

Appendix 6

Taxi policy responses to consultation

I have noticed that you are reviewing the taxi licensing policy.

I don't know if my comments fit in with this but I would like to ask that you consider the needs of people with dementia in relation to the provision/licensing of taxi services.

We are currently working towards Darlington becoming more dementia friendly and I have attached a letter and consultation report in relation to the development of a Dementia Friendly Darlington.

Clearly transport provision is a key element of people continuing to be able to access their local communities.

We have a Dementia Friendly Business Guide and could offer Dementia Friends information sessions to taxi companies/drivers.

*See attached report from Dementia Friendly Darlington **Appendix 8***

Hello,

I would like to comment on your proposals to bring a single shade of red to all Darlington Hackney's. I think having a colour scheme, like Middlesbrough would ensure passenger safety more.

Many moons ago, as you know, there were private hire vehicles working in Darlington, that were plated in Berwick. There was a red one, complete with roof sign. We are guilty of flagging it down to take us home. It was during the journey we realised it wasn't a 'proper' Darlington Hackney.

My husband is a Darlington Hackney owner / driver. If we could make this mistake, how many others did?

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

To make it easier for some drivers would it be possible to change the age of a new car to 4 years old for registering and would it be possible to get a car plasti dipped instead of wrapped or painted to have a greater choice instead of looking for a certain red.

Regards to the changing taxi policy, would it not be simpler to have 4 separate coloured vehicles to provide the service, example

DL1 postcodes Red vehicle

DL2 postcodes White Vehicle

DL3, postcodes Blue Vehicle

Out of town vehicles black or silver.

DBC checked

Clean driving licence

As the majority of cabs are red I see no reason why they should be same shade. Only Upon renewal of a vehicle should the colour be taken into consideration if a driver wishes to continue.

Shaded glass should be an option.

As far as age of vehicle is concerned I think renewal every 10 years.

First of thank you for asking our opinions about taxis in Darlington. I held a dual badge for two years.

1. I think the idea of making hackney cabs is brilliant, I don't see the need for them all to be the same of red, absolutely no need. Obviously, when you give them the license if it is wildly different then it can be stopped there.

2. I think that every can should have a working CCTV for both front and rear in the cab, and I think that they should have to be stored so that you as the issuing office can do spot checks and check for speeding, contact with the customer.

The main issue I had and still have is the blatant disregard for keeping with the speed limit and cutting other drivers up. The driving standards are getting worse.

3. There are not enough stop checks done on the taxis, we used to get warnings on the radio and if we didn't have something then we would be sent out of town or we went home for the night to avoid being stopped.

4. Length of time holding a license, I believe that 12 months is not long enough, we are getting a more and more diverse taxi driver, who when I was taking my test couldn't even understand his name being said in English, talking to him afterwards he didn't understand English very well and had been primed as to the questions being asked.

5. There needs to be more consequences for the drivers for such things as smoking in the taxi, there are a few drivers in 1AB who are seen driving to their next job smoking. When reported nothing is done - if CCTV was installed this could be checked on.
 6. 1AB make everyone wear a black shirt and tie, I think all taxi drivers should. They should take pride in their vehicle and themselves, some cars are a crumb haven, the cars still of old sweat and so do the drivers.
 7. Radio off whilst driving, this is not necessary, as long as it's not too loud for the customer, then why not? When you have been driving for 12 - 15 hours you need something to break the silence.
 8. Length of time driving - some drivers work Friday night to Tuesday morning with little or no sleep. It also becomes addictive to try and get one more fare hoping it's a big one. Personally, I think driving time should be limited to a certain amount of hours in a 24 hour period, just like lorry drivers.
 9. I think there needs to be more audits on the drivers and the vehicles, once the license has been issued. Mainly unexpected ones, to make sure that Darlington taxis are the safest and best in not only the County but also the Country.
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Throughout lock down taxi drivers have been hardest hit and you want to impose ridiculous rules about whatever shade of red the car needs to be! Are you OCD?? Also if the cars passed mot its legally road worthy !!and are you going to bloody well pay the drivers to change the shade of red or buy new cars ! Absolutely ridiculous!! And i think you at the council have too much time on your hands to even make this rubbish up,leave the taxi drivers alone for god sake.

I am concerned at the continuation of the red colour which apart from its political association is a very difficult colour to standardise. To specify a particular red specification will require the purchase of bespoke vehicles or an expensive respray . Perhaps we could standardise on black which has limited variations

There is a section that say drivers needing to give assistance to disabled people and few more area where similar words are used. However there is nothing about putting someone's folding wheelchair in the boot, and nothing to say that the car needs to have a boot or rear space that can carry a folded wheelchair, providing the wheelchair meets the reference wheelchair size. Do you think there is already enough in the policy to cover this and will driver recognise this? I say this because I have witnessed drivers not getting out of the driver's seat to assist a wheelchair user transfer from

wheelchair to the car, as well as just flipping the boot lid expecting the wheelchair user to put their wheelchair in the boot and then close it.

Private Hire Cars and Hackney Carriages- the need to licence more wheelchair accessible ones.

I have been a manual self propelling wheelchair user for 25 years having moved back to Darlington 4 years ago. Darlington was a big culture shock with regards to very limited access to wheelchair accessible taxis. In Leicester, London, Manchester, Nottingham, Liverpool, Birmingham, Edinburgh all Hackney Carriages are wheelchair accessible due to local bylaws. This meant I had no more difficulty than other people in finding a taxi at a station or other ranks and could always book an accessible taxi at a time of my choosing.

Darlington has few private hire or hackney carriages that are wheelchair accessible, so I can never rely on getting one to catch a train or get there and back from appointments. Even if I got one one way, there would be no guarantee that I would get one for the return journey. Most meetings or appointments are unpredictable in length. Even when I specifically booked a wheelchair accessible one, it was often late, not good for catching a specific train!, and not available for early morning or late night journeys. We need to have a 24 hour service like other people.

The wheelchair accessible ones that are licensed locally are mostly of different adaption types making use more difficult, and one is not compatible with my carbon fibre chair due to its fixation points, and no transfer into a seat when on board possible, though this taxi is ideal for large heavy electric chairs and their users. Those that give the option of transferring to a seat once inside are useful to some who prefer to travel facing forwards, not possible in some conversions if you stay in your chair.

Non wheelchair users often assume wrongly all wheelchairs are similar. Even electric chairs vary a lot in size and weight to cope with larger users. These chairs and their users are completely dependent on a fully accessible taxi.

It is generally possible for manual folding wheelchair users to use non accessible taxis if the user can transfer into a low car seat. However many long term self propelling users have chairs with a rigid frame, that may have the back fixed in position, and these do not fold., only the wheels are detachable, often not fitting in the boots of saloon cars. Transferring into and out of a low car seat is very difficult for most people with mobility issues with out any aids such as grab handles and transfer boards, or turning device.

Ideally when I travel I have bags carefully attached to my chair enabling my independence, with the weight of them balanced out to stop my lightweight wheelchair from tipping, which is ok in an accessible taxi. Having to remove them all, and take wheels off is not easy and often leaves the chair unbalanced when they are put back wrongly. Even when my chair fits in taxi boot it has frequently been damaged, requiring temporary repairs at the station, including a broken castor, wheel spokes, seat straps being partially removed when picked up wrongly, apart from the cosmetic damage. Manual chairs can cost up to £5000.

Accessible taxis tend to have grab handles, and some models swing out seats to aid any one with mobility issues, such as more traditional style London cabs, that also feature built in ramps. Separate ramps tend to be problematic and time consuming especially those with 2 separate channels. The traditional style purpose built London taxi generally have lower floors, less steep ramps, less risk of tipping off ramp! and easier for both mobility impaired and older people to board if using seats than conversions. There is a new TX taxi that is electric, meeting the need for greener transport, which is accessible to most people, other than possibly the users of very large bariatric electric chairs.

Speaking to Darlington taxi drivers, they fail to understand that the lack of accessible taxis is a major issue, and they state there is under use of current ones. Because there are so few, there is little chance of one turning up on time when needed, I and probably most other manual wheelchair users, no longer specify, but I do tell them I have a non folding , manual wheelchair when I book, Rarely does an accessible one turn up, even though this company has 4 accessible ones on your list. There needs to be a much higher proportion of both accessible Hackney carriages, and private hire cars before wheelchair users in Darlington can even begin to get out and about like non disabled people, that is get a taxi at the time you want one, not dictated to by availability of “ special ones” I would have missed trains, or been late to meetings, appointments if I had relied only on wheelchair accessible taxis.

I am lucky in that I can drive, but limited by medications and medical treatments, so still need a reliable, dependable, taxi service that I can use without damage to me or my chair. Currently it is unreasonable difficult for wheelchair users to access taxi and private car at a time of their choosing, and the Council has an Equality Duty under the Equality Act to meet as well as the taxi companies own as a service provider. There is an ageing population who will be even more reliant on easy to access taxis. Saloon cars are obviously much cheaper than accessible TX Taxis, or specialist conversions. It is vital that all of Tees Valley citizens has a reliable useable taxi service. May be the Tees Valley Mayor can help make loans available for greener wheelchair accessible taxis and all councils increase the percentage licensed.

Having recently moved to the town, I find the majority of taxis drive inconsiderate, dangerously and fast. I have seen taxi drivers being aggressive and threatening to other road users.

I live on Clifton Road and have seen multiple taxis 'take off' as they launch themselves over the speed ramps at 40mph+.

If anything can be done to address their standard of driving and behaviour it would be great. It's only a matter of time until one hits somebody.

Hope this helpful for your review,

If it is possible, please could taxis be aware and set an example by not allowing their car engines to run unnecessarily.

This causes to pollution from engine emissions that harms people's health and affects climate change.

Thank you.

My concerns about the taxis are the speed they drive at, when on a job and off a job. I feel taxi's should have a black box which when they speed effects there insurance. So as a Darlington policy making all Darlington taxis have a black box to protect the passengers but also protect the community from speeding taxi drivers!

Would you jet off on holiday in a plane that had no black box or limits for your safety, the same should apply to taxis and the drivers!

I have just seen that you are looking for feedback regarding taxi policy.

I would like to raise the point regarding lack of availability for wheelchair users. I find it disappointing and frustrating the lack of taxis that provide this service. It needs to be a minimum requirement that there are available taxis for wheelchair users at all times.

Often, you are unable to pre-book these taxis. Firms often do not know if they will have an available car for wheelchair users in advance, if is almost saying that wheelchair users cannot make plans if they need transport.

I sincerely hope this a prioritised issue and hope that this is something that you could also help with.

Just seen a post to say you're changing the way taxi services are ran.

I think there isn't enough taxi drivers for one, leaving people stuck after a night out for 1-2 hours because they can't afford a rank taxi home which may I add costs £10 usually.

I think you should take a look at how the yellow cabs in Middlesbrough work, I've never had an issue with them and £2.50 for a journey.

There also isn't enough disabled taxis, if I've ever been with my grandma and we need to go somewhere we've had to wait an hour or even more sometimes to get a wheelchair accessible taxi.

Drop the price from villages such as Middleton set George £8 each way is too much and that's most of my wages gone When the drivers pretend their card machine isn't working when it actually is its important for drivers to make sure all machinery is working when they pick up a customer When I'm in the town on a night out its harder to get a taxi so more taxis would be great