLE STILL RUN TAXI FIRMS

YOU CAN'T DISPATCH YOUR WAY OUT OF A BAD SITUATION

Article by Rob Finlayson

Operations Manager

City Cars Glasgow

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The taxi and private hire trade has never had more technology available to it than it does today. Dispatch systems are faster, smarter and more automated than ever. Apps promise self-service for customers, real-time updates and minimal, if any, human involvement. Some even suggest that the ideal operation is one where nobody needs to speak to anyone at all.

On paper, it sounds efficient. In practice, it ignores how this industry actually works.

Traditional operators understand something that software-only companies don't quite grasp. Taxi operations are messy, unpredictable and deeply flawed, of if you prefer, human. No system, no matter how advanced or how much AI is layered on top, can fully account for real-world, live demand, driver behaviour, traffic conditions, weather and last-minute changes. When things go wrong, code doesn't take responsibility. People do.

Anyone who has worked as a controller knows the moment. The phone lines light up. A vehicle breaks down. A driver doesn't turn up. Demand spikes off the chart. The system is still running, but the plan of attack has already failed. At that point, automation stops being the solution and communication becomes the job.

Software-only dispatch models are excellent while everything is going to plan. Bookings flow through the platform, drivers accept jobs and customers follow the in-app notifications without question. Nobody needs reassurance. Nobody needs an explanation. The cracks appear the moment something deviates from the expected plan.

That's when customers need answers, not notifications. Drivers want context, not system messages. Operators need experience and judgement, not algorithms.

Traditional operators don't pretend problems don't exist; they manage them. That management starts

with communication. Setting expectations early. Explaining delays honestly. Owning decisions and mistakes rather than blaming the system. A late-running job explained before it goes late is an inconvenience. A late pickup discovered after the fact is a complaint waiting to happen.

Drivers, in particular, feel the difference in algorithm-led environments. Too often they are treated as just another system input, availability on or off, job accepted or rejected. When conditions change, they are expected to adapt without explanation. Over time, that erodes trust. Drivers disengage not because the work isn't there, but because they feel like passengers while someone else takes the wheel.

Traditional operators know drivers aren't just a commodity; they are partners in delivering the service. When demand is heavy, priorities shift or difficult calls have to be made, talking to drivers matters. Explaining why something is happening builds cooperation and trust. Ignoring them builds resistance and apathy.

Technology should support that working relationship, not replace it. Dispatch systems should reduce workload, not remove accountability. Automated updates are useful, but they are not a substitute for picking up the phone when things go wrong. The best operations blend systems with experienced people, automation to lighten the load and grizzled controllers for when judgement is required.

Reputations in this industry are not built on slick interfaces or the latest feature release. They are built in difficult moments, when expectations aren't met and someone has to step in, explain and put things right. Customers remember whether they were informed. Drivers remember whether they were respected.

You can't dispatch your way around bad communication. You can't automate trust. You can't build a resilient business by pretending people are the problem.

The companies and operators who will last in this industry won't be the ones chasing full automation at any cost. They will be the ones who understand that technology is a tool, not a replacement, and that when things go wrong, proper, proper, human interaction still wins the day.

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COUNCIL CONCERNS

BASINGSTOKE COUNCIL TO PAY £270K+ FOR RACIAL DISCRIMINATION OF TWO BLACK PH DRIVERS

Basingstoke and Deane BC (BDBC) has been ordered to over £270,000 in compensation after an employment tribunal ruled that two black PH drivers were subjected to racial discrimination by council officers. The claimants, Miss Akinleye and Mr Olumade, pursued an employment tribunal against BDBC alleging sex discrimination, race discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

In November 2024, the tribunal found that BDBC licensing officers discriminated against the drivers "based on simple racial prejudice." The tribunal detailed a "sustained failure by BDBC at a senior level"

and two officers to "deal with serious and well-founded allegations of race discrimination and race harassment by other cabbies, plus sustained racist treatment of both claimants by council officers." The judgment stated:

- The council "constantly dismissed" the claimants' complaints and "sought instead to undermine and penalise them."
- Miss A and her husband were "unfairly" investigated for "baseless allegations," causing her to feel "anxious and fearful."
- Mr O "suffered severe stress when baseless allegations were made against him and when

[BDBC] treated him differently when investigating allegations."

- The tribunal accepted Miss A's evidence that she and her family suffered "emotional trauma and reputational harm as well as suffering financial hardship."

For emotional distress, both claimants were awarded £55,000, plus interest, as the discrimination "falls in the top part of the top band."

The total amounts awarded were:

- Miss O Akinleye: £122,929.52
- Mr A Olumade: £155,529.52

These payments cover injury to feeling, loss of earnings, aggravated damages, and future loss of earnings.

WAKEFIELD COUNCIL LICENSING OFFICER ACCUSES ELECTED MEMBERS OF BEING "CORRUPT"

A Wakefield council licensing officer has accused elected members of being "corrupt" as a reason for why they cannot make decisions on taxi licensing matters. Several members of the Wakefield taxi/PH trade were at the meeting and one was so angry and concerned at what was said, he has lodged the complaint below:

"Dear Chief Executive and Leader of the Wakefield MD Council
I'm writing to lodge a formal complaint and raise serious concerns about comments made by a senior officer during a recent meeting. As a vested stakeholder, namely a licensed driver, I attended the meeting on 27 October 2025 at Wakefield Townhall, where the officer in question verbally stated that 'elected members are corrupt'

in reference to why the members are not able to conduct committee hearings. He had stated, this was due to the national sexual grooming cases, specifically in Rotherham and Rochdale. This remark is deeply troubling and undermines the integrity of the local authority's democratic processes.

Such an allegation, made without evidence and in a professional setting not only casts unwarranted aspersions on the elected members but also erodes public confidence in the council's governance. It is unacceptable for a senior officer to make unsubstantiated claims that could be perceived as defamatory or politically motivated.

This behaviour falls short of the standards expected under the Nolan Principles of Public Life,

particularly those of integrity, objectivity and accountability.

I believe this incident warrants a thorough investigation to determine the intent behind the statement, as well as any potential breach of the authority's code of conduct or employment policies.

I kindly request that you:

- Initiate an immediate and impartial investigation
- Provide me with details of the investigative process & timeline
- Take appropriate disciplinary action if the complaint is upheld
- Ensure measures are put in place to prevent similar occurrences in the future

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Kind regards Mr Adil Hamid"

COUNCIL CONCERNS

REFORM COUNCILLOR FACES BACKLASH OVER BASSETLAW “DANGEROUS” CABBLE CLAIMS

A political firestorm has broken out in Bassetlaw as Cllr Fraser McFarland faces demands for an apology after labelling certain local taxi drivers as individuals with “dangerous criminal histories.”

The controversy follows data revealed by Bassetlaw DC in September 2024, showing over the past decade, 12 PH licences were granted to people with convictions for violent offences, and one for a sexual offence. Recent updates showed an additional two licences were granted to applicants with convictions within the last year.

Cllr McFarland, leader of the opposition for Reform, has used the figures to demand a full review of the licensing system. In a scathing assessment of the

findings, he stated: “That means at least 15 people with dangerous criminal histories have been approved to carry passengers. This is unacceptable. It is unsafe.”

McFarland argued that residents should not have to worry about a driver’s history of “violence or sexual offending,” describing the situation as a “serious failure of oversight and judgement.”

Bassetlaw DC has moved quickly to defend its vetting process, noting that of the 15 licences questioned, only five remain active. The council clarified these historical convictions occurred between 10 - 33 years ago.

Under current policy, the council maintains that no licence is granted to anyone with a sexual

offence conviction, nor to those with serious violent offences within the last 10 years.

A council spokesperson rebuked McFarland: “It’s important that Cllr McFarland’s comments do not undermine the wider Bassetlaw taxi industry and cast doubt over the legitimacy of all taxi drivers.”

The row has drawn in Bassetlaw’s Labour MP, Jo White, who characterised McFarland’s remarks as a “disgrace.”

Cllr McFarland later made the following statement on his Facebook page: “I will not apologise, regardless of pressure from Cllr Jo White MP. I will continue to call out failings at Bassetlaw DC and will always prioritise the safety of women and children.”

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IN THE NEWS

BOGUS CABBY JAILED FOR 20 MONTHS FOR ABDUCTING WOMAN IN STIRLING & SEXUAL ASSAULT

A man who posed as a taxi driver to abduct a 22-year-old woman near a Stirling nightclub and go on to sexually assault her has been sentenced to 20 months in prison. Mahmoud Kalawizada, 32, was convicted after a jury found him guilty of sexual assault and abduction, having offered "taxi services when not licensed as a taxi driver." Falkirk Sheriff Court heard that Kalawizada, described by social workers as a risk to women, parked his "unmarked BMW in a loading bay next to an official taxi rank"

near Fubar night-club around 1am on August 14, 2022. The victim thought his car was a taxi because of where it was waiting and got into the front seat after finding the rear doors "appeared to be locked." Instead of taking her home, Kalawizada drove her to Tillicoultry, demanding oral sex at one point to settle the fare. He eventually turned into a quiet, dark residential road, stopped and



locked the car. He stroked her hair, "tried to climb over the central console to straddle her," pulled up her skirt, and put his hand on her upper thigh.

The assault ended when the victim screamed and managed to get the door open and escape.

Sheriff Craig Harris told Kalawizada: "The case is serious, involving a high level of culpability. It involved both deception and breaching the trust the complainer placed in you thinking you were a legitimate taxi driver.

OXFORDSHIRE FIRM INVESTIGATED OVER SAFEGUARDING CONCERN ON SCHOOL ROUTES

Go Green Taxis, based in Didcot, has operated school transport routes across Abingdon, Bicester, Didcot, Henley, Oxford, Wallingford, Wantage, Witney, Newbury and Reading for over 15 years.

The company provides home-to-school transport on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), including for SEND children.

OCC has confirmed that Go Green Taxis has been temporarily replaced with an alternative provider while an investigation is carried out.

At least one parent has formally raised concerns with the council. Gemma Rodgerson, from Witney describes how her daughter, 15, who has autism and ADHD and an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), was left alone by a driver after being dropped off incorrectly. Ms Rodgerson said: "The driver drove off and left my daughter in Witney. As part of her EHCP, the

local authority provides home-to-school transport, and we had no contact to say what had happened. "When I rang the SEN transport department, I was told a taxi would be sent. But by that point she had been left outside on her own. It was dark and cold, around 4pm." She also alleged a driver was speeding after she tracked the vehicle on her phone, claiming it was doing 43mph in a 20mph zone. Ms Rodgerson also raised concerns about a message she says appeared on drivers' phones, warning: "Beware, passengers may have autism, ADHD or SEN needs. Why do you need to 'beware'?" she said. "They're not animals."

Ms Rodgerson criticised OCC's response, saying she felt ignored despite repeatedly raising safeguarding concerns: "We need change at the council. SEN parents want to work with the council, but

they just shut you off."

In a statement, a spokeswoman for Go Green Taxis said safeguarding was a "core priority" for the company: "We operate hundreds of routes each month and have done so for over 15 years. We respond promptly to any concerns, working with contracting authorities, schools, guardians and drivers to ensure the delivery of a safe and secure service."

An OCC spokesman said: "The safety and wellbeing of young people will always be our priority. We are aware of the allegations about Go Green Taxis Ltd and, as with any concerns raised about individuals or organisations, we are thoroughly investigating."

Editor's comment: Should all school contract vehicles have CCTV fitted to not only protect the children BUT also protect the drivers from false allegations?



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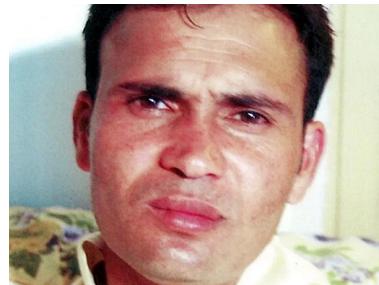
 **AUTOLOGICA**

IN THE NEWS

ARREST IN COLD CASE: MAN 76 CHARGED WITH 2008 MURDER OF TIPTON TAXI DRIVER

A 76-year-old man has been charged with the murder of Tipton taxi driver and father-of-four, Harun Khan, who was fatally shot outside his home in 2008. David Harrison, from Bilston, is accused of killing 39-year-old Mr. Khan. The victim "was shot outside his Tudor Street home at 9.25pm on March 3, 2008, and later died at hospital."

A West Midlands Police spokesperson confirmed the charges, stating: "A 76-year-old man has been charged with the 2008 murder of a Tipton



taxis driver.

"David Harrison, from Bilston, is due to appear at Birmingham Magistrates' Court on January 6, 2026, accused of the fatal shooting of 39-year-old taxi

driver Harun Khan."

In addition to the murder charge, Harrison faces further serious counts. "Harrison is also charged with wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm following a shooting of a 27-year-old man on December 14, 2007, in Farthings Lane, Dudley," the spokesperson added.

The defendant is further charged with "two counts of possessing a firearm."

Mr. Harrison is scheduled to appear at Birmingham Magistrates' Court on January 6, 2026.

TWO TEEN PASSENGERS KILLED AND ONE CRITICALLY INJURED AFTER DEVASTATING SURREY CRASH

Two teenagers have sadly died in a devastating crash after the private hire vehicle (believed to be but not confirmed as an Uber) taking them home from a Christmas night out smashed into a tree on a country lane in Surrey.

Jake Neaves and Jenson Seal, both 19, were passengers in a white Tesla, where travelling from Oxted train station when the vehicle crashed on Holland Road in Hurst Green shortly before 10pm on Saturday night, 20 December.

A third teenage passenger was seriously injured and remains in hospital fighting for his life.

Friends who had been travelling in a second cab stopped to help and managed to pull two people



from the vehicle before it reportedly burst into flames. Police confirmed a 30-year-old man from Oxted, believed to be the driver, has been arrested on suspicion of causing death and serious injury by dangerous driving. He was also taken to hospital with serious injuries.

Tributes have since been laid at the scene, with friends describing Jake and Jenson as "lovely lads

with hearts of gold" who always made others smile.

Investigations into the cause of the crash are ongoing. Surrey police are asking anyone who may have witnessed this collision to get in touch.

They are also seeking CCTV, dashcam, or helmet cam footage that may have captured all or part of this incident.

If you have any information that might assist their investigation, please contact them quoting PR/45250153201 via private message, live chat on their website or their online reporting form: <https://orlo.uk/dvPDG>

PHTM sends our deepest sympathy to all the families and friends.

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MILESTONE OR RISK? TESLA BEGINS UNSUPERVISED ROBOTAXI TESTING IN AUSTIN, TEXAS

Tesla has escalated its autonomous driving programme, officially beginning tests of its Robotaxi fleet on public streets in Austin, with no human occupants or safety monitors inside the vehicles. A modified Tesla Model Y, operating without any passengers, was observed navigating city roads autonomously last month, with videos showing the steering wheel moving on its own.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk confirmed the development on X, simply stating: "Testing is underway with no occupants in the car."

This shift represents a significant milestone in Tesla's Robotaxi pilot

programme, active in Austin since June 2025. The removal of human monitors from select test vehicles indicates growing confidence in the latest Full Self-Driving (FSD) software specifically tailored for Robotaxi operations.

The Robotaxi fleet currently operates within a limited, geofenced area of Austin. However, the move to fully unsupervised testing is generating renewed safety discussions. Unlike rivals such as Waymo, which share granular disengagement and intervention rates with regulators, *"Tesla has not published detailed disengagement or intervention*

rates for its system."

Critics warn that removing human oversight without publicly demonstrated improvements could increase risks. Data from NHTSA crash reports, based on reported events up to September 2025 in earlier phases of the Austin pilot, showed incidents occurring roughly "every 62,000 miles" even with human oversight present, though the fleet had accumulated limited overall mileage.

Tesla maintains that its data-driven approach, which leverages billions of real-world miles gathered across its wider customer fleet, validates the transition.

BAIDU ROBOTAXI SERVICE HALTED AFTER COLLISION TRAPS PEDESTRIAN IN CHINA

A Baidu-supplied robotaxi operating in the city of Zhuzhou, China, struck and injured two pedestrians on December 6, leaving one person "trapped beneath" the autonomous vehicle. The incident has led the operator, Hello, to immediately halt its robotaxi service in the city as authorities investigate.

Witness videos shared on social media showed a "chaotic scene" where one injured person, who appeared to be wearing a helmet, was trapped beneath the vehicle - marked with the slogan "Hello Autonomous Driving" - while bystanders rushed to "lift the car in an attempt to help."

Local authorities confirmed the vehicle, identified as an Apollo RT6 model, was travelling southbound



and had just crossed a pedestrian crosswalk at the time of the crash. Emergency services transported both injured pedestrians, a man and a woman, to hospital.

A Hello customer service representative confirmed the Alibaba-affiliated company was informed of the crash and is "actively cooperating with relevant departments" in the investigation. The vehicle involved is part of

Hello's autonomous fleet in Zhuzhou, which had been scaling up operations since August after receiving regulatory approval for public road testing. Following the crash, the company has paused its AV trials in Zhuzhou.

Hello co-founder Yu Qiankun recently outlined ambitious plans to put more than 50,000 robotaxis on the road by 2027, with the first L4 AV slated for mass production by June 2026.

By contrast, Baidu's Apollo Go stands as one of the world's leading robotaxi providers, with operations now spanning 22 cities. Its network includes major Chinese hubs such as Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Shenzhen, and Hong Kong, as well as international markets like Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

STORM WARNINGS AND SYSTEM FAILURES: WAYMO FLEET GROUNDED AGAIN

Waymo's ambitious robotaxi rollout in San Francisco has hit another significant snag. Just days after a citywide power outage left its fleet paralysed, the company was forced to suspend all Bay Area operations due to a National Weather Service flash flood warning. While the decision prioritises safety, it underscores growing concerns regarding the vehicles' inability to navigate unpredictable environments.

Last month's power outage transformed the high-tech fleet into a series of stationary obstacles. Without functional traffic lights, footage captured the cabs idling in

intersections, blocking both human motorists and each other. The incident highlighted a critical flaw in the AI's programming: "Frightened animals have a fight-or-flight response; Waymos have a stand-dumbfoundedly-in-place response."

Despite a strong overall safety record, Waymo's presence in San Francisco remains a flashpoint for local frustration. Public sentiment soured further after a robotaxi "ran over and killed a beloved bodega cat," adding emotional weight to technical criticisms. The vehicles have also been documented:

- Driving down the wrong side of

the road.

- Getting stuck in roundabouts.
- "Careening through an active police standoff."
- Becoming "paralysed by a parade."

As Waymo struggles to adapt to "offbeat road scenarios," experts are calling for a more measured approach to deployment. Jeffrey Tumlin, former CEO of San Francisco's Municipal Transit Authority, suggested the city needs to rethink the density of AVs, stating: "I think we need to be asking 'what is a reasonable number of [AVs] to have on city streets, by time of day, by geography and weather?'"

LONDON TO BECOME GLOBAL HUB FOR ROBOTAXIS AS TECH GIANTS TARGET 2026 LAUNCH

The capital's streets are set to become the ultimate testing ground for the future of transport as Uber and Lyft join forces with Chinese tech titan Baidu to launch fully autonomous taxi fleets in 2026. The landmark partnership will introduce Baidu's purpose-built "Apollo Go" EVs to the UK for the first time. The move sets the stage for a high-stakes showdown with Waymo which is also targeting a 2026 public rollout in London.

The initiative aims to prove that autonomous technology can master the "busy, narrow and often complex streets" of a historic European city, a significant step up from the predictable grid systems of the US and China.

Baidu, which describes itself as the "world's largest AV operator,"

brings massive scale to the project, having already completed over 17 million cumulative rides globally. The company noted that its systems have covered more than 240 million kilometres, emphasising that its RT6 models are: "...fully electric cars designed specifically for ride-hailing use. Unlike converted production cars... the RT6 has been developed from the outset to operate without a driver." Lyft, which entered the UK market in 2025 via the acquisition of Freenow, clarified that robotaxis will not be replacing humans immediately. The company intends to operate a "hybrid network," where AVs work alongside human-driven cars.

According to Lyft, this strategy is: "...designed to ensure London's full

range of travel needs are met while creating new opportunities within the wider ride-hailing ecosystem." While the ambition is high, the companies face a rigorous path to approval. Work is currently underway with TfL and local regulators to ensure the technology meets the UK's strict safety standards.

Industry analysts suggest the arrival of these platforms marks a shift from experimental pilots to "real-world urban deployment." If the first half of 2026 proves successful, the plan is to expand the fleet to hundreds of vehicles. London is rapidly emerging as a premier global hub for self-driving technology. Should these initiatives succeed, the sight of a robotaxi could soon turn from a futuristic curiosity into a part of daily life.

THE GLASGOW TAXI TRADE: A CAUTIONARY TALE

Article by Rob Finlayson
Operations Manager
City Cars Glasgow
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For decades, the Glasgow taxi and private hire landscape followed a predictable hierarchy.

Hackney plates were at the top, a badge of status, long term investment, and commitment to the trade and for many drivers their retirement plan and pension all in one little black square attached the back of a Fairway or a TX.

Private hire was the underling, functional, flexible with very little barrier to entry certainly not the glitz and glamour of the hackney drivers, an obvious two-tier system that "worked" or at least limped along.

But over the last ten years the city has experienced a seismic shift, some say linked to ride-share arriving in the city plus the introduction of the country's first low emission zone with a final death knell from covid. The entire industry has flipped on its head in such a short space of time.

Hackney plates once worth tens of thousands of pounds and the retirement plan of many a driver have collapsed and now hold no value, Private hire plates, thanks to the demand for cars due to the city's cap on private hire cars, have rocketed in value with business plates changing hands for up to £10,000 a plate. It's not a dip, it's not a fluctuation - it's a harsh reality of the new face of the taxi and private hire industry in the city

The crash in hackney plate values didn't come from one singular issue, it was a result in a monumental shift across the industry, Ride-share, love it or loathe it, made the industry more accessible to thousands of drivers. The app-based immediacy and ease of access made the industry appealing, alongside companies offering hundreds of pounds in sign-up bonuses to new drivers to fill their demand.

The introduction of Scotland's very first low emission zone hit the hackney trade harder than most. Drivers were forced to replace vehicles which had been purpose-built to be repaired over and over and with

much longer life expectancies (and costs I may add) with a very limited selection of vehicles available to drivers and operators; or vehicles could be retrofitted at great expense, to meet the new standards that were coming in. Many drivers simply chose not to bother, walking away and surrendering their plates en masse. As it stands now, approximately 8% of the cities hackney plates are unallocated and available from the council and operators are starting to realise that their retirement pot is non-existent.

The real damage to the trade as a whole isn't just financial, its cultural. For decades hackney work in Glasgow was built on experience and local knowledge with a belief that the city's taxi men and women were a cut above providing an unmatched service carried out with a pride and a passion that was unparalleled.

As the trade battled its own challenges, private hire companies combined with app-based ride-share encroached and before you knew it the trade had turned and private hire was suddenly the hot commodity and all of a sudden, drivers didn't want to take that natural progression into driving a black cab. Whilst the introduction of a plate cap into Glasgow for private hire did stem the flow, all that really did was drive demand, and the value of private hire plates to a level that was unimaginable only a few short years before.

So where does this leave Glasgow?

With the hackney fleet showing very little sign of a recovery, with an aging driver pool and private hire booming with a handful of large operators dominating the city, it is hard not to wonder where the balance lies in the modern age.

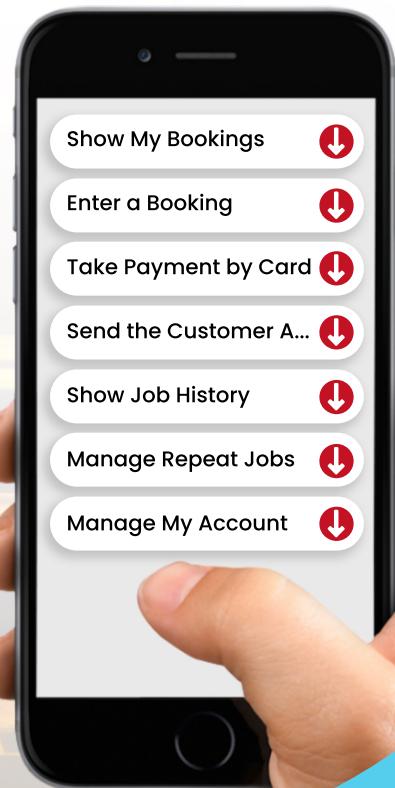
Speaking personally I can only hope that I can finally pass my own "*Topo*" test on what will be my fourth attempt and join the ranks of Glasgow's taxi men and women before the trade loses the appeal that drew me to it in the first place.

Because if we have learnt anything from the past decade, it's that nothing in this industry is guaranteed, not values, nor the vehicles or the structures so many of us have taken for granted for generations.

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TAKE ME LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

TAKE ME CELEBRATES A LANDMARK 2025 AND LOOKS AHEAD TO AN EVEN BIGGER 2026

Article by Chris Thalha

Take Me Group Managing Director

<https://takeme.taxi>



Take Me Group is celebrating an outstanding 2025, marked by strong growth, national recognition and major developments that have solidified the company's position as one of the UK's fastest growing taxi and private hire networks.

A standout moment of the year was winning **Taxi Company of the Year 2025** at the prestigious Taxi Summit Awards. This honour reflects the hard work of our incredible drivers and staff, the loyalty of our customers, and the respect of our industry peers who voted for us. It represents the exceptional standards delivered across every part of the Take Me family.

This year also saw significant milestones, including our strategic partnership with Gett which brings together Take Me's extensive regional operating footprint and local expertise with Gett's market-leading corporate travel technology. This enables businesses to benefit from seamless booking, consistent service standards, and enhanced reporting across multiple UK locations.

Through the collaboration, Gett's corporate clients will gain access to Take Me's growing national network of licensed professional drivers, while Take Me will integrate with Gett's platform to support high-volume, time-critical and compliance-led journeys for enterprise, public sector and managed travel customers.

This partnership with Gett is a natural fit. Corporate clients are looking for simplicity, reliability and scale without losing the benefits of strong local operations. By combining Take Me's regional strength with Gett's corporate technology, we're creating a solution that meets the real needs of businesses operating across the UK.

Furthermore we have also seen the launch of Take Me One, our national corporate travel solution providing unified service, simple booking and consolidated billing for businesses across the UK and cemented our position as lead supplier with many aggregators.



Looking ahead to 2026, Take Me is focused on even greater expansion and one of the most exciting opportunities is our franchise programme. We are inviting ambitious operators to join the Take Me network and become part of one of the fastest-growing taxi and private hire groups in the country.

Franchise partners benefit from our national brand, technology, marketing, support systems and the strength of a rapidly scaling organisation.

For details see: <https://takeme.taxi/partner-with-us/>

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ROUND THE COUNCILS

NORTH LANARKSHIRE: LICENSING REVIEW LAUNCHED

North Lanarkshire Council is set to launch a formal consultation process with taxi and private hire operators as it reviews its licensing policy.

Councillors have unanimously approved the engagement, which will involve a broad range of stakeholders, including police, community organisations, and representatives of people with disabilities, to gather feedback that will "help shape the updated policies and procedures."

A critical component of this review is a demand survey to accurately assess the current provision and usage of taxi and private hire services across North Lanarkshire. A council report acknowledges the significant hurdles the trade has faced recently, such as "the pandemic and the emergence of app-based alternatives, as well as changes to the public's leisure habits."

Crucially, the review also recognises a growing sentiment that "the current processes are too slow to respond effectively to these changes and new technologies so new systems need to be created to deal with them."

Beyond the demand survey, the comprehensive review will cover key areas including vehicle specifications, electronic communications, CCTV within vehicles, the license application process, and fee structures.

Draft policies and all supporting evidence will be brought forward for assessment at a future meeting of the council's finance committee.

GLASGOW: MOVES FOR MANDATORY CARD PAYMENTS

Glasgow taxi drivers could soon be required to accept card payments after the city's licensing committee officially agreed to hold a public consultation on the issue. The committee is now set to gather views on whether it should be "mandatory for taxi drivers to allow the use of credit/debit cards."

While "some operators have installed payment card readers voluntarily," there are currently no licensing conditions demanding it.

The move is prompted by increasing public and trade pressure. Council officials reported "several queries" from members of the public, and noted "some operators have also raised it due to the number of people now asking drivers if they can pay by card."

The shift reflects a broader trend, with a council report stating: "It is now commonplace for members of the public not to carry cash, relying solely on card payments or preferring to use payment methods via a wallet on a smartphone."

Although "no local authority [in Scotland] has yet introduced licence conditions or adopted a policy mandating the use of card payment devices within taxis," the report acknowledged that "several English authorities have mandated the use of card payment readers" and "the number of European cities also introducing a mandatory requirement for card payment facilities to be available for passengers in taxis is ever-increasing."

The consultation dates for the city's 1,217 licensed taxis have not yet been announced, but its findings will be reported back to the licensing committee for a final decision.

HYNDBURN: TESTING MONOPOLY ENDED

Local taxi and PH drivers have secured a major victory as Hyndburn Council announced it will finally outsource vehicle safety inspections to private garages, ending a long-standing dispute over the authority's testing monopoly.

For years, licensed drivers were required to use the council's own Central Vehicle Maintenance Unit (CVMU) at a cost of £52.50. However, the trade has "long raised concerns" regarding the facility, leading to repeated demands for an independent, privately operated alternative.

Under the new shake-up, the council is inviting local MOT stations to apply for "approved provider" status. These garages will be authorised to conduct both standard MOTs and the mandatory taxi compliance checks.

Hyndburn Council deputy leader, Cllr Melissa Fisher, stated that the transition would be a win-win for the borough, stating: "These changes will provide more flexibility for those in the trade and provide a boost to the economy by providing work to local garages."

Despite the move to private providers, the council insists that safety requirements will not be diluted. All approved garages will be subject to regular inspections to ensure "standards are consistently maintained."

Once approved, these garages will be able to issue Certificates of Compliance directly to drivers.

ROUND THE COUNCILS

PETERBOROUGH:

NATIONAL STANDARDS & CCTV FUNDING

Peterborough city councillors have passed a motion calling on the government to provide funding support for CCTV installation in taxis and establish a nationally regulated standard for all licensed taxi and private hire vehicles across England and Wales.

The motion, spearheaded by Labour councillor Mohammed Jamil, requires the city council to write to the Secretary of State for Transport and two local MPs, urging their support.

The proposal aims to eliminate current discrepancies in local authority regulations. As the motion stated: "Some local authorities have made CCTV installation mandatory, others have left it voluntary, and some have prohibited it altogether."

It added that these "inconsistencies extend to data protection, storage, and access arrangements, resulting in confusion, inequality, and an uneven playing field across the trade."

The push for mandatory CCTV follows a petition created several months prior by independent councillor Daisy Blakemore-Creedon. During the full council meeting on December 3, Cllr Blakemore-Creedon expressed her support but raised a point of clarification regarding potential evasion. "How is off-duty defined? Because what prevents a driver from claiming to be off-duty to avoid recording?" she questioned.

Cllr Jamil responded by defining the key distinction: "She asked a question about off-duty status. The difference between all that is when you're off-duty, you're not with a fee-paying passenger. That's the distinction between the two."

Support for the motion crossed party lines, with councillors highlighting the safety benefits for all involved. Liberal Democrat councillor Chris Wiggin stressed the dual benefit, stating: "CCTV is not just about protecting vulnerable passengers and giving them peace of mind, but also protecting the drivers from verbal and physical abuse, fare dodgers and false accusations."

Independent councillor Amjad Iqbal insisted that government financial support was crucial. He pointed out that: "Many drivers in Peterborough are self-employed and are already facing rising costs. Requiring mandatory CCTV installation without offering any support would place an additional and unnecessary financial burden on them."

Conservative member Cllr Steve Allen proposed an alternative: offering a reduced licence cost for taxis that install CCTV.

The motion marks a reversal in policy, as Peterborough councillors voted to reject proposals for mandatory in-vehicle CCTV just last December.

The passage of Cllr Jamil's motion commits Peterborough City Council to the following actions:

- Writing to the Secretary of State for Transport, Andrew Pakes MP, and Sam Carling MP to urge support for a nationally regulated standard for all licensed taxi and private hire vehicles across England and Wales.
- Requesting the Department for Transport work with stakeholders to develop and implement this national framework.
- Emphasising that a consistent national approach will address cross-border operation and ensure uniform safety and data protection standards.
- Calling upon the government to provide funding support, grants, or financial assistance to help drivers with the installation and maintenance costs.
- Reaffirming the council's commitment to advocating for fair, consistent, and evidence-based national regulation.

NORWICH:

ENHANCED LICENSING STANDARDS

From 1 December 2025, Norwich City Council is introducing enhanced licensing standards and a fresh look for plates and badges - the latest step in the council's commitment to keeping taxi journeys safe and professional.

Here's what's new:

- Extra safety measures - drivers will stay up-to-date with DBS checks, complete safeguarding training, and pass medical checks at every renewal
- No vaping in vehicles - keeping the ride clean and comfortable
- Clearer identification - new plates and badges with visible details and a security hologram for added peace of mind
- Stronger coordination - working with neighbouring councils in order to manage cross-border drivers.

These updates build on the council's existing high standards to make sure Norwich's taxi and private hire services remain trusted, professional, and even safer for everyone.

ROUND THE COUNCILS

NORTH AYRSHIRE: DRESS CODE VIOLATIONS DOUBLE

Taxi drivers in North Ayrshire are facing a “one strike and you’re out” policy after reports revealed that non-compliance with dress code standards has nearly doubled since rules were relaxed.

The region’s licensing committee heard last month that despite a move toward more flexible attire in September 2024, an increasing number of drivers are failing to meet basic presentation requirements.

Civic licensing standards officer Drew Robertson informed the committee that while only 10 drivers received warnings over a nearly year-long period under the old rules, 19 drivers have already been warned in the few months since the new standards were introduced.

The committee is now taking a hardline stance with Mr Robertson saying: “If they have received one warning, they will not get another one if caught again - they will appear before the licensing committee.”

The surge in violations caught the attention of Cllr Christina Larsen, who questioned the irony of the statistics: “Are we saying that since the dress code was relaxed, you’re getting more not complying than we had at a stricter level?” In response, Mr. Robertson admitted: “Probably we are getting slightly more although it goes over a slightly longer period.” He noted that the majority of issues involved drivers failing to wear the correct “shirts and trousers.”

The current code mandates that drivers “must conduct themselves in a proper and civil manner and be clean and tidy in appearance.” While black jeans and polo shirts are now permitted, the rules remain specific to maintain a professional image:

Drivers found in breach a second time now face the formal sanctions or the loss of their licence.

WALSALL: NEW POLICY CONSULTATION

Walsall Council is consulting on a new draft Taxi and Private Hire Licensing policy. The draft policy reflects government guidance and sets out procedures and standards for everyone involved including drivers, passengers and other road users.

The council is encouraging anyone who uses taxis/PHVs, works in the trade, or shares the road network to take part in the consultation to help shape the policy.

Views are also being sought on a range of key areas, including, vehicle age, identification, frequency of testing and suitability of vehicles. Alongside the policy review, vehicle licensing fees are also being reviewed and are open for public comment.

The consultation is open until 31 January 2026 and can be found at: <https://shorturl.at/3vCTN>

Vehicle licensing fees can be commented on at go.walsall.gov.uk/vehicle-fees-consultation

ABERDEEN: CONSULTATION ON LICENSING CHANGES

Aberdeen City Council is set to launch a public consultation on significant changes to taxi licensing rules, including the controversial proposal to scrap the stringent “street knowledge test” following a notable drop in driver numbers. Licensing chiefs have put forward several proposals aimed at addressing driver shortages and modernising the service.

The review follows a period where roughly 200 drivers quit after Covid, leading to “queues of passengers regularly seen standing along Union Street waiting for a ride home.” While numbers have since risen, the council is looking to consult on whether the current street knowledge exam should be “ditched entirely” or amended. The move to potentially axe the test has previously met with resistance from existing drivers. One argued the move “would make a mockery of all the hard work taxi drivers went through to get our badge.” Key proposed changes:

- **Abolishing or changing the Street Knowledge Test**
- **Merging the two current taxi zones - the city and the airport - so that all taxis are “licensed for the whole council area.”**
- **Allowing private hire flexibility:** plans include asking the public if PHVs, such as Uber, should be allowed “to take passengers on journeys other than pre-booked routes,” effectively blurring the line between taxis and PHVs
- **Vehicle age limits:** the council will seek views on appropriateness of current vehicle age limits - all WAVs must be “no more than 10 years old at first licensing,” while other vehicles must be “no more than five years old.”

The public consultation is scheduled to run from February 2026 until March 2026, with the results to be reported back to the Licensing Committee for consideration on May 20, 2026.

The Exchange

We are delighted to announce the launch of The Exchange. With the potential to encompass some **60,000** taxis in the UK and IE this network will be hands down the largest united pool of taxis available to passengers today. And it is all done through the local fleet. This means that a local taxi firm, who uses iCabbi taxi dispatch technology, can now offer their passengers access to local, national and soon, a global network. Critically, this collaborative approach to retaining, and winning bookings for the taxi and private hire sector serves to push ridehail back from taking offer passenger transport in cities and towns across the UK, something that is becoming an ever growing problem as more and more councils issue licenses.



→ **60,000**

Taxis in the UK and IE network



ROUND THE COUNCILS

PERTH:

24 NEW TAXI PLATES TO BE ISSUED

Perth and Kinross Council's Licensing Committee has approved a controversial new scheme to issue 24 additional taxi licence plates, ignoring warnings from the local trade that the move could "destroy" the industry. The decision, made on December 15, aims to address "unmet demand" in the city, but local drivers argue the council is misreading the market.

The scheme introduces strict conditions for the 24 new licences to ensure "fairness and transparency":

- Non-Transferable: plates must be returned to the council if no longer used.
- Accessibility: all new vehicles must be WAVs.
- New entrants first: priority is given to operators who do not currently hold a licence to "grow the local taxi trade."

Council officials defended the legality of the move, with Head of Legal Services, Lisa Simpson, insisting the process was "legal, competent, appropriate and lawful." She noted that a 2024 survey showed that while total hires were down, the number of people waiting for cabs was "significantly higher."

The Perth Taxi Association launched a scathing attack on the plan. Vice-chairman Kevin Kulik, a cabbie for 32 years, warned: "We are fighting to save an industry that's been built up over many years by working class people; yet decisions are being made by officials and councillors who, with respect, have little understanding of how a taxi/PH business actually operates. The consequences of these decisions will be devastating for livelihoods, public safety and the people of Perth."

He claimed the whole process had been "marred from the beginning" and there were "major flaws". He added: "This is not a system in a position to safely expand; it's a system struggling to cope. The trade has repeatedly asked to work with the council and was told we would have an input. Yet we had late notification of this meeting then discovered the decision already appeared to have been drafted up without consent."

He added: "Waiting times have fallen dramatically from 12 minutes, 32 seconds in 2021 to five minutes and 30 seconds in 2024 yet you are being asked to introduce five times the number of plates that were previously added. The figures don't add up.

"This decision will dilute the market to the point where many operators will walk away."

Veteran driver Peter Milne argued the council is solving the wrong problem, suggesting that the city lacks drivers, not cars. He claimed the restriction on transferring plates was unlawful and would discourage investment.

Despite these pleas, the committee unanimously agreed to approve the scheme.

BLACKBURN w DARWEN:

PRIVATE TAXI MOTS REJECTED

Blackburn with Darwen Council is set to uphold strict taxi testing regulations, prioritising passenger safety over calls from drivers for more flexibility.

A new report heading to the Executive Board on January 8 recommends that all locally licensed taxis must continue to use the council's own Motor Vehicle Service Station (MVSS) at Davyfield Road for their MOTs, rather than private garages.

The recommendation follows a summer consultation that revealed a sharp divide between the trade and the public:

The Trade: Most taxi operators and drivers lobbied for the freedom to use any MOT testing station within the borough.

The Public: In a July 2025 survey of 500 residents, 84% rated vehicle safety as "extremely important." A combined 82% of residents insisted that tests should remain at council-run or council-approved facilities. Despite the pressure from the taxi industry, officials argue that keeping the process in-house ensures the highest possible standards. To accommodate drivers, the MVSS currently aims to provide test and retest slots within 24 hours of a request.

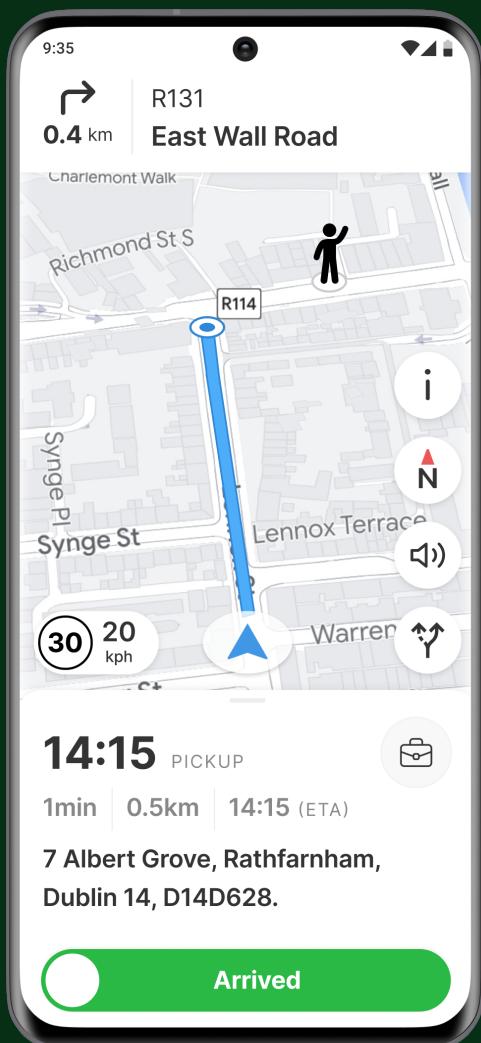
Councillor Jim Smith, Executive Member for Environment and Resident Services, emphasised that public trust is the deciding factor. "Public confidence in taxi safety is key, and we've received a clear message from our residents that MOT tests must continue to be undertaken by the council," Smith stated.

He added that the move aligns with broader goals to build "safer communities," noting: "The recommendation to continue with our existing arrangements... is made with consistency and safety in mind."

If the Executive Board approves the proposal, the current system will remain locked in for the foreseeable future, with the next formal review not scheduled until 2028.

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UBER UPDATE

UBER DRIVERS TOLD ACCEPT NEW TERMS OR BE BLOCKED

The App Drivers and Couriers' Union has condemned Uber's decision to force drivers to accept deeply unfair new Terms and Conditions by 5 January or lose access to the platform.

Under the new agreement, due to apply from 2026, Uber drivers outside London will be required to accept a variable service fee ranging from 3% to 49%, creating huge uncertainty over pay and pushing many drivers' earnings to unsustainable levels.

ADCU says Uber is exploiting a Supreme Court judgment that enabled a two-tier contract system. In London, drivers are not treated as agents and contract directly

with passengers. Elsewhere in the UK, drivers are classed as agents - allowing Uber to impose contracts with variable commission rates.

The union has consistently opposed the use of agency status and continues to challenge policies that undermine drivers' pay and conditions.

Cristina Georgiana-Ioanitescu, President of ADCU, said: "This move will have a devastating impact on drivers' ability to make a living. No one can earn a decent living with a commission that can jump to 49%.

"ADCU has long called for a 15% cap on commission so drivers can predict their earnings. This level of

variation destroys that certainty and risks pushing drivers below the minimum wage once waiting time is taken into account - potentially breaching Uber's obligations following *Uber v Aslam*.

"The Employment Rights Bill passed in December offered little protection for gig workers without worker status. Our members can be removed from the app at any time, leaving them especially vulnerable to coercive changes like this."

ADCU is calling on Uber to withdraw the new terms and engage with drivers and their representatives to agree fair, transparent, and sustainable conditions.

CUT OFF THE UBER APP: COTSWOLD CABBIERS DEMAND BAN OVER FEARS OF OUT OF AREA DRIVERS

Licensed drivers in the Cotswolds are demanding a local ban on the Uber app, claiming they are losing "thousands of pounds" due to competition from drivers licensed in distant areas.

Cabbies licensed by Cotswold DC (CDC) raised their concerns at a November council meeting, alleging that out-of-area Uber drivers are "plying for trade" in towns such as Cirencester and Moreton-in-Marsh.

Driver spokesperson, Robert Miller, formally requested that the council "effectively geo fence the Cotswolds" by blocking the app.

"Uber does not have a CDC licence to operate in the Cotswolds," Mr. Miller stated. "That means that cars that are coming into the area, and



we have quite a number of them, are operating outside of the regulations."

He claimed the northern Cotswolds were "overrun" by an estimated 10 to 15 PH drivers from places such as South Glos, Swindon and Wolverhampton during the summer.

Miller argued that this situation undermines the local licensing system. "Technology has overtaken the regulations, for fares, our work, that we pay the council a

considerable amount of money to have the privilege to do," he said. "If it isn't important, why did Gloucestershire police run a sting operation in 2018 at Cheltenham races to catch out hawkers on the side of the road."

Environment and regulatory services cabinet member, Andrea Pellegram, responded to the plea, expressing doubt over the council's ability to implement an outright ban. "You want us to cut off the Uber app, I suspect we are not able to do that," she told the meeting, adding: "I'm going to have to do some research on this." She confirmed the council will undertake a consultation and offered to meet with the taxi drivers to discuss their concerns.

UBER UPDATE

DUBLIN CABBIES' FIXED-FARE FIGHT FAILS AS GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS UBER POLICY IS COMPLIANT

The high-stakes dispute between Dublin taxi drivers and Uber has ended with the National Transport Authority confirming that the ride-hailing giant's controversial fixed-fare system "complies with the applicable regulations," despite weeks of driver protests. The ruling comes immediately after c. 1,500 drivers, mobilised under Taxi Drivers Ireland, temporarily suspended a planned six-day "national shutdown protest" in December. The suspension was conditional on the outcome of talks with Transport Minister Darragh O'Brien.

The protests, which involved "slow protests" that disrupted Dublin traffic, were triggered by Uber's

introduction of an upfront fixed-price fare model. Drivers argue the new system shifts all financial risk onto them and can result in them earning significantly less, especially during heavy traffic or major events. They maintain that only the driver should be able to agree on a fixed fare with a customer, per existing regulations. Uber states the change aims to improve transparency and build rider trust, which in turn increases demand and creates more earning opportunities for drivers by reducing "meter anxiety".

The outcome is a major blow to drivers, who had warned they would "not quietly accept the destruction of our livelihoods."

While the NTA's current interpretation of the law validates Uber's model, the advisory committee acknowledged the challenges posed by technology, noting a "need to assess whether legislation is up to date regarding the roles of technology and booking app dispatch operators." Consequently, Minister O'Brien has requested that the NTA conduct a "regulatory assessment of dispatch operator licensing in Ireland."

With the Government ruling that Uber's policy is compliant, the question remains whether Taxi Drivers Ireland will reactivate their planned "national shutdown" now that the talks have failed to overturn the policy.

UBER GRANTED LICENCE TO OPERATE IN SOUTHEND AFTER UNANIMOUS LICENSING COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Southend-on-Sea City Council's independent, quasi-judicial Licensing Sub-Committee has unanimously approved Uber Britannia Limited's application for a private hire vehicle operator's licence.

This means Uber is now able to operate in the city. The licence will be granted for a period of five years, after which Uber will need to reapply.

All Uber drivers licensed in Southend must meet the same standards as other local private hire drivers. This includes passing the Southend knowledge test, completing safeguarding training, undergoing enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks,

medical checks, and displaying Southend PHV door stickers. Cllr Donna Richardson, Chair of the Licensing Sub-Committee, said: "I would like to thank everyone involved for their professionalism and commitment throughout this process. The committee has worked through all the details carefully, and I am pleased we've reached a decision in a courteous and respectful manner."

Cllr Martin Terry, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Regulatory Services, added: "This licence approval demonstrates our commitment to maintaining the highest safety and safeguarding standards for private hire services in Southend."

"Residents and visitors can have confidence that any Uber driver operating in the city meets the same rigorous checks and requirements as all other licensed operators."

Cllr Daniel Cowan, Leader of the Council, said: "I acknowledge the Licensing Sub-Committee's decision, which allows Southend residents and visitors to benefit from a regulated Uber service. It is reassuring to see the process concluded thoroughly and professionally."

"I know this was especially important to business owners in the nightlife economy and I hope it supports the growth we all want to see."

MOBILE-OPTIMISED WEBSITES

DOES YOUR TAXI FIRM NEED A NEW WEBSITE? HERE'S HOW TO TELL

Article by Taxisolutions
taxisolutions.co.uk



When was the last time you looked at your taxi firm's website, not as the owner, but as a passenger?

If it's **slow, outdated, or hard to use on a phone**, you're not just losing bookings, you're losing trust. In 2026, your website is often the **first impression** passengers and potential drivers get of your business. And if it's not up to scratch, they'll move on to the next firm... fast.

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TERROR TIMES

MINIBUS DRIVER ATTACKED WITH KNIFE AND STABBED IN HAND IN NUNEATON

In the early hours of the morning, just before Christmas, a veteran minibus driver with 22 years' service working for Mi Taxis, was attacked when he went to pick up a male passenger from a known address in Nuneaton.

The passenger got into the front seat of the partitioned minibus and asked to be taken to a 24-hour garage. The driver agreed but asked the passenger to move to the back of the vehicle. At this point, the passenger produced a

knife and demanded money. The shocked driver instinctively raised his hands to protect his face, during which the attacker stabbed him viciously in the hand before fleeing the scene.

The traumatised driver was taken to hospital. Thankfully, his injuries were not life-threatening, but he required 11 stitches to his hand. Police were called immediately and were provided with the passenger's phone number, along with all addresses from which he

was previously picked up and the police have confirmed he has now been arrested.

A spokesperson for Warwickshire police said: "Thank you to all who shared our appeal (and then spotted) a 29-year-old Nuneaton man wanted for a robbery and other theft-related offences in the town. Despite jumping fences and hiding in gardens – he was quickly tracked and arrested.

A huge thank you to the residents who assisted us."

DO YOU RECOGNISE THIS MAN WHO ALLEGEDLY ASSAULTED A TAXI DRIVER IN NOTTINGHAM?

Nottinghamshire Police have released an image of a man they wish to trace after a taxi driver was assaulted and had his vehicle smashed. The incident happened on Saturday 13 December just after 11.30pm.

The taxi driver, a man in his 50s, was waiting at a red light leading onto Lower Parliament Street opposite the Motorpoint Arena. When the

light turned green, a man walked in front of the taxi. When he was challenged, the man punched the front windscreen of the taxi causing the left side to shatter. The cabbie left his vehicle and was then attacked by the man,



receiving two punches to the shoulder area.

Police officers have now released images of a man that could help them further their investigation. We are calling on the public's help to identify him.

PC Matthew Fisher, who is investigating the incident, said: "The taxi driver was just carrying out his duties when he was subjected to this aggressive and thuggish attack.

"Not only would this incident have caused financial hardship for the victim due to his vehicle being smashed but he was also left with pain and discomfort due to the punches he received.

"Do you know the man in the image? Please get in touch with us."

Anyone with information can call 101 quoting incident number 0723 of the 13th December 2025 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

POLICE PROBE AIR WEAPON SHOOTING IN CHRISTCHURCH

Dorset Police have launched an investigation after a taxi in Somerford, Christchurch, was shot with what is believed to be an "air weapon". The incident occurred around 10.18pm on December 11, 2025, on Somerford Road. The attack caused damage to the rear window of the vehicle.

Officers attended and carried out enquiries.

Authorities confirmed there were "no reports [of] any injuries" as a result of the attack.

No arrests have been made at this time, and the spokesperson added that "an investigation is ongoing to identify those responsible."



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NEW YEAR: WELCOMING

EMBRACING CHANGE, GROWTH, AND A FEW LAUGHS IN PRIVATE HIRE TRANSPORT

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Introduction

The start of a new year is like a freshly washed car: it's shiny, full of promise, and you just hope the kids don't spill juice on the seats by January 2nd. For the private hire industry, this season is all about fresh starts, new opportunities, and the chance to welcome a wave of new customers and drivers. As the clock strikes midnight and resolutions are made - some more ambitious than others (farewell, chocolate?) - private hire operators can rev up their engines for a year of transformation and success. With each January comes a unique sense of anticipation, like waiting for your satnav to finally get its act together.

Perhaps this is the year the satnav will finally stop saying: "*Turn around when possible.*" One can dream. And maybe, just maybe, that coffee you spilled under the seat last March will finally be found.

New customers: meeting evolving needs

With each New Year, customer expectations evolve faster than a driver changing lanes at rush hour. Technology, safety, and convenience are now the holy trinity of the private hire world. Customers want rides that are reliable, seamless, and somehow, always five minutes away - even if it's snowing and there's a marathon in town. The quest for the perfect ride continues, whether it's a smooth journey to the airport or braving the festive crowds for a night out.

- **Online booking:** Customers now expect to book a ride as easily as ordering a pizza. If your app takes longer than a Margherita to arrive, it might be time for an update. And let's be honest, some customers will try to track the driver like a pizza delivery, too.
- **Contactless payments:** Cash is so last year. The only coins customers want are the ones in their loyalty apps. For drivers, it means fewer trips to the bank and more time perfecting the art of polite small talk.

- **Safety first:** Everybody loves a driver who knows the quickest route - bonus points if they also know the route to avoid potholes the size of small lakes. A good driver is worth their weight in GPS coordinates.

Whether it's airport runs, school drop-offs, or a last-minute dash to buy forgotten birthday gifts, there's a growing market for adaptable, reliable private hire services. The trick is to stay ahead of the curve - without accidentally curving into the next lane. And if you manage to avoid roadworks and surprise diversions, you deserve a medal - or at least a biscuit.

New drivers: joining the fold

The New Year invites many people to leap into new ventures. For some, it's finally signing up for the gym (and actually going). For others, it's joining the private hire industry - a place where every day is different and the GPS is occasionally wrong in entirely new ways. The camaraderie among drivers is unique: nothing bonds people quite like sharing stories of confusing roundabouts and unexpected detours.

For aspiring drivers, the appeal is clear:

- **Flexibility:** Set your own hours. Work when you want. Just be prepared for "one last job" at 2 am, and the inevitable: "Can you go just a bit further?" requests.
- **Independence:** You're the boss - unless your satnav disagrees, in which case, good luck. And remember, the customer is always right - unless they're directing you down a dead end.
- **Meeting new people:** Every fare is a new adventure. You might meet a future best friend... or someone who insists on telling you their life story before you reach the next street. Occasionally, you'll even be asked for relationship advice, whether you want to give it or not.

Private hire operators can support new drivers with thorough training, open communication, and a sense of humour - especially when explaining why it's important not to pick up passengers dressed as superheroes at 3 am (unless it's Comic-Con). Veteran drivers can offer invaluable tips: for example, how to remain calm when the satnav wants you to "*turn left*" into a canal.

NEW CUSTOMERS & DRIVERS

Supporting success: tools and training

Equipping drivers with the right tools is like making sure you have enough tea bags for a long shift - essential. From the latest navigation apps (that only get lost occasionally) to up-to-date safety protocols, the right support makes every shift smoother. And for those who rely on their phones to get through the day, a portable charger is worth its weight in gold.

- **Training sessions:** Not just where the horn is, but also how to use it judiciously - like when someone tries to pay you in Monopoly money. Sessions also cover how to handle forgotten items - umbrellas, sunglasses, the occasional rubber chicken.
- **Mentorship:** Pairing new drivers with seasoned pros who know every shortcut, every coffee stop, and every good place to wait for fares. Wisdom is passed down, along with warnings about "that one traffic light" that's never green.
- **Communication:** Regular check-ins, feedback, and a hotline for life's urgent questions, such as: "How do I get chewing gum off the upholstery?" Plus, a WhatsApp group for sharing photos of the most creative parking solutions on the dashboard.

By investing in driver knowledge and wellbeing, private hire companies build a reputation as trusted, supportive employers - because nobody wants to be known as the firm where the office kettle is always empty. And let's face it, a happy driver means a cheerful ride - unless it's Monday morning, in which case, all bets are off.

Building lasting relationships

In private hire, every ride is more than a journey - it's an opportunity. Each new customer and driver brings stories, experiences, and - let's be honest - occasional mysterious smells. The secret to lasting relationships is creating a welcoming environment, celebrating diversity, and ensuring everyone feels respected. There's always room for a bit of light-hearted banter, as long as you remember to keep your eyes on the road.

Some companies offer loyalty programmes (free ride after ten trips), feedback surveys, and community events. These not only build goodwill, but also make for great stories at the annual staff party: "Remember the time we picked up that parrot...?" And who could forget the year someone tried to pay with a potato? True story.

Encouraging open dialogue and celebrating achievements turns a workplace into a community.

Recognition for outstanding service, clever problem-solving, or simply surviving the Christmas rush helps build morale and foster loyalty among teams.

Looking head

There's a lot to be optimistic about as the private hire industry accelerates into the New Year. Tech innovations are helping companies connect drivers and customers faster than ever. Shifting consumer preferences mean new opportunities for niche services: pet-friendly rides, eco-friendly cars, or even karaoke-equipped vehicles for late-night singalongs. And if your car comes with heated seats, you'll be a hero in February.

The industry's commitment to safety and service sets it apart, ensuring loyal customers and dedicated drivers. With a bit of creativity - and a sense of humour when the eighth person asks you if you've gone far today - companies can make 2025 a year to remember. The more we embrace change, the more memorable each journey becomes - no matter how many times the satnav tries to reroute you through a field.

Conclusion

The New Year is the ultimate fresh start, a time to set goals, welcome newcomers, and perhaps finally learn all the backroads in town. Whether you're a customer seeking reliability or a driver looking for independence, this industry is ready for you. Never underestimate the power of a friendly greeting and a well-timed joke to turn a simple ride into a memorable experience.

So buckle up, adjust your mirrors, and get ready for a journey filled with opportunity, laughter, and maybe the occasional detour. Because, as every good private hire operator knows, it's not just about the destination - it's about making the ride memorable, one trip at a time. And if you're still using a paper map, well, that's one way to ensure every ride is an adventure.

Wishing everyone in the private hire world a year of success, growth, and just the right amount of caffeine. Here's to new beginnings - may your tyres stay inflated, your passengers stay cheerful, and your satnav finally learn the meaning of "*shortest route*."

If your New Year is starting with more a fizz than a bang - reach out to join the Elite Family. It's about a few good operators and no arguments over a game of monopoly, where we can all land on Park Lane and pick up rather than pay a huge rent.

Email - paul@elite-liverpool.co.uk

AIRPORT AILMENTS

HEATHROW HIKES DROP OFF FEE TO £7 AND CUTS WAIT TIME LABELLED UNJUSTIFIABLE MONEYMAKER

Heathrow Airport is set to raise its drop-off charge by £1 to £7 from January 1, putting it on par with other major London hubs such as Stansted, and Luton. The increase comes alongside a new strict 10-minute maximum stay limit in the drop-off zones.

The current £6 'kiss-and-fly' fee was initially introduced at £5 in 2021. Vehicles staying longer than the new 10-minute limit risk an £80 Parking Charge Notice.

Motoring campaigners and taxi drivers have fiercely criticised the steady fee increases, arguing that passengers will ultimately be forced to "shoulder the costs."

Zamir Dreni, a private hire driver in

London, called the latest fee hike "unfair" and an easy scheme to generate revenue.

He told Metro: "How can you justify that? It's a moneymaker, there is no other way to polish it. An easy scheme to make as much money as possible."

Dreni also said the high charges push drivers to avoid airport work, stating: "I avoid Heathrow and other airports as much as I can, and so do many other drivers I know."

He added: "To me, it is an unjustifiable charge. They are charging enough for pick-ups, which is £7.50." He also noted that the strict 10-minute limit is stressful, especially for drivers assisting passengers

such as wheelchair users or families with significant luggage, arguing the limit can easily be exceeded when waiting to exit the zone.

Heathrow claims "95% of passenger visits are under 10 minutes."

A Heathrow spokesperson defended the decision, stating: "This change brings Heathrow's Terminal Drop-Off Charge in line with other major UK airports and plays a key role in our sustainability strategy."

The airport claimed the fee helps "reduce congestion, encourages public transport use, and ensures our forecourts are used for their intended purposes."

GATWICK AIRPORT BECOMES UK'S MOST EXPENSIVE DROP-OFF ZONE WITH 43% HIKE TO £10

Gatwick Airport is to implement a substantial hike to its passenger drop-off fee on January 6, raising the charge to £10 for 10 minutes outside the terminal. This 43% increase from the current £7 makes Gatwick the most expensive airport in the UK for car drop-offs. Gatwick Airport has defended the decision, citing a significant rise in operating costs, specifically pointing to an increase in business rates levied by Chancellor Rachel Reeves. A spokeswoman for Gatwick stated: "This increase in the drop-off charge is not a decision we have taken lightly. However, we are facing increasing costs, including business rates more than doubling." The airport added that the charge is intended to achieve two goals:

"The increase in the drop-off charge will support wider efforts to encourage greater use of public transport, helping limit the number of cars and reduce congestion at the entrance to our terminals, alongside funding a sustainable transport initiatives."

The fee, which was introduced at £5 in March 2021, has steadily increased, reaching £7 in May 2025. This latest jump places it £3 higher than any other airport nationwide. The airport is facing a major financial challenge, with its business rates bill set for an £11.9m hike to £51.6m in 2026-27, despite a 30% cap under transitional relief. Rod Dennis, senior policy officer at the RAC, was critical of the move, noting that the increase is

unprecedented: "A more than 40% increase in the drop-off fee is the largest we've ever seen."

Mr Dennis also highlighted the difficulty this poses for certain travellers: "Drivers tell us the main reason they use drop-off facilities at airports is to help people with bulky or heavy luggage – something that can be incredibly impractical on public transport, especially if elderly relatives or young children are in tow."

"Sadly, it looks like drivers are going to have to get used to coughing up increasingly exorbitant sums for doing so."

He further added that drop-off fees are "almost unheard of" at major airports elsewhere in Europe.

AIRPORT DROP-OFF CHARGES

AIRPORT	5 mins	10 mins	15 mins	20 mins	30 mins
ABERDEEN	£5.50	£5.50	£5.50	£10.50	£20.50
BELFAST CITY	£4.00	£4.00	£6.00	£6.00	£20.00
BELFAST INT	£3.00	£3.00	£5.00	£5.00	£10.00
BIRMINGHAM	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00	£11.00	£23.00
BOURNEMOUTH	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00
BRISTOL	£8.50	£8.50	£10.50	£10.50	£13.00
CARDIFF	£3.00	£3.00	£6.00	£6.00	£9.00
CITY OF DERRY	£1.00	£1.00	£1.00	£1.00	£1.00
CORNWALL NEWQUAY	free	free	free	£2.50	£2.50
EAST MIDLANDS	£5.00	£5.00	£5.00	£10.00	£20.00
EDINBURGH	£6.00	£6.00	£11.00	£16.00	£26.00
EXETER	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00	£7.50	£7.50
GLASGOW	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00	£11.00	£21.00
GLASGOW PRESTWICK	£4.50	£4.50	£4.50	£4.50	£4.50
HUMBERSIDE	free	free	free	£5.00	£5.00
GUERNSEY	free	free	free	free	free
INVERNESS	£3.80	£3.80	£3.80	£3.80	£3.80
ISLE OF MAN	free	free	free	£3.00	£3.00
JERSEY	free	free	free	free	£1.00
LEEDS BRADFORD	£7.00	£7.00	£9.00	£9.00	£12.50
LIVERPOOL	£6.00	£6.00	£10.00	£10.00	£25.00
LONDON CITY	£8.00	£13.00	n/a	n/a	n/a
LONDON GATWICK	£10.00	£10.00	£15.00	£20.00	£30.00
LONDON HEATHROW	£7.00	£7.00	n/a	n/a	n/a
LONDON LUTON	£7.00	£7.00	£12.00	£17.00	£27.00
LONDON SOUTHEND	£7.00	£15.00	£15.00	£15.00	£15.00
LONDON STANSTED	£7.00	£7.00	£7.00	£25.00	£25.00
MANCHESTER	£5.00	£6.40	£25.00	£25.00	£25.00
NEWCASTLE	£5.00	£5.00	£10.00	£10.00	£10.00
NORWICH	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00
SUMBURGH	free	free	free	free	free
SOUTHAMPTON	£7.00	£7.00	£7.00	£7.00	n/a
TEESSIDE	£2.50	£2.50	£5.00	£5.00	£5.00

TAXIBOT IS LIVE ON INSTAGRAM

WHY INSTAGRAM IS THE NEXT BIG REVENUE CHANNEL FOR TAXI OPERATORS

By M2M TaxiBot
www.m2mtaxibot.com



For years, taxi operators have focused their digital strategy on phone bookings, websites and booking apps. But there's a major platform hiding in plain sight that is rapidly becoming one of the most powerful customers acquisition channels for the next generation of passengers: **Instagram**.

If taxi firms want to future-proof their business and stay relevant to younger riders, Instagram isn't just "nice to have." It's essential.

Gen Z lives on Instagram, not the App Store

Gen Z, (aged c. 12–27,) represents the next major wave of transport users. They're digital natives, mobile first, and highly selective about the apps they download. In fact, multiple industry studies show that Gen Z avoids downloading new apps unless necessary. Storage space, privacy concerns, and app fatigue all play a role.

This is where Instagram becomes a gamechanger. Instead of asking a young passenger to download yet another taxi booking app, one they'll likely delete within weeks, operators can meet them directly on a platform they already use daily. Instagram is where Gen Z spends its time, communicates with brands, and makes quick decisions. It's their digital home base.

By enabling taxi bookings directly through Instagram, operators remove the biggest barrier to entry: the app download. The result is instant accessibility, zero friction, and a booking experience that feels natural to the user.

A multichannel world needs multichannel booking

Taxi operators have traditionally relied on phone calls, websites and apps. But the modern customer expects choice. They want to book a taxi the same way they order food, message friends, or shop online, through the channels they already use.

Instagram is one of the fastest growing messaging and engagement platforms in the world. With features like Instagram DM automation, quick reply to buttons, and integrated chat flows, taxi operators can now offer a

seamless booking experience without writing a single line of code.

Imagine a customer opening Instagram, tapping "Message," selecting "Book a Taxi," and confirming their pickup in seconds. No app store. No forms. No friction.

This is the future of customer engagement.

Unlocking new revenue streams

Instagram isn't just a booking channel it's a marketing engine.

Taxi operators can use Instagram to:

- Reach new audiences through targeted ads
- Showcase their fleet, drivers, and brand personality
- Promote airport runs, school contracts, corporate accounts, and event transport
- Run seasonal campaigns directly linked to instant booking
- Convert followers into paying passengers with one tap

Every post, story, reel, or ad becomes a potential booking. And because Gen Z prefers visual, fast-moving content, Instagram is the perfect environment to capture their attention and convert it into revenue.

Building trust with the next generation

Gen Z values authenticity. They want to see real drivers, real cars, real people, and real service. Instagram gives taxi operators a platform to humanise their brand, build trust, and create a community— - not just a customer base.

Operators who embrace Instagram now will be the ones who win the loyalty of the next generation of riders.

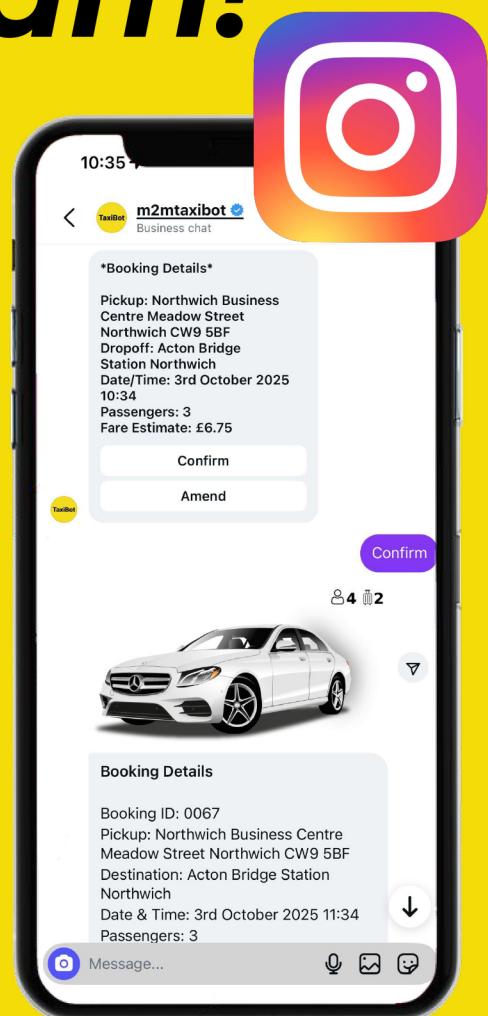
The opportunity is here

Instagram isn't just another social platform. It's a booking channel, a marketing tool, a customer service hub, and a gateway to Gen Z - all rolled into one.

Taxi operators who adopt Instagram today will open new revenue channels, reduce reliance on traditional apps, and position themselves at the heart of the digital behaviours shaping the future of transport.

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FIT AND PROPER

DUDLEY BARS DRIVERS OVER REVOKED LICENCES AND FORGED DOCUMENTS

Minutes of Dudley's Council's Taxi Committee have provided an insight into a string of "incredible" licence applications and reviews. The records detail a recurring theme of the failure of applicants to disclose criminal histories or legal troubles.

In February, AM saw their application rejected after the committee discovered previous convictions, including "dishonesty," which had been omitted from the official form. Similarly, in March, SM's licence review found that his driving licence had been revoked, and he had failed to declare an ongoing case at Birmingham

Magistrates' Court. Consequently, his taxi licence was revoked "in the interests of public safety."

The committee also dealt with: Inappropriate conduct: in July, driver MAR was ruled unsuitable after failing to explain "inappropriate conduct towards female passengers and plying for hire."

Uber forgery: also in July, driver YM was blocked from renewing his licence after he committed a "serious offence by submitting false documents to Uber."

Multiple offences: In April and September, drivers AA and SB both saw their licences revoked

following "numerous offences" and the discovery that their DVLA licences were no longer valid.

The committee emphasised that public safety remains the priority. In many cases, it was not just the original offences that led to bans, but the drivers' attempts to hide them. While some drivers could retain their licences after review, they were issued "stern warnings about future behaviour."

However, for those such as AA and SM, the committee was unmoved by their explanations, concluding that their history of non-disclosure and legal disqualification made them a risk to the community.

CORNWALL CABBIERS LOSE LICENCES AFTER DRUG DRIVING ARRESTS AND SPEEDING SPREE

Several taxi drivers in Cornwall have had their licences revoked or refused following serious misconduct, including being arrested for driving on cocaine and then smashing into cars, according to minutes from Cornwall Council's licensing sub-committees.

An urgent driver sub-committee on November 13 heard details of two separate cases where drivers had their licences revoked "in order to promote public safety due to the conduct of the driver."

Driver A had been arrested for driving while unfit through drink/drugs and possession of a controlled substance. Police evidence stated Driver A had been driving his HC and "had driven into stopped vehicles" and "had admitted to taking cocaine." The driver denied

taking cocaine, claiming he had found the drug in his vehicle and was confused at the time.

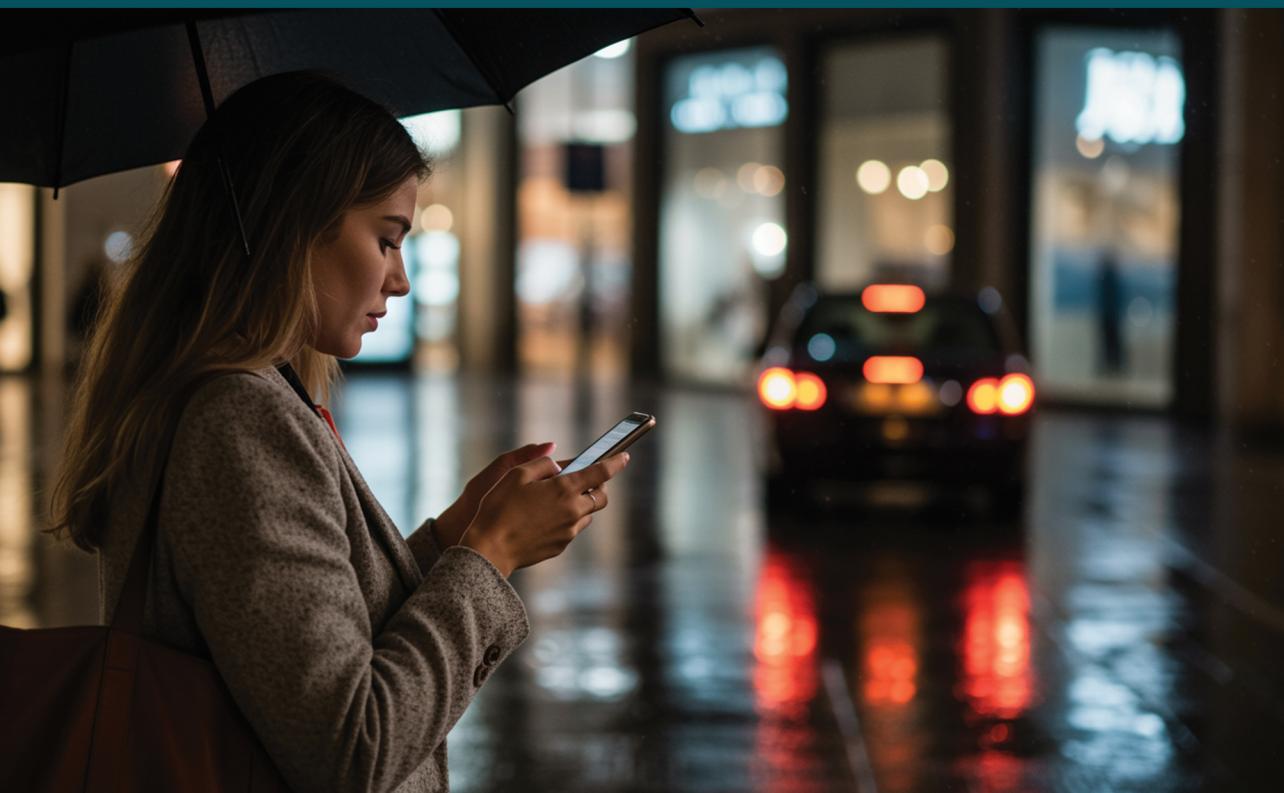
Driver B, who was not present, had their licence revoked for almost exactly the same reasons, including being arrested for driving while unfit through drink/drugs and possession of a controlled substance. Police stated that Driver B had been driving his taxi at the time, "admitted to taking cocaine" and was "found in possession of drugs in his vehicle." In both cases, members noted the drivers' submissions that they'd not yet been charged as they were awaiting blood test results.

Separately, on October 31, Driver E had his licence revoked with "immediate effect" after he failed a roadside drug test, testing positive

for cannabis and cocaine. Councillors noted he was awaiting blood test results but felt the roadside failure was "serious and impacted on public safety."

Other drivers faced consequences for different reasons: Driver D had his licence renewal refused after receiving "nine points for speeding within a one-month period." The committee was concerned by this "pattern of behaviour," noting that the nine points related to three separate occasions. Driver D had also "failed to notify the council of any of the endorsements" despite it being a licence condition.

Applicant C was refused a new HC and PH licence after HR Safeguarding stated they did not consider the applicant to be a suitable taxi driver.



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FIT AND PROPER

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CABBIE ORDERED TO PAY NEARLY £7,000 IN COURT COSTS

A Buckinghamshire cabbie who had his licence revoked for 'poor standards' has been ordered to pay nearly £7,000 after losing a court case. Malik Paracha's licence was taken away in March 2025 when Bucks Council officers became aware that he had committed 'multiple motoring offences'. Following an investigation, evidence revealed that Paracha

'clearly demonstrated a deterioration of his standards of driving'. Paracha appealed the council's decision, and on 17 November, High Wycombe Magistrates' Court supported the removal of his licence.

The court heard how some incidents the driver was involved in, which include a crash, as well as his explanation as to what

happened, 'reflected a concerning pattern indicating deterioration in Mr Paracha's driving to a level below the high standard expected by Bucks Council in its policy,' which states that: "any motoring conviction demonstrates a lack of professionalism and will be considered seriously." He was ordered to pay £6,805 in court costs.

BUCKS COUNCIL WINS 14th CONSECUTIVE TAXI LICENCE APPEAL AS DRIVER LOSES IN CROWN COURT

Former Bucks PH driver, Mr. Nawaz, has lost his appeal hearing to regain his licence, which had been revoked due to "unsatisfactory driving standards."

Buckinghamshire Council initially revoked Nawaz's licence in May 2024 after officials "identified a pattern of increasingly poor driving" that progressed to a "serious incident." The council concluded he could "no longer be

considered a safe licensed driver." Nawaz's initial appeal was dismissed at High Wycombe Magistrates' Court, leading to the Crown Court hearing on December 10, 2025 where the court upheld the council's decision. It agreed that Mr. Nawaz was not suitable to hold a licence and found "no compelling reason to overturn the council's decision" or depart from its policy on driver

suitability. This latest ruling marks the 14th consecutive successful defence of a taxi and PH licensing decision by the council this year. The courts have ordered the losing parties in these appeals to pay a combined total of £39,026.05 to the authority. Cllr Winn added the 100% success rate "demonstrates the strength and fairness of our approach."

TORBAY TAXI DRIVER'S LICENCE SUSPENDED AFTER 19 COMPLAINTS IN SIX WEEKS

A Torbay taxi driver has had her licence suspended immediately after the council's regulatory sub-committee reviewed a "series of complaints," including concerning CCTV footage of traffic incidents. The unnamed driver's licence is suspended for three months, though she may return sooner if she completes training.

The committee viewed footage

showing the driver "reversing into oncoming traffic at a Torquay taxi rank" and a "near-miss at Paignton railway station."

A licensing officer told councillors that 19 complaints were received between August 18 - September 28 - the most he'd "ever seen in such a short time against one driver."

Other allegations included "sleeping in her cab while on duty,

refusing card payments, failing to queue properly, and aggressive behaviour."

The committee decided the suspension was "in the interest of public and customer safety" and concluded the driver was "not currently a fit and proper person to hold a licence." The driver denied all accusations saying there'd been misunderstandings."

FIT AND PROPER

COURT BACKS COUNCIL'S DECISION TO REVOKE SCUNTHORPE CABBIE'S LICENCE

A Scunthorpe cabby who was caught speeding and watching videos while driving with a passenger has lost his appeal against the revocation of his licence.

Magistrates have upheld North Lincolnshire Council's decision to

immediately revoke the taxi licence of Mr Shah Abu Sufian Md Sheruzzaman Siddiquee, 44 confirming the driver was not "fit and proper" to carry passengers.

The council revoked the licence in January 2025 after receiving five videos of him speeding and

watching videos whilst driving. At a hearing held recently at Grimsby Magistrates' Court, the court upheld North Lincs Council's decision and ordered Mr Siddiquee to pay the full legal costs incurred by the council in bringing the case, of over £2,000.

NORTH HERTS DRIVERS FACE SANCTIONS AFTER REFUSING SHORT FARES DURING SAFETY STING

Two cabbies are facing potential licence revocation after failing a council-led "secret shopper" operation designed to protect females in the nighttime economy. The enforcement exercise by North Herts Council on December 10 at Hitchin Railway Station, utilised a lone female operative who requested short journeys within the minimum fare distance.

Between 7pm and 9pm, two out of the seven drivers approached refused to take the passenger. The council emphasised that refusing short fares is not merely a service issue but a significant safety concern which can "leave passengers vulnerable."

The council has documented the details of the non-compliant drivers and is currently weighing

formal enforcement actions. Under local licensing regulations, the drivers could face:

- Penalty points on their taxi licence
- Suspension or revocation of their right to operate
- Formal prosecution

The operation is part of a broader strategy to combat violence against women and girls.

CABBIE TO PAY OVER £650 FOR BREACHING PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER NEAR HEATHROW

Hillingdon Council has prosecuted a TfL taxi driver for contravening a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and not paying a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

Dane Tonlin, from Lewisham, was ordered to pay a fine of £220, a victim surcharge of £88, and costs of £350 at Ealing Magistrates' Court on 8 December. The case was proved in his absence by a single justice.

On 1 February 2025, the council introduced a PSPO prohibiting

taxis, chauffeurs, and PHVs from waiting in residential streets in Pinkwell, West Drayton, and Heathrow Villages, unless collecting or dropping off passengers there or they live there.

During a routine patrol on 2 May, Tonlin's vehicle was caught waiting in Heathrow Villages by a council environmental enforcement officer. The officer issued an FPN for the offence, which is £100 discounted to £50 if paid within 14 days. Despite a final warning,

Tonlin did not pay the penalty. The PSPO was introduced following a public consultation, which saw strong support for the proposed measures which help prevent nuisance caused by drivers frequently parking in residential spaces, blocking driveways, littering, publicly urinating and defecating, and causing noise and air pollution by idling while waiting to collect from the airport. Since its introduction the council has issued 6,252 FPNs.

SHAME SHAME

FORTY FIVE MONTHS' JAIL FOR WARRINGTON CABBIE CAUGHT WITH DRUGS WORTH OVER £250K

Cabbie Alex Verdin, 29, turned drug courier to pay off a cocaine debt has been jailed after leading police on a dangerous late-night chase and dumping packages of drugs in residential gardens.

He was caught with more than £250,000 worth of cocaine and cannabis after attempting to flee from officers in St Helens.

Liverpool Crown Court heard that police tried to stop Verdin's cab near Collins Green at 11pm on October 12, after it was driven through a road closure caused by a collision. Instead of stopping, Verdin sped away, driving dangerously, reaching excessive speeds and running a red traffic light "with no consideration for other road users".

Recorder Gavin McBride told him:

"Fortunately for you, no other road users were out as it was late at night, and there was no injury or harm to others that could have been so readily caused."

The pursuit ended in Sutton Leach, where Verdin abandoned the vehicle and ran off on foot. An officer saw him throw packages into nearby gardens before he was detained. The discarded packages were recovered and found to contain cocaine. A search of the taxi revealed 27 vacuum-sealed packages of cannabis.

Police also searched Verdin's home in Warrington and seized around £2,000 in cash.



In total, officers recovered 12.2kg of cannabis with a wholesale value of up to £81,000 and a potential street value of more than £180,000. Around 1kg of high-purity cocaine, valued at up to £99,500 at street level, was also seized.

Verdin admitted dangerous driving and possession with intent to supply cocaine and cannabis.

Defending, Matthew O'Neill said Verdin was a hard-working taxi driver who was not living a lavish lifestyle and had become addicted to cocaine, using it daily.

Verdin, who appeared via video link from HM Prison Liverpool, was sentenced to 45 months in prison. He was also banned from driving for 12 months on release and must pass an extended driving test before driving again.

BLACKBURN UBER DRIVER BANNED AFTER DRINK DRIVING CRASH WITH PASSENGERS ONBOARD

An Uber driver who crashed his car while carrying passengers was more than double the legal drink-drive limit, a court has heard. Blackburn Magistrates' Court was told the car driven by Faizan Anjum collided with a road barrier while travelling from Darwen towards Bolton, causing the airbags to deploy.

A police officer who attended the scene said it was fortunate the vehicle struck the barrier, warning that without it the crash could have been fatal.

Anjum, 33, from Blackburn, pleaded guilty to driving while unfit through drink.

The court heard two women had booked the Uber through the app and were picked up at around 4.15am. Prosecutor Glenn Anderson said the passengers, who were sitting in the rear of the vehicle, initially described the driver as appearing normal.

"The next thing they knew, the taxi had crashed," Mr Anderson said. "The airbags were activated and the seatbelts caused bruising to both passengers."

Police carried out a roadside breath test, which showed Anjum had 87 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath – more than double the legal limit of 35mcg. He

admitted drinking alcohol before driving.

Mr Anderson said Anjum was taken to hospital following the crash and by the time blood samples were taken, the reading had fallen below the legal limit.

Sentencing Anjum, Deputy District Judge Wajid Khalil said it was fortunate nobody suffered more serious injuries.

Anjum, who was unrepresented and has a previous alcohol-related driving conviction from 2016, apologised to the court.

He was banned from driving for 36 months and ordered to pay £85 costs and a £114 victim charge.

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SHAME SHAME

‘CALCULATING’ SEXUAL PREDATORS JAILED FOR BRISTOL GUEST HOUSE RAPE OF VULNERABLE WOMAN

Two men have been sentenced to a combined 17 years in prison following the “planned attack” of a vulnerable woman at a Bristol guest house in 2019. Riaz Muhammed, 51, and Muhammed Zahid, 46, were both found guilty of rape following an eight-day trial at Bristol Crown Court.

The court heard that Riaz Muhammed, an Uber driver, picked up the victim and drove her to a guest house he selected, where he then arranged for Zahid to join him. The victim was subsequently raped



while she was unconscious. The jury returned unanimous guilty verdicts against both defendants. Riaz Muhammed was sentenced to nine years in prison and Muhammed Zahid to eight years in prison.

Investigating officers DC Laurence Castle and DC Saoirse Moore described the pair as “calculating sexual predators who preyed on a vulnerable victim, hoping she would not have the strength to come forward.” The detectives highlighted the breach of trust involved, noting the victim believed the men “were taking her to a place of safety,” instead, she was forced to endure significant trauma, adding: “The victim has shown extraordinary resilience despite the distress she was forced to endure.”

SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORTS ROCK UK’S “TAXI CAPITAL” WOLVERHAMPTON

Wolverhampton, dubbed the “taxi capital” of the UK due to licensing nearly 33,900 PHVs - 96% of which operate outside the city - has revealed 17 reports of alleged sexual assault or rape against its licensed drivers within a three-month period. The figures, obtained via a FOI request submitted by London black cab driver, Mark White, and reported by the BBC, covered the period between August 11 and November 11. Nine of the 17 alleged assaults related to passengers.

A spokesperson for City of Wolverhampton Council defended the city’s licensing regime, stating the rate of reports against their drivers was lower than many other licensing authorities. They stressed that “Safeguarding is our number one priority in taxi licensing, and we adhere to all standards as set by government.”

Addressing the allegations, the

council spokesperson added: “None of these drivers had a criminal conviction on their records when their licence was issued. Once aware of the allegations, we ensured all drivers surrendered their licence in one working day. “Our policy is not to grant licences to anyone with a sexual offence or on a barred list. Our application process includes vigorous checks, and we are the only licensing authority to carry out daily DBS checks on all of our drivers.”

Mark White raised serious concerns about Wolverhampton-licensed drivers operating in other areas, fearing safety checks might be missed and vehicles could be unsafe. “I’ve seen shocking images, of tyres being worn out, of drivers not getting checked because they’re not in the area,” he said, adding: “This situation is untenable for passengers, for legitimate drivers,

and for licensing authorities trying to maintain safety standards.” The council responded by detailing its proactive enforcement, stating: “We undertake compliance operations throughout the year, across the country... Officers are equipped with laser tyre-tread readers to tackle illegal tyres, as well as infra-red cameras to detect ghost plates.”

Mr. White called the situation “a real national scandal,” fearing any cap on PHVs in London would lead drivers to “shut up shop, operate outside London and drive in.”

Wolverhampton council’s Chief Operating Officer, David Pattison, explained the high popularity was due to an “efficient system” and competitive fees and strongly rejected the suggestion of lower standards, stating: “Our standards for fit and proper are stronger than the DfT’s guidance.”

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Brighton & Hove Cab Trade View

Andy Peters

Brighton & Hove Cab Trade Association

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BHCTA
Brighton & Hove Cab Trade Association

Firstly, I hope you all got what you deserved for Christmas.

We start another year, which for me will be the beginning of forty-three years in the trade. During that time, there have been several periods of uncertainty regarding job security for both myself and colleagues, plus various challenges along the way, leading to serious consideration being given to changing my direction numerous times. But, I can state without any doubt that last year has paved the way to such unparalleled uncertainty that I could kick myself for not getting out when I had the chance.

Before I begin my rant, I would like to make it very clear that I have no political leaning one way or another. My only political support is for those individuals in power, from whatever standing, who show that they understand and care for the trade on a local basis.

I will start with the situation where the government has decreed that in a few areas, including Brighton & Hove, voting for the newly appointed position of superpower 'God Mayors' for the supposed newly created devolved areas will now be delayed until 2028. Not that anyone knows the details of what these new devolved areas will be and how smaller areas will be swallowed up into 'one size fits all'. The only certainty is that this government seems to despise localism which is exactly at the heart of the local taxi/PH trades. Apparently, there will still be 'local' Mayors for locally elected councillors to undertake local duties, so we will have a two-tier Mayoral system. Effectively a 'God Mayor' with almighty powers and a local 'Underling Mayor' to cut ribbons and shake hands.

This delay is quite a disruption because I know that down here there have been several candidates from various parties and backgrounds who have been eagerly promoting themselves, either independently or via a political party. Whilst I would categorically disagree with the whole notion of devolution which should be scrapped, you can imagine the disruption that this delay will mean to those people having to hold fire for two years, or even if they can still stand.

Where am I going with this? Well, for all intents and purposes, when elected, these new 'God Mayors' will

have certain powers to make decisions on matters, such as transportation, and at the moment we don't know if this means the taxi and PH trades? Nor do we know if this means that local councils, which have always had the job of taking into account the localisation of the taxi and PH trade, will then have that responsibility snatched away or how we will all operate under this new superpowered 'God Mayor', when several 'local' licensing areas are all combined?

Where do we all stand? So many questions!

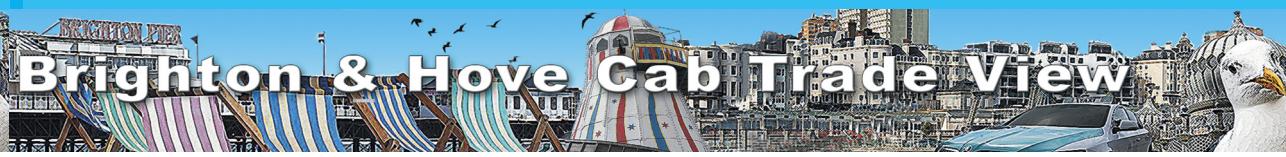
For example; this year we will be revising our '*Blue Book of Conditions of Licensing for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire, Drivers, Vehicles and Operators*' which is carried out every three years, where I roll up my sleeves to ensure that conditions are still acceptable and nothing is sneaked in. Is this going to be a waste of time and effort if we are going to be thrown into a massive devolved pot with some faceless entity creating new conditions of licensing for a huge devolved area?

Also, it looks like some local elections will be cancelled again, which includes Brighton & Hove, because of the impending devolution that no one to date has any clue about!

Will devolution, if and when it ever comes, have a massive impact on the both the taxi/PH trades or just the PH trade? If this is to include the taxi (hackney) trade then what happens with these new larger areas with regards to the knowledge tests and ranks? Also, what happens to the hackney fare structure where the current local authorities along with the local licensing committees negotiate with the local trade and set the fares based on parameters that are contained within the specific local conditions of licensing?

What will happen to the local taxi/PH Trade Forums, where the local trade reps, licensing officers, councillors and police reps have regular meetings to throw buns at each other, such has been long established here? Will we all become faceless numbers to our new 'God Mayor' in much the same way that Uber drivers are to Uber?

Certainly, there is a lot of guess work going on because absolutely nothing has been set out and that is grossly unfair to all of us that work in both trades where we need to plan ahead. The government has already stated it wants to reduce the 340 or so current licensing areas down to 70, which I claim is based on the 'mythical Uber regions', and furthermore, hand



Brighton & Hove Cab Trade View

over licensing to the yet undefined '*Transport Authorities*' whatever entity this will be.

With the government dithering on the election of '*God Mayors*', local elections and impending devolution, I double underline how this government clearly could not give a monkey's whtsit about localism, and localism is literally what the *Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976* was based on, which itself will have to be scrapped.

Because of this government's apparent policy of eradicating localism, I have absolutely no faith in it making any decision that will keep the taxi and private hire trade local, but instead will favour faceless apps. As I constantly state; I strongly believe that at the end of the '*Call for Evidence – Taxi Private Hire*' consultation, new legislation will be created that actually supports cross-border hiring by implementing a National Minimum Standard. So, there will be '*no problem*' with cross-bordering hiring because every taxi/PH driver will meet that minimum standard and government will assert: "*We have cured cross-border hiring with our new NMS and we have also removed borders with the creation of seventy new larger licensing areas, just as Uber always wanted... so go away and shut up.*"

Uber the true cost

There has been quite a lot in the trade news recently about how Uber is changing its T&Cs. This is based on Uber going full pelt on being classed as the '*Agent*' outside of London, whereas in London it is classed as the '*Principle*'. Although being the Agent is what most traditional taxi/PH companies have worked under since the *LGMP Act 1976*.

However, Uber has now revealed the true cost of being on its platform because it has issued a statement that as of January 1st, its new variable '*service fee*' structure will be up to 49%! It gets around calling it '*service fee*' under '*Uber speak*' instead of what it really is, *commission*.

I nearly choked on my cup of tea with laughter when I read that! But it was certainly worth it!

To confuse the drivers this '*up to*' will ensure that they will remain oblivious to a set pattern of earnings as the applied percentage will vary between trips. This means different rates will be seen at various different times, effectively meaning you can do a job one day and get £10 but doing the same job the next day you could get £6.

Do those Uber drivers who abandoned the local companies think that the grass is still greener on the other side? Yeah, yeah, I know that some local cab companies probably could have treated their drivers better, but I hope these are still around and have not been destroyed by Uber so those drivers can go back, even with cap in hand. Additionally, Uber drivers will have to agree to the new T&Cs and of course if those drivers don't sign on the dotted line then they are off the platform!

I know for a fact that Uber drivers down here, which includes the hundreds of OoTs, are up in arms about this and I have been informed that the local GMB rep is ensuring Uber's fare structure is on the agenda for the next Trade Forum meeting in January, where there are going to be demands for '*fare transparency*' whatever that is supposed to mean?

I presume that the rep will be speaking up in support of all Uber drivers who predominantly work here, including those from Southampton, Portsmouth, Chichester, Lewes, Havant, New Forrest and Fareham, as well as those B&H Uber drivers. Not that any local council has any interest in any individual operator's business model nor does it possess any power to demand any such '*transparency*' from Uber, or indeed any other private hire company. However, with Uber boldly stating that its '*service fee*' could be up to 49%, then in reality it could not really be much more transparent!

One point for sure is that drivers working for the two main local companies here know exactly what the fare structure is. This being the local hackney tariff (for both hacks and PH) and whatever is on the meter, is theirs to keep based on a set weekly subscription.

Now, having re-read my ramblings as above, whilst I have always lived by my moto of never '*suffering fools gladly*' and speaking my mind at whatever cost, I can see that with age, along with twinges and aches, I am also turning into a cantankerous old whtsit.... which is actually something that I am quite proud of.

But, having now entered into the seventh year of writing for **PHTM** with reflections on the trade in Brighton & Hove and around the country, which must mean some eighty-plus rambling articles, I think I have earned the right to be a cantankerous old whtsit ...so I make no excuses!

Have a great New Year, and once again, I hope we all get what we deserve...as long as it is localised!

RAPIDLY GROWING GHOST NUMBER PLATE CRISIS AS 41% LONDON CABBIERS ARE NON COMPLIANT

An “explosive” new report has laid bare the “serious safety concerns” posed by the UK’s “outdated and poorly regulated number plate system,” warning it has created a crisis enabling criminals to operate undetected on the nation’s roads. The report, launched by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Transport Safety (APPGTS), follows a cross-party inquiry and concludes that the UK’s advanced Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) network - which captures around 90 million reads daily - is being “critically undermined” by weak regulation.

The inquiry found that as many as one in fifteen vehicles may carry modified or non-compliant plates, including ‘ghost’ and stealth plates designed specifically to evade ANPR detection. These plates, often sold “openly online by unregulated suppliers,” allow drivers to skip road charges, tolls, and fines.

However, the threat extends far beyond traffic offences. Criminals are using these ANPR-evasive plates to facilitate serious crimes, including “rogue trading, drug dealing and organised crime such as human trafficking and people smuggling.”

A submission from National Trading Standards highlighted the chilling national security implications: “Ghost plates pose a serious threat to counter-terrorism operations. Vehicles with stealth plates can bypass surveillance systems around critical infrastructure such as airports, government buildings, and transport hubs.

“This creates vulnerabilities that could be exploited by terrorist



Image: Red Speed International

groups planning vehicle-borne attacks.”

The report exposes “extraordinary weaknesses” in number plate manufacturing. Currently, 34,455 suppliers are registered with the DVLA, many operating from private homes without any background checks. The inquiry heard that some suppliers handling sensitive ID documents were found to have “serious criminal convictions, including for violent offences and fraud.”

Innocent motorists are also suffering, with increasing numbers being targeted by criminals who clone their number plates, leading to fines, debt collection, and in some cases, police investigation. The report states the “personal impact of this tampering is a scandal.”

The widespread use of tampered plates poses an “acute risk to public safety.” The report highlights evidence that “taxi/PH drivers are tampering with plates en masse to avoid drop-off and road charges.” The inability to trace these vehicles “raises serious risks for women and girls’ safety, as well as for vulnerable passengers.”

Enforcement efforts in London have validated the scale of the issue. TfL, using ‘ghost’ plate-defeating

cameras, found that 41% of licensed taxis/PHVs checked had non-compliant plates. Since acquiring more of these cameras in July 2023, TfL has issued more than 4,200 fines.

The report concludes

that the current system is a “gaping hole” in the UK’s security that can be exploited using “nothing more sophisticated than cellophane, leaves or a marker pen.”

It calls for a wholesale revision of the system, advocating for:

Standardised design with security features, banning 3D and 4D plates. Significantly restricting the number of licensed sellers via annual fees and regular audits.

Increasing the fine, giving offenders points for illegal plates, and seizing the vehicles of repeat offenders.

Simon Williams, RAC head of policy, strongly supported the findings: “It’s clear from this report that urgent action must be taken to stop the widespread abuse of number plates, which has serious and far-reaching consequences for our society from road safety to national security. Ghost and cloned plates have no place on our roads as no one should be able to drive a vehicle that’s invisible to enforcement cameras or untraceable by the police.”

Martin Saunders, head of uninsured driving prevention at the Motor Insurers’ Bureau, added that the “increasing damage done by drivers of vehicles hiding in plain sight on our road system should not be tolerated.”

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FOR
ABUSE**

OFFENDERS WILL BE
REPORTED TO THE POLICE

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EXCUSE
FOR
ABUSE**

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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.

What a year 2025 was!

Firstly, a Happy New Year to members of the trade. It may seem strange starting the new year looking back at the old, however 2025 probably saw the start of perhaps the most significant potential changes to the licensed trade for many years.

Beginning with the announcement of local government reorganisation, promising the biggest change to local government in 50 years seeking to reduce the number of licensing authorities regulating the trade, with the intention of reducing variation across the current 260+ authorities which currently deliver taxi and private hire licensing functions.

2025 also saw the definitive ruling from the Supreme Court allowing operators to contract with passengers and drivers as they wish outside of London, with the later announcement in November's budget about the addition of 20% VAT on private hire fares taking effect from this month.

Across the industry continuing issues such as driver shortages, increased automotive costs, costs of living squeezing customer habits and evolving innovations to technology influenced trends.

However perhaps the most significant developments were the publication of the Casey report in June, which was damning in its assessment of previous failings around safeguarding with recommendations to close the gap caused by '*out of area working*'. Following the report, we have had the Parliamentary call for evidence and inquiry, with the proposal of national minimum standards drafted into legislation which is making its way through parliament.

In December, last month, the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill cleared its second reading in the House of Lords, triggering an extensive debate over the Bill's proposed licensing reforms, particularly those concerning taxi and private hire vehicle regulation.

The Bill, intended to expand devolution and strengthen local governance across England, introduces new powers enabling the Secretary of State to establish national minimum standards for taxi and private hire licensing. During the 8 December debate, peers examined these provisions closely, reflecting long-standing concerns from local authorities about inconsistent regulatory standards and enforcement challenges.

The Government, represented by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, positioned the reforms as a means to address fragmentation across the country. She argued that national minimum standards covering driver vetting, safety compliance, vehicle specifications and operator conduct would help ensure consistent protection for passengers irrespective of where they travel in England. Addressing the issue of "*out-of-area working*" - where drivers operate primarily outside the authority that licensed them - she noted that the current patchwork of rules has reduced accountability and complicated safeguarding.

Several peers, however, argued that uniform national standards must be complemented by stronger local enforcement capabilities. Labour's Lord Bradley highlighted ongoing concerns raised by metro mayors, including those in Greater Manchester, who cite loopholes that permit companies to be licensed in areas with less stringent requirements while conducting most of their operations elsewhere. He pressed the Government to consider further statutory measures that would require operators and drivers to be licensed where they actually work.

Other contributions focused on safeguarding, referencing recent findings by Baroness Casey on child sexual exploitation. Speakers noted that effective enforcement requires local authorities to have clear jurisdiction and adequate resources to monitor compliance, particularly when passengers rely on taxis in vulnerable circumstances. They emphasised that national standards alone will not resolve these issues unless matched with robust, localised enforcement frameworks.

Beyond taxi and private hire regulation, the Bill also contains wider licensing provisions, including expanded powers for the Mayor of London relating to the hospitality and night-time economy sectors. Supporters argue these powers could drive economic growth, while critics caution against over centralisation and the potential weakening of borough-level autonomy.

ALL THINGS LICENSING



With the Bill now moving to Committee Stage, peers are expected to table amendments seeking greater clarity on the scope of licensing powers, the balance between national and local regulation, and the enforcement mechanisms available to strategic authorities. The debate underscored the broader tension between consistency and local control that continues to shape England's devolution landscape.

Last month also saw the Government formally launch its much anticipated Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs, appointing Baroness Anne Longfield CBE to lead a three-year investigation into systemic failures that enabled child sexual exploitation across multiple regions. Crucially, the inquiry will examine how taxi licensing loopholes contributed to abuse, following stark findings in Baroness Casey's National Audit.

Announced by Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood, the inquiry will be chaired by Baroness Longfield, supported by Zoë Billingham CBE and Eleanor Kelly CBE - experts in children's rights, policing oversight, and local government accountability. The panel has full powers under the **Inquiries Act** to compel evidence, investigate institutional failures, and recommend reforms. The inquiry will be trauma-informed and victim-centred, with local investigations - including in Oldham - targeting areas of suspected cover-ups or negligence.

A key focus will be Chapter 7 of Baroness Casey's audit, which identified taxi licensing as a critical vulnerability in safeguarding systems. Grooming gangs exploited regulatory gaps, using taxis to transport victims to abuse locations. Survivors reported instances where drivers facilitated or ignored exploitation.

The audit revealed that licensing inconsistencies across councils allowed perpetrators to obtain licences in areas with lax standards, then operate elsewhere - undermining local safeguards. In response, the government has pledged to legislate to close this loophole, ensuring drivers operate under the rules of the area they serve.

In essence, 2025 was a year of regulatory tightening and economic pressure, pushing the trade towards greater standardisation and technological adoption, while simultaneously grappling with rising costs and a persistent driver shortage.

The start of a year of change

In this vein, and on the back of December's IoL's Artificial Intelligence in Licensing Conference, we start to look ahead at what 2026 may bring. The role of AI in licensing is something which both regulated and regulators will need to embrace and be cautious of and is definitely worthy of a future article in **PHTM** in 2026.

Keeping with the theme of the key development of 2025, the Parliamentary Inquiry is expected to publish its findings, with the government expected to respond. What the national minimum standards may look like may also be the subject of consultation.

So, if your New Year's resolution is to ensure you keep on top of licensing updates and matters affecting the trade, I would again encourage members of the trade to join the IoL: www.instituteoflicensing.org.

Finally, it is with much personal sadness, shock and a sense of disbelief that I pay tribute to my colleague Phil Bates, who died suddenly and unexpectedly on Sunday 7th December 2025. Phil was a long-standing member of the IoL, a member of our Taxi Special Interest Group and our working group responsible for the original Suitability Guidance (2018) and its revision published in 2024. He was a regular trainer for the IoL, and was a speaker at the IoL's National Training Conference in November, speaking with me on two occasions less than two weeks prior to his death.

A 30-year Hampshire Constabulary veteran, Phil retired in 2012 as Southampton's Sector Inspector. His partnership-led approach reduced city-centre violent crime by 67%, winning the 2011 Tilley Award. Later, as Southampton City Council's Licensing Manager, he pioneered the Taxi Camera project. He was a firm but fair licensing manager, and applied the 4 Es approach to licensing: Engage, Explain, Encourage and only when necessary, Enforce. He retired in 2025, but remained actively involved in licensing and was increasingly engaged in training projects.

Phil was well known to many of us at the IoL, and he will be very sadly missed as both a friend and colleague. My sincere condolences go to his widow Corinne, his family, friends and colleagues at Southampton.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

THOUSANDS OF SPEEDING OFFENCES TO BE OVERTURNED

Thousands of motorists in England could see their speeding fines overturned after a technical fault caused some speed cameras to activate incorrectly on motorways and major A roads.

The government has instructed National Highways to review up to six years of camera data after the issue was discovered. So far, 2,650 incorrect camera activations have been identified since 2021.

As a precaution, police have also cancelled more than 36,000 speed awareness courses while the investigation continues. In addition, thousands of other prosecutions are reportedly being dropped, even if they may not have been affected by the fault.

What is the issue?

This relates to variable speed limits on A roads and motorways. A variable speed limit is a traffic system where the maximum speed on a road can change depending on conditions such as congestion, accidents, roadworks, or weather.

The limits are shown on electronic signs above or beside the road and are legally enforceable, meaning drivers must follow the displayed speed rather than the usual national limit.

When the speed limit changes, it should automatically notify all the speed cameras in the area, and drivers are given a 10 second grace period to allow them to recognise the change in limit and slow down.

However on some roads this delay was not active, meaning that drivers would be caught '*speeding*' having been entirely unaware of the speed limit change.

How can I check if I've been affected?

The government has said: "*If you think you have been affected by this, please wait to be contacted directly. You do not have to take any action at this*

stage." So anyone who is affected will be contacted automatically to have their fines refunded and points removed.

National Highways Chief Executive, Nick Harris, said: "*Safety is our number one priority and we have developed a fix for this technical anomaly to maintain the highest levels of safety on these roads and make sure no one is wrongly prosecuted.... All drivers should continue observing the posted speed limits as normal. Anyone who has been impacted will be contacted by the relevant police force.*"

If you have not been contacted by the police directly, the chances are that you have not been affected.

However, if you have moved address recently or concerned that your letters could have been lost in the post, you may wish to contact the police force who issued the fine directly and ask them whether yours is one of the affected cases.

What happens if I receive a letter?

If your case is still outstanding with the police – so if you are due to attend a speed awareness course or have a conditional offer of 3 points and a £100 fine – that will simply be cancelled.

If you have an open case at Court, the police/prosecution would write to the Court to explain the case against you will be discontinued and there should then be no need for you to attend the Court hearing.

So far, that's quite simple.

The complications arise from historical cases where people have wrongfully had penalty points for a number of years. Those drivers may well receive a letter about points from 2 or 3 years ago and have their £100 fine removed – but what about 2/3 years of increased insurance premiums? Those drivers are surely due some compensation.

Transport Minister Simon Lightwood has indeed

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS



confirmed that affected drivers would be compensated, saying the government “*would correct any incorrect prosecutions*”. However, National Highways has stopped short of identifying exactly where compensation will be due; releasing a statement simply stating that drivers “*will be reimbursed and have points removed from their licence where relevant.*”

But how much compensation will they receive? Will they be due compensation for just the increased premiums? Or for having to wrongfully attend Court?

And what about those who lost their jobs. There will no doubt be private hire and taxi drivers who have had their licences revoked due to the number of penalty points on their licence, which will now be removed. Those drivers will need to be compensated for loss of earnings, and local authorities taken back to Court to have those decisions overturned. None of that so far has even remotely been discussed by the government?

And what about those who have been disqualified?

When a driver accumulates 12 points within three years they will usually be banned for 6 months. So those drivers who have been wrongfully banned – will they be compensated for all the additional public transport costs? Or lost work? Or for needlessly attending Court?

And what about the drivers who perhaps might not want their case removed. It sounds strange, but there will be cases where people want to just let things lie. After a driver is banned for 6 months their licence will

be ‘wiped clean’ and the points reset to 0. So there will be people out there who attended Court, received a 6-month ban and are now happily driving again.

Now if the government goes ahead and reopens their old case and removes three of the penalty points, it means their licence is not wiped clean anymore, putting them back up to 9 penalty points as well as dragging them back through the court. Drivers might not want that to happen.

It seems to us that the police have tried to do the right thing by making the mistake public and overturning the points/fines immediately. But so far, they have only scratched the surface, but the complications have not been considered yet. Every case is going to have to be dealt with on its own facts, due to these issues being far more complex than anyone realises.

We have seen how complex the issue of compensation can be after the Post Office scandal – so let’s hope the government sets up a compensation scheme a lot quicker here.

Do I need legal advice?

If you have received a letter from the police, or even if you think you could be affected, contact us on advice@pattersonlaw.co.uk or call us on 01626 359800 for free legal advice. We can go through your case with you and, depending on the complexities of your case, we can assist you.

If your case is as straightforward as removing points or cancelling a speed awareness course, it should be done automatically and you may not need legal assistance.

But if your case is more complex and needs to go back into Court, it’s very sensible to at least obtain initial legal advice as to how this could affect you moving forward.

For updates on road traffic law, please follow us on: twitter.com/Patterson_law_ or facebook.com/PattersonLawMotoringSolicitors



THE NATIONAL HACKNEY FARES TABLE

JANUARY 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
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NATIONAL AVERAGE
2 MILE
HACKNEY FARE
TARIFF ONE

7.40

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	
82	COVENTRY £8.00
83	EAST LINDSEY £8.00
84	HARLOW £8.00
85	HORSHAM £8.00
86	NORTH YORKSHIRE £8.00
87	NOTTINGHAM £8.00
88	RIBBLE VALLEY £8.00
89	RUSHCLIFFE £8.00
90	SHROPSHIRE £8.00
91	SOUTH AYRSHIRE £8.00
92	SOUTH GLOUCESTER £8.00
93	TANDRIDGE £8.00
94	YORK £8.00
95	DENBIGHSHIRE £7.90
96	HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH £7.90
97	ROther £7.90
98	STEVENAGE £7.85
99	ADUR £7.80
100	BRACKNELL FOREST £7.80
101	DORSET £7.80
102	EASTBOURNE £7.80
103	GLOUCESTER £7.80
104	LEICESTER £7.80
105	NORTH SOMERSET £7.80
106	ROCHFORD £7.80
107	RUSHMOOR £7.80
108	SOUTHEND ON SEA £7.80
109	SOUTH HAMS £7.80
110	STOCKPORT £7.80
111	SURREY HEATH £7.80
112	WAVERLEY £7.80
113	MELTON £7.75
114	DUNDEE CITY £7.72
115	CHELMSFORD £7.70
116	DACORUM £7.70
117	HIGH PEAK £7.70
118	NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE £7.70
119	WEALDON £7.70
120	WINDSOR & MAIDENHEAD £7.70
121	STRATFORD ON AVON £7.68
122	NORTH TYNESIDE £7.65
123	RENFREWSHIRE £7.65
124	WARWICK £7.65
125	SHETLAND ISLES £7.62
126	ASHFORD £7.60
127	BIRMINGHAM £7.60
128	BRISTOL £7.60
129	CONWY £7.60
130	DUMBARTON & VALE OF LEVEN £7.60
131	FIFE £7.60
132	GREAT YARMOUTH £7.60
133	ISLE OF MAN £7.60
134	KERRIER £7.60
135	KINGS LYNN & WEST NORFOLK £7.60
136	MONMOUTHSHIRE £7.60
137	SCOTTISH BORDERS £7.60
138	SOLIHULL £7.60
139	SOMERSET £7.60
140	THREE RIVERS £7.60
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148	CARDIFF	£7.50
149	CHESTER	£7.50
150	EPPING FOREST	£7.50
151	GOSPORT	£7.50
152	MID SUFFOLK	£7.50
153	SHEFFIELD	£7.50
154	SOUTH NORFOLK	£7.50
155	TAMESIDE	£7.50
156	THANET	£7.50
157	BRAINTREE	£7.40
158	CANTERBURY	£7.40
159	EAST HAMPSHIRE	£7.40
160	EAST RENFREW	£7.40
161	LEWES	£7.40
162	LIVERPOOL	£7.40
163	PORTSMOUTH UA	£7.40
164	S. LANARKSHIRE (CAMBUS/R'GLEN)	£7.40
165	STAFFORD	£7.40
166	TEWKESBURY	£7.40
167	WEST LOTHIAN	£7.40
168	WEST OXFORD	£7.40
169	WIRRAL	£7.40
170	NEW FOREST	£7.35
171	NEWARK & SHERWOOD	£7.32
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174	KINGSTON-UPON-HULL	£7.30
175	NORTH DEVON	£7.30
176	NORTH KESTEVEN	£7.30
177	NORWICH	£7.30
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179	VALE OF GLAMORGAN	£7.30
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211	CARMARTHENSHIRE	£7.00

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
212	INVERCLYDE	£7.00
213	MACCLESFIELD	£7.00
214	NEWPORT	£7.00
215	PEMBROKESHIRE	£7.00
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232	CEREDIGION	£6.80
233	EAST STAFFORDSHIRE	£6.80
234	EAST SUFFOLK (SOUTH)	£6.80
235	EDEN	£6.80
236	ELLESMERE PORT	£6.80
237	MANSFIELD	£6.80
238	MID DEVON	£6.80
239	NORTH NORFOLK	£6.80
240	NORTH NORTHANTS	£6.80
241	SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE	£6.80
242	TENDRING	£6.80
243	TRAFFORD	£6.80
244	WIGAN	£6.80
245	WOLVERHAMPTON	£6.80
246	CHARNSWOOD	£6.75
247	WALSALL	£6.75
248	MALVERN HILLS	£6.72
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251	OADBY & WIGSTON	£6.70
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275	COUNTY OF HEREFORD	£6.40
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	COUNCIL	
277	DERBYSHIRE DALES	£6.40
278	NORTH AYRSHIRE	£6.40
279	NORTHUMBERLAND	£6.40
280	SALFORD	£6.40
281	WEST LINDSEY	£6.40
282	WYRE	£6.38
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317	STOKE-ON-TRENT	£5.90
318	VALE ROYAL	£5.90
319	AMBER VALLEY	£5.80
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324	CAERPHILLY	£5.70
325	STOCKTON ON TEES	£5.70
326	ASHFIELD	£5.60
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330	REDCAR & CLEVELAND	£5.50
331	ROCHDALE	£5.50
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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.

WORLDWIDE TAXI FOCUS

from Spain



CABBIES GRIDLOCK BARCELONA IN PROTEST AGAINST UBER AND CABIFY

Around 1,500 taxis blocked the central lanes of Barcelona's Gran Vía on Monday 8 December, in a major protest about proposed new taxi law, demanding the Catalan government speed up its approval of the new law without weakening its provisions against ride-hailing services (VTCs) such as Uber and Cabify.



The demonstration and subsequent strike, which organisers claimed had an "attendance of around 80%" across Catalonia, aims to ensure the draft legislation, which would drastically reduce VTC licences from 900 to around 300, is passed in its current strict form.

Tito Álvarez, spokesperson of the Élite Taxi union, warned that drivers "will not stop until the law that we have agreed upon with most political parties is approved." Álvarez threatened an "indefinite strike" if the law's approval is delayed or its provisions are diluted. The union has also filed a complaint with the Catalan Competition Authority (ACCO) against Uber and other VTC companies for "acting like a cartel." Taxi drivers from across the region joined the protest, with Albert, president of Radio Taxi Sabadell, stating: "We've come to support Barcelona because we're at the final stages before the taxi law is passed, and we're here to put a bit of pressure."

He criticised VTC operations, noting they "change licence plates, solicit passengers on the street, which they aren't allowed to do, they should return to the base." Drivers highlighted the disparity in investment and regulation. Joan, a driver from Figueres, explained: "When I was 21, I bought a taxi for €120,000. Now these people come along and don't pay anything apart from the car, and their companies don't pay taxes here in Spain."

Joan also stressed the reliability of regulated services, recalling the 2017 Barcelona attacks: "Taxi drivers took people for free. Meanwhile, Uber and the other platforms tripled their prices, and for a €10 ride they were charging maybe €80."

In response, Catalan Minister of Territory and Mobility, Sílvia Paneque, said the government intends to approve the law "as soon as possible," with effects expected in the "first half of 2026."

The ride-hailing association Unauto, criticised the action, with president José Manuel Berzal claiming Barcelona was being "kidnapped by a minority" and demanding the government halt the new regulation, warning of a potential "€72 million impact" on the sector.

Meanwhile, Uber announced it would pay €1,500 to finance the insurance of each taxi driver who joins its platform until March 31, and filed a complaint against Élite Taxi for allegedly attempting to "boycott" its services during the strike.

In a statement, the company criticised Élite Taxi for preventing drivers from using the platform, which it says violates competition law.

from USA



TAXI TANGLE SUV CAB GETS 'WEDGED' ON CON EDISON UTILITY STRUCTURE

A bizarre accident caused an unusual sight in Times Square on the night of 4 December, when an SUV taxi somehow got stuck over a Con Edison structure.



The incident occurred just after 7pm along West 42nd Street and Broadway.

Police reported that the taxi driver "drove over a metal grate with a manhole underneath, and got wedged on a piece of metal."

One witness noted that "one of the back tyres was almost completely in the hole."

Officials stated that debris struck the vehicle and caused a spark, but FDNY, Con Edison, and NYPD investigators on the scene determined that "this was not an explosion."

Con Edison said a tow truck was called to remove the cab "stuck on one of their structures."

Fortunately, there were "no reported injuries," and no customer outages resulted from the incident.

WORLDWIDE TAXI FOCUS

from Ireland



IRELAND'S FIRST FEMALE-FOCUSED TAXI SERVICE, LADY CAB, DEBUTS

LadyCab, a new taxi service dedicated to offering female passengers the option of a female driver, launched in Dublin on 12 December, aiming to increase safety and security

for women on the city's streets. The company's founder, Emanuela Negura, was motivated to create the service following a personal and distressing incident.

Negura explained that the impetus for LadyCab: "I was attacked last year in July in this city centre by a male passenger, who tried to get in my car."

LadyCab's bold and factual tagline: "Every woman deserves to get home safe," has already garnered significant attention online. While some commenters have raised concerns about segregation and discrimination, many women have voiced their support, stating the service makes them more comfortable with the idea of going out.

The benefit is intended for both passengers and drivers. Negura hopes to cultivate a community for female drivers, many of whom have endured unpleasant experiences in the industry, including verbal abuse and inappropriate comments that left them feeling unsafe. The debut of LadyCab underscores a global trend driven by concerns over gender violence and safety. Similar female-focused transportation services exist worldwide, notably the Portuguese company Pinker, which launched in 2024 with 1,000 women pre-registering as drivers. Uber has also introduced a feature allowing female drivers and passengers to request a same-sex driver, offering a free cancellation if the request cannot be met. Furthermore, specific carriages on public transport systems globally are often reserved for women to provide a safe space, particularly during peak hours.

LadyCab has already received numerous pre-bookings and plans to expand rapidly in 2026 to other cities across Ireland, Europe, and potentially beyond.



from Australia



CABBIE ALLEGEDLY DROVE AT POLICE IN SYDNEY AIRPORT STANDOFF

A Sydney man is facing serious criminal charges after allegedly using his taxi as a weapon against Australian Federal Police (AFP) officers at Sydney Airport on December 27, 2025. The 27-year-old appeared before Parramatta Local Court following a high-stakes confrontation that ended with an officer drawing their service firearm.

The incident began when AFP officers were called to investigate reports of two taxi drivers operating despite being subject to barring notices. A barring notice is an official ban, often for 24 months, issued by the NSW Taxi Council or Airport management, preventing specific taxi service providers (such as Apex Cabs recently) from picking up passengers at the kerbside for serious rule breaches, such as touting, non-compliance, uncooperative behaviour, unsafe practices, traffic obstruction, or overcharging, to maintain safety and standards against rogue operators.

Upon the arrival of the police, the 27-year-old suspect allegedly fled toward his vehicle in an attempt to escape the scene.

Authorities allege the man's attempt to leave became life-threatening when he bypassed a marked AFP vehicle that had been positioned to block his path. Despite being ordered to stop by a second officer, the man allegedly steered the taxi directly toward the member of the force. The situation reached a critical point when the officer was forced to draw their firearm to halt the oncoming vehicle. While the taxi eventually stopped and no shots were fired, the man was immediately arrested and taken to Sydney Airport Station.

The driver now faces several significant charges, the most severe being one count of using a weapon to resist arrest, which carries a maximum penalty of 12 years' imprisonment. He is further charged with unlawful entry on enclosed land, failure to comply with directions, and resisting a commonwealth public official.

AFP Sydney Airport Police Commander Davina Copelin issued a stern warning following the arrest, stating that there is a "zero tolerance" policy for any attempts to harm officials.

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- ✓ Free Warranty
- ✓ Service History
- ✓ MOT

No Reserve - Highest Bidder

2019 Ford Transit Custom Leader 2.0TDci 9 Seat LWB Minibus



- ✓ Direct Company
- ✓ Air Con
- ✓ From 90,000 Miles
- ✓ Free Warranty

No Reserve - Highest Bidder

2017 Peugeot Boxer 435 L3H2 2.2HDI 6 Seat Disabled Access Bus



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- ✓ Air Con
- ✓ Access Ramp
- ✓ Long MOT
- ✓ Direct NHS

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THE BERNIE THE BOOK COLUMN

"THIS TIME NEXT YEAR RODDERS WE'LL BE MILLIONAIRES"

Del Boy always said it and eventually achieved it, but as a good friend once relayed to me, it's the anticipation of a big prize that excites - so hopefully with the aid of my crystal ball the following tips might at the very least keep the wolf from the door and the tallyman (ask your granddad) from knocking...

NFC/AFC

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

I can't remember a more chaotic season - giants like KCC, Detroit & Dallas have fallen, so this year I predict Conference winners of the **SEAHAWKS** & the **BILLS** at 3/1 and 7/2 respectively

SUPERBOWL

FEBRUARY

And the winner is.... **SEATTLE**, which at time of writing, just before the post -season, is a tempting 7/1.
N.B. The early bird (etc., etc.)

EFL CUP

MARCH

Again, at the turn of the year and at time of writing, we are at the semi-final stage, and **MAN CITY** are 5/2 to win again at Wembley.... back them with confidence

CHELTENHAM

MARCH

Now the big guns are all firing, most of the pretenders have shown their hand, so my two fancies are **THE JUKEBOX MAN**: Gold Cup at 8/1 and **SIR GINO**: Champion Hurdle at 2/1

THE MASTERS

APRIL

Who is best suited for Augusta? Surely you cannot ignore **SCOTTIE SHEFFLER** and at odds of 4/1 it's a real steal as Rory defends

GRAND NATIONAL

APRIL

I was very impressed with **HAUTI COLEURS** in the Welsh National on unseasonal good ground... and a tilt at Aintree is well worth a small wager... currently 25/1, back now

SNOOKER

APRIL/MAY

The old guard is vulnerable & the Chinese will get stronger. But in one last hurrah it's time to roll back the clock to a win from the jester from Leicester (**MARK SELBY**) at 10/1

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

MAY

Back **FC HOLLYWOOD** at 9/1 to bring the trophy back home to Munich. Their destruction of PSG last October still reminds me of glory days. The Gunners are a sound alternative

THE WORLD SERIES

JUNE

The **YANKEES** suffered many injuries which should all be healed by June. If you can get anywhere near 10/1, my advice is go for the home run (if you hail from New York)

THE WORLD CUP

JUNE/JULY

Alez le **FRANCE** alez.., need I say anymore? At 6/1 they are the connoisseurs' choice... the only alternative is Spain at similar odds ...as for England? early exit and a raft of excuses!

THE OPEN

JULY

Birkdale is a course less hostile to weather and modern staging. South Africans have a strong heritage here so take a punt on the winner coming from **AFRICA** at odds c. 9/2

PREMIER LEAGUE

AUGUST

New season, new challenges, same faces, but on the handicap where you get 16/1 the field I think the continual improvement in **EVERTON** should be backed



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