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# THE IRISH LOOP

## WHEN HMRC TALKS ABOUT THE “IRISH LOOP”: WHAT UK PRIVATE HIRE OPERATORS NEED TO KNOW

By Gary Jacobs  
CEO Eazitax  
[www.eazitax.co.uk](http://www.eazitax.co.uk)



Sorry folks, I have to caveat this article by saying that this is for general information only and you must seek appropriate advice from a solicitor and/or your accountant to take this any further...

That being said, I would like to share some whispers from the trade about a subject that has been brought to me and on which I have worked with clients many times over the years.

The Irish model finally has its own HMRC name. It's called “*The Irish Loop*”. It's important to understand that HMRC does not recognise or endorse any tax model; it merely reaches a point where it chooses to work with it, not against it, in certain circumstances. That is, however, still a big deal.

### What is the Irish Loop?

In simple terms, the **Irish Loop** is a tax planning structure that involves:

- A **UK company** (often the trading or operating company), and
- A related **Irish company**, usually providing services, holding IP, or charging management or platform fees.

Money and driver engagement are passed between the UK and Irish companies in a way that aims to:

- Reduce the **UK corporation tax** burden, and
- Make lawful use of **Irish tax rules** and the **UK-Ireland treaty**, including the recognition of non-vat applicable behaviour if appropriate.

Nothing in that, on its own, is illegal. Many perfectly legitimate groups operate across both countries, such as private hire operators - without them really understanding what's involved, or when the **commercial reality doesn't match the paperwork**.

### Why this matters to PH operators

Private hire is no longer just “one office and a few cars”. Many operators now:

- Use **apps and booking platforms**
- Run **separate companies** for vehicles, staff, and brand
- Work across **multiple cities or even countries**

That complexity makes the sector attractive to planners who propose “*Irish solutions*” to high UK tax bills. For example:

- Moving booking platform income to an Irish company
- Charging the UK operating company “*management*” or “*technology*” fees
- Holding intellectual property (brand, software) in Ireland and charging royalties

The fact that HMRC now has a convenient label - “**Irish Loop**” - signals that this kind of structure is **on their radar**, is being **actively reviewed**, and in some circumstances is being treated as something they are prepared to engage with rather than automatically attack. For operators, that has three major ramifications.

### 1. The bar for implementation has gone up

Once HMRC gives a pattern a name, it becomes easier for them to:

- Train officers to **spot it quickly**
- Develop **standard lines of enquiry**
- Compare one operator's arrangement against others

That means a rough and ready version of the Irish model is increasingly dangerous. If you are going to run a cross-border structure:

- The **Irish company must be real** – with genuine decision making, records, and activity.
- Contracts, invoices, and bank flows must **match the supposed commercial logic**.

# THE IRISH LOOP

- Transfer pricing and value creation need to be **properly documented**, not sketched on the back of a menu.

For private hire, this might mean actually having people in Ireland performing tech, admin, or management services if that's what the paperwork says. A “*brass plate*” company that does nothing but issue an annual invoice to your UK firm is asking for trouble.

## 2. “Everyone else is doing it” is no defence

Because the Irish Loop is now a recognised pattern, HMRC can compare cases:

- If one operator has a robust, well evidenced arrangement and another has a paper thin copy, the second is exposed.
- The existence of compliant examples does not protect weaker ones; in fact, it can highlight where yours falls short.

For private hire bosses, this means:

- Don't assume that because a competitor boasts about an Irish structure, it is either safe or suitable for you.
- Don't rely on **generic marketing material** from scheme promoters. Insist on tailored, written advice from a regulated professional who understands your specific business.

Remember: HMRC's job is to collect the right tax, not to level the playing field between operators. If your version of the Irish Loop doesn't stack up, pointing at someone else's won't help.

## 3. HMRC may accept the structure but still challenge the numbers

Another key implication is that tax authorities can:

- Accept the **broad shape** of an Irish Loop structure, yet
- Still dispute **how much profit** is shifted, **which company** should bear particular costs, or **how prices are set** between UK and Irish entities.

For private hire operators this could show up as:

- Disputes over the **level of platform or management fees** charged by the Irish company

- Arguments about whether **key decisions** are really taken in the UK rather than Ireland

- Questions around whether **driver or customer facing functions** (which create much of the value) are properly rewarded in the UK

In other words, even where the model is not torn up, the **tax saving may be reduced** or removed by an adjustment, potentially years after the fact and with interest and penalties on top.

## Practical steps for operators considering (or already using) an Irish structure

If any of this rings bells, there are some sensible actions to take:

### 1. Get independent advice

Speak to a UK tax adviser or solicitor who is not the original promoter of the structure. Ask them to review the arrangement in plain English: what it does, why it works, and where the risks are.

### 2. Check that reality matches the story

Look at who is really doing what, where. If the Irish company is meant to be running technology, customer service, or management functions, make sure that is actually happening and evidenced.

### 3. Keep thorough records

Minutes, service agreements, transfer pricing reports, and correspondence should all support the idea that the Irish company is a genuine, profit earning part of the group.

### 4. Plan for HMRC questions

Assume at some point you may have to explain the structure. Being ready with a clear narrative and supporting paperwork is far better than trying to reconstruct it under pressure.

The bottom line for UK private hire operators is this: the Irish Loop is no longer an obscure idea muttered about at conferences; it is a recognisable pattern that HMRC now has language for and experience with. That doesn't make it automatically wrong, but it does mean that **only well designed, properly implemented versions are likely to stand up to scrutiny**.

**For everyone else, the promise of quick tax savings may come with a long and expensive tail.**

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# BLURRING THE LINES

## HOW LONG TILL YOUR DMS KICKS YOU TO THE KERB?

Article by Rob Finlayson  
City Cars Glasgow  
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Since the dawn of dispatch software when we still compared it to being almost as good as pen and paper, the relationship between fleets and dispatch management system (DMS) providers has been largely symbiotic. Operators ran fleets using the tools provided by their chosen software partner and everyone understood their place in the ecosystem.

Operators brought drivers, vehicles, customers and local market knowledge. Dispatch providers supplied the technology that allowed all of those moving parts to work together. It was a relatively simple arrangement and one that has served the industry well for decades.

Lately though, I'm beginning to wonder if that relationship is starting to change.

The recent investment by Veezu into Cab9 caught my attention and not because there is anything particularly unusual about an operator investing in technology. What interested me more was what it says about the direction that the wider industry is starting to lean toward. We are seeing operators become increasingly interested in software, software providers becoming increasingly interested in the operational side of the business and the line between the two becoming more blurred every day.

At first glance the suggestion that a dispatch provider could ever become more important than the fleets it serves sounds ridiculous. The tail doesn't wag the dog. Dispatch providers exist because operators need software. Without fleets there is no customer base, there are no bookings and there is no revenue. It is a perfectly reasonable argument and one that, even five years ago, I would have agreed with wholeheartedly.

The problem is that the industry is changing and changing quickly.

Twenty years ago a dispatch system sat quietly in the background allocating work and generating reports. Today it sits at the very heart of the operation. It manages bookings, payments, customer communications, driver communications, business accounts, reporting, analytics and increasingly the decision-making process itself.

The modern DMS doesn't simply support the business, it has become woven into and is ingrained into every aspect of it.

At the same time customer behaviour has shifted dramatically. Passengers are increasingly loyal to convenience rather than companies. They care that a vehicle arrives quickly, that they can track it on a map and that payment is seamless. The operator's name has become less important than the experience being delivered through the technology. More so with the ability to use a single app on some software to book a car anywhere in the world. That should be a slightly uncomfortable thought for all of us because it means the software is playing a bigger role in customer retention than ever before.

What makes this particularly interesting is the sheer volume of information now sitting within these systems. An operator sees their own fleet. A dispatch provider sees hundreds if not thousands of fleets. They can see demand patterns, acceptance rates, driver behaviour, customer trends and operational performance across the entire world.

In all respects the software providers now have a better view of the market than the operators themselves. You know what your drivers are doing every minute of the day. Your DMS knows what tens of thousands of cars are doing every minute of the day, and believe me they have access to far more data than you will ever see. That is an incredibly powerful position to occupy and one that becomes more valuable with every booking processed through the platform.

This is where my mind starts wandering into slightly more uncomfortable territory. The taxi and private hire industry has spent years worrying about aggregators,

# BLURRING THE LINES



rideshare platforms and global technology companies inserting themselves between operators and customers. We watched Uber grow from an interesting concept 15 years ago into a global force. We watched platforms begin to own the customer relationship. We worried about losing control of demand and drivers.

Meanwhile another shift was taking place right under our noses.

The software providers were becoming bigger, smarter and more influential. Some now have processed north of a billion bookings. Some have visibility across tens of thousands of vehicles. Some have become so deeply embedded within our offices that replacing them would be almost impossible without rebuilding the business from the ground up. Even a change of DMS these days can be catastrophic or game changing for a business.

Then you start looking at the wider transport market and things become even more interesting.

The race towards autonomy is no longer science fiction. Every major technology company involved in transport is investing heavily in autonomous vehicles. Billions are being spent attempting to remove what is, from a purely commercial perspective, the single largest cost in the transport equation: the driver. Whilst many of us are of the opinion that happens in five years, ten years or twenty years, is almost irrelevant. The reality is that it's already here and it's already happened - we just don't realise it yet.

Which brings us back to the dispatch providers.

Today they need fleets because fleets in the main own the vehicles. Tomorrow that assumption may not hold true. If autonomous vehicles become commercially viable at scale, then suddenly the software companies already have everything they need. They know where the demand is. They know how to distribute work. They know how to manage pricing. They already own the booking, journey and the customer experience. The only missing piece is the vehicle itself.

I'm sure many of you will now be thinking of a certain Gallic automotive company that owns the dominant dispatch platform. That's before you look at the other side of that coin; with Uber owning and directly controlling Autocab, could we see a certain electric car manufacturer make a play for the world's dominant rideshare platform in the near future?

When you consider the Veezu investment into Cab9 it does make you stop and think. Have they looked into the future and decided they need to control their own destiny outright without relying on external third parties.

I'm not suggesting Cab9, Autocab, iCabbi or anyone else is about to launch a fleet of robotaxis next week. What I am suggesting is that the boundaries between operators, software providers, aggregators and transport platforms are becoming increasingly difficult to define. The roles that once seemed fixed are starting to overlap which should give everyone reading this pause for thought.

Perhaps dispatch providers will always remain software companies. Perhaps operators will always sit at the centre of the industry. Or perhaps, ten years from now, we'll look back and realise that the balance of power shifted long before anyone noticed.

**Because if history has taught this industry anything, it is that disruption rarely arrives with a warning. Usually it arrives quietly, sits in the corner for a few years and then one day everyone suddenly realises the industry has changed around them.**

**The real question isn't whether your DMS is planning to kick you to the kerb; it's whether you'll control your DMS or it controls you.**

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Article by Cordic  
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There's more to the new Cordic Dispatch than a fresh face. Every fleet sits on a mountain of data that could transform how it reacts to events and adjusts its plans minute to minute and hour to hour - but until now, no dispatch system has been built to do it.

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# ROBOTAXIS...ROBOTAXIS

## LONDON ASSEMBLY LAUNCHES URGENT INQUIRY INTO LOOMING ROBOTAXI ROLLOUT

The London Assembly Transport Committee has launched an urgent inquiry into driverless taxis as technology firms push to launch commercial robotaxi services in the capital this year. The investigation will examine how AVs should be licensed and regulated by the Mayor of London and TfL, especially after government plans accelerated the approval process for driverless trials without human safety backups. Public anxiety over the technology

remains high with research data revealing that “almost four in five people in London would not feel comfortable travelling in a vehicle without a driver,” while a mere 21% said they trusted the technology. Additionally, over a third of those surveyed by automotive data company, HPI, questioned the reliability of autonomous systems. While firms such as Waymo claim their vehicles are involved in “92% fewer collisions” than those with human drivers, the Assembly

remains sceptical. Critics argue that valid safety comparisons are difficult to make because AVs have not yet covered enough miles or faced enough complex traffic scenarios to definitively prove they are safer. Cybersecurity experts have also raised the alarm over hacking risks, pointing to government analysis that warned connected vehicles could become targets for criminals or terrorists seeking to disrupt networks or demand ransom payments.

Beyond safety, the inquiry will heavily focus on the economic and social fallout of automation. Traditional taxi/PH drivers face a massive threat to their livelihoods, with more than 380,000 licensed drivers across the UK potentially affected by the shift.

There are also growing concerns regarding the city’s potential dependence on private, foreign-owned commercial firms to run vital pieces of London’s transport infrastructure.

Supporters of the tech emphasise its massive economic potential, with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders estimating self-driving transport could add £66 billion to the UK economy by 2040. However, Assembly members are questioning how commercial robotaxis align with the Mayor’s broader environmental and traffic goals, which include cutting traffic by 15%.

TfL has maintained that any future roll-out must firmly support “safer roads”, “better air quality” and “protection for vulnerable road users.”

## METRO MAYOR PUTS BRAKES ON AV ROLL-OUT IN WEST OF ENGLAND

Bristol and the West of England will not see robotaxis on their streets anytime soon after Metro Mayor, Helen Godwin, rejected the idea, despite a new government push for the technology.

While the UK government has launched a nationwide pilot scheme inviting tech firms to apply for AV licences later this year, the West of England Combined Authority holds the ultimate power to block or permit the vehicles across Bristol and Bath as it takes over regional taxi licensing.

When asked if the region would become an early adopter of driverless technology, Ms Godwin made it clear that her priorities lie elsewhere. “I’m much more focused on delivering better buses, more trains and stations, and mass transit plans,” she said, adding that the region’s record transport funding requires “a steady hand on the wheel.”

Transport chiefs for the combined

authority intend to monitor trials in other areas first and have pledged that any future changes in the West of England will only be made “in consultation with taxi drivers.” The regional block comes as the Capital moves ahead with the technology. However, London trials have already faced teething problems, with East London residents complaining that the mapping cars are repeatedly getting stuck in dead-end streets and making loud siren noises late at night.

Despite local hesitation, the government is highly enthusiastic about the technology’s potential. Roads and Buses Minister, Simon Lightwood, hailed self-driving vehicles as a “transformative opportunity for Britain.” While a DfT spokesperson added the pilot scheme could eventually include driverless buses. The government has promised that all pilot services will face rigorous cyber and safety checks.



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## THE SOFTWARE VENTURE PROVEN INSIDE TAKE ME, & WHY BEING BUILT BY OPERATORS IS THE WHOLE POINT

Article by Liam Brewster  
COTO of TakeMe Group  
and part of the team at Moova  
<https://takeme.taxi>



Every operator I know has had the same conversation. You are sitting in front of your dispatch screen, or your driver app, or whatever you are paying for every month, and you think: this is good, but it is not quite built for me. It does plenty I never touch, and misses the one or two things that would make the difference. And those things are hard for any supplier to deliver, because the platforms are built for thousands of operators at once, often across several industries, and that breadth always brings trade-offs.

I have had that conversation with myself more times than I can count. I look after the technology and operations side of Take Me, a group of operators with a large number of sites reaching into every part of the UK. The platforms we run are good and they do the heavy lifting well. But like any operator we keep meeting the edges, a piece that is missing or something that could be better. What has changed is that we can finally do something about it. Through the APIs those platforms now open up, and with newer technology on top, we can fill the gaps ourselves and do things this trade has never managed before. And we are nowhere near finished.

This trade has a habit of waiting. We wait for the big players to lead, we wait on someone else's agenda and schedule, and the problem we needed solving last month is still sitting there. So instead of waiting, a few of us did something about it. That something is Moova. It is its own business, separate from Take Me, a technology layer for private hire built to smooth out the edges operators live with. Sometimes that means working with established suppliers to extend what their tech already does, sometimes it means bringing an entirely new tool to market. Either way, it is tried and tested inside one of the UK's largest operators first, so we know it is fit for purpose. Take Me is that proving ground, its first and most demanding customer, and this year the two of us stood alongside each other at the **PHTM EXPO** and started telling people properly.



Being part of Take Me is a real advantage, and not the obvious one. Take Me is not a single operator, it is a network of fleets of every size, from those running under 50 cars to operations with 400 and more. That is a serious advantage when building software, because every feature gets stress-tested across the full range of the trade before anyone else sees it. Whatever size you run, it has probably been tested on a fleet that looks a lot like yours.

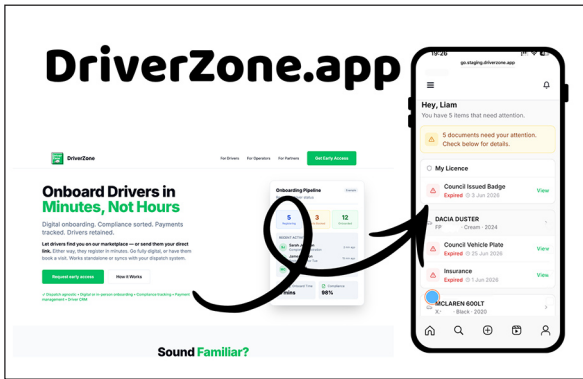
Let me be clear about what Moova is not. We are not here to take over from the technology you already run, or to tell you to rip out a dispatch system that works perfectly well for you. These are tools that sit alongside what you have got, not replacements for it. Moova is dispatch agnostic by design, so it works with whatever you already use, and we would rather plug into your world than make you move into ours. We only build something when it is worth the time and effort to do properly, because it makes a real difference to the quality of life and the operation inside a working business. If it does not clear that bar, we leave it alone.

That is the discipline of building inside a working operator: you stop chasing what looks good in a marketing deck and keep only what makes the team sharper, faster and properly tech-enabled.

A few of Moova's tools have stood out, because they came straight out of real problems on real sites.

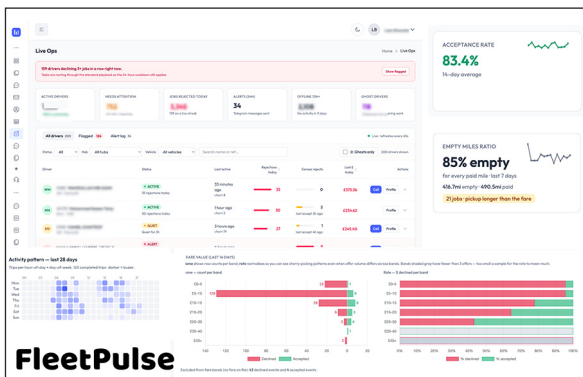
**DriverZone** is Moova's driver onboarding, compliance and operations management tool. Getting a driver from first contact to out on the road, properly checked and properly compliant, is one of the most painful jobs an operator has, and the one most likely to bite you if it is done sloppily. DriverZone takes that whole journey and puts it in one place. Onboarding, the compliance

# TECH THAT DEMOS WELL

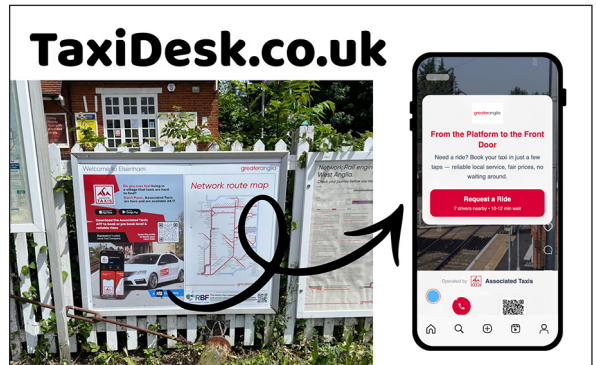


that has to be right and has to stay right, and the day to day management of the operation, all joined up instead of scattered across spreadsheets, inboxes and somebody's memory. The important things stop falling through the cracks, and the people doing that job get their time back to run the fleet instead of chasing paperwork.

**FleetPulse** is the one that gets people leaning in. It keeps our driver managers' finger on the pulse of the fleet. It senses behavioural change in a driver and nudges the manager to reach out and have that human chat, at the point it matters, not weeks later when it is already a problem. Just as importantly, it automates the praise and recognition that drivers earn and almost never get. When a driver stays out longer to cover work because the work is there to be paid for, when they take a late job nobody else wants and see it through, FleetPulse catches it and makes sure it is recognised. And it flags what I call the ghosts of the fleet, the drivers who have quietly drifted and gone cold, so a manager can step in before they are gone. The point is not to replace the human conversation. It is to make sure it happens before a good driver quietly slips away.



TaxiDesk came at it from a completely different direction. It lets an operator put interactive digital displays into venues alongside strategic partners, and use them to cross-promote the venue, the operator and the transport at the same time. People can call, download the app, or book a car there and then on the screen. In the right location that display stops being a poster and starts being a revenue stream the venue shares in, which turns a logo into a partnership that pays for itself.



We are seeing all of this work across the Take Me group, which is the only proof I trust. None of it was built to win an award. It was built because a real operator needed it, and because I believe the rest of the trade needs it too.

And we are not stopping at tools. The bigger ambition is to buy, build and partner across this industry, to do joint ventures with people who believe private hire deserves better technology than it has been handed so far. We want to push the whole trade forward, and bring others with us as we go. So if any of this strikes a chord, let us work together.

There is plenty more coming, and most of it is already running quietly inside Take Me: one that puts your brand back in the passenger's pocket, one that gives your best customers a reason to keep coming back, and a few more I will not spoil yet.

I will be sharing more on my LinkedIn alongside this article, so find me there or just drop me a message. Take Me is where Moova grew up. But it belongs to the whole trade now. We just got tired of waiting.

“ We want to buy, build and partner across this industry, and bring others along with us. So let us work together. ”

## GOODBYE KEIR STARMER - HELLO ANDY BURNHAM A VIEW FROM THE TRADE ON THE STATE OF PLAY

Mikey's Taxi Southampton shares his thoughts on what an Andy Burnham premiership COULD mean for private hire and cross-border working.

The national approach to taxi and PH regulation is set for a massive shake-up. Having spent years fighting the over-saturation of local streets as Manchester Mayor, his leadership will directly impact how out-of-district vehicles operate. The end of the "virtual office" loophole: Burnham has consistently called out the practice of operators using a lone laptop in places such as Wolverhampton to bypass local standards. Expect tighter national definitions on what constitutes a local operator, requiring a genuine physical presence where bookings are accepted.

Enforcement of the "start or finish" rule: a core objective will be introducing legal boundaries. This means a PH journey would be legally required to either begin or end in the borough where the vehicle and driver are licensed, effectively stopping out-of-town plates from working entirely localised circuits.

Devolved capping powers: rather than relying purely on the free-market "passenger supply" model pushed by Whitehall civil servants, local authorities are likely to gain the explicit legal teeth to cap PH numbers - just as they currently do for HCs - to protect local driver livelihoods and reduce congestion.

### • Could this actually happen?

Yes, but it will be a fierce legislative battle.

The political will is there:

Unlike previous Prime Ministers,



Burnham has a proven track record of actively fighting for the taxi trade. He has already been lobbying for these exact changes through the English Devolution Bill. With the supreme power of Downing Street, he won't have to beg central government for changes anymore - he can write them directly into law.

The technology is ready:

Implementing a "start or finish" rule is incredibly simple from a software perspective. Cloud dispatch systems already use geofencing. If the law changes, operators would be forced to update their algorithms overnight, and out-of-town plates would instantly stop receiving local jobs.

### • The roadblocks to watch:

The app giants and massive fleet owners will unleash corporate lawyers to fight any restrictions, claiming a ban hurts passenger availability. Furthermore, civil servants in Whitehall will still push for National Minimum Standards rather than localised caps.

### • The bottom line:

It won't happen overnight, but a Burnham-led government means the highest office in the UK will finally be held by someone who intends to dismantle cross-border working and return control of local zones to local drivers.

### • Other views from the trade:

David Lawrie – Director **NPHTA**

*"The campaign to end predominant out-of-area use started long before Andy Burnham was even mayor. Yes, he will claim credit as he always does and deny failures for anything he doesn't deliver.*

*"But the cross-border debate is already long underway, with or without him. The "start or finish" rule does not exist and will not work. The only approach that has been proven to work, is the "intended use policy."*

*"Add this into legislation as a statutory requirement, and it becomes far more than just a policy or guidance which can be ignored.*

*"That then grants the ability for councils to enforce the triple lock rule, 75(1)(a) LGMPA 1978, and automatically encourages localism once more!"*

William Greenhalgh - cabbie

*"When Andy Burnham was mayor, he dealt with local issues affecting Manchester, with out-of-area licensing being one of them. Now he is possibly going to be the country's PM, he will have national issues to deal with: welfare, immigration, defence, trade deals, markets, public finances, and a whole heap more. Transport won't be his concern, instead it will be of concern to whomever he appoints as Minister of Transport.*

*"The upshot is, there will be a reform of regulations in the trade but it's likely going to be well below many people's expectations with minimal long-term effects."*

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# UNsung HEROES

## HERO ELY CABBIE HONOURED AFTER SAVING ELDERLY PASSENGER FROM £3,000 SCAM

Friday 17 April started like any other day for Bridget. She hopped into her cab and headed off to her collect her next fare – an elderly woman going into town.

But when the woman got in the car, Bridget could sense something was wrong as she seemed stressed. She spoke to the woman about her plans for the day and she confided in Bridget that she was going to the bank to withdraw some money.

She explained how she had received a text message from the bank earlier that morning claiming there had been some suspicious activity on her account and that someone from the fraud department would give her a call. When she spoke to the person from the fraud team, they told her she needed to go to her bank and withdraw £3000 in cash to help with the investigation.

They said if the bank questioned what the withdrawal was for, she



should say it was an emergency, her roof had fallen in, and she needed the money for repairs.

The woman tried to tell them she didn't feel comfortable with the request and didn't want to do it, but they insisted and persisted, bombarding her with calls and texts until she eventually felt so stressed she called a taxi.

As soon as Bridget heard this tale, she asked the woman for her

phone and called the number back. Someone called "Fiona" answered and told Bridget to take the woman to the bank immediately, reiterating she was from the fraud team and this was part of a very important investigation.

Bridget informed the woman she would not be going to the bank and instead hung up the call, phoned the police, and took the elderly woman to the police station so she could report the attempted fraud.

Thanks to Bridget's quick thinking, the victim didn't lose any money and an investigation into the attempted courier fraud is now underway.

Superintendent Nikki Hall met Bridget at force HQ in Huntingdon on Friday 19 June to present her with a certificate and thank her for her actions, and it just so happened to coincide with National Courier Fraud Prevention Week.

Cyber and fraud prevention officer Kate Thwaites said: "Fraud is a devastating and ever-evolving crime, with fraudsters often targeting the most vulnerable in our society.

"The community are our eyes and ears and this incident goes to show how important they are in helping to spot and even prevent acts of fraud.

"I want to thank Bridget for her quick thinking and the care she showed the victim. Her inquisitive and perceptive mind prevented a vulnerable woman from potentially losing thousands of pounds.

### HELP TO PROTECT VULNERABLE & ELDERLY FROM COURIER FRAUD

Taxi, PH and ride-hail drivers - are being used by criminals to transport elderly or vulnerable people to and from banks or jewellers in order to scam them out of their hard-earned money and savings. If you suspect a scam is happening:

- Call 999 when it's safe to do so
- Be vigilante if you are asked to carry a potential courier from a local train station to an

address and back again

- Be suspicious if you are asked to collect a package from an elderly person. They may appear stressed or in a hurry
- Be suspicious if you carry unusual repeat fares to banks
- Please raise awareness by warning your regular elderly passengers - let's stop these criminals from ruining people's lives



# Proud to be local? You should be!

For the week starting 6th July, we want to raise awareness of just how much our trade gives back to their local areas and celebrate the contribution that you make all across the UK. You love local and we want your local community to love you back!

We want you to get involved and make a plan on how you are going to celebrate Love Local Taxi and Private Hire in your town.



6th - 12th July 2026

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# THANKS FOR BOOKING LOCAL

## PRIVATE HIRE GIVES BACK: BECAUSE THE COMMUNITY KEEPS US MOVING

Article by Rev'd Paul Newbery  
The Elite Family  
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[paul@elite-liverpool.co.uk](mailto:paul@elite-liverpool.co.uk)



Every year, the private hire industry quietly keeps the country ticking along. We get people to the airport at silly o'clock, rescue wedding guests who have underestimated both prosecco and geography, and provide safe passage home after those legendary "just one pint" pub trips that somehow end with someone trying to pay in chips.

But behind every booking is a community that supports local operators all year round. The regulars who book every Friday. The families who trust us with airport runs. The brides, grooms, aunts, uncles and best men who need getting from ceremony to reception without turning the back seat into a confetti crime scene. The night-time heroes who know that getting home safely beats walking home in shoes they regret buying.

That is why giving back matters. Private hire is not just about cars, drivers and dispatch screens glowing like mission control. It is about being part of the local fabric: supporting schools, charities, sports clubs, community groups, food banks, care homes and the small businesses that make a town feel like home. If the community keeps us moving, it is only right that we put something back into the tank.

This year, that spirit is being championed through iCabbi's Love Local Taxi & Private Hire campaign, a week dedicated to celebrating the vital role that local taxi and private hire fleets play in their communities. Running from 6th to 12th July, the campaign encourages operators to plan local events, invite their communities along, and shout about the good they do beyond getting people from A to B without anyone leaving a kebab behind.

### More than a lift: a local lifeline on 4 wheels

For more than a century, local taxi and private hire firms have been woven into the everyday life of towns

and cities across the UK. They have been there for the school run panic, the missed-bus meltdown, the hospital appointment nobody wanted to attend alone, and the late-night call that begins with: "Can you get me home as soon as possible, but also can we stop for garlic bread?"

Unlike anonymous transport platforms that seem to appear and disappear depending on surge pricing, the local private hire operator is rooted in the area. They know the schools, estates, shortcuts, roadworks, awkward one-way systems, and the houses where "outside now" means "I have just started looking for my coat". They are part transport service, part local knowledge bank, part mobile confessional box.

This is why the Love Local Taxi & Private Hire message matters. The campaign reminds passengers that choosing a local firm supports local jobs, drivers, call handlers, mechanics, offices and the businesses those people spend their wages with. In other words, your airport transfer may also be helping someone sponsor a junior football kit, donate to a raffle or keep a community service available when people need it most.

It is easy to underestimate the impact because private hire often works best when nobody notices it. The car arrives, the passenger gets there safely, and the whole operation looks effortless from the back seat, even when a local team has handled traffic, roadworks, awkward driveways and someone giving directions to the wrong town.

### Passengers who keep the wheels turning

Every passenger has a story, and local private hire operators hear most of them by 2am. There are the airport families who book months ahead but still leave the house like the holiday has taken them by surprise, complete with one missing charger, one overstuffed suitcase and one dad announcing they will miss the flight despite being four hours early.

Then come the weddings: polished cars, perfect ribbons and a timetable that lasted right up until someone could not find the buttonholes. The private hire driver waits patiently, smiles politely, and quietly

# THANKS FOR BOOKING LOCAL

hopes the best man remembers which venue he is meant to be going to.

And of course, there are the pub trips: “*just one pint*” turning into karaoke, chips and someone confidently claiming they live “*near the big tree*”. Local drivers know those moments well, and they also know that getting people home safely is no joke, even when the journey itself provides plenty of comedy.

But these passengers are not just customers, they are the people who make the industry possible. Their regular bookings create work for drivers, keep offices open, support investment in safer technology and allow firms to keep giving back in practical, quietly appreciated ways.

## Giving back without making a big song and dance about it

One of the best things about the private hire trade is that much of its community support happens without fanfare. A local firm might help an elderly regular reach a medical appointment, support a charity night, provide transport for an event or sponsor a grassroots team whose goalkeeper is brave, enthusiastic and only occasionally facing the right direction.

These acts do not always make headlines, but they matter. They are the difference between someone feeling stranded and someone feeling supported. They are also why many passengers still prefer the local number or local app: there is comfort in knowing the business taking your booking knows your area, your needs and probably which supermarket entrance has been chaos since 2018.

The iCabbi campaign encourages firms to make that contribution visible. During Love Local Taxi & Private Hire week, operators are invited to plan community events, bring people together and share the positive impact they already make, from charity fundraisers and food bank collections to family fun days, school safety talks and the occasional community barbecue where someone’s uncle insists he is “*in charge of the grill*”.

The point is not to boast. It is to remind the public that local operators do far more than move people around. They help keep communities connected, independent, safe and included, especially when plans change, trains fail, the weather turns or walking home has become less of a plan and more of a threat.

## Supporting those who support us

So, when the private hire industry gives back, it is not a gimmick. It is gratitude in motion: a thank you to the commuters, carers, shoppers, wedding guests, airport travellers and brave souls who book after a night out, then spend seven minutes explaining they are “*outside the bar with the lights*”.

Supporting those passengers means investing in the community around them. It means being visible, approachable and proud of the role local operators play, while reminding schools, charities, clubs and community groups that private hire firms are often ready to help with events, fundraising and practical transport support.

## A call to love local

Love Local Taxi & Private Hire week is an opportunity to celebrate all of that. It is a chance for operators to open their doors, invite the community in, tell their story and remind people why local matters. It is also a chance for passengers to look at the firms they use every week and recognise that behind the booking confirmation is a real local business with real people working hard to keep everyone moving.

Because when you book local, the benefit stays local. It supports drivers who know the roads, operators who know the community, and a service that is still there when the big platforms are busy chasing the next trend.

So let’s thank the drivers, dispatchers, operators and passengers who keep it going. Let’s shout about the sponsorships, charity work, safe journeys, emergency lifts, early mornings, late nights and everyday reliability that rarely gets applause but absolutely deserves it.

Most of all, let’s support the people who support us. The private hire industry gives back because the community has always given it something priceless: trust.

**Love local. Book local. Support local. And please, for the love of all drivers everywhere, check you have your keys before we pull away.**

If you want to join the family looking after you, the operator, and help you grow more in your community, email [paul@elite-liverpool.co.uk](mailto:paul@elite-liverpool.co.uk) for more information.

**Share technology, ideas, tears and laughter.**

# DRUGS IN CABS

## GLASGOW PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER SUSPENDED OVER £55,000 DRUGS CHARGES

A Glasgow PH driver has been found with an estimated £55,000 worth of suspected drugs in his possession. Mohammed Sajed had his PH licence suspended for the remainder of its duration on 3 June, following a formal notification from Police Scotland that

he had been “charged with being the supply of drugs.”

The committee heard that officers initially searched Sajed’s vehicle Perth on April 15, and allegedly discovered 5kg of herbal material with a street value of £19,800. A subsequent

search of his home allegedly uncovered an additional 8.95kg of cannabis.

In light of the serious criminal charges, the licensing committee voted to suspend Sajed’s taxi licence. He is set to appear in court at a later date.

## CABBIE LOSES LICENCE AFTER BEING CAUGHT WITH DRUGS AND CRIMINAL CASH NEAR CARLISLE

A cabbie has been stripped of his licence after police caught him transporting 1kg cannabis and thousands of pounds in cash near Carlisle.

Yousaf Hossain, 44, was stopped by police on M6 southbound after driving to Glasgow to collect the cargo. Inside his vehicle, officers found the class B drugs in the boot alongside £9,600

worth of criminal cash.

Hossain admitted to possessing the cannabis with intent to supply and the criminal cash, confessing he could see the bag he was asked to deliver contained a “large amount of cash.”

At Carlisle Crown Court, Hossain, from Nottingham, admitted to the offences on the basis that he

acted strictly as a courier with no involvement in supplying drugs. While the Recorder accepted Hossain acted as a courier, he emphasised the driver “must have been alive to the bags’ contents.”

Hossain was handed a one-year community order, including 10 rehabilitation activity days and 100 hours of unpaid work.

## FORMER LIVERPOOL NAVY VET TURNED CABBIE JAILED FOR STREET DEALING COCAINE OPERATION

A debt-ridden former merchant navy veteran turned taxi driver has been jailed for 28 months after being caught running a cocaine dealing operation in Liverpool city centre.

Warren Childs, 45, turned to crime after racking up £30,000 in debts, including taxi repair bills and tax arrears. Police stopped his Mercedes on Renshaw Street and found him with cash and high-purity cocaine hidden

between his legs. Officers later uncovered more drugs, worth up to £2,160, and £1,270 in cash. Phone records showed he had been running an independent dealing operation for a month.

Defence barrister Julian Nutter said Childs was working exhausting hours to support his family, calling the situation a “complete nightmare” brought on by desperation.

While acknowledging Childs’

previous good character, Judge Anil Murray refused to suspend the sentence, noting he made a deliberate choice to sell Class A drugs for personal financial gain. “Class A drugs cause misery in our society,” Judge Murray told Childs during sentencing. “You decided to start off your own class A drug dealing business so that you would be financially better off. I cannot suspend this sentence.”



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# SHAME SHAME

## DRIVER BUSTED IN **BIRMINGHAM** AFTER PASSENGERS DEBUNK HIS “GROUP OF FRIENDS” LIE

A driver was caught operating illegally in Birmingham city centre after his own passengers blew his cover to the police.

Traffic officers pulled over Mohammed Ramzan late at night on Corporation Street after noticing that his vehicle was acting suspiciously while picking up fares. When confronted, Ramzan tried to laugh off the situation, confidently claiming he was simply “dropping off a group of friends after a night out.”

However, his story quickly unravelled. When officers questioned the passengers separately, the confused riders admitted they had never seen Ramzan before in their lives and had hailed the car believing it was a legitimate taxi.

A police search of his home later uncovered an official council letter



confirming that Wolverhampton council had already stripped away his PH driver credentials due to previous compliance failures.

Ramzan was prosecuted for driving without insurance and operating a PHV without a licence. Birmingham Magistrates' Court hit him with a hefty financial penalty, court costs, and added six penalty points to his driving record.

Magistrates strongly condemned his actions, slamming his “reckless disregard” for public safety.

## **BRADFORD** PH BOSS LOSES LICENCE AFTER HOUSE CONVERTED INTO £210,000 CANNABIS FARM

A Bradford man has had his private hire operator's licence stripped away after allowing a property he owned to be transformed into a large-scale cannabis factory.

The decision was made by Bradford Council's licensing panel following a police raid that uncovered a sophisticated illegal

drug cultivation setup inside the house. Authorities confirmed the farm contained a massive yield of cannabis plants, with an estimated street value of c. £210,000.

During the investigation, it was revealed the property's electricity supply had been dangerously bypassed to power the specialised

heating and lighting equipment required to grow the drugs. Police highlighted that this tampering created a severe fire hazard and risk to the neighbouring residents. The Leap Taxis boss, who is responsible for a business operating 100 drivers in the district, claimed he had simply rented out the house to tenants and was unaware of the illegal activities taking place inside.

However, licensing officials rejected the explanation, ruling he was no longer a “fit and proper person” to hold a taxi licence due to the scale of the criminal operation tied to his property.

A spokesperson for the council stated that “the operator failed to meet the high standards of accountability required” to hold such a position of trust within the community, leading to the immediate revocation of the company's operating licence.

## DRUG DRIVING CABBIE AVOIDS JAIL FOLLOWING **M6 MOTORWAY** CRASH

A taxi driver has avoided immediate prison after a drug-fuelled M6 crash left his passenger hospitalised.

Jake Bland, 36, was caught driving a “significant distance” while nearly three times the legal limit for a cocaine metabolite. Court records show the motorway collision was caused by Bland's “bad driving.”

He also admitted to being double the drink-driving limit during a separate incident at a school car park.

At South Cumbria Magistrates' Court, Bland was handed a 14-week sentence, suspended for two years. He was also ordered to complete 120 days of alcohol monitoring and pay £854 in costs and surcharges.

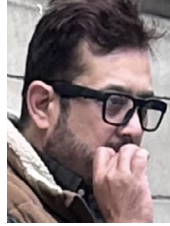
# SHAME SHAME

## GLASGOW PH DRIVER GUILTY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT OF SCHOOLGIRL IN SUPERMARKET CAR PARK

A PH driver has been convicted of sexually assaulting a vulnerable 14-year-old girl after offering to drive her home. The 45-year-old attacked the terrified teenager in the early hours of February 16 last year after pulling his car into a car park near Hillend, Edinburgh. The court heard that the cabbie had given the schoolgirl his mobile number four days prior following an official booking. The teenager later text him at 4:30am for a ride from a friend's house in Edinburgh to her home in Midlothian. During the journey, the driver asked to stop for a cigarette and pulled into the car park, where he groped the girl's thigh and forced himself on her. Recalling the horrific ordeal, the victim told

Edinburgh Sheriff Court: "He kissed me on the cheek, then snogged me. He put his tongue in my mouth, I told him to stop. I didn't feel comfortable."

As the journey continued, he slipped his hand down the victim's jogging bottoms and touched her vagina. The attack has had a devastating impact on the girl, leaving her deeply traumatised." The experienced PH driver of 18 years, denied all the allegations during the two-day trial. He claimed he only pulled into the supermarket car park because his engine was overheating, and



argued that the girl had moved to the front seat on her own because it was "more comfortable." When questioned by prosecutor Corey Laouadi, the defendant strongly protested his innocence, stating: "I never touched her, it never happened like that." However, a jury rejected his version of events, returning a majority guilty verdict after just 90 minutes of deliberation. Sheriff Douglas Keir described the attack as "a very serious matter" and warned the driver that "all sentencing options are open to the court at this time." The PH driver has been placed on the sex offender's register on an interim basis, and sentencing has been deferred for the preparation of background reports.

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## LEISURE CENTRE TO PAY £100,000 AFTER TRAGIC ELECTROCUTION OF PORTSMOUTH CABBIE

A leisure company has been ordered to pay £100,000 after a Portsmouth cabbie was tragically electrocuted by a faulty floodlight while playing football with friends. Albert Xhediku, a driver for City Wide Taxis, was playing a five-a-side game at the Mountbatten Centre in January 2016, when the match turned fatal.

After a ball was kicked out of bounds, Mr Xhediku climbed a fence to retrieve it. When he touched a nearby floodlight column, he suffered a catastrophic electric shock. Despite his friends' desperate attempts to resuscitate him, he died in the hospital the following day.

A subsequent investigation by the

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) exposed a history of severe neglect. Investigators discovered the shock was caused by worn and faulty wiring that had been

left in poor condition for several years. Alarming, the company had ignored a direct warning just a month prior. In December 2015, police officer Simon Tam suffered an "extremely painful" shock in the exact same spot during a game with colleagues, which caused his "whole body to tense up." Although the police reported the



incident, Parkwood Community Leisure took no action to repair the equipment. The company pleaded guilty to breaching health and safety laws. At Portsmouth Magistrates' Court, it was fined £60,000 and ordered to pay £40,000 in costs.

HSE inspector Dominic Goacher condemned the company's negligence, stating that it knew the system was in poor condition yet "failed to take action to remedy the faults," calling the case a "stark reminder" to manage the risks of ageing infrastructure.

Parkwood Leisure, which stopped operating the centre in 2017, expressed its "deepest and most sincere condolences" to the family.

## BRADFORD POLICE SERGEANT ADMITS TO PUNCHING AND STRANGLING CABBIE IN BRUTAL ATTACK

A West Yorkshire Police sergeant is facing the sack after pleading guilty to a violent, unprovoked assault on a taxi driver while the vehicle was moving.

Sergeant Edward Howard, who works in the Bradford area, admitted to charges of intentional strangulation and assault during a hearing at Leeds Magistrates' Court.

The court heard that Howard had been out drinking with colleagues in Cleckheaton last November, and was put into a taxi because he was too drunk. While the vehicle was travelling "at some speed" after leaving the motorway, CCTV footage captured Howard rubbing his hands together and slapping

his own face before lurching forward from the back seat.

He grabbed the driver around the neck with both hands and squeezed, before punching him in the head six times.

The driver, who managed to safely stop the vehicle, was physically unharmed but later stated he genuinely believed Howard "was going to kill him."

District Judge Dave Kitson condemned the "bizarre" behaviour, noting that it could have easily caused a crash "with catastrophic results for all concerned."

Defending Howard, Tom Harris described the incident as a "brutal attack" and a "bizarre episode," but stressed that it was "very much" a

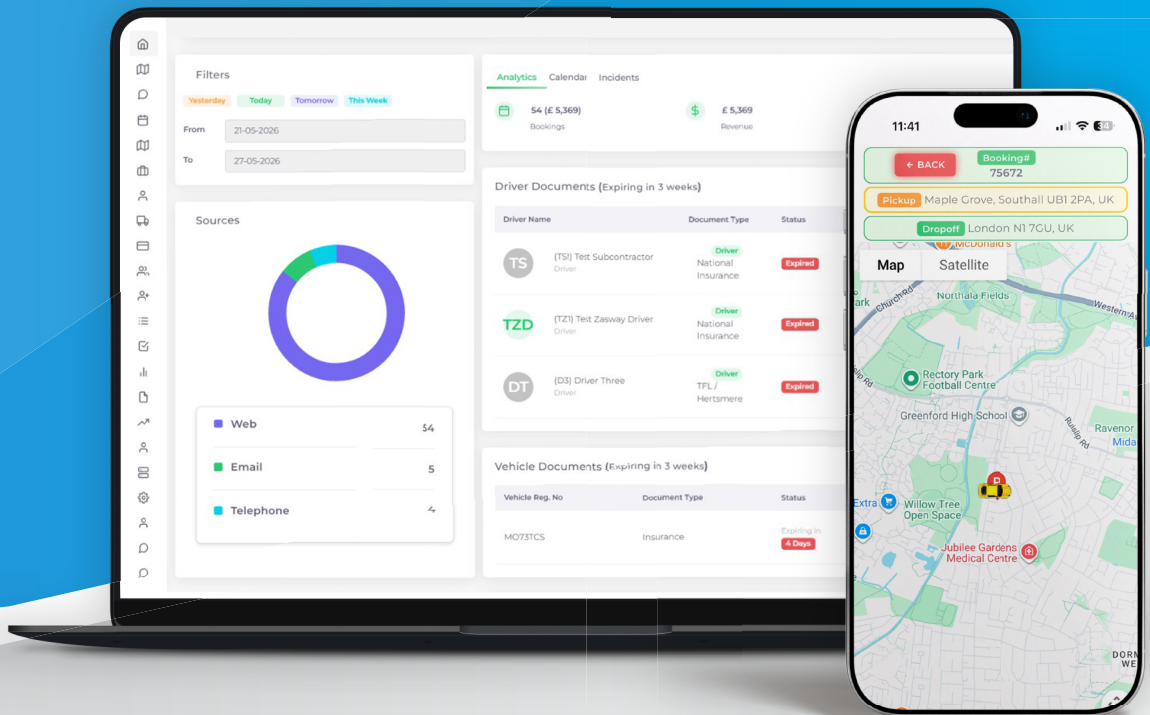
one-off. He told the court that Howard had surrendered to police as soon as he learned what he had done, though he still has no memory of the assault.

Howard was handed a 12-month community order requiring 200 hours of unpaid work. He was also ordered to pay £400 in compensation to the driver and £199 in court costs.

Sentencing him, Judge Kitson said: "I don't know what came over you and I am sure you don't either. It really was extreme behaviour."

Following the hearing, DCS Tanya Wilkins confirmed that internal disciplinary action will now follow and misconduct proceedings will be considered.

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# TAXI LEGISLATION UPDATE

## 12 TRANSPORT COMMITTEE URGES MINISTERS TO GET TOUGH ON TAXI STANDARDS

The Transport Committee has warned the Government that its plan for national minimum standards for taxis must not mean “low by default”.

The Committee’s report into the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles that was published on 9 June, also calls for a “clear plan” to reduce high levels of out-of-area working.

The report comes amid concern about fragmented regulation that varies from one area of the country to another. Currently there are more than 260 licensing authorities in England, each applying its own standards.

The Government announced in November 2025 that it would legislate to introduce national minimum standards for taxis and private hire vehicles, while some in the sector have called for tougher absolute national standards.

Minimum standards would establish a floor for the conditions set by every licensing authority, while preserving the ability of individual authorities to vary conditions by setting higher requirements where local circumstances warranted it.

Absolute national standards, by contrast, would impose a single set of conditions to be applied consistently by every authority, with no scope to add to or depart from them.

During its inquiry, the Committee heard arguments for both minimum standards and absolute national standards.

The Committee also heard fierce opposition to routine out-of-area working, which sees drivers obtaining their licence in one area and operating mainly in another. In its written evidence, the Blackpool Taxi Association referred to out-of-area working as “the root cause to all that’s wrong”.

A key concern is that this practice reduces standards by enabling ‘licence shopping’ - whereby drivers and operators deliberately obtain licences from an authority with less stringent requirements than the one in whose area they primarily operate.

This was highlighted by the 2025 report into group-based sexual exploitation by Baroness Louise Casey, which warned that licence shopping was undermining safeguarding efforts.

In the King’s Speech in May 2026, the Government announced its intention to further modernise the current system with measures unveiled including a national database of all licensed taxis and PHVs.

### Chair comment:

Transport Committee Chair Ruth Cadbury said: *“Throughout our inquiry, the Transport Committee heard concerns about inconsistent taxi standards up and down the country. We also encountered deep-seated opposition to routine out-of-area working that many believe reduces standards by enabling licence shopping.*

*“The Committee welcomes the Government’s determination to turn this around with minimum standards, but we are clear that these standards should be high, comprehensive and consistent, with safety as absolute – both for drivers and passengers.*

*“Ministers should also build on the foundations they have laid with a blueprint for bringing down high levels of out-of-area working that has undermined public confidence in the sector and made enforcement harder.*

*“By taking tough action now, we can ensure licence shopping is disincentivised, taxis are safer and passengers get the same high standards wherever they are in the country.”*

### National minimum standards:

The report states:

*“We welcome the department’s acknowledgement that greater national consistency in licensing standards is required. However, we are not persuaded that the current plan to pursue national minimum standards will be sufficient, unless those standards are strong enough to avoid a lowest common denominator effect, and carefully specified to remove incentives for licence shopping. The department already accepts that in practice there should be an absolute standard in areas like safety.*

*“The government’s plan for national minimum standards must not mean low by default. The areas in which variation in standards is permitted should be minimised in order to disincentivise licence shopping,*

# TAXI LEGISLATION UPDATE

and set at a high level wherever possible to ensure consistently high-quality passenger experiences.”

## Out of area working:

The report states:

“Out-of-area working is now a widespread feature of the taxi and private hire vehicle market. We recognise the strength of concern about its impact on standards, local accountability and public confidence. We also acknowledge that outright prohibition would be impractical.

“We urge the Department to bring forward a clear plan to curtail the extensive practice of out-of-area working and create greater incentives for drivers to license in the locality in which they operate. This will enable local licensing authorities to take enforcement action more readily, keep both drivers and passengers safe, and restore trust that has been lost across the sector.”

## NPHTA comment:

David Lawrie, Director of NPHTA said:

“Having been a part of the inquiry, with both multiple written submissions, and an oral submission in October, We have been waiting for this with bated breath.

“It is finally out there - and WOW, what a read. Everything has been covered, 69 pages - there's just so much detail including:

- National standards alone will not be enough
- Standards must also include turnaround time (processing and issuing licences)
- Fees
- Enforcement
- NO support for any 100% WAV policies in rural areas - instead recognising the need for a reasonable proportion
- CCTV
- Ending predominant out-of-area use (cross-border working)
- Extending of NR3S to include vehicles and operators

“I can honestly say, that the vast majority of everything we said on your behalf has been taken on board!”

Click to read: <https://shorturl.at/w9UZb/>

Remember NPHTA, IoL, and many other stakeholders have already begun discussions with the Transport Minister Lilian Greenwood ...

“This time, FINALLY, it looks like change IS coming!”

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# GLASGOW LICENSING OVERHAUL

## GLASGOW TO REMOVE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS AND MODERNISE WHOLE OF LICENSING REGIME



Glasgow City Council is to scrap an old rule forcing taxi/PH drivers to carry fire extinguishers following a campaign by Scottish PH Association highlighting the requirements actually pose safety risks.

The change is part of a major over-haul of Glasgow's taxi/PH licensing conditions. However, while the wider policy review introduces sweeping updates across the sector, it's the removal of the mandatory fire extinguishers that marks a major victory for trade reformers who have fought for years to align Scottish licensing with modern safety standards.

The SPHA has long argued that this requirement is not only fundamentally flawed but introduces unnecessary risks to drivers and the travelling public alike. Under current guidelines from national fire bodies, drivers without firefighting training are actively discouraged from attempting to tackle vehicle blazes.

Eddie Grice, General Secretary of the SPHA, welcomed the shift in perspective, stating: *"The primary purpose of an extinguisher in a vehicle should only ever be as an aid to escape, not as a tool to fight a fire. In practice, forcing an untrained driver to tackle a vehicle fire is minimal in benefit and maximum in risk. National safety guidance is explicit by saying if a vehicle catches fire, you get the occupants out quickly and to a safe place. You do not open the bonnet and attempt to extinguish an engine fire yourself. The instruction is simple. Get out, stay out, and call 999."*

The SPHA's campaign has relied on aligning Scottish practices with evolving UK standards. In England, major licensing authorities, such as Southampton and Milton Keynes, have recently dismantled their extinguisher requirements. This followed clear warnings from insurance bodies that claims could be invalidated if an amateur attempted to fight a fire, alongside updated Best Practice Guidance from the DfT and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

Beyond the fire risks, carrying the equipment has caused practical issues; securing heavy extinguishers can entail drilling directly into fascia panels, bulkheads or frames. The SPHA highlights that the structural modification causes permanent damage and risks puncturing hidden wiring or vital electrical systems.

While Glasgow's decision marks a watershed moment, the SPHA emphasises this is part of a larger, coordinated effort spanning many authorities and national legislative discussions. *"Eliminating this flawed requirement authority by authority, is an incredibly impractical way to manage a transport sector,"* Grice explained. *"Unless all councils act simultaneously, we simply create a patchwork of inconsistent rules. That's why the SPHA has been pushing this issue in individual committee rooms, as well as at national legislative level."*

*"We're campaigning for unified national vehicle standards to guarantee regulatory consistency and safety across all Scotland."*

The removal of the extinguishers forms part of a broader modernisation of Glasgow's licensing regime. At meetings held in late 2025 and early 2026, the council's Licensing Section established dedicated Working Groups to completely review conditions that had sat untouched for 15 years.

The SPHA was heavily involved throughout this process, securing a seat on the PHC Working Group alongside council enforcement officers, Police Scotland and select trade representatives to meticulously draft the new framework.

Following a series of summits between February - April 2026, a comprehensive list of revised conditions was generated including: updates to minimum ages for vehicles, use of CCTV, protective screens in PHCs, conditions on vehicle modifications and streamlining rules on taximeters in PHCs.

The final draft of revised conditions was issued to the working groups in May, with no further amendments sought by the trade. Glasgow's Licensing and Regulatory Committee approved the changes on 10 June 2026 and they will take effect on 1st September.

For the SPHA, however, the successful removal of the fire extinguisher rule serves as a powerful precedent for what targeted, legally-grounded trade representation can achieve for driver safety. Mr Grice concluded: *"We hope to see this same change take place around the country and SPHA will continue working towards greater uniformity of standards across the board"*.

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# KEEP UP WITH COMPLIANCE

## COMPLIANCE IN THE INDUSTRY IS CHANGING, IS YOUR FLEET KEEPING UP?

Article by CheckedSafe  
info@checkedsafe.com  
www.checkedsafe.com



The taxi and private hire industry remains an essential part of day-to-day life for millions of passengers every year. However, alongside growing demand comes increasing responsibility. Operators today face greater scrutiny than ever before from licensing authorities, regulators, insurers, and the travelling public.

Licensing authorities are continuing to raise much-needed compliance standards, introducing more detailed requirements around vehicle safety, and record keeping. These changes are designed to improve public safety and consistency across the sector.

For many taxi operators, compliance is still managed through a mix of paper records, spreadsheets, and manual reminders. This approach may have been sufficient in the past, but it is becoming harder to sustain as fleets grow and expectations increase. The risk is not just inefficiency, but inconsistency, where small gaps in process can lead to larger compliance issues.

Vehicle safety remains a central focus. Although taxis are subject to an annual inspection, operators still carry responsibility for ensuring vehicles remain roadworthy between these inspections. Everyday use in busy urban environments means wear and tear can develop quickly. Without a structured approach to daily checks, minor defects can escalate into serious issues, potentially leading to downtime or enforcement action.

Driver compliance is equally critical. Operators must be confident that every driver is properly licensed and remains entitled to carry passengers. However, driving licences are not static documents. Entitlements can change, endorsements can be added, and renewals can be missed. Relying on historic checks is no longer enough in an environment where regulatory expectations continue to tighten.

This is where digital compliance systems are increasingly becoming part of modern fleet operations. Instead of relying on manual processes, operators are moving towards platforms that centralise vehicle checks, licence checking, defect reporting, and are able to provide complete audit trails in one place. The aim is not only to reduce administrative burden, but to improve visibility and accountability across the entire operation.

CheckedSafe has been developed specifically with these challenges in mind. By digitising daily vehicle checks and licence checking, operators are able to receive real-time updates, track issues as they happen, and maintain clear records that can be accessed instantly when needed. This level of visibility is particularly valuable when dealing with licensing inspections or responding to compliance queries.

The benefits of this shift extend beyond regulatory reassurance. Digital compliance processes help create better communication between drivers and management teams, reduce delays in defect reporting, and ensure that issues are acted on more quickly. Over time, this can lead to improved vehicle availability, fewer unexpected breakdowns, and a more proactive approach to maintenance.

Passenger expectations are also evolving. Customers increasingly expect high standards not just in service, but in safety and professionalism. Being able to demonstrate strong compliance processes is becoming a differentiator for operators, particularly in competitive urban markets where reputation plays a key role in securing both private and contract work.

Looking ahead, there is strong indication that compliance requirements will continue to increase. Operators who continue to rely on outdated systems may find it increasingly difficult to keep pace.

Ultimately, compliance in the taxi industry should not be viewed purely as an administrative burden. When managed effectively, it supports safer vehicles, more reliable services, and stronger businesses. The operators who embrace more structured, digital approaches today will be better positioned to meet the expectations of tomorrow's regulatory environment.



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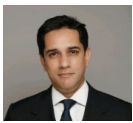
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# OUT-OF-AREA-WORKING

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE

Article by Talal Malik, Solicitor  
Transit Legal  
[www.transitlegal.co.uk](http://www.transitlegal.co.uk)



### A practice that has moved from exception to routine

Out-of-area working has become a defining feature of the modern taxi and private hire sector. Vehicles licensed by one authority are now routinely seen operating well beyond the district that issued the licence, turning what was once occasional into everyday practice in many parts of the country.

For drivers and operators, the attraction is clear. Licensing regimes vary significantly between authorities, including vehicle standards, compliance requirements and fees. Obtaining a licence in one district while undertaking work in another can therefore present a commercial advantage.

However, the legal framework governing private hire services was never intended to permit unrestricted geographic mobility. Cross-border working is lawful in certain circumstances, but only within the defined statutory structure established by the legislation.

### The legal principle behind cross-border hiring

The statutory framework distinguishes between the location of a journey and the acceptance of the booking. A private hire vehicle may undertake journeys almost anywhere, provided the booking has been accepted by a licensed operator, and the operator, driver and vehicle are all licensed by the same authority.

The legality of the journey, therefore, depends not on where the passenger is collected or dropped off, but on who accepted the booking and whether it was accepted within the statutory framework. This is why many cross-border journeys are lawful. A passenger in one district may book through an operator licensed elsewhere, and once the operator accepts the booking and dispatches a driver licensed under the same authority, the journey may take place outside the licensing district without breaching the legislation.

In practice, regulatory concerns rarely arise from the journey itself, but from situations where the statutory booking structure has been weakened or bypassed.

### Where cross-border working becomes unlawful

A number of operational arrangements commonly encountered within the sector fall outside the intended legal structure. One example arises where a driver licensed in one authority effectively operates independently in another district, accepting work directly from passengers or through informal arrangements that bypass the licensed operator. PH drivers cannot lawfully accept bookings themselves. Where the operator's role becomes nominal or absent, the legal basis of the journey is undermined.

Another difficulty arises through dispatch systems that allocate bookings across drivers licensed under different authorities. Where a booking is accepted by one operator but fulfilled by a driver licensed elsewhere, the statutory requirement that the operator, driver and vehicle share the same licensing authority may not be satisfied.

Licensing authorities also encounter situations in which vehicles licensed in distant authorities operate almost entirely within another district. The legislation does not prohibit vehicles from working outside the area where the licence was issued. Nevertheless, where vehicles appear to have little practical connection with the licensing authority that granted the licence, regulators may question whether the arrangement reflects the intention of the statutory scheme.

In each of these situations, the central issue is the same. The lawfulness of private hire work depends upon the integrity of the statutory booking structure. Where that structure is weakened or circumvented, regulatory scrutiny is likely to follow.

### The responsibilities of private hire operators

Within the private hire framework, the operator occupies a central regulatory role. The operator accepts bookings, maintains journey records and dispatches drivers. Because of that role, operators carry primary responsibility for ensuring that cross-border operations remain within the statutory framework.

This responsibility extends beyond administrative record-keeping. Operators must be able to demonstrate that their dispatch systems, booking processes and driver arrangements operate in accordance with the legislation. In larger operations,

# OUT-OF-AREA-WORKING

particularly those using digital dispatch platforms or multi-district driver networks, licensing authorities may look closely at whether the operator is genuinely exercising control over the bookings it accepts. Where an operator cannot clearly demonstrate how bookings are accepted, recorded and allocated, regulators may question whether the operational model preserves the statutory structure intended by Parliament.

## The position of taxi drivers

The position of hackney carriage drivers differs in an important respect. HC licences remain tied to the authority that issued them. While taxis may undertake pre-booked journeys outside their licensing district, they generally may not ply for hire beyond it.

A taxi driver licensed in one authority cannot lawfully accept street hails in another district. Doing so may amount to unlawful plying for hire and expose the driver to both criminal enforcement and licensing action.

In areas where significant numbers of out-of-area PHVs operate, this distinction can create tension between the taxi and PH sectors, particularly where licensing standards differ between authorities and cross-border activity is perceived as creating an uneven competitive environment.

## Why licensing authorities remain concerned

For authorities, out-of-area working presents practical regulatory challenges. Licensing officers have direct control only over the drivers and vehicles they license. When vehicles licensed elsewhere operate extensively in the district, enforcement becomes more complicated. Complaints, safeguarding concerns or compliance issues must often be referred back to the authority that issued the licence. This can delay regulatory action and reduce the immediacy of local oversight.

Where large numbers of vehicles operate within a district without being licensed there, authorities may feel their regulatory framework is being undermined. As a result, cross-border operations are frequently viewed through the lens of public protection rather than market competition.

## Improving compliance in practice

For operators and drivers engaged in cross-border work, clarity in the booking structure is essential. Bookings must be demonstrably accepted by the correct licensed operator, and records should clearly

identify when the booking was accepted and which driver was allocated.

Drivers should ensure that all work undertaken is routed through their licensed operator rather than accepted directly from passengers. Even informal arrangements can create legal difficulty where the statutory booking structure is bypassed.

For operators using app-based dispatch systems, it is particularly important that the technology preserves the legal framework rather than obscuring it. Digital convenience does not alter the statutory requirements governing private hire bookings.

## The direction of regulatory reform

Out-of-area working has attracted increasing national attention. Government consultations and industry discussions have explored reforms aimed at improving regulatory oversight where cross-border operations occur.

Proposals have included stronger data-sharing arrangements between licensing authorities, greater consistency in national licensing standards and reforms addressing how operators manage bookings fulfilled across district boundaries. While comprehensive reform has not yet been implemented, the issue remains firmly on the policy agenda.

## A continuing point of tension in the sector

Out-of-area working reflects a structural tension within the licensing system. Passenger demand increasingly operates on a national and digital basis, while regulation remains rooted in local authority licensing. The law permits cross-border hiring, but only within the statutory structure governing how bookings are accepted and allocated. Drivers and operators who work within that framework can operate lawfully across authority boundaries; those who treat cross-border working as an unregulated space risk attracting regulatory scrutiny.

Out-of-area operations frequently give rise to complex questions concerning operator control, booking structures and regulatory compliance. I specialise in transport regulatory and licensing law and regularly represent drivers and operators before licensing sub-committees and Magistrates' Courts. Where issues arise involving investigation, licence review, refusal, suspension, or revocation, early specialist advice can assist in addressing the regulatory concerns being raised. Those facing such proceedings are welcome to make contact for advice or representation.

# PROTEST PLIGHT

## LONDON PROTEST OVER DRIVERLESS CARS DISRUPTS CITY HALL TRANSPORT MEETING

Private hire drivers, working on platforms including Uber and Bolt, disrupted a London Assembly Transport Committee meeting on 24 June to protest the planned rollout of driverless cars on London's streets.

The meeting at City Hall included a discussion on the future of autonomous vehicle technology, with industry stakeholders invited to give evidence to members of the London Assembly and TfL officials. Speakers included a representative from Waymo, the leading commercial robotaxi operator worldwide, and Wayve, a UK based autonomous vehicle technology company that secured more than a billion pounds in funding from Uber.

Drivers belonging to the IWGB Union stood and interrupted the meeting to raise concerns directly with London's transport decision-makers. Protesters highlighted concerns around passenger safety, the impact of additional vehicles on already congested roads, and the threat posed to more than 100,000 private hire driver jobs.

During the meeting, one driver challenged claims made about accessibility benefits and raised concerns that disabled passengers' needs were being used to justify the rollout of driverless vehicles. Another highlighted the absence of drivers from the discussions, questioning why those whose livelihoods would be affected had not been invited to take part.

The meeting was forced to a stop several times as drivers spoke out, with the committee and speakers leaving the room whilst security



officers removed protesters.

Last month the government passed legislation allowing companies to begin testing robotaxis on UK roads and apply for permits to start using them commercially. Tech firms have been trialling the cars on London streets as part of this application process, but TfL still has the power to refuse to issue these permits in London.

Unions and other groups have raised concerns about the pace of development and the lack of consultation with the public and with workers who could be affected.

IWGB member, Rez Kamyabi, who protested inside the meeting, said: "We interrupted today's meeting because we can't afford to wait. TfL is considering plans that could push tens of thousands of drivers into mass unemployment.

"I've been a driver for more than ten years, and despite everything that's wrong with the sector it's a job that I'm skilled at and that I enjoy. I won't let them take it from me, just so that tech bosses can get even richer.

"When drivers united with the IWGB during the licence crisis last year, we got organised, we protested, and we forced TfL to fix the delays crisis. We can win against them again. But we need

drivers across London to team up in bigger numbers than ever before. We call on all PH drivers to join us because it's now or never. If drivers do not act, decisions will be made without us by people who will not face the consequences. Either we come together and fight, or soon we may not have anything left to fight for."

Alex Marshall, President of the IWGB Union said: "We are sleepwalking into a crisis. TfL needs to wake up and put the brakes on this threat to our city. Robotaxis will clog up our roads, put the public in danger, threaten over 100,000 drivers' jobs, and transfer power from the hands of Londoners to the hands of tech execs.

"The people who live in this city have not even been consulted about this wholesale takeover of our public space. Decisions about London's future cannot be made without the voices of the communities who will be affected. "The government is rushing through these cars in the name of 'innovation', but innovation only matters when it serves people. What value is innovation when it does not serve London communities or workers, and only benefits billionaires behind these companies?

"Together we can claim back London for Londoners, not tech billionaires. Drivers in Texas and New York have already halted the rollout. If London drivers unite like we did during the licence crisis, we can force TfL to the table and do the same."

Watch the video of the disruption here: <https://shorturl.at/63gYf>

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# JUST DESERTS

## HAMILTON PASSENGER JAILED FOR 18 MONTHS AFTER VIOLENT ATTACK ON TAXI DRIVER

A late-night taxi ride ended in violence when a rowdy passenger choked a Hamilton cabbie who simply asked to be paid. Michael McCabe, 43, has been sentenced to 18 months in prison following the incident last July, which also involved him smashing a resident's window with a wheelie bin. The trouble began around 1am when the 27-year-old cabbie picked up McCabe and a woman, driving them to multiple locations. After McCabe stepped out of the vehicle on Craighburn Street, he picked up a bin and hurled it

through a house window. When the driver warned McCabe he would call the police and requested his fare, the passenger turned his aggression on the driver. The court heard how McCabe tore down the plastic barrier inside the cab, reached into the front seat, and wrapped both hands tightly around the driver's neck. "The driver tried to wriggle free but McCabe put his arm over his neck and held him in place before letting go and making off," the prosecutor stated. In his defence, a lawyer noted that McCabe was a recovering alcoholic

who had relapsed, stating the incident was "fuelled by alcohol" and offering an apology to the driver "who was only doing his job." The lawyer added that the smashed window stemmed from a separate dispute with the homeowner. However, Sheriff John Hamilton KC rejected any excuses after reviewing a victim impact statement and examining McCabe's extensive criminal history. Sending him to prison, the Sheriff told McCabe: "There is no plausible explanation for your conduct that night other than your violent nature."

## NORFOLK WOMAN JAILED AFTER CRIME SPREE INVOLVING STOLEN TAXI AND HAMMER ATTACK

A 25-year-old Norfolk woman has been sentenced to 22 months in prison following a chaotic series of crimes that included stealing a taxi, smashing police station windows with a hammer, and attacking emergency workers. Mia Stebbings, of North Walsham, was jailed last month after committing multiple offences across Dereham and her hometown. Her most recent crime wave peaked on March 18, when she took a taxi from Norwich Bus Station to Dereham. When the driver stepped out of the vehicle to find the correct address, Stebbings hopped into the driver's seat and sped away. Her joyride quickly ended in disaster. Police were called to Commercial Road following a collision where the stolen taxi crashed into several parked cars.



An off-duty police officer administered first aid at the scene before Stebbings was taken to the hospital and subsequently arrested. Investigators later reviewed dashcam footage which revealed she had also crashed into a police vehicle right outside Dereham Police Station. For this wild sequence of events, she was charged with aggravated vehicle taking, dangerous driving, driving while disqualified, and driving without insurance.

However, this was not her first encounter with the law. Stebbings was also sentenced for two earlier incidents. On March 15, officers at North Walsham Police Station investigated a loud banging at their rear door and discovered Stebbings outside. She had "smashed the glass panels with a hammer," leading to charges of criminal damage, possession of an offensive weapon, and being in an enclosed premises. Furthermore, on September 24, 2025, she attacked two paramedics who were responding to an emergency call at a pub in North Walsham, resulting in two counts of assaulting an emergency worker. In addition to her 22-month prison sentence, Stebbings has been hit with a 35-month driving ban and ordered to pay a £187 surcharge.

# UNJUST DESERTS

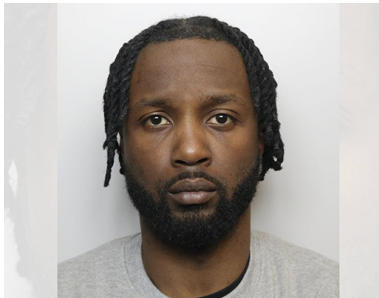
## OXFORD KNIFEMAN SPARED JAIL AFTER “APPALLING ATTACK” ON CABBIE

An Oxford man has avoided immediate prison time after threatening to stab a taxi driver and chasing him down the street in a violent row over a fare.

Donnelle Ochiela, 28, was handed a suspended sentence at Oxford Crown Court on June 18, after admitting to threatening a person with a knife.

The court heard that Ochiela had hired driver Murad Eltayeb to take him from Blackbird Leys to Snowdon Mede, leaving his jacket and phone behind as reassurance while the driver waited 20 minutes for him. However, when Ochiela returned, an argument broke out over payment.

When Mr Eltayeb threatened to call the police, Ochiela pulled out a



knife and threatened to stab him. The terrified driver fled, but Ochiela chased him down, punching him and kicking him in the groin before running away.

He was later arrested by police.

The attack has had a devastating impact on the victim, who has since quit his job.

In a statement read to the court, Mr

Eltayeb said: “The incident has affected me emotionally. I stopped working as a taxi driver. I’ve been in constant fear and distress. I’ve lived in Oxford for 10 years and I’m thinking of leaving... The impact this has had made me want to leave the UK.”

The court heard in mitigation that Ochiela struggles with ADHD and that the attack was unplanned.

Condemning the “appalling act,” Judge Recorder Eleanor Sanderson sentenced Ochiela to a 28-month prison sentence, suspended for two years.

He must also complete 150 hours of unpaid work, attend 26 rehabilitation sessions, and pay £900 in compensation to the victim.

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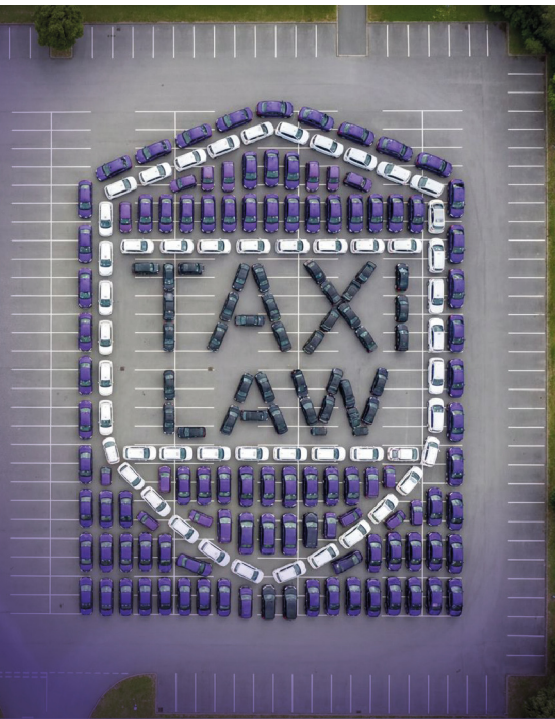
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# ALERT: CHECK YOUR INSURANCE!

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



This month we focus on insurance policy wording, check the details, make sure you are clear in the insurance that you need. This comes following an alert raised to us by Colchester council which sent an email out to operators that read:

*“Dear Operator*

*It has come to our attention that some hackney carriages that are sub-contracted to undertake journeys via private hire operators may not have adequate insurance in place.*

*If a hackney carriage undertakes journeys for a private hire operator, even only occasionally, they are required to have both public hire insurance and private hire insurance.*

*As an operator you have a duty to check the vehicle insurance policies for the vehicles you use. Please check the wording of the vehicle insurance policy carefully to ensure there is the correct cover in place and ask the vehicle owner to check with their insurance provider if you are unsure.*

*Where vehicles do not have adequate insurance for their use, the council will take enforcement action, which is likely to result in the suspension of vehicle licences and the issuing of penalty points*

*If an incident occurs whilst a vehicle is working for you without the correct insurance, you are at risk of prosecution.”*

I was confused about this suggestion, and reached out to as for a copy of such policy wording, which the council were kind enough to provide as follows:

“

## EXCLUSIONS

*The Policy does not cover use*

*(a) for hire or reward other than for the carriage of passengers for hire or reward under a Hackney Carriage Licence. ”*

Now this was not expressly excluding pre-booked, since of course it states “under a hackney carriage license, which is allowed by law to fulfil prebooked jobs.

## Is this wording correct?

But there was another example as follows:

## “ LIMITATIONS AS TO USE

*Use for the business of the Policyholder as a Public Hire operative including the carriage of passengers for Hire and Reward purposes and in accordance with the requirements of the declared licensing authority.*

*Use in connection with the Policyholders business or profession, including Social Domestic and Pleasure purposes.*

## EXCLUDING

*Use for racing, pacemaking, competitions, rallies, track days, trials or speed tests whether on road, track, off-road, land prepared for such use..... carriage of passengers for Private Hire, carriage of goods for hire and reward, commercial travelling or any use in connection with the motor trade. ”*

We found this situation particularly unusual, so we contacted our insurance partners who all agreed that the policy wording is ambiguous and open to interpretation.

Their view was that, while a private hire policy does not cover taxi work (i.e. journeys that are not pre-booked through an operator), the reverse does not necessarily apply. This makes the wording confusing and potentially concerning.

As we know, any hackney carriage (taxi) can legally undertake pre-booked journeys accepted from any source, whether booked directly with the driver in advance or through a private hire operator. The “triple lock” rule does not apply to hackney carriages. This is one of the reasons why there was a significant increase in hackney carriage licence applications following the Berwick case, which helped clarify the legislation. Given this, it is difficult to understand why an insurance policy would seek to exclude this ability.

With that in mind, we strongly recommend that you carefully review your insurance policy wording. If the wording is incorrect or misleading, it could potentially create licensing issues through no fault of your own. More importantly, you may find that you are not insured for work you reasonably believed was covered.

However, it is worth noting that most insurers are extremely helpful. During the Covid pandemic, for example, many were quick to extend policies to include food delivery work to help drivers continue earning during difficult times.



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# WHO LICENSED THAT DRIVER?

## THE QUESTION WOLVERHAMPTON DOESN'T WANT TO ANSWER

Article by Christopher Johnson  
Veteran London hackney driver

Picture this: you open a minicab app on your phone; you book a car; the driver accepts; then cancels; you're left on the pavement; you've missed your appointment; and you want to complain. Fair enough; but complain to whom?

Here's the problem: you have no idea which licensing authority regulates the driver who just let you down. The app doesn't tell you. It never did. Without that information, you cannot bring a complaint to the authority responsible. And without a complaint, the regulatory system that is supposed to protect you simply doesn't function.

That is not a hypothetical scenario, it is how app-based private hire operates today across much of the country. And when I raised a formal complaint about it with Wolverhampton City Council - one of the licensing authorities at the centre of the problem - the response I received raised questions every passenger, every trade professional, and every elected representative with an interest in public safety ought to be asking.

### How we got here

Bolt, like several other major app-based operators, holds licences from more than one licensing authority. It holds a licence from Transport for London, covering drivers based in London. It also holds a licence from Wolverhampton City Council, whose licensed drivers operate cross-border into London. When a passenger opens the Bolt app in the capital, both groups of drivers are available. Both appear identically on screen, under the same branding, through the same interface. Nothing tells the passenger which authority licensed the driver heading towards them.

For the vast majority of journeys that go without a hitch, this is invisible. But the moment something goes wrong, that invisibility becomes a serious problem. A cancellation, an accessibility failure, conduct that warrants a complaint. In any of those situations, the

first thing a passenger needs to know is which authority is responsible and how to contact it. That is not a technicality, it is the entire mechanism of accountability. Remove it, and the passenger has nowhere to go.

The problem falls hardest on disabled passengers. Someone who has specific accessibility requirements, who has booked in reliance on them being met, and whose driver then cancels, is not merely inconvenienced, they may be stranded at the very moment they most need the system to work. The right to complain to the responsible authority matters enormously in that situation. It only works if the passenger can identify that authority.

### What consumer protection law is there to do

Consumer protection law exists for a straightforward reason: when people buy goods or services, they are almost always at a disadvantage compared to the business they are dealing with. The business knows exactly who it is, how it is structured, who is responsible for what, and how its systems work. The consumer typically knows none of this. The law corrects that imbalance by requiring traders to provide the information consumers need before they commit to a transaction.

That principle runs through three separate bodies of legislation that, between them, cover this situation comprehensively. The first, dating from 2013, sets out the information a trader must provide to a consumer before a distance contract - one concluded online or through an app - is entered into. That includes the identity of the trader: who they are, where they are based, and who is responsible for the service. The second, from 2015, goes further and requires that whatever terms a trader presents to consumers must be transparent - expressed clearly, in plain language, so that an ordinary person can understand them. The third, passed in 2024 and specifically designed for digital platforms, addresses a different but related problem: the omission of information that a consumer needs in order to make an informed decision. Under that legislation, leaving out material information at the

# WHO LICENSED THAT DRIVER?



point a consumer is deciding whether to book is itself an unlawful commercial practice.

Now ask a simple question: would an average consumer standing in London and opening the Bolt app want to know which licensing authority regulates the driver and vehicle about to be sent to them? Of course they would. That information is directly material to their decision. It determines where they can complain if something goes wrong. It determines which authority is responsible for ensuring the driver has been properly vetted and the vehicle properly inspected. It is precisely the kind of information that consumer protection legislation was designed to ensure they receive.

Bolt does not provide it. The cross-border booking architecture makes it structurally impossible for consumers to know this before they commit. The information does not exist at the point of booking because no driver has yet been identified. By the time a driver accepts the job, the consumer is already committed. By the time the journey is complete, most consumers have moved on. And for the consumer who wants to complain - particularly a disabled consumer who has been failed - the information they need is simply not there.

## The complaint and the response

I raised formal complaints with Wolverhampton City Council in May 2026, asking a series of direct questions. Had the council considered whether its licensing framework allowed a disabled consumer to identify the relevant authority following a cancellation? What conditions, if any, required disclosure of which authority governed the driver? Had it assessed whether the Bolt booking architecture complied with consumer protection law? Had it considered using its powers to require that disclosure?

And could it explain how its failure to do so was consistent with its legal obligations towards disabled people?

The council's response did not answer those questions. What it did instead was rather more instructive.

It opened by pointing out that Bolt's licence was granted in October 2021, and that the licensing conditions cited in the complaint were only adopted in October 2025, applying to licences granted after that date. Bolt, the council argued, was not therefore subject to those conditions.

It is worth pausing on that argument, because it reveals something fundamental about how the council has approached this complaint.

That distinction - between a 2021 licence and a 2025 policy - is a piece of internal licensing administration. It lives entirely within Wolverhampton's regulatory machinery. It does not exist anywhere in the world for the average consumer. A member of the public who looks at Wolverhampton City Council's website sees a licensing policy. They see a framework. They see conditions that the council has put in place to govern the operators it licenses. They have no means of knowing, and no reason to suspect, that a currently operating national platform is exempt from those standards because of the year in which its licence was first granted. Nothing tells them. Not the council's website, not the Bolt app, not anything in the booking process.

The average consumer is entitled to assume that a licensed operator is operating under the authority's current standards. Any other assumption would make a nonsense of consumer protection and licensing policy. If an authority publishes a licensing framework that sets out what consumers can expect from its licensed operators, and certain operators are in fact operating under an older version of that framework without anyone being told, that gap is itself a transparency failure. The council offered this distinction as a defence. On examination, it is part of the problem.

The response went on to note that Wolverhampton was the first authority in the country to adopt certain accessibility conditions, and that this demonstrated the council was effectively discharging its duties. Good practice in one area does not discharge a specific, identified failure in another. The complaint concerned what was happening to consumers using the platform now. The council's pride in its policy development did not address that.

# WHO LICENSED THAT DRIVER?

The council then revealed that it had audited Bolt the previous day - one day after the complaint was received - and found no issues. It added, firmly, that it would not be conducting further audits simply because a complainant demanded it.

An audit conducted the day after a detailed complaint arrived, apparently without the specific questions being put to the operator and without any examination of the consumer law arguments raised, is not an investigation. It is the appearance of one. The complaint was closed on the basis of it.

## Three laws and a one-line dismissal

The complaint argued, drawing on those three bodies of consumer protection legislation, that Bolt's booking architecture was not meeting its legal obligations. The council's response dealt with this by citing one provision of the oldest of the three pieces of legislation - a provision from 2013 - that excludes passenger transport contracts from certain pre-contract information requirements, and concluding on that basis that the other two bodies of law were "not relevant".

No explanation was provided for that conclusion. No analysis of the 2015 or 2024 legislation appeared anywhere in the response. The reasoning appears to be that because one part of one older piece of legislation contains a transport exemption, newer and separately enacted consumer protection obligations simply disappear along with it.

That is not how the law works. Each piece of legislation is independent. An exemption in one statute does not automatically carry over into a different statute enacted years later, and certainly not into legislation passed in 2024 specifically to address the conduct of digital platforms. The 2015 transparency obligation applies to passenger transport contracts in exactly the same way as any other. The 2024 legislation, designed precisely for the kind of app-based commercial conduct this complaint concerns, contains no equivalent transport carve-out.

The issue is further complicated by Bolt's own descriptions of its role. In its rider terms and conditions, Bolt presents itself as the provider of the transportation service. Yet in other documentation, it describes itself as an intermediary that merely connects passengers with drivers. Those positions are not obviously the same. Either way, the inconsistency raises legitimate

questions about whether consumers are being given a clear and transparent explanation of who is responsible for the service they are purchasing.

The complaint accordingly asked, at Stage 2, that the consumer law questions be referred to the council's own legal department. These are statutory interpretation questions, they require legal advice, not a one-line assertion that two Acts of Parliament are irrelevant.

## A register that doesn't register

At one point in its response, the council referred to Wolverhampton's public register of licences as evidence that consumers had access to sufficient information about its licensed operators. The council's own Freedom of Information response, exhibited to the Stage 2 complaint, confirmed that the register does not include address details and that those details are not separately disclosed.

The complaint identified a failure to disclose the trader's identity and location. The council pointed to a register. Its own FOI decision confirmed the register was deliberately kept without the information in question. A licensing authority cannot point to a register it has chosen to keep incomplete as evidence that its licensed operators are meeting their consumer transparency obligations.

## Complain to the operator - seriously?

Perhaps the most telling passage in the council's response concerned what a passenger left stranded by a cancellation should do. The council's answer was that the consumer could complain to Bolt and subsequently make enquiries about which licensing authority to contact.

Think about what that means in practice.

A consumer has just been let down by a regulated operator - having had their booking cancelled, been left without transport and, in some cases, been stranded with unmet accessibility needs. The council's proposed route to accountability requires that consumers go back to the operator that has just failed them, ask that operator to tell them who regulates it, and then take the information provided - if any - and pursue a separate complaint from there.

If a licensed operator has already failed in its obligations to a consumer, it is the last party from

# WHO LICENCED THAT DRIVER?



whom that consumer should be expected to obtain the information needed to bring a regulatory complaint. Directing an aggrieved passenger to the operator that has wronged them is not a consumer protection framework. It is an arrangement that protects the operator from scrutiny while leaving the passenger without any practical route to redress.

Consumer protection law exists precisely to prevent this. It places obligations on traders rather than consumers because Parliament understood that a person who has already been let down should not then be required to conduct their own investigation before they can exercise their rights. The council's suggested approach turns that principle on its head entirely.

## The question of whose interests are being served

Reading the council's response as a whole, a pattern emerges that goes beyond any individual legal error. Throughout the letter, the council advances arguments on the operator's behalf. It assumes the operator's legal position to be correct without requiring the operator to demonstrate compliance. It constructs defences that the operator has not been asked to provide. It declines to engage with the arguments that contradict those defences.

There is a wider context to this that matters. Wolverhampton City Council licensed this operator. It renewed that licence. If it has done so without ever considering whether the operator complies with consumer protection law - law that a minister confirmed in Parliament in March 2026 forms part of the fit and proper assessment - then the council has a direct institutional interest in defending the position it

has taken. To acknowledge the consumer protection failures identified in the complaint would be to acknowledge that its own licensing decisions were made without the scrutiny they required.

That does not make the council's position legally defensible. It does help explain why a consumer transparency complaint received a response that reads, from first paragraph to last, as though it were written by the operator's lawyers rather than by an independent regulator.

## Why this matters beyond Wolverhampton

Cross-border licensing is one of the most significant unresolved issues in private hire regulation. Drivers licensed by out-of-town authorities operate extensively in London and other major cities, under frameworks that were never designed for app-based national platforms operating across multiple licensing boundaries simultaneously. Passengers have no way of knowing which authority governs their journey. And when a formal, detailed complaint identifying the structural transparency failure at the centre of that arrangement is raised, the response - at least from one of the authorities at the heart of it - is to invoke distinctions no consumer could know, dismiss legislation that squarely applies, and suggest the consumer begins their search for accountability with the operator that has just failed them.

The Transport Select Committee, the Department for Transport, and the ministers responsible for private hire licensing policy have all received this correspondence. Parliamentary scrutiny has already established that consumer protection compliance is relevant to fit and proper assessments.

The question of whether operators are actually meeting those obligations - and whether the authorities that licence them have ever required them to - is now squarely on the record.

The average consumer opening an app to book a car is entitled to know who is responsible for the driver heading towards them. That is not a complicated demand. It is the most basic expectation of any regulated service. Consumer protection law has required it for years. The question is why, in 2026, it is still not happening - and why a licensing authority asked directly about it thinks the appropriate response is to defend the operator rather than protect the passenger.

## WHY CUSTOMERS STILL TRUST LOCAL COMPANIES MORE THAN RIDE-HAILING APPS FOR AIRPORT TRANSFERS

Article by Phil Holloway  
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As someone who works with taxi and private hire companies across the UK every day, I've seen first-hand how much the industry has changed over the last decade.

The rise of ride-hailing apps has undoubtedly changed customer expectations. Passengers now expect to be able to book quickly, track their vehicle, and pay seamlessly through an app. However, despite the growth of these platforms, there is one area where local taxi companies continue to have a significant advantage – airport transfers.

**When people are travelling to catch a flight, the stakes are much higher than a standard journey across town.**

If you're heading to the supermarket and your driver is five minutes late, it's frustrating. If you're travelling to the airport for a family holiday, a business trip, or a once-in-a-lifetime getaway and your driver doesn't arrive, it's a completely different story.

**That's why trust becomes the most important factor.**

One of the biggest advantages local taxi companies have is reliability. Customers know there is a real business behind the booking. They know there is a local office, local drivers, and often a local telephone number they can call if they need assistance. That level of reassurance still matters, especially when flights, luggage, passports, and holiday plans are involved.

**Another major strength is local knowledge.**

Local taxi drivers understand their towns and cities better than anyone else. They know which routes can become congested during peak holiday periods, where roadworks are likely to cause delays, and the best alternatives when traffic problems arise.

As far as airport transfers are concerned, that knowledge can be invaluable.

**Pricing is another area where local operators often outperform ride-hailing platforms.**

Many airport transfer customers value certainty. They want to know exactly what their journey will cost before they travel. Fixed-price airport transfers provide peace of mind and remove the anxiety that can come with surge pricing or fluctuating fares. For many travellers, knowing the price in advance is worth far more than saving a few pounds.

**Perhaps most importantly, local taxi companies often build genuine relationships with their customers.**

Many airport transfer bookings come from repeat business. Families who use the same operator year after year, business travellers who trust a particular company to get them to the airport on time, and local residents who value a familiar service all contribute to long-term customer loyalty.

**From a marketing perspective, this presents a huge opportunity.**

If your company offers airport transfers, make sure you're talking about reliability, trust, local expertise, and fixed pricing in your marketing. Too many operators focus solely on vehicles or prices when the real selling point is confidence.

**Customers aren't simply buying a journey to the airport - they're buying peace of mind.**

As we move through the busy summer travel season, I believe that local taxi companies should be proud of the advantages they offer. The businesses that communicate those strengths effectively through social media, their websites and Google reviews, as well as customer communications will be the ones that win more bookings and build stronger customer loyalty.

Technology is important, and customers expect convenience. But when it comes to catching a flight, trust still matters. And trust is something local taxi companies have been building within their communities for many years.

**That's a powerful marketing message that shouldn't be overlooked.**



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# BE APPY WITH TAXIAPPS

## TAXIAPPS LAUNCHES TO HELP OPERATORS MOVE FASTER WITH SMARTER SOFTWARE INTEGRATIONS

Article by Taxiapps  
info@taxiapps.co.uk  
www.taxiapps.co.uk



TaxiApps has officially launched with a mission to help taxi and private hire operators access the kind of digital tools, branded booking journeys and dispatch-connected software integrations that can often feel out of reach for smaller and growing businesses.

### Born from real operator experience

TaxiApps was born from the experience of building Elite Liverpool, a modern private hire operator serving Liverpool, Sefton, Wirral and UK airport journeys. Through that journey, founder Paul Newbery saw first-hand how operators need practical, connected and commercially useful tools that sit alongside the dispatch systems they already rely on.

Rather than creating software from a distance, TaxiApps has been developed from the operator's side of the desk. Its focus is on making day-to-day improvements achievable, whether that means launching a branded passenger app, creating a venue booking portal, improving web booking, supporting mobile dispatch workflows or developing custom tools for operators.

### Connecting operators, customers and dispatch systems

TaxiApps provides software integrations with taxi dispatch management systems, including iCabbi-connected onboarding and workflows, and is actively looking to integrate with all major taxi software providers. Its purpose is not to replace dispatch platforms, but to extend them with operator-first products that improve customer experience, unlock new booking channels and support better operational control.

The TaxiApps platform supports products such as passenger apps, website booking flows, venue portals, mobile dispatch tools, CabSafe and custom operator tooling, helping operators make bookings, venues and dispatch feel like one fast, connected brand.

### Making software innovation more accessible

Many operators have ideas for improving their businesses but assume that bespoke software, advanced integrations and polished customer-facing tools are only available to large fleets with large budgets. TaxiApps has been created to challenge that assumption by turning operational problems into workable products and practical software solutions.

Paul Newbery, founder of TaxiApps and Elite Liverpool, said:

*"TaxiApps is about making things happen. Operators know what they want to improve, but they do not always have the route to build it. We want to work with operators and dispatch management system providers to create useful, connected tools that help move the industry forwards."*

### Industry support from ETGL

Darren at ETGL welcomed the launch and praised Newbery's journey from operator growth to software innovation.

*"It's been a pleasure working with Paul Newbery since he joined us in June 2023. At the time, Elite Liverpool was a relatively small operation with only a handful of drivers. Over the past three years, Paul has demonstrated exceptional dedication, leadership, and entrepreneurial vision, transforming Elite Liverpool into a highly successful and respected private hire operator."*

# BE APPY WITH TAXIAPPS

*“One of Paul’s most admirable qualities is his commitment to supporting others. He has generously offered guidance to many smaller operators, particularly in helping them implement and maximise the benefits of the iCabbi platform.*

*“Through his advice and practical support, we have seen numerous ETGL customers improve their operations, achieve growth, and realise greater value from their technology investments.*

*“We are equally excited to see him embark on his next venture as the founder of TaxiApps, where he will undoubtedly continue to provide valuable software solutions that benefit operators throughout the industry.*

*“Congratulations, Paul, on everything you have accomplished so far. We look forward to following your continued success and seeing the positive impact you will undoubtedly make in the years ahead.”*

Darren, ETGL

## Invitation to operators & DMS providers

TaxiApps is now inviting taxi and private hire operators, as well as dispatch management system providers, to start conversations about integrations, product fit and custom development opportunities.

For more information, email [info@taxiapps.co.uk](mailto:info@taxiapps.co.uk). Whether you are an operator or a DMS provider, TaxiApps wants to work with you to move the taxi and private hire industry forward.

## About TaxiApps

TaxiApps provides branded booking journeys, passenger apps, web booking tools, venue portals, mobile dispatch tools, CabSafe and custom software integrations for taxi and private hire operators.

Built from real operator experience, TaxiApps helps businesses connect customer touchpoints with dispatch-linked workflows and unlock practical technology that supports growth.



## Upgrade Your Private Hire Business

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[taxiapps.co.uk](http://taxiapps.co.uk) | [info@taxiapps.co.uk](mailto:info@taxiapps.co.uk)

# AIRPORT RUNS: EXTRA REVENUE

## TAXIBOT LAUNCHES AI TRAVEL eSIMs: A NEW REVENUE STREAM FOR TAXI OPERATORS

By M2M TaxiBot  
[www.m2mtaxibot.com](http://www.m2mtaxibot.com)



Airport transfers are some of the most valuable jobs for taxi and private hire operators. They generate higher fares, are usually booked in advance, and serve customers who value convenience and reliability. But what if every airport booking could generate even more revenue?

**With TaxiBot's AI-powered Travel eSIM service, it can.**

Whenever TaxiBot recognises an airport transfer booked through WhatsApp, Instagram or Messenger, it can automatically send the passenger a personalised Travel eSIM offer before they fly. It's perfectly timed, giving travellers affordable mobile data before they leave, while creating an additional revenue stream for the operator.

### A smarter passenger experience

Travellers no longer need to search for airport Wi-Fi, pay expensive roaming charges or queue to buy a local SIM card on arrival. Instead, they receive a simple message, purchase their Travel eSIM in minutes and arrive connected.

There's no app to download, no account to create and no complicated setup. Just an easy purchase through the messaging channels they already use every day.

### Automatic revenue from existing bookings

TaxiBot works behind the scenes, identifying airport journeys and automatically sending the right offer at the right time. There's no manual work, no additional administration and no need for staff to monitor bookings. Everything is fully automated, allowing operators to generate additional income from airport transfers they are already completing.

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# ROUND THE COUNCILS

## WALSALL:

### WHEELCHAIR TRANSPORT SAFETY TRAINING

Walsall Council has launched a targeted safety initiative to make local taxi journeys more inclusive and secure by giving its community protection team specialist wheelchair transport safety training.

Timed to coincide with National Licensing Week (8–12 June 2026), the project brings together the council's licensing and community protection teams alongside the local taxi trade.

The joint effort equips enforcement officers with the exact knowledge required to spot both safe and unsafe practices during vehicle spot checks. Officers were trained on what to look for during inspections, focusing on correct wheelchair securing techniques, the safe use of ramps, restraints, and tail lifts, and how to provide appropriate support for passengers.

The guidance covered various vehicle types, including hackney carriages, minibuses, and private hire vehicles. This new training is part of the council's broader dedication to accessibility and public safety, ensuring that transport enforcement "positively impacts transport for wheelchair passengers by making travel more accessible, inclusive and safer."

Alongside these safety measures, the council is currently inviting the taxi trade, stakeholders, and the public to share their feedback on proposed changes to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licensing fees: <https://shorturl.at/KFqbg>

## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE:

### £819M TAXI BILL CLAIM DEBUNKED

Buckinghamshire Council has flatly denied social media claims that it spent nearly £1 billion on taxi services, explaining that the massive figure was actually the result of a data-entry error.

The controversy began when local resident Andrew Matthews shared a screenshot on X from a government procurement tracking website. The image showed a five-year contract for school and college transport routes valued at a staggering £819,489,040. In his post, Mr Matthews branded the spending "insane," claiming the council was spending £163 million a year on taxis, arguing it "could run an equivalent transport service for a fraction of this cost." The post quickly went viral, gaining over 1.3 million views and sparking widespread online fury. However,

council officials quickly replied on social media: "The amount shown on this website is incorrect and is a data entry error," adding that they had contacted the site to demand an urgent fix.

Thomas Broom, the council's deputy leader pointed out that a crucial warning had been "conveniently cropped off" the viral screenshot. He explained that anyone scrolling down to the supplier allocations would see the correct figure of £8,194,890.

UKGovScan has since updated the page with a correction notice. The site confirmed the headline value was "likely a data-entry error" caused by a 100x slip - such as entering pence as pounds.

When adding up the 16 individual supplier contract values listed in the text, the actual total was just over £8.1 million, exactly one-hundredth of the viral figure.

## BARNSLY:

### CCTV SCHEME SET TO EXPAND

Plans to expand a successful CCTV scheme to dozens more licensed vehicles in Barnsley were discussed by councillors at a licensing meeting last month.

Following a successful pilot programme that installed cameras in all HCs, council bosses are now looking to roll out the security systems to an additional 50 PHVs.

The original pilot scheme was funded through the Transport Innovation Fund, and leftover money was initially used to offer CCTV to PHVs holding home-to-school transport contracts with the local authority.

Following that initial rollout, the council's Strategic Transport team has secured extra funding to expand the project even further. Officials have hailed the scheme as a major success, noting that 90% of the public reported feeling safer in a consultation.

The cameras have also given taxi drivers the confidence to return to late-night work. The number of drivers willing to work Saturday night shifts has surged dramatically, rising from just 16% in 2023 to 45% today, which has driven down passenger waiting times.

An official report to be reviewed by councillors outlines the multiple benefits of the project, stating: "The main aim of CCTV is to increase driver and passenger safety and encourage more drivers to work unsociable hours."

The report notes that the cameras support drivers so they do "not avoid the more difficult customers."

Ultimately, officials concluded that having CCTV in vehicles has "enhanced safeguarding protocols and contributed to enhancing protection for passengers and drivers."

# ROUND THE COUNCILS

## SEFTON:

### OUT OF BOROUGH APPLICATIONS SURGE

Sefton Council is facing an unprecedented wave of taxi driver applications, but only half of the prospective drivers actually live within the borough.

At a recent Licensing and Regulatory Committee meeting, principal licensing officer Mark Toohey revealed that around 50 new drivers are applying every single week. This massive surge has left council officials baffled. "The council is at a loss as to what is behind the surge," Mr Toohey stated. He suggested Sefton might simply be seen as an "efficient" and "attractive" borough for processing applications.

By April 1, active licences jumped to 12,957, up from 10,958 last year. Strikingly, half of these are from outside the wider Liverpool City Region. To keep up, the council increased its testing capacity, offering 4,109 knowledge tests over the past year compared to just 1,165 previously.

While the pass rate sits at 58%, nearly 1,000 applicants failed to show up. Because the £50 fee is non-refundable, this provided an unexpected financial boost, leaving the council's reserve fund "fairly healthy." Committee chair Cllr John Kelly observed, "We've actually made a few bob out of that then, haven't we?"

However, the boom has also prompted stricter oversight. Recent enforcement checks on 205 vehicles at local airports and stations revealed that 40% had defects, resulting in immediate suspensions or defect notices.

## DONCASTER:

### TAXI POLICY FACES MAJOR OVERHAUL

City of Doncaster Council officials have recommended sweeping updates to the local taxi and PH licensing policy, including a strict new ban on licensing a vehicle previously written off by an insurance company. The move follows a 12-week public consultation that drew 545 responses, consisting of 53.4% taxi drivers, 44% members of the public, and 2.6% other respondents. Under current rules, structural (Category S) and non-structural (Category N) write-offs can still be licensed if they pass a roadworthiness inspection.

However, the council's report highlighted significant safety concerns with this system, stating: "There is no standard level of inspection report to establish the

suitability and safety of vehicles which have previously been written off." Officials added that they have seen a wide variety of inspection reports, "with varying levels of detail and, in most cases, no clear indication that the vehicle is safe and roadworthy."

The consultation revealed a sharp division between the public and cabbies, with two-thirds of the trade voting to keep the existing rules. However, the wider results namely 250 combined votes backed a policy shift compared to 221 votes to keep things as they are. Officials have ultimately recommended "option two" be adopted in the new licensing policy, meaning the new ban will also apply to vehicles already licensed. To ease the transition, existing drivers will be given a three-year grace period to find a suitable replacement vehicle.

Beyond the write-off ban, officials have recommended scrapping the rule requiring new applicants to provide two-character references. Conversely, health checks will become stricter, requiring drivers to submit a medical certificate with every new application and renewal, and then annually once they reach the age of 65.

Looking ahead, the council's licensing committee will hold future meetings to deliberate three additional proposed changes: making in-car CCTV mandatory, introducing stricter vehicle exhaust emission limits, and deciding whether vehicle compliance testing must be done exclusively at DVSA-approved MOT centres.

## AMBER VALLEY:

### TEST CENTRE MOVES 25 MILES UP THE M1

Taxi companies are furious after Amber Valley Borough Council "suddenly" moved its vehicle testing centre 25 miles away to Eckington. Drivers say the long drive will drain their time and profits, branding the decision "unfeasible" and "unfair."

Velda Hutsby, owner of Nat-a-Jack Taxis, warned the move has "immediate, damaging ramifications for local small businesses" who must now pay staff to drive and wait at the distant site. She added: "We feel very let down to be honest with you."

Veteran driver Sam Sharpe estimated the change could cost individual drivers £260 a year and take the area's 168 taxis off the road for a combined 32 days.

The council defended the move, explaining their previous contractor unexpectedly stopped providing the service. A spokesperson said the situation was "outside of the council's control" and required an emergency solution to prevent licensing from grinding to a halt.

# ROUND THE COUNCILS

## FIFE:

### EAST FIFE TA DEMANDS ANSWERS

The East Fife Taxi Association has accused Fife Council of unfairly attacking local taxi operators while withholding the very data needed to justify its claims. Following comments made at a Regulation and Licensing Committee meeting last month, EFTA says councillors have chosen headline-grabbing criticism over transparency and evidence.

EFTA spokesperson Linda Holt said: "Local taxi operators have been publicly condemned by councillors who have failed to provide the detailed inspection data needed to support their claims.

"The first-time pass rate in North East Fife has improved from 78% to 83%, yet councillors have chosen to portray the trade as a problem rather than recognising that operators are working hard to improve standards."

The association is particularly concerned that detailed inspection information which was previously made publicly available has not been published this year.

"Last year, detailed inspection information allowed proper scrutiny of the figures. This year, councillors have made serious accusations against local operators while withholding the data that would allow the public to judge the facts for themselves.

The obvious question is: what are they trying to hide? If councillors are confident in their claims, they should publish the full inspection results, including the nature and severity of all failures, and allow independent scrutiny."

EFTA also questioned whether testing standards are being applied consistently across Fife.

"We continue to hear reports from operators across Fife that different testing centres apply different levels of discretion when dealing with defects identified during inspections. If one area records an immediate fail while another allows defects to be rectified during the inspection process, comparing pass rates becomes highly misleading."

The association says councillors have failed to recognise the financial pressures faced by operators. "Taxi operators have spent years absorbing rising costs while Fife Council repeatedly delayed meaningful fare reviews. Even when fare increases were eventually approved, many operators felt they failed to reflect the true costs of running and maintaining licensed vehicles.

Despite this, operators continue investing significant sums in vehicle maintenance, insurance, licensing,

fuel and compliance requirements in order to provide a vital public service.

Rather than attacking hard-working local businesses, councillors should be thanking operators for continuing to serve communities despite increasingly difficult trading conditions."

EFTA reiterated its call for Cllr Tom Adams to resign as Convener of the Regulation and Licensing Committee. "The comments made this week demonstrate once again a lack of balance, fairness and leadership. Cllr Adams appears more interested in publicly berating operators than addressing legitimate concerns about transparency, consistency and the challenges facing the taxi trade. The taxi industry deserves evidence-based regulation, not political grandstanding."

## DENBIGHSHIRE:

### AGE RULE CHANGE AFTER RISE IN WAVs

Denbighshire County Council is set to meet to consider permanently relaxing rules for wheelchair-accessible taxis following a successful trial that boosted vehicle availability. In June last year, the council's licensing committee agreed to a 12-month trial that removed age limits for wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Under the temporary rules, instead of being forced off the road due to age, WAVs were simply required to meet "Euro 6 emission requirements" and undergo "increased compliance testing once a vehicle reaches 12 years of age."

Council officers reported that the trial had a "positive impact" on the local fleet.

Since the change, the council received seven WAV applications. While three were withdrawn because applicants failed to meet licensing standards, the remaining four accepted applications "represent a significant improvement when compared with the previous year, when no new applications were received." However, the move does come with potential drawbacks. A council report noted that "the main risk relates to the continued use of older vehicles, which may naturally require closer monitoring as they age." Despite this, officials believe the danger is under control, stating that the risk "is effectively managed through the enhanced testing regime, which ensures regular safety checks and early identification of any issues."

The licensing committee will debate whether to make these changes permanent during their upcoming meeting at the Ruthin County Hall headquarters.

# ROUND THE COUNCILS

## ABERDEEN:

### KNOWLEDGE TEST TO STAY FOR PHVs

Aberdeen councillors have unanimously voted to keep the controversial “Street Knowledge Test” for private hire drivers. The decision rejects intense pressure from Uber and local business leaders who wanted the exam scrapped to combat a severe shortage of cabs in the city. Uber led calls to remove the exam since being granted a licence to operate in Aberdeen in summer 2024.

Following years of complaints about taxi shortages Aberdeen City Council launched a taxi consultation earlier this year. The consultation touched on a number of key issues impacting the industry, including the future of the airport taxi fleet, card payments and whether all cabs should have CCTV.

But most interest was in the much-debated need for the Street Knowledge Test for private hire drivers in Aberdeen.

Around 1,800 people took part in the survey, and more backed maintaining the Street Knowledge Test than wanted it scrapped.

More than 45% of respondents said the exam should be required for all aspiring Aberdeen PH drivers whilst 43% wanted it removed.

This came despite business leaders warning of the impact on the night-time economy, claiming a lack of cabs is deterring people from going into the city centre.

#### What happened in the meeting?

Aberdeen City Council's licencing committee met on Wednesday 3 June to discuss the future of the taxi trade.

After seeing the slim margin of public support for the Street Knowledge Test, Uber issued a last-ditch plea for it to be axed anyway to “transform how people get around the city”.

Local taxi drivers, Uber, industry chiefs and disability representatives spoke at the meeting, while the rowdy, heckling public gallery was threatened with closure on more than one occasion as debate became charged.

Councillors united to unanimously agree to keep the Street Knowledge Test for all Aberdeen drivers, committing to revisit the issue in two years.

Taxi chiefs argued a revamp of the exam in Aberdeen was already bearing fruit, with more than 120 people already passing the test this year.

Council licensing solicitor Sandy Munro summarised

what had been agreed. He said: “The upshot is essentially the majority of the policy remains unchanged.”

Luke Hulse of Hulse Citywide Taxis, who is also also a member of the city's Taxi Private Hire Consolation Group (TPHCG) said: “Wednesday's outcome is simply common sense. Aberdeen City Council (ACC) has decided to maintain the high standard of its licensed drivers.

“Instead of buckling to immense pressure from Uber, Our Union Street, Aberdeen Inspired and Aberdeen Grampian Chamber of Commerce, ACC has continued to be a leader in the world of licensing. Licensing authorities from all over the UK, could learn something from this.

“The Street Knowledge Test (SKT), is vital to maintaining the standard that locals and visitors have come to expect from the city's licensed drivers.

“Local knowledge can't be beaten!

“A sat-nav won't tell you what the best entrance is at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, when you have an appointment at a certain department.

“A sat-nav won't tell you where the pick-up and drop-off points are at Aberdeen International Airport, nor will it tell you the fee the airport charge to pick-up and drop-off, as they are currently different.

“The sat-nav won't tell you what's happening, event wise. Nor will it recommend the sights and places to see.

“And it definitely won't tell you where you can obtain a deep fried mars bar, or help you with your cravings for a late night, (early morning to some), steak and gravy pie.

“We are the unofficial ambassadors to the Granite City. We are immensely proud at what we do.

“Everyone at the TPHCG, works really hard to fight for this trade, whether as a group, a company, or as an individual, we all have the same goals, excelling in customer service, pride behind the badge, and tradition.

“It's a shame that the local business groups and local media don't engage in up-to-date facts, nor accept what the public want. Maybe they should engage with us, the local taxi trade, instead of peddling the narrative of an international operator.

“Maybe they should stick to what they know, and keep out of a business they clearly know nothing about.

“Lastly, a thank you to the people of the City of Aberdeen. Thank you for showing your support. Thank you for backing the REAL ‘Local Champion’.

“We will always be there for you!”

# FIT AND PROPER

## UNLICENSED CARMARTHENSHIRE DRIVER FINED OVER £2,600 FOR TAKING CHILDREN TO SCHOOL

A PH driver has been fined after transporting school children on five separate occasions without the proper licence. David Rhydian Thomas, connected to Windy Corner Coaches in Carmarthenshire, used a licensed PHV to take pupils to school over a a week last

October. However, Mr Thomas did not hold the necessary HC/PH Dual Driver's Licence.

This was not his first warning.

After pleading guilty by post, Mr Thomas was ordered to pay a total of £2,694, which included a £666 fine, a £266 victim surcharge, and

£1,762 in court costs.

Local officials stressed that licensing rules exist strictly to keep vulnerable passengers safe. Cllr Owen, Carmarthenshire Council's cabinet member for enforcement, stated: "The safety of children and the public is our absolute priority."

## ASHFORD BC'S DECISION UPHELD TO REVOKE PH DRIVER'S LICENCE AFTER MOBILE PHONE USAGE

Ashford BC's decision to revoke the licence of a PH driver caught using a handheld mobile phone while driving on the M25 has been upheld by Folkestone Magistrates' Court. In November 2025, Surrey Police submitted a report to the council concerning Mehmet Kaygun, who was seen driving while using a mobile phone for a prolonged

period. Officers also noted additional distraction from an electronic tablet device.

The council determined this conduct raised serious public safety concerns and that Mr Kaygun was no longer a fit and proper person. His PH licence was immediately revoked.

Kaygun appealed, and while the

court acknowledged the personal impact of the licence revocation, it confirmed the decision must be based solely on public safety and not an individual's personal circumstances in line with existing case law.

The appeal was dismissed, and Mr Kaygun was ordered to pay £2,000 towards the council's costs.

## DURHAM UNLICENSED CABBIE FINED AFTER USING UNINSURED VEHICLE FOR SCHOOL RUN

A County Durham cabbie has been fined after illegally using an unlicensed and uninsured vehicle to transport school children.

Keith Lambton, 53, of Chester-le-Street, was contracted by Durham County Council to drive up to five children, aged 11 to 16, to and from school. However, council enforcement officers caught Lambton picking up the pupils in a car without a valid taxi licence.

Peterlee Magistrates' Court heard that Lambton knew the vehicle was unlicensed. He claimed his regular taxi had broken down and he used

the alternative car to fulfill his council contract, noting he had already applied for its licence. Although ordered to leave the scene immediately, CCTV checks later revealed Lambton had used the exact same unlicensed car the previous day. Furthermore, his insurance provider confirmed he was entirely uninsured for commercial collections in that vehicle. During a formal interview, Lambton confessed to the breaches, stating he "realised this was a mistake, but that it was his first in all his years as a licensed driver."

Durham County Council strongly condemned his actions. Owen Cleugh, the council's safer places manager, said: "We carry out enforcement of our home to school contracts to ensure that the drivers and vehicles are correctly licensed as we take the safety of our children and the travelling public very seriously." He hoped the case demonstrated that they would "take swift action."

Lambton was fined £280 and ordered to pay £288 in costs and an £80 surcharge, totalling £568. He also received six penalty points.

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# FIT AND PROPER

## **BOLTON** DRIVER SUSPENDED AFTER COURT FINE FOR UNINSURED VEHICLE

A Bolton PH driver has had his licence suspended for eight weeks after being convicted of keeping a vehicle without insurance.

Bolton Council's licensing committee took action following his January 22, 2025 court conviction, noting that the driver had

breached the strict conditions required to hold a PH licence which gave reasonable cause to suspend him. The driver was fined £200 by the court, a penalty the committee described as being "at the higher end of the fines level." The decision to suspend the driver

was made during a private council meeting. Although the driver failed to attend, he did send an email "explaining the reason for his non-attendance."

The committee ruled there was "reasonable cause to suspend him" to protect the public.

## **GLASGOW** PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER SUSPENDED AFTER BEING CAUGHT 'PIRATING' FOR FARES

A PH driver has been handed an eight-week ban by licensing chiefs in Glasgow after he was caught allegedly "pirating" for passengers. Councillors on the city's licensing committee suspended Muhammad Janaghir following an incident in December last year, acting on a complaint from the council's enforcement unit. Enforcement

officers witnessed a man talking to Mr Janaghir through his front passenger window. An officer told the committee: "As the man entered the vehicle, officers approached and asked if this was a pre-booked hire."

The driver claimed he wasn't as he was having trouble logging on to his Uber app. Officers warned him

about taking passengers without a prior booking but Janaghir claimed he was approached by the man who "didn't speak very good English" and asked for directions. Mr Janaghir told investigators: "I was on my way home so I said I'd take him but not for money. This was a mistake and I wouldn't do it again."

## **STOKE-ON-TRENT** PRIVATE HIRE FIRM STRIPPED OF LICENCE OVER FAKE SCHOOL RUN DOCUMENTS

A Stoke PH firm that transported vulnerable school-children has lost its appeal to get its licence back following a damning council investigation.

Just Travel PH Ltd had its operator licence revoked by Stoke-on-Trent City Council after serious concerns emerged regarding the safety checks of its staff. The company held 32 contracts with Staffs County Council to transport SEND pupils. However, the council terminated these contracts after a 2023 compliance check flagged issues with foreign "certificates of

good character" submitted for four passenger assistants. The documentation featured QR codes supposed to link to overseas background checks, but authorities questioned their legitimacy. During a hearing at North Staffs Justice Centre, the court heard that company director Muhammad Anwar, 45, submitted these applications for candidates. If an applicant chose not to work for his company after getting the badge, Anwar would charge them a £20 fee to "move on."

Sarah Johnson, a licensing officer

for the council, explained that Anwar was referred to a licensing panel due to dishonesty. "We would have expected Mr Anwar to check these QR codes and documents he received were legitimate," Johnson said.

Anwar's defence solicitor argued that his client had simply passed on the documents provided by applicants and claimed there was no evidence of dishonesty, noting Anwar had a "largely unblemished record" since being licensed in 2012. Magistrates rejected the appeal, upholding the council's decision.

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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: [www.instituteoflicensing.org](http://www.instituteoflicensing.org)

Please note that this article represents my own views which are not presented as the views of the Institute of Licensing nor Guildford BC.

It has certainly been another busy month for licensing, with a raft of developments spanning national policy, technology and legal interpretation. In this month's article, I begin with reflections on the **Transport Committee's First Report of Session 2026–27**, before turning to emerging concerns around app-based driver distraction, the next steps in implementing the **Automated Vehicles Act 2024**, and finally new guidance from the Institute of Licensing on private hire passenger contracts.

Taken together, these developments highlight a sector that continues to evolve at pace, with significant implications for regulators, the trade and the travelling public alike.

## Raising the bar – or risking a race to the bottom?

The long-awaited intervention from the House of Commons Transport Committee into taxi and private hire licensing has landed. It does not pull its punches.

At its heart, the Committee's First Report of Session 2026–27 is a recognition of what those of us in licensing have been grappling with for years: a fragmented, inconsistent system that struggles to balance local accountability with a national marketplace. With more than 260 licensing authorities operating across England, each applying different standards, the system has become patchwork at best, and, at worst, vulnerable to exploitation.

The Committee's conclusions are clear: reform is necessary, but reform done badly could entrench the very problems it seeks to solve. In particular, the proposed move towards national minimum standards is welcomed, but only with a significant caveat: **minimum must not mean mediocre**.

This article explores the key findings of the report, and - crucially - what they mean for three core audiences: the public, licensing authorities and the trade.

## The core problem: fragmentation and inconsistency

As I and others have written many times, if there is one defining feature of the current licensing landscape, it is inconsistency. The Committee heard extensive evidence that standards vary dramatically across the country, covering everything from driver vetting and safeguarding training to vehicle specifications and enforcement practices.

This variability is not new, nor is it entirely undesirable. Local areas differ, as do local conditions, and licensing authorities have traditionally exercised discretion to reflect those differences and to reflect the needs of their areas, such as mandatory CCTV. However, the Committee has concluded that the degree of variation has gone too far, creating what can only be described as a competitive regulatory environment.

In practical terms, this manifests in two key ways:

- Differing thresholds for entry into the trade
- Uneven safeguarding & public protection standards

The consequences are significant. Passengers cannot be assured of consistent safety standards. Drivers and operators may seek to minimise compliance costs by "shopping around" for a more permissive authority. And enforcement becomes increasingly difficult where activity crosses administrative boundaries.

## National minimum standards: a necessary step; but not sufficient alone

The Government's proposal to introduce national minimum standards is, on the face of it, a logical response. Establishing a baseline across all licensing authorities should, in theory, eliminate the worst disparities.

The Committee agrees...but only up to a point.

It explicitly warns against a "*lowest common denominator*" approach. Minimum standards, if set too low, risk becoming a ceiling rather than a floor.

The report therefore calls for:

- High, comprehensive baseline standards, particularly in areas relating to safety
- Minimal scope for variation, to reduce incentives for licence shopping
- Clarity on which areas demand absolute consistency (e.g. safeguarding)

# ALL THINGS LICENSING



There is a subtle but important distinction here between minimum and absolute standards. Absolute standards would remove local discretion entirely, mandating a single set of requirements nationwide. Minimum standards, by contrast, allow authorities to go further, but not below the baseline.

The Committee stops short of endorsing a fully centralised system but leaves little doubt that, in certain areas, particularly those involving public safety, uniformity is essential.

## Out-of-area working: elephant in the room

No issue provoked stronger reaction during the inquiry than out-of-area working. For those outside the sector, the concept can seem counterintuitive: a driver licensed in one district is legally permitted to operate in another, often many miles away. But for those working in licensing and enforcement, this has become one of the defining challenges of modern regulation.

The Committee recognises that: out-of-area working is now widespread and is closely linked to licence shopping, and overall it undermines local accountability and public confidence. The evidence presented was stark. Some stakeholders described out-of-area working as *“the root cause to all that’s wrong”* in the sector.

Critically, the Committee also links this issue to safeguarding concerns, citing findings from Baroness Casey’s 2025 report into group-based sexual exploitation, which identified licence shopping as a factor undermining effective protections.

Yet, despite the strength of feeling, the Committee stops short of calling for an outright ban. It acknowledges that prohibition would be impractical in a modern, flexible transport market.

Instead, it calls for a *“clear plan”* to reduce high levels of out-of-area working and to incentivise drivers to license where they primarily operate.

This is arguably the most significant - and most challenging - recommendation in the report.

## National database: a foundation for reform

Alongside standards and out-of-area working, the report notes the Government’s commitment to introducing a national database of licensed taxis and private hire vehicles.

While this is not explored in depth within the Committee’s commentary, its importance should not be underestimated. A national database has the potential to:

- Improve information sharing between authorities
- Enhance enforcement capability
- Support public confidence and transparency

For many years, licensing officers have operated with limited visibility beyond their own districts. A truly functioning national database could change that dynamic fundamentally.

## Implications for the public: consistency, safety, and trust

For passengers, the Committee’s report is ultimately about confidence. The current system leaves too much to chance. A passenger taking a journey in one town may be subject to entirely different standards than in another. That is difficult to justify in a sector so closely tied to public safety.

If implemented effectively, the Committee’s recommendations could deliver:

### 1. Consistent safety standards

High national minimum standards would ensure that core safeguarding measures are non-negotiable, regardless of location.

### 2. Greater transparency

A national database could allow passengers - and authorities - to verify licensing credentials more easily.

### 3. Improved accountability

Reducing out-of-area working would make it clearer which authority is responsible for oversight and enforcement.

However, there are risks. Poorly designed minimum standards could fail to address existing weaknesses. And if enforcement is not strengthened alongside reform, public confidence may not improve as intended.

# ALL THINGS LICENSING

## Implications for licensing authorities: a shift in role and responsibility

For licensing authorities, the report signals a pivotal shift.

Authorities may find their ability to tailor standards constrained. However, this could be offset by greater clarity and consistency at a national level. The challenge will be ensuring that local risk factors such as urban density, night-time economy pressures, cross-border demand; are still adequately addressed.

The call to reduce out-of-area working, combined with a national database, implies a more integrated enforcement environment.

Authorities may need to:

- Collaborate more closely with neighbouring districts
- Share intelligence more proactively
- Develop new approaches to cross-border compliance, such as through resourcing.

This represents both an opportunity and a resource challenge.

Where authorities currently operate at lower standards, the introduction of robust national minimums will require significant uplift. This may involve revising policies and conditions, enhancing training and safeguarding measures and increasing compliance and enforcement capacity.

For many authorities, this will not be a trivial exercise.

## Implications for the trade: certainty, cost, and competition

The trade: drivers, operators, and proprietors; will experience the impact of these reforms most directly.

High national standards could reduce the competitive advantage gained through licensing in lower-requirement areas. This should be welcomed by those who already operate to high standards.

For some, particularly those currently licensing in less stringent authorities, the shift will mean higher costs and more rigorous requirements. While these are justified in the interest of safety, they will not be without economic impact.

Any effective reduction in out-of-area working will require parts of the trade to rethink their business

models. Operators and drivers who rely on cross-border work may face:

- Pressure to relicence locally
- Changes in dispatch and platform arrangements
- Increased scrutiny from enforcement bodies

For operators, particularly those using app-based platforms, the implications could be profound.

## The bigger picture: a moment of opportunity... and risk

The Committee's report arrives at a critical juncture. The Government has signalled its intent to legislate. The sector is engaged. Public concern, particularly around safeguarding is high. This creates a rare opportunity to reshape the licensing landscape in a meaningful way.

But the risks are equally significant. Set standards too low, and the system remains vulnerable to exploitation. Fail to address out-of-area working, and enforcement challenges persist. Over-centralise without flexibility, and local responsiveness is lost.

The Committee's message is, in many ways, one of balance. National consistency is essential, but not at the expense of effectiveness.

## Conclusion: getting it right

From a licensing perspective, the report is both validating and challenging. It validates long-standing concerns about inconsistency, licence shopping, and enforcement difficulties. But it also challenges the sector to adapt to a more structured, nationally coordinated approach.

The key takeaway is simple: reform is coming, but its success will depend on detail.

- Minimum standards must be high and meaningful
- Out-of-area working must be managed, not ignored
- Enforcement must be strengthened alongside policy

For the public, this is about safety and trust.

For authorities, it is about clarity and capability.

For the trade, it is about fairness and sustainability.

Above all, it is about recognising that taxi and private hire licensing is not simply an administrative function.

# ALL THINGS LICENSING



It is a cornerstone of community safety.

If the Government heeds the Committee's warnings, we have an opportunity to build a system that is both consistent and robust.

If not, we risk entrenching the very problems we are trying to solve. The stakes, as ever in licensing, could not be higher.

## In other news:

### Government pressed on safety risks from use of booking and navigation apps

The Department for Transport has said it has not issued any specific guidance to developers of private hire booking apps or navigation tools, despite growing concerns about driver distraction and road safety.

In a series of written parliamentary questions, Dewsbury and Batley MP, Iqbal Mohamed, asked ministers what assessment had been made of the impact of app based systems on taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers, and whether the Government planned to issue guidance to ensure such apps can be operated hands free.

Transport minister Lilian Greenwood confirmed that no tailored guidance has been produced but said the department "*engages with industry and monitors how these technologies are used in practice.*" She stressed that the law already places clear responsibility on drivers to maintain full control of their vehicle at all times.

Greenwood reiterated that it is illegal to hold or use a mobile phone while driving, including when stopped in traffic, and that enforcement remains a matter for the police. She added that the Government will continue assessing the benefits of emerging technologies while supporting the development of safer, distraction minimising systems.

Mohamed also asked what discussions ministers have held with technology companies on improving safety features to reduce the need for driver interaction while vehicles are in motion. The response indicates that while engagement with industry is ongoing, no formal guidance or regulatory intervention is currently planned.

### Government sets out next steps for implementing AVs Act 2024

The Government has issued an update on the implementation of the Automated Vehicles (AVs) Act 2024, alongside the launch of a consultation on the draft **Statement of Safety Principles** for automated vehicles.

The consultation forms part of the statutory framework required to bring self-driving technology into regulated use and sets out the principles that automated vehicles must meet before they can be authorised for deployment.

The draft principles outline expectations for whole-life safety, including pre-deployment assessment, in-use monitoring and the ability to intervene if safety performance changes.

The Department for Transport states that the principles are intended to provide a consistent basis for assessing whether an automated vehicle is safe to operate on public roads.

The Government has also invited the public to contribute views on self-driving vehicle safety. The consultation seeks input from local authorities, industry, safety bodies and members of the public to inform the final version of the safety principles. This forms part of the wider programme to implement the AV Act, which also includes the national pilot scheme for automated passenger services.

The AV Act brings automated passenger services within a defined regulatory structure. Services that would require a taxi or private hire vehicle (PHV) licence if operated by a human driver remain within scope when automated. This ensures that automated taxi-style and PHV-style services cannot operate outside existing local licensing controls.

The Government has confirmed that the permitting scheme for automated passenger services is intended to reflect the regulatory expectations that apply to current taxi and PHV operations.

# ALL THINGS LICENSING

The Institute of Licensing (IoL) has set out its position in its responses to the Government's consultations on the AV regulatory framework and the permitting scheme. The IoL has emphasised the need for clear statutory local authority consent for any automated service that resembles a taxi or PHV operation, and for safeguards to ensure that automated services meet equivalent safety and accountability standards. The IoL has also highlighted the importance of maintaining the role of licensing authorities in decisions about automated services operating within their areas.

**Finally;**

## **Institute of Licensing publishes new guidance on PH passenger contracts**

The IoL has published a new Private Hire Passenger Contract Guidance Note, prepared by licensing specialist Neil Morley of Travis Morley Law, providing a practical overview of recent legal developments relating to passenger contracts in the private hire sector.

The guidance examines a series of significant court decisions concerning the contractual relationship between private hire operators, passengers and drivers, and explores the differing legal positions that now apply in London and elsewhere in England and Wales.

Designed as a concise and accessible reference document, the guidance reviews the interpretation, application and enforcement of passenger contract requirements. It seeks to offer a useful reference point for applicants, licence-holders, licensing officers, councillors and legal professionals navigating this evolving area of licensing law.

The publication outlines the legal developments arising from a number of widely reported court cases and considers their implications for licensing authorities, operators and the travelling public. It also highlights practical considerations for compliance, regulation and enforcement.

While intended to assist licensing professionals, lawyers, councillors, applicants and licensees in understanding the current legal landscape, the guidance does not constitute legal advice.

The Guidance Note forms part of the Institute's ongoing commitment to promoting excellence in

licensing through the publication of authoritative resources and practical guidance for licensing practitioners across the UK.

James Button, IoL President and author of *Button on Taxis*, said:

*"The arrangements that need to be in place between a hirer, a private hire operator and a private hire driver are confusing. They are complex. This Guidance, in line with the increasing numbers of Guidance issued by the Institute of Licensing, explains these issues clearly and concisely.*

*"Neil Morley of Travis Morley Law has analysed the case law, and most importantly, explains it in this Guidance. It presents a brief overview and examination of widely reported legal developments surrounding passenger contracts; offers a useful reference for applicants, licence-holders, licensing officers, councillors and legal professionals.*

*"There has been a lot of publicity over the last few years around this issue, and this publication provides a timely and practical resource to help practitioners understand the legal position and its potential implications.*

*"The Institute of Licensing is grateful to Neil for his expertise and for taking the time to prepare this Guidance."*

The Guidance is available at:

<https://shorturl.at/aYzdR>

As ever, the pace of change in licensing shows little sign of slowing. Whether it is national reform, technological advancement or evolving case law, staying informed has never been more important.

I would strongly encourage those working within the sector, licence holders, officers and practitioners alike, to engage with the work of the Institute of Licensing, whose guidance, training and professional network remain invaluable in navigating this complex landscape.

If you are not already a member, now is the time to consider joining and ensuring you remain up to date with the changes shaping our profession.

Full details at:

<https://instituteoflicensing.org>

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# Brighton & Hove Cab Trade View

Andy Peters

Brighton & Hove Cab Trade Association

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Having extracted the audio from the video of the **PHTM EXPO 2026 'Questions and Answers'** which was presented really well by David Lawrie, Director **NPHTA**, with guests including government minister Ruth Cadbury and James Button from the Institute of Licensing, I was able to listen to it whilst driving the taxi in my leisure.

There were some interesting comments from the audience and certainly some interesting replies. However, I do have to admit that there were times when I was groaning at what I was hearing. One observation that was very clear to me was that Ruth Cadbury, who obviously has an enormous task to undertake is certainly London-centric. My concern here is this will have an influence on her input and the consequential knock-on effect. Additionally, I was very disappointed that she made it clear that with the use of satnavs she questioned the viability of drivers requiring the 'Knowledge'.

Thankfully there was an experienced taxi driver in the audience who picked her up on this point, and even though I was listening to the recording from some three weeks previously, hopefully she could hear me shouting my own views on this!

So, with great respect Ruth Cadbury, if you just happen to be reading this, let me tell you that having the knowledge of the streets embedded in a professional driver's head, with all the back streets and short cuts, is by far superior to any piece of technology that is mainly provided for simple navigation.

A good example of this in Brighton is that our streets have been undergoing continuous excavations to replace the gas pipes. This means that no one really knows in advance which roads have suddenly been shut...or even opened and then shut again. So, this means that with sole reliance on a satnav you could, as an untrained local driver, be completely stuck if you did not know your way around.

I know for a fact that Uber drivers here have been distraught not knowing where to go when there has

suddenly been an issue in the city where roads have been shut in an emergency. Even Uber customers have told me that their drivers have been fixed to the Uber driver app whilst not actually concentrating on the road itself.

And as I have stated many times before, when I get my boiler serviced I expect to pay a professional engineer to know their way round it and not have to watch YouTube to do it.

It did annoy me when reference again was made by Ruth Cadbury that: *"Customers travel cross border..."* as some kind of justification to remain with the chaos we currently have. This was also referred to in the Select Committee report, as quoted by Kimberly Hurd, Senior General Manager for the UK and Ireland at Bolt, who stated: "Cross-border is essentially the way people live and work". This was backed up by the Uber rep, both of whom will obviously say anything to protect their shareholders.

This is because time and time again I shout that it has absolutely nothing to do with anything! People have always *'crossed local borders'* going back hundreds of years. It's nothing new at all, even since the implementation of the **LGMPA 76**, and has nothing to do with where we are today with drivers intentionally getting a licence in one area to predominantly work in another area (he says whilst slamming his fist on the table!)

So, I was very pleased to hear David specifically make the point of correcting the continuously misused term of *'cross-border hiring'* and labour the point that the correct terminology is *'predominant out-of-area working'* which is something I have written about in almost every article over the years for **PHTM**.

So, please spread the word on this point and use **'POAW'** wherever you can when you speak to your councillors or MPs so everyone is on the same page and there is no misunderstanding.

I also have to reiterate again that to date, I still do not know if their intention to *'rip it up and start again'* applies to both the **LGMPA 1976** as well as the **London Private Hire Act 1998**. I have stated this so many times before and I will state it in every article until I read the answer in black and white.



## The rise of the autonomous car

Firstly, (he states in his normal cantankerous way) autonomous vehicles are not and will never be 'taxis'. As such it should be illegal, with the threat of getting slapped in the face with a wet fish, to refer to them as taxis. So the press, and even trade publications need to stop referring to them as taxis.

Having stated that, I feel obliged to create a brand new name for them, so I here provide, free of charge with no copyright clauses attached, the new name for them to be known as: '**robaxis**'. Yes, I know even that is near the knuckle, but it will clearly define once and for all that these are not taxis which under legislation are hackney carriages which work the streets and ranks.

However, I laugh in the face of all those foolish government ministers who are dazzled with faux promises presented by the snake-oil companies of autonomous vehicles, and by that I mean completely driverless ones. I know I would be referred to as a Luddite by some, but I really am not and I consider myself as a realist who is not taken in by such a gimmick that will never take off here.

Yes, I know that these '**robaxis**' are apparently driving around fully driverless abroad. But from everything that I have seen so far, they are not capable of being driverless in the streets over here. Additionally, there are so many viral videos around of these '**robaxis**' getting stuck or causing mayhem, to the recent significant and dangerous situation of an autonomous vehicle, with an observation driver on board, driving through a police cordon at a murder scene in Harlesden.

But, the crucial question that the government and all the supporters of promoting driverless autonomous cars should be asking, apart from why, is: who is in control of them? Well, from a cross-examination, or rather interrogation of the Waymo Chief Security Officer, Dr Peyna, a few months ago it was revealed that these are controlled in the Philippines.

See: [tiny.cc/who-controls-your-waymo](https://tiny.cc/who-controls-your-waymo)

Yep, you better believe it. So, should a Waymo have any difficulty anywhere in the world, then engineers in the Philippines will take-over. These will be people who have no UK security checks who are allowed to be in full control of navigating our streets, spying on everything and everyone around. Ultimately they're in control of a machine that has been let loose on the UK streets and sanctioned by our government to be controlled by unknown aliens.

Having taken this on board, let's examine it in a bit more detail including the consequences of our government allowing Waymos and the likes to be set free in London. This may sound far fetched but what is to stop an army of driverless autonomous vehicles being used to create chaos and destruction in the capital? Are these being lined up to be the modern equivalent of the Trojan Horse? So, whilst I see all the publicity photos of gullible ministers being ferried around in these autonomous vehicles, albeit with drivers still at the wheel, and being cajoled into being 'trendy and hip', I beg to question their judgement and capability of living in the real world and keeping us safe.

Forget drones attacking Buck House, instead there will be an unstoppable army of autonomous cars heading down The Mall with Putin stroking his white cat on his lap watching on from 3,000 miles away.

It's actually a shame that Doctor Who has been cancelled because these autonomous driverless cars, or '**robaxis**' would feature quite well as an enemy structured to take-over the world, just like Uber...or even for the next James Bond story...

Anyway, with the above now written and printed, and knowing the way things are here with the media police, I would not be surprised if I hear the jangle of handcuffs and get a knock at the door!

If my ramblings do not appear in the August **PHTM** then you will know the answer!

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

With summer well and truly here, and following the recent heatwaves, it got us thinking at Patterson Law about how the hot weather can affect our driving. The heat is different from the cold or the wet. In the snow, we all know not to drive too fast, to thoroughly defrost your windscreen before setting off, and, if the conditions are particularly bad, not to drive at all. In the wet, we know to leave extra space for stopping distances, not to go too quickly around corners, and to make sure our windscreen wipers are working. However, many of us do not really think about how hot weather can affect our driving and what we should be looking out for.

What about driving in flip-flops? Driving with a dusty windscreen? Driving when blinded by the sun? Below are examples of questions we have been asked which examine exactly these points. These are example questions, but they are based on real scenarios.

## Question:

I was approaching a zebra crossing and I didn't see a young girl step out in front of me because the sun was in my eyes. I hit her and she fell to the floor. The police attended, she didn't seem hurt, and they said I might be offered a course. I then heard nothing until I've just received a summons to court for 'driving without due care and attention'. Is that normal? What will I be looking at?

## Advice:

*Unfortunately, yes, this is perfectly normal. After a minor incident where there is no significant injury or damage, a traffic file is usually created and passed to a decision-maker within the police collision unit. They will decide whether a case is suitable for an out-of-court disposal, such as a driver improvement course or a fixed penalty of three points. However, if that department decides that the case is too serious for an out-of-court disposal and should proceed straight to court, you would not necessarily be informed of that decision. It is therefore not uncommon for the next thing you hear to be a summons.*

*At court, you will now have to enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. If you plead guilty, you will receive between 3 and 9 penalty points, depending on how serious the court considers the offence to be. Seriousness depends on culpability, so the court will look at factors such as whether you were working at the time, whether you were distracted or using your phone, whether you*

*were under the influence of drink or drugs, or whether you were speeding. The first option would therefore be to plead guilty, maintain maximum credit, and mitigate to try to keep the points down.*

*The second option is to plead not guilty and have a trial. If we do that, on the face of it this is going to be a difficult case because you hit a pedestrian on a zebra crossing, so automatically any court in the country is likely to assume that you were at fault.*

*I note, however, that you say the sun was in your eyes, and there is a very specific South African case on that issue called Lombard. This case states that where a driver finds himself unexpectedly blinded by headlights or the sun, then unless the loss of vision or control immediately ceases, he should stop at once. If, during the literal second or two while he has no proper vision or control, an accident occurs which is due entirely to that loss of vision or control, it is submitted that he is not guilty of careless driving. However, if the accident occurs more than two seconds after the loss of vision or control began and the driver has not done anything to reduce speed or stop, he should generally be found guilty of careless driving at least, for continuing to drive when he could not see or control the car properly. So ultimately, this depends on the length of time between the loss of vision and your collision with the pedestrian.*

## Outcome:

In this case, the driver decided to enter a guilty plea. There was CCTV footage nearby showing that when the sun was in his eyes, he made no attempt to slow down. It was also a very straight road, so the sun had been in his eyes for a lot longer than a couple of seconds before he hit the pedestrian.

Had he significantly reduced his speed and the collision occurred immediately, he may have been able to defend it, but maintaining a constant speed would have been careless at the very least.

The court did treat the fact that the sun was in his eyes as a mitigating factor, but also considered the case serious enough to prosecute, given that he had hit a pedestrian on a zebra crossing. In the end, the court awarded 6 penalty points.

## Question:

I need some advice on an allegation of not being in proper control of a vehicle. My windscreen was dusty, it had not rained, and I just had not got round to taking

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

the car to the car wash yet. I had also run out of windscreen washer fluid. I was pulled over by a copper, who told me that it was dangerous. He issued me with a ticket for three points. I want your advice on whether I should accept it, challenge it, or take it to court.

## Advice:

*It sounds like you are being charged with driving a vehicle in a dangerous condition. That offence is under section 40A of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and carries 3 penalty points. You have two options with a fixed penalty: you either accept it or reject it. If you accept it, you pay the £100 fine and surrender your licence to the police for endorsement. You must do that within the 28 days given, and that will be the end of the case.*

*If you reject it, the case will proceed to court in a few months' time, where you can enter a not guilty plea and defend yourself. If you win, then of course you get no points and no fine. The risk is that, if you lose after trial, you will end up with 3 points and significantly higher financial penalties, including a fine of up to £1,000, as well as costs and a surcharge on top. Whether you should take it to court really depends on the level of obstruction that the dust was causing. If you can send me a few photographs, I will have a look.*

## Outcome:

Fortunately in this case, the accused driver felt very strongly that there was nothing wrong with his view through the windscreen so immediately after he was pulled over he took photographs showing that he could see perfectly well. He decided to reject the fixed penalty offer and take his chances in court. He entered a not guilty plea and had the matter listed for trial. After we made representations to the prosecution, the case was withdrawn.

The photographs he took were fantastic and really did show that he could see just fine. On the other hand, the police officer took just one photograph from the outside of the car, meaning you could not see what view the driver had. But, had the driver not taken any photographs, and instead just cleaned the windscreen straight away, it could have been a very different story.

## Question:

Could you settle a debate for me? Is it illegal to drive in flip-flops?

## Advice:

*There is no specific offence of "driving in flip-flops". You may see news articles every now and again stating that driving in flip-flops could land you with 3 points and a fine of up to £1,000, but strictly speaking it is not illegal, no. What these news articles are referring to is: "driving whilst not in proper control of a vehicle". It is a catch-all offence: the same offence that could cover things like eating whilst driving, smoking behind the wheel, or driving whilst watching a film. In other words, anything that might mean you do not have full control of the car.*

*In order to prosecute the offence, a police officer would have to convince a court that driving in flip-flops meant that you could not have full control of your car.*

## Outcome:

This is a hypothetical question that we get asked fairly regularly, but we have never actually seen anybody prosecuted for it. It is theoretically possible, though. If there was a drop in the standard of driving - for example, if the driver was swerving or did not brake quickly enough - it may well be that the police would suggest that this was due to the flip-flops. However, in the absence of a drop in the standard of driving, in our opinion it would be incredibly difficult for a police officer to convince a court that driving in flip-flops alone meant the driver could not be in full control.

Although, as above, we've never actually seen it prosecuted.

## Our advice:

Hot weather should not affect your driving anywhere near as much as snow or rain, but there are certainly still things to be careful of. When the sun is in your eyes, pull down the sun visor and drive extremely slowly and carefully until visibility improves. Make sure that you consistently top up your windscreen wash to maintain good visibility, and always try to drive in suitable footwear.

If you need any advice on motoring matters, please send us an email to [advice@pattersonlaw.co.uk](mailto:advice@pattersonlaw.co.uk) or call us on 01626 359800 for free legal advice

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# THE NATIONAL HACKNEY FARES TABLE

JULY 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	

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19	WORTHING	£9.10
20	HERTSMERE	£9.08
21	EDINBURGH	£9.00
22	MAIDSTONE	£9.00
23	MID SUSSEX	£9.00
24	ORKNEY	£9.00
25	READING	£9.00
26	TONBRIDGE & MALLING	£9.00
27	DACORUM	£8.98
28	BRENTWOOD	£8.90
29	CHELTENHAM	£8.90
30	EAST LOTHIAN	£8.90
31	MIDLOTHIAN	£8.90
32	REIGATE & BANSTEAD	£8.90
33	SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE	£8.90
34	STROUD	£8.90
35	UTTLESFORD	£8.90
36	VALE OF WHITE HORSE	£8.90
37	TORRIDGE	£8.79
38	BRIGHTON & HOVE	£8.70
39	EAST DEVON	£8.70
40	RESTORMEL	£8.70
41	SEVENOAKS	£8.70
42	SWINDON	£8.70
43	WATFORD	£8.70
44	WOKING	£8.70
45	SHETLAND ISLES	£8.64
46	CAMBRIDGE CITY	£8.60
47	TEST VALLEY	£8.60
48	TUNBRIDGE WELLS	£8.60
49	WEST BERKSHIRE	£8.60
50	BCP	£8.52
51	PENWITH	£8.52
52	CLACKMANNAN	£8.50
53	EAST AYRSHIRE	£8.50
54	SLOUGH	£8.50
55	WYRE	£8.50
56	COLCHESTER	£8.40
57	EAST SUFFOLK (NORTH)	£8.40
58	EASTLEIGH	£8.40
59	LEEDS	£8.40
60	MEDWAY	£8.40
61	SOUTHAMPTON	£8.40
62	DARTFORD	£8.30
63	HUNTINGDONSHIRE	£8.30
64	LINCOLN	£8.30
65	RUNNYMEDE	£8.30
66	SWALE	£8.30
67	THANET	£8.30
68	TORBAY	£8.30
69	WILTSHIRE	£8.25
70	BASINGSTOKE & DEANE	£8.20
71	BROXBOURNE	£8.20
72	EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE	£8.20
73	EAST HERTS	£8.20
74	GRAVESHAM	£8.20
75	HART	£8.20
76	MANCHESTER	£8.20
77	NORTH HERTS	£8.20
78	WOKINGHAM	£8.20
79	FOREST OF DEAN	£8.13
80	HASTINGS	£8.10
81	IPSWICH	£8.10

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
82	NORTH DEVON	£8.10
83	OXFORD CITY	£8.10
84	PLYMOUTH	£8.10
85	DUNDEE CITY	£8.08
86	MOLE VALLEY	£8.08
87	BRECKLAND	£8.00
88	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	£8.00
89	CHICHESTER	£8.00
90	COVENTRY	£8.00
91	DOVER	£8.00
92	EAST LINDSEY	£8.00
93	HARLOW	£8.00
94	HORSHAM	£8.00
95	NORTH YORKSHIRE	£8.00
96	NOTTINGHAM	£8.00
97	RIBBLE VALLEY	£8.00
98	RUSHCLIFFE	£8.00
99	SHROPSHIRE	£8.00
100	SOUTH AYRSHIRE	£8.00
101	SOUTH GLOUCESTER	£8.00
102	TANDRIDGE	£8.00
103	YORK	£8.00
104	FIFE	£7.98
105	DENBIGHSHIRE	£7.90
106	HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH	£7.90
107	ROTHER	£7.90
108	STEVENAGE	£7.85
109	ADUR	£7.80
110	BRACKNELL FOREST	£7.80
111	DORSET	£7.80
112	GLOUCESTER	£7.80
113	ISLE OF MAN	£7.80
114	LEICESTER	£7.80
115	NORTH SOMERSET	£7.80
116	ROCHFORD	£7.80
117	RUSHMOOR	£7.80
118	SOUTHEND ON SEA	£7.80
119	SOUTH HAMS	£7.80
120	STOCKPORT	£7.80
121	SURREY HEATH	£7.80
122	SWANSEA	£7.80
123	WAVERLEY	£7.80
124	MELTON	£7.75
125	CHELMSFORD	£7.70
126	HIGH PEAK	£7.70
127	NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE	£7.70
128	WEALDON	£7.70
129	WINDSOR & MAIDENHEAD	£7.70
130	STRATFORD ON AVON	£7.68
131	NORTH TYNESIDE	£7.65
132	RENFREWSHIRE	£7.65
133	WARWICK	£7.65
134	ASHFORD	£7.60
135	BASILDON	£7.60
136	BIRMINGHAM	£7.60
137	BRISTOL	£7.60
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141	KERRIER	£7.60
142	KINGS LYNN & WEST NORFOLK	£7.60
143	MONMOUTHSHIRE	£7.60
144	SCOTTISH BORDERS	£7.60
145	SOLIHULL	£7.60
146	SOMERSET	£7.60

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
1	LONDON (HEATHROW)	£15.00
2	EPSOM & EWELL	£13.40
3	TfL	£13.40
4	LUTON AIRPORT	£12.60
5	GUILDFORD	£10.00
6	JERSEY	£9.65
7	CARADON	£9.60
8	EASTBOURNE	£9.60
9	NORTH CORNWALL	£9.60
10	ARUN	£ 9.50
11	SPELTHORNE	£9.50
12	ELMBRIDGE	£9.50
13	EXETER	£9.50
14	GLASGOW	£9.30
15	CARRICK	£9.20
16	LEWES	£9.20

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
147	THREE RIVERS	£7.60
148	WEST SUFFOLK	£7.60
149	BATH & N. E. SOMERSET	£7.50
150	MILTON KEYNES	£7.55
151	BEDFORD	£7.50
152	ANGUS	£7.50
153	CARDIFF	£7.50
154	CHESTER	£7.50
155	EPPING FOREST	£7.50
156	GOSPORT	£7.50
157	MID SUFFOLK	£7.50
158	SHEFFIELD	£7.50
159	SOUTH NORFOLK	£7.50
160	TAMESIDE	£7.50
161	BRAINTREE	£7.40
162	CANTERBURY	£7.40
163	EAST HAMPSHIRE	£7.40
164	EAST RENFREW	£7.40
165	LIVERPOOL	£7.40
166	PORTSMOUTH UA	£7.40
167	SUNDERLAND	£7.40
168	S. LANARKSHIRE (CAMBUS/R'GLEN)	£7.40
169	STAFFORD	£7.40
170	TEWKESBURY	£7.40
171	WEST LOTHIAN	£7.40
172	WEST OXFORD	£7.40
173	WIRRAL	£7.40
174	NEW FOREST	£7.35
175	NEWARK & SHERWOOD	£7.32
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178	KINGSTON-UPON-HULL	£7.30
179	NORTH KESTEVEN	£7.30
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204	HIGHLAND	£7.10
205	ISLE OF WIGHT	£7.10
206	OLDHAM	£7.10
207	RUGBY	£7.10
208	HARBOROUGH	£7.09
209	ABERDEENSHIRE	£7.06
210	BABERGH	£7.00
211	BROMSGROVE	£7.00

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
212	WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND	£7.60
213	WINCHESTER	£7.60
214	CARLISLE	£7.00
215	CARMARTHENSHIRE	£7.00
216	INVERCLYDE	£7.00
217	MACCLESFIELD	£7.00
218	NEWPORT	£7.00
219	PEMBROKESHIRE	£7.00
220	WELWYN HATFIELD	£7.00
221	COMHAIRLRE NAN EILEAN SIAR	£7.00
222	SANDWELL	£6.92
223	BURY	£6.90
224	CLYDEBANK	£6.90
225	EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE	£6.90
226	FYLDE	£6.90
227	NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME	£6.90
228	NORTH AYRSHIRE	£6.90
229	WORCESTER CITY	£6.90
230	ABERDEEN CITY	£6.80
231	BARROW IN FURNESS	£6.80
232	BLACKPOOL	£6.80
233	BOSTON	£6.80
234	BRIDGEND	£6.80
235	BROXTOWE	£6.80
236	CEREDIGION	£6.80
237	EAST STAFFORDSHIRE	£6.80
238	EAST SUFFOLK (SOUTH)	£6.80
239	EDEN	£6.80
240	ELLESMERE PORT	£6.80
241	MANSFIELD	£6.80
242	MID DEVON	£6.80
243	NORTH NORFOLK	£6.80
244	NORTH NORTHANTS	£6.80
245	SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE	£6.80
246	TENDRING	£6.80
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261	LANCASTER	£6.60
262	NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE	£6.60
263	S. LANARKSHIRE (E. KILBRIDE)	£6.60
264	SOUTH TYNESIDE	£6.60
265	SALFORD	£6.60
266	ST HELENS	£6.60
267	WAKEFIELD	£6.60
268	BASSETLAW	£6.50
269	EREWASH	£6.50
270	GEDLING	£6.50
271	HALTON	£6.50
272	ROSSENDALE	£6.50
273	SEFTON	£6.80
274	TORFAEN	£6.50
275	DONCASTER	£6.48
276	HYNDBURN	£6.42

POSITION	TARIFF ONE 2 MILE FARE	
	COUNCIL	
277	BLAENAU GWENT	£6.40
278	COUNTY OF HEREFORD	£6.40
279	CREWE & NANTWICH	£6.40
280	DERBYSHIRE DALES	£6.40
281	NORTHUMBERLAND	£6.40
282	WEST LINDSEY	£6.40
283	EAST RIDING	£6.35
284	WARRINGTON	£6.35
285	ANGLESEY	£6.30
286	BARNSELY	£6.30
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330	PENDLE	£5.50
331	REDCAR & CLEVELAND	£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 USA



### \$100M AIRPORT TAXI CRACKDOWN TO HELP WORLD CUP TOURISTS

New York transportation officials have announced a massive \$100 million crackdown on illegal airport “taxi hustlers” and fare gougers ahead of a huge wave of tourists arriving for the World Cup.

The joint effort by the Taxi and Limousine Commission and the Port Authority will introduce stiffer penalties, increased surveillance, more enforcement officers, and widespread public warnings. The initiative aims to stop unlicensed drivers from targeting and swindling unsuspecting visitors right as they step off their flights. “We’ve all seen the individuals who wait around the baggage claim and on our frontages, targeting unknown passengers with the offer of transportation - often posing as legitimate rideshare drivers,” Port Authority Executive Director Kathryn Garcia said. “They are, at their best, annoying for travellers; at their worst, they are a real threat to public safety.”

Officials warned the problem is escalating dangerously, with at least 16 incidents in the past year where hustlers refused to let passengers leave their vehicles until they paid exorbitant fees. In one extreme case last December, an illegal driver and an accomplice trapped two Japanese tourists at JFK Airport, demanding \$500 for a ride. When the passengers refused to pay at an ATM, the driver drove them to Flushing Meadow Park and threatened them.

The numbers highlight a sharp rise in the scam. Port Authority police issued 2,874 summonses for taxi hustling at LaGuardia and Kennedy airports in 2025, a massive jump from 1,698 in 2024 and just 802 in 2022. Additionally, TLC spokespersons revealed they have already issued 2,021 summonses for unauthorised vehicle operations in the first five months of this year. To combat the surge, dozens of extra police officers will be deployed to airport terminals. High-tech licence-plate readers will also be used to automatically flag suspected vehicles. Also, drivers convicted of illegal solicitation will face a hefty five-point penalty on their driver’s licence. Under New York law, racking up 11 points within two years triggers an automatic licence suspension.

To ensure travellers don’t fall victim to the scams in the first place, officials are also launching an aggressive public information campaign inside airport terminals and during incoming flights.

## from South Africa



### TAXI CHIEFS WARN: ‘BUCKET SEATING’ PUTS COMMUTER LIVES AT RISK

The South African National Taxi Council (Santaco) is urging commuters to speak out against a dangerous and illegal trend where overcrowded taxis force passengers to sit on plastic buckets and makeshift seats. The taxi body has strongly condemned operators who use these unauthorised seating arrangements on KwaZulu-Natal’s roads to squeeze in extra passengers. A Santaco spokesperson confirmed they have received reports of this happening during peak travel hours, stating that it compromises safety and ruins efforts to make the industry professional. They said: “Drivers who do not obey the law must face the full might of the law. The safety of passengers must always come first. We cannot allow a situation where profit is placed above people’s lives.”

In response, the government is teaming up with Santaco’s new leadership to ramp up safety measures, promising to tackle vehicle overloading head-on.

## from Greece



### GREEK CABBIE FOUND DEAD AFTER CAR PLUNGES INTO SEA

A Greek cabbie has died after his car plunged into the sea at the port of Piraeus last month. A large-scale search and recovery operation quickly took

place and a crane was also brought in to lift the submerged car out of the water. The driver, identified as a 59-year-old Greek man, was rushed to a hospital, where medical staff officially pronounced him dead. Authorities confirmed that there were no passengers in the taxi at the time of the plunge.

Investigators are working to determine whether the plunge was caused by a sudden medical emergency, a mechanical failure, or a tragic driving accident.



# WORLDWIDE TAXI FOCUS

## from France



### PARIS TAXI SCAM SMASHED: FOUR MEN CHARGED AFTER TOURISTS SWINDLED

A sophisticated gang of fake cabbies who allegedly scammed unsuspecting tourists in Paris out of nearly £600,000 using rigged card readers is facing up to a decade in prison. Operating between December 2024



and January 2026, the four unlicensed drivers reportedly targeted tourists near major landmarks, such as the Eiffel Tower and the Trocadéro.

The group utilised counterfeit number plates on eight vehicles provided by the alleged ringleader, a 27-year-old man named Boubaker. According to investigators, the syndicate coordinated their high-stakes fraud through a Snapchat group brazenly named 'Elchapo94', a nod to the notorious Mexican drug lord.

The operation relied on a tactic known as the 'sum up' scam. Drivers allegedly manipulated contactless payment terminals by obscuring the screen or using devices with damaged displays to hide the true cost of the ride allowing them to secretly skyrocket small fares e.g. altering a standard €19 charge to a staggering €1,900 before presenting the terminal to victims.

Many passengers didn't notice the deception until days later when checking their bank statements. Around 80 tourists are currently trying to recoup total losses of €680,000. One victim, identified locally as David, thought he had paid a reasonable €38.60, only to discover he had been hit with a €2,500 charge. "I immediately blocked my card, opened a dispute with my bank, and filed a complaint," he said.

The scam also had a violent edge. Prosecutors allege the gang resorted to physical force if passengers challenged the exorbitant fares. In one shocking incident, a customer was run over by a driver after disputing a charge.

Police eventually cracked the case by analysing phone records, which led to coordinated raids on June 3 at properties on the outskirts of Paris. During a search of Boubaker's home, officers seized €53,000 in cash, a Kalashnikov assault rifle, and ammunition. Raids on other suspects uncovered large sums of money, luxury

goods, fake licence plates, and taxi equipment. The defendants have been charged with fraud and money laundering but have not yet formally entered pleas.

## from Croatia



### ZAGREB CABBIES CHARGING UP TO €85 FOR 5KM RIDES UNDER LOOPHOLE LAW

Significant differences in taxi fares continue to shock passengers across Zagreb, with some drivers legally permitted to charge up to €85 for a journey of just five kilometres. Regulations introduced in May last year require operators using taximeters to display their maximum allowed fare on the vehicle doors. However, while these prices must be clearly visible, there is currently no legal cap on the amount operators can set, provided it is listed on the vehicle.

This system has sparked intense criticism from passengers and consumer groups, with extreme cases on social media showing maximum fares running into thousands of euros for short journeys. A local journalist visited Zagreb's Main Railway Station and uncovered some of the city's highest-priced taxis. She found several vehicles displaying maximum fares of €85 for a five-kilometre journey - equivalent to €17 per kilometre - while others listed maximums of €78 and €65. High rates were also spotted near hospitals; at one taxi rank, the highest advertised fare was €42.50 for five kilometres, with others at €31.50 and €25.

In stark contrast, established operators charge a fraction of these amounts. Drivers under the Zagrebački taksi brand displayed a maximum fare of €7.90 for five kilometres, while Wizi listed a maximum of €7.80 for the same distance. Meanwhile, taxi services booked through mobile applications operate under different rules that oblige app-based operators to show passengers the total journey price and route before the ride begins, providing much greater transparency.

To combat the issue and strengthen oversight, Croatia's Ministry of Transport has introduced new measures which include mandatory driver identification cards and dedicated "TX" registration plates for official taxi vehicles. Authorities have also announced stricter penalties for irregularities, expanding enforcement powers so that municipal wardens, police officers, and customs officials can join transport inspectors in carrying out compliance checks.

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## TOMMY TO FINALLY DELIVER ON SOUTHPORT LINKS; ARGENTINIAN INVADES SW19

And at time of writing, they're still playing football in America!!.. but I am all Messi'd out.

It's the Summer, and Summer stands for Strawberries and Pimm's and (as I haven't a clue about The Henley Regatta) Wimbledon! And this year I fancy an upset.

For the bookies to bet 4/6 on, that's for every £100 you win just £66, on Sinner is lunacy and anyone who thinks that is a good bet and wagers a chunk on Sinner at that price will soon be chucking himself off the Embankment!! Obviously, he has a favourite's chance but I think his true odds are around 9/4 and I have already laid him on Betfair accordingly.

The French Open this year has shown that emerging talent is no respecter of reputation, and to that end I think you can (and I know it's a mixed metaphor) chuck some darts at the following three...

**FRANCISCO CERENDOLO** (just won the Stella Artois at Queen's) at 66/1

**JAKUB MENSIK** (big serving Pole) at 33/1

And

**FRANCES TIAFOE** (just won Halle) at 66/1

### BRITISH OPEN

The Open returns in the middle of the month. Back at the historic links of Royal Birkdale in Southport, which has now been redesigned to counter the changes in golf technology, this should be a putters' dream with the weather set to be fair, a winning score around 14 under and primed for **TOMMY FLEETWOOD**, local lad, to finally win his first major and at a top priced 20/1, he is a confident pick.

My other against the field of 156 is uber consistent **MATT FITZPATRICK**, at 25/1; both players' chances would be enhanced if the wind blows off the Irish Sea.



### BRITISH GRAND PRIX

The third big event in July is the British Grand Prix at Silverstone and given the very public criticism of his own car by Mercedes chief, Toto Wolff, with its reliability issues, I cannot see a quick fix. I have no doubt it is the fastest car, but until reliability issues are addressed and fixed, it is no certainty. Ferrari is prancing again and so is the king of Silverstone - **LEWIS HAMILTON**, and a bet on the winning-most driver on the circuit at 4/1 cannot be sneezed at. Bless you !



### ST LEGER

Now is the time to lay down a wager on the concluding Classic of the season, The St Leger at Doncaster in mid September. Procrastination is the thief of time and apart from the trial at Goodwood in early August and the York race in mid August, it is unlikely that anything will come out of the pack until we know who Ryan Moore will ride for Ballydoyle.

I was impressed with **DEL MARO** at Royal Ascot and I think, at 25/1, he is well worth an interest for the boys in blue.

Similarly, O'Brien Junior needs to be kept onside and the battling qualities of **JAMES J BRADDOCK** in the Derby marks him out as ideal for Doncaster's long straight. 10/1 is a steal.

Back them both now for September.

Next month its footy ante-posts for 26/27!!

So until then....

Good punting



**Bernie the Book**

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