

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Newsletter – November 2020

Welcome to the November 2020 taxi and private hire newsletter.

We hope you will take a few minutes to read this newsletter as it contains lots of relevant taxi and private hire news and information including a copy of the hackney carriage and private hire guidelines.

If you would like to give feedback or ideas for future editions, please contact us via email at fleet.licensing@wiltshire.gov.uk

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Further information can be found on our website at:

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/licences-permits-transport.

Contact us:

Email: fleet.licensing@wiltshire.gov.uk

COVID 19 update

As you will be aware in March 2020, The Government placed unprecedented restrictions on the movement of people, requesting people to stay at home and banning non-essential travel, gatherings and contact with the aim of reducing the spread of COVID-19.

During this period, the Council have tried to keep you up to date with the ever-changing situation, however this has proved difficult with the taxi and private hire trade not initially being included in the public transport guidance. Relevant guidance and information will continue to be distributed as and when provided by central Government.

All employers and self-employed drivers must ensure that they have completed a COVID-19 risk assessment before working. Further information on completing risk assessments can be found at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm>

National restrictions were reintroduced across the Country from 5th November 2020. Further information and guidance can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november

Changes to appointments and renewal processes

In response to the national restrictions introduced in March 2020, licences were extended for a three-month period to enable the trade to keep going whilst we reviewed our procedures in line with the new restrictions.

From May 2020 all driver, vehicle and DBS renewals have been processed via email/post. This process will continue going forward.

Driver renewal process:

To renew your drivers' licence, you will need to submit via email:

- Completed application form
- Check code to enable us to check your DVLA licence online

Once we receive your completed application form and DVLA check code we will carry out an online check of your DVLA licence, we will then contact you to take payment over the phone.

Once payment has been processed your badge will be issued and sent to you in the post.

Vehicle renewal process:

To enable you to renew your licence you will need to submit via email:

- Completed application form
- Scan/photo of second page of V5C Registration Document
- Scan/photo of Current Insurance Certificate

Once we receive your completed application form, V5C Registration Document and Insurance certificate, we will check that the vehicle holds a valid MOT online (MOT must be issued less than 28 days prior to the expiry date). Once this has been processed you will be contacted to take payment over the phone and to book an inspection appointment.

Licence plates will be issued following satisfactory completion of vehicle inspection.

Medical renewal process:

Medicals were temporarily replaced by the requirement for licensees to complete a self-declaration form, once received these forms were valid for six months. The full medical requirement was resumed in August 2020, following restrictions being lifted.

DBS renewal process:

DBS renewals are now carried out via email, you will be notified when your DBS is due for renewal and asked to complete a DBS details form. The completed form will need to be emailed back to us. Once received we will contact you to take payment. Your DBS will be processed once payment has been received and you will be emailed details of how to sign up to the DBS update service. When you receive your DBS certificate by post you must sign up to the DBS update service.

6 Month Inspection and MOT process:

Six monthly MOTs and inspections were temporarily suspended. MOTs were reintroduced in October 2020. Inspections were reintroduced in July 2020 with COVID-19 procedures put in place to ensure the safety of customers and staff.

New driver appointments were also reintroduced in July 2020, however due to further national restrictions being introduced on 5 November 2020, these have had to be temporarily suspended to avoid the spread of the virus. We hope to resume these once restrictions have been lifted.

Social distancing

You should only accept passengers from the same household or [support bubble](#) in the same journey. This does not apply to council contracts where appropriate risk assessments have taken place.

Where possible, ask all passengers to sit in the back of your vehicle, and if they are travelling alone then the left-hand side back seat.

Assist passengers if they are struggling or require assistance due to a disability. You should ask passengers to leave the luggage next to the boot and move away. You should sanitise your hands after handling the luggage.

When plying for hire on taxi ranks drivers should stay with their vehicle, a distance of two meters between drivers should be maintained at all times. Drivers should not congregate on or near the rank.

Cleaning

Before a journey ask your passengers if they or anyone in their household have had [coronavirus symptoms](#) (new, continuous cough, high temperature or loss or change to smell or taste) in the last 14 days. If passengers have Covid-19 symptoms politely decline the fare and remind them to adhere to the [government social distancing guidelines](#).

Before the journey clearly explain to passengers what is expected from them with regards to hygiene and social distancing.

Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds in accordance with [NHS guidelines](#). You can keep a bottle of water and a bar of soap in your vehicle or use a sanitiser gel. Sanitiser gel should be a minimum 60% alcohol.

Carry disposable tissues with you to catch coughs and sneezes. Dispose of in a plastic carrier after use. Have these available for customers too. Dispose of as soon as possible but at least daily.

Avoid the use of cash instead use a contactless payment method if possible.

Open windows to provide ventilation where possible

Cleaning your vehicle

Before starting work and between each passenger journey clean surfaces regularly with sanitising wipes or spray including card payment devices, seatbelt buckles, door handles and other surfaces that customers may touch.

Clean your driver door, steering wheel, gear stick, switches and other areas you touch on a regular basis

Where a vehicle is shared, regularly clean the steering wheels, handbrake, door handles. At the beginning, middle and end of a shift as a minimum.

Face Coverings

From 23 September 2020 **it is the law for passengers to wear a face covering** when using taxis or private hire vehicles. You are entitled to refuse to accept a customer not wearing a face covering, unless they are exempt.

Please be mindful of people who [don't have to wear a face covering](#) because of age, health or disability reasons. You still have a responsibility to passengers under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

Private hire operators should advise customers when booking of the need to wear a face covering. Drivers of hackney carriages also need to explain this to their customers.

Public health advice is that taxi and private hire vehicle **drivers wear a face covering when social distancing cannot be maintained**. It is recognised that there will be circumstances when you cannot wear a face covering, or, a face covering may not be worn based on your risk assessment. Face coverings do not replace social distancing. If you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19, you and your household must isolate at home. Wearing a face covering does not change this.

It is important to use face-coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and taking them off. The Department of Health and Social Care have produced guidance on [face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own](#)

NHS Test and Trace

It is advised that NHS Test and Trace information is collected at the time of booking by Private Hire Operators. Hackney drivers should maintain a record of customers as well.

Data collected should be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Reporting gatherings to police

There has been a lot of challenges for the police in managing public order, pop up parties, illegal raves in the post COVID-19 world. There has been a steady and dangerous rise in public order, and we know that large gatherings are not only in breach of rules but also risk a spike in the virus. What we would like is for taxi companies to notify us if they were dropping a lot of people to a particular location on a given day. Taxi drivers and companies are an excellent tool for intelligence, and no doubt if anyone would know about an event going on and lots of people going somewhere it might be you. Please call 101 and let us know so we can prevent harm to people in our community.

Record of refusals

If a driver refuses to carry a passenger(s) due to COVID-19 related issues it will be for the driver to prove that the refusal was reasonable. Therefore, if you refuse to carry a passenger the council recommends that you keep a record of the date, time, location and reason for refusal.

Business Support

Coronavirus (COVID-19) support is available to employers and the self-employed, including sole traders and limited company directors. You may be eligible for loans, tax relief and cash grants, whether your business is open or closed.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder>

Further guidance

The Department for Transport (DfT) have published guides for both operators and passengers on travelling safely during the outbreak. It is important you follow this guidance. These documents are updated when restrictions change.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-taxis-and-phvs>

<https://extranet.dft.gov.uk/safer-transport-campaign/resources-for-taxi-phv/>

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer transport guidance for operators](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#)

Keep up to date with the latest news

COVID-19: [latest government guidance](#).

Latest news and information from Wiltshire Council can be found at: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/public-health-coronavirus:



One zone

Since the introduction of the new unitary council in Wiltshire in April 2009 which brought together the old district councils and the county council, hackney carriages have been operating as separate zones based on the previous district council area. During this period the Council have carried out extensive consultation to enable the zones to have one set of policies, procedures, guidelines and tariffs and move towards removing the zones. It has always been the Council's intention to move to one zone for the whole of the Council's area to promote the Council's drive to reduce climate change. A single zone will promote fuel efficiency, reduce wasted time for drivers and ensure drivers can utilise as much of their travelling time as possible. A single zone will also allow the Council to deliver the service within budget and reduce spend on duplicated facilities. The Council is evaluating whether to introduce a single zone for Wiltshire, drivers will be consulted during 2021 on any proposals put forward.

Taxi Tariff update

The Council consulted with driver in February 2020 in relation to proposed changes to the current schedule of fares and tariffs. The Council wishes to update drivers on the current position on the consultation and proposed changes, I apologise this update has taken so long to provide but COVID and the work required to manage it and keep drivers on the road has been priority over the last 8 months.

Feedback indicated drivers were against the proposal to remove driver's ability to charge tariff 2 all day on a Sunday, after reviewing feedback it was decided to remove this proposal and allow drivers to charge tariff 2 all day on a Sunday. Feedback indicated no other strong feelings against the other proposals, in view of this a final proposal was agreed, the main changes being shown below:

For Vehicles up to four seats;

1. An additional 30p to be added to all flag rates (standing charge)
2. Tariff 3 to be amended to only apply on Public Holidays
3. Tariff 2 to be implemented from 22:00 instead of 22:30 (with the exception of Sunday where it can be charged all day)
4. Tariff 1 to end at 21:59 instead of 22:29

For vehicles with more than four seats carrying more than four passengers

1. Tariff 5 to be amended to only apply on Public Holidays
2. Tariff 4 to be implemented from 22:00 instead of 22:30 (with the exception of Sunday where it can be charged all day)
3. Tariff 2 to end at 21:59 instead of 22:29

The final proposal was agreed prior to the first national lockdown in response to Covid-19. Covid-19 has placed additional financial pressures on both the industry and Wiltshire Council and as such the Council was not in a position to proceed with the proposed changes in the 2020/21 financial year. It was also recognised that Covid-19 has had a significant and damaging effect on the industry and to implement change and further costs for vehicle owners at this time would not be appropriate.

In view of this the Council proposes to bid for funding to implement the changes during the 2021/2022 financial year. The Council will work with the industry at the time to ensure it is appropriate to implement any changes to the schedule of fees and tariffs. Therefore, the proposed changes to the schedule of tariffs and fares have been delayed, an update on the situation will be provided to vehicle owners and drivers in April 2021.

National standards

On 21 July the Department for Transport introduced the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards. This is a national document which all local authorities must have regard to when making decisions and considering applications.

This will impact on everyone, including the Council, and we are currently reviewing what steps we may need to take in respect of these standards, inevitably it will mean some changes to the guidelines and fit and proper policies.

For further information please see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards

New system

We are in the process of replacing our current M3 system with a new system from Tascomi, this will give us enhanced benefits and functionality and will make the licensing administration process more efficient. It is anticipated that this will go live in April 2021, during this period please bear with us as we will be experiencing high work volumes to enable us to transfer licensing data to the new system. The new system will eventually allow drivers to manage their own data, upload documents directly, make payments and book appointments.

Driver Badges

Hackney carriage/private hire drivers badges should be worn by drivers in a visible position at all times whilst working not just kept in the vehicle. Please note if wearing jumpers, coats, jackets the badge still needs to be visible. All drivers should be using the visible lanyards provided by the Council. This has been highlighted as a widespread issue during recent enforcement checks. Failure to comply with this will result in drivers being issued with penalty points.

Recording of incidents in licensed vehicles

We have been asked to contact you all by our Designated Officer for Allegations.

It is regarding a recent case whereby a Driver was recording a student with their personal mobile phone to record bad behaviour that was happening in the vehicle. We have been asked to reiterate to you all that this must not happen under any circumstances.

The only recording that can take place inside of the vehicle is by installation of an approved CCTV system, this must comply with the CCTV Code of Practice issued by the ICO. Further information can be found at: <https://ico.org.uk/media/1542/cctv-code-of-practice.pdf>.

Trowbridge Change of taxi rank

The taxi rank on Wicker Hill in Trowbridge has been replaced with a taxi rank at St Stephens Place in Trowbridge, just opposite the multi-story car park entrance near to the cinema and restaurants.

Low Emission Vehicles

Wiltshire Council has declared a climate emergency and as such is working on a strategy to move its vehicle fleet to low emission vehicles by 2030. This is in line with the Governments recent announcement that the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles will cease in 2030. The Council is also looking at its taxi fleet and has commenced a project to evaluate how it can support drivers and vehicle owners in a move to lower emission, electric, hydrogen and hybrid vehicles.

The Council recognises it needs to incentivise vehicle owners to switch to lower polluting vehicles and is currently reviewing how this can be achieved. It is also important to ensure that any move to electric vehicles is supported with the correct infrastructure, eg charging points on taxi ranks to make any switch viable for vehicle owners.

The Taxi Licensing team will continue to work in identifying how Wiltshire's taxi fleet could move to low emission vehicles in the future and provide regular communication to vehicle owners and drivers on any proposed initiatives.

Trade representatives

Details of the current Trade representatives and contact details:

Glenn Sharp (East)
Email: glenn@devizestaxis.co.uk
Tel: 07855 416738

Paul Humphries (South)
Email: dalestaxisalisbury@hotmail.co.uk
Tel: 07748800343

This is an exciting time for trade representatives who will shortly be involved in the review of the hackney carriage and private hire guidelines. The Trade representative role involves liaison between the compliance team and the taxi and private hire trade. Quarterly meetings are held in to communicate and discuss items with the trade. You will be expected to attend at least 50% of these meetings. This is your chance to have your say and put forward the views of the taxi and private hire trade within your area. If you are interested in becoming a Trade Representative, please contact us via email at: fleet.licensing@wiltshire.gov.uk.

Website forms

There are now forms available on the website, these forms must be completed for the following:

Vehicle accident form
Change of address form
Private hire exemption request form
Hackney carriage vehicle advertising request form

They can be found at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/licences-permits-transport> under Notification and request forms

Previous newsletters

Newsletters provide valuable information to the trade, to keep up to date with information provided, copies of previous newsletters can be found on our website:

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/licences-permits-transport>

Keep playing your part and prevent increased restrictions being introduced in Wiltshire:



Keep washing hands regularly



Wear face coverings in enclosed spaces



Stay at least 2 metres apart



Follow rule of six



Self-isolate when instructed

#WiltshireTogether