

Preston Hackney Carriage Trade Liaison Meeting
8th March 2023

Attendance:

Michelle Reynolds (chair) – Licensing Manager, Preston City Council (PCC)
Julia Littlechild – Senior Licensing Technician (PCC)
Steven Morris – Licensing Enforcement Officer (PCC)
Harriett McNamara – Assistant Operations Engineer, Traffic Team - Lancashire County Council (LCC)
Matthew Campbell – Traffic Technician, Traffic Team - LCC
Naveed Safdar – Chairman, RMT (Preston branch)
Mohamed Ayub – Trade representative (RMT)
Sodack Ali – Secretary (RMT)

1. Introduction of new trade representatives

All above attendees introduced themselves and briefly outlined their role.

2. Introduction of the Licensing Manager (PCC)

MR – Introduced herself as the new Licensing Manager. MR joined the Licensing team in February 2022 following the previous manager's retirement from the Authority. MR started her career with PCC in the Licensing team 19 years ago as a licensing enforcement officer before moving to the Environmental Protection department.

3. Admin/Policy/Procedures

Upgrade to Information Systems

MR – Advised of the Licensing team's pending transition to the latest version of the software used by the service. It is expected to be introduced in the next 18 months and it is anticipated this will be beneficial to the trade as it should mean more user interaction and users will be allocated dash portals so they can check the progress of their own applications etc this should in turn reduce the number of calls made to the taxi licensing enquiry line.

Documentation check appointments

JL – Advised that documentation checks had been reintroduced for all new applicants and renewal driver applications. JL advised that drivers must now ring Licensing Services to book a face-to-face documentation check appointment before their driver licences can be issued.

Workloads

MR – Advised that the Licensing team was working hard to ensure all driver and vehicle applications were dealt with prior to their expiry dates and that it would be appreciated if drivers could please refrain from contacting the helpline for unnecessary queries (e.g. chasing when badges/plates would be ready) which takes the focus away from processing applications. It would also speed up the process if applicants ensured

that their applications were complete and correct before submitting them. It was reiterated that badges/licences will not be issued until all documents have been received and checked.

4. Enforcement

Unlawful plying for hire

MA – Advised that it appears to be mainly Preston licensed private hire drivers, possibly those who still hold a 12 month licence, that are unlawfully ranking outside Yum Yums, Switch and Revolution between 9pm and the early hours of the morning. MR - advised that unlawful plying for hire would be addressed now the team have additional enforcement resource.

Uber

MA – Advised that the trade hoped that PCC do not grant an operator's licence to Uber. MR advised that no application had recently been received from Uber. MA advised that Uber drivers were parking up at the Railway Station waiting for jobs to be allocated which is causing friction with the Railway drivers. SM advised that he had previously visited the Railway and spoken to some drivers to ask them to move on, so it does not appear that they are plying for hire. SM to monitor the situation.

Non- PCC licensed vehicles operating in the area

MA – Advised that there are a significant number of Wolverhampton licensed vehicles working in the Preston area and asked could anything be done about this? MR advised that there was nothing that could be done to stop Preston operators from being granted an operator's licence with another Council e.g. Wolverhampton and then sub-letting a booking accepted at their Preston office to their other office so that they can then dispatch the drivers from that area to fulfil the Preston booking. MR advised that this is not a Preston specific problem, but is a national issue which arises due to the legislation that allows operators to carry out this practice lawfully.

5. Ranks

Parking in ranks/obstruction

MA - Advised that there was an issue with private vehicles parking after 7pm on the Church Street rank resulting in difficulties in licensed hackneys using the rank correctly and that it would be beneficial if cameras could be installed to monitor this. MR advised that parking of private vehicles in ranks is a parking enforcement issue for which LCC have responsibility.

Church Street rank design/issues

MA – Advised that the busiest rank in Preston is Church Street where approximately 90% of the trade rank up. MA advised that the new Church Street/Fishergate road layout is confusing as the public do not realise that it is a taxi rank due to not being

marked out clearly with taxi rank markings and that, due to the narrowing of the road in this location, this makes it difficult to operate effectively as a rank.

MR advised that concerns have been raised in relation to this area of Church Street and that the rank needs to both clearly appear and operate like a rank to reduce the risk of road traffic incidents in the area and to reduce congestion especially in the evening. MC - advised that the area was a shared bay so it could not be marked out just for taxis. MC confirmed that they would conduct a site visit to assess the situation. MR suggested it would be beneficial to see the rank operating in the evenings when conducting the visit as in practice this is when the issues are more prominent.

Signage

Market Street rank

MR – Advised that the Market Street rank had been approved as a 24 hour rank some time ago by PCC however it still needed signage to reflect this change and hoped this could be completed soon. MC advised that as this rank was also a loading bay there would have to be consultation with all neighboring businesses prior to making any changes to the Traffic Regulation Order which is in place at this location. MR advised leaving this matter open to investigate further.

6. Miscellaneous

Hackney carriage requirement to display front licence plate

NS – Noted that the front white plate required to be displayed on a hackney carriage vehicle was so small and queried if it was necessary to have to display it as it was difficult to attach to some vehicles. MR advised that it was necessary, as per the current PCC Taxi Policy, but that it was something that may be re-considered in the future.

Hackney Carriage tariff increase

MA – Submitted a written application on behalf of the RMT requesting an increase to the current Hackney Carriage Table of Fares. MR advised this would be considered and that any supporting evidence submitted by the RMT would be useful and taken into account when considering the request.

7. Any other business

Conversion certificates

SM – Advised that the taxi testing stations have raised concerns that some vehicles that have been converted do not hold the correct conversion certification. MA wanted to know why these issues had been raised and wanted it noted ‘why proprietors should pay thousands of pounds for a taxi when they could purchase a panel van for a few hundred and convert it?’

SM advised that if vehicles are converted following manufacture, we need to ensure that it was carried out to the correct specification as per the PCC Taxi Policy and that the vehicle is safe for the public to travel in.

SM advised that, as yet he could not confirm if the certifications that were being produced for the vehicle conversions were genuine and that this issue was currently under investigation.

MR advised that currently V5C forms (log books) were not currently a requirement as part of the vehicle licence application process but this was being considered as a new procedure by the Licensing team.

Complaints

MA – Requested an update regarding an incident involving two hackney carriage drivers at the Railway Station. MR advised that the incident was still under investigation by our enforcement officer and it is inappropriate to provide further comment on the matter.

Short journeys

MR – Raised concerns that some drivers mainly ranking at the Railway Station and the Church Street rank at weekends are allegedly refusing to take passengers for short journeys. MA agreed that this was unacceptable and advised would take the issue up with the trade.

Card payment machines

MR – Raised concerns that drivers ranking mainly at the Church Street and Railway ranks are reportedly refusing to accept certain fares (usually short journeys) where the hirer has no cash by advising customers that their card machine is not working/unavailable. MR advised that this was unacceptable practice and that it may be considered in the future to introduce the mandatory requirement that all licensed vehicles must provide a working card machine to take payments. RMT representatives in attendance were generally in support of this proposal.

Fishergate Hill bus only lane

MA – Advised that it had been discussed at previous trade meetings that had been attended by LCC about opening the bus lane on Fishergate Hill to taxis. This would assist drivers by shortening their journey around the outside of the City to access the Railway Station. MC advised that they were unaware of this request and agreed to investigate the matter further.

Garstang Road / Broughton roundabout bus lane

MA – advised there is a lack of taxi signage at this location. HM advised that they were unaware of this issue and agreed to investigate the matter and feedback to MR (as to whether taxis could be allowed to use the bus lane at this location or if it merely required amendments to the existing signage).

8. Date of next meeting

Room B, Town Hall
10th May 2023 @ 10am