

Bromsgrove Taxi Association.

Report in to reasons why the Hackney Carriage should be reduced  
And why policies within the taxi trade needs to be changed.

At this moment in time there's an imbalance between Hackney Carriage and Private Hire within the Bromsgrove area. This is causing many problems for the Hackney drivers who rely on the taxi ranks for their main income. As opposed to the drivers who work for the large Private Hire Companies in and around the district, who see and use the taxi ranks as a means to increase their income when the private hire companies are quiet.

Many of these problems occur when the Private Hire Companies are quiet; this would normally be at the same time when the taxi ranks are also quiet so, in effect these drivers, who are using the taxi ranks to increase their income at quiet times, are inadvertently reducing the income of the Hackney Carriage drivers who rely on the Taxi ranks for their sole income.

There is another problem with this situation which is when the Taxi ranks are busy on Friday and Saturday nights, the Private Hire Companies are losing their drivers who are plated as Hackney Carriage, because these drivers are disappearing and are working the taxi ranks rather than doing the booked calls from the Private Hire Companies. The simple reason for this is that they can earn more money at peak times from the taxi ranks rather than doing booked calls that has been allocated to them from the booking office.

This in turn is causing problems for the Private Hire companies who have already booked jobs for these drivers and once they have disappeared to work the Ranks, the Private Hire Companies are unable to get these booked jobs carried out on time, so in effect, the people who have booked with the Private Hire Companies are only picked up as and when there is a driver available, regardless whether the Private Hire driver is on time or not. This could explain some of the reasons why there are complaints about some, if not all of the Private Hire Companies within and around the Bromsgrove area.

Licensing have a major problem with the current criteria and policies, the major problem is that under the current laws any Hackney Carriage cannot act as a Hackney Carriage outside the boundary of the licensing authority,

but they can act as a private hire vehicle. So therefore, as the law stands at the present time, a driver can be Badged and plated within Bromsgrove, but in reality, they can and indeed they do, work within other areas as a Private Hire Vehicle and driver, although this may seem acceptable, in reality it is a very bad practice due to the fact that there is no one who is able to control or regulate these drivers within the district that they choose to work. This is because a licensing authority can only control and regulate drivers who are licensed under their control. It would be very difficult or impossible to regulate drivers who could/ and often will be, working many miles away.

All of the above is a result of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire policies within Bromsgrove, which are very out dated and it is well known that drivers from other areas who are unable to meet the criteria to be badged and plated within their own district, can come to Bromsgrove and obtain a Hackney badge and vehicle licence too easily, but then return to their own district and work unimpeded, or stay in Bromsgrove adding to the problems that already exists on the taxi ranks.

This is why I have asked the council to change the policies for new Hackney Carriage applicants, in order to make the criteria more difficult, so as to raise the standards to a level that would bring the Bromsgrove policies back in to line with other districts. This would also help to protect the existing Hackney Carriage drivers and the Private Hire Companies from the current bad practice that exists within Bromsgrove, under the present day policies and criteria.

#### Requested changes

##### 1. Return to a two tier system. Private Hire or Hackney Carriage.

For many years, Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Badges have been issued as a dual badge, this was done to ensure that the new applicants would be forced to sit the knowledge test and would have to meet the criteria that existed at that time, whether the driver wanted to be Hackney Carriage or Private Hire. This probably was okay at first, until these drivers started to exploit this situation and just by plating their vehicles as Hackney Carriage they could have the best of both worlds. This has been a major contribution to the massive imbalance of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire that we see today. By reverting back to having Hackney Carriage and Private Hire driver Badges, would indeed help to keep the two sectors separated.

2. New applicant to pay for the knowledge test and any retests.

At this present time there is no charge for the knowledge test, or for the processing of new applicants. So therefore the rest of the taxi trade is supplementing the cost for the new applicants to undertake the knowledge tests and to be processed. Whether the applicant passes the test or not, the applicant can take as many knowledge test as he or she likes at no charge. Not only is this a drain on the councils resources, but it is also unfair that the cost has to be passed on to the rest of the trade.

I would like to see the knowledge test limited to three attempts. If the applicant fails a third time he or she would not be able to resit the knowledge test for at least six months. This will stop applicants learning the questions set within the test criteria, this will also ensure that the driver has done his or her home work, before coming to sit the test.

3. I have proposed that the Hackney Carriage licence should be more expensive than Private Hire. This would encourage the new applicant coupled with the above (part 1 and 2) to take the private hire route, to learn the streets and the trade within Bromsgrove before becoming a Hackney Carriage driver. This would also help to contribute to the added cost of the processing Hackney Carriage.

5 and 6. All new applicates must take a Maths and written/spoken English exam. This is to ensure that the driver can communicate with the passenger in a spoken manner, as well as in a written form when the driver is dealing with people who are deaf or dissabled.

7. Hackney Carriage only

As above but with an additional a maths test incorporating questions on the Hackney Carriage tariff sheet, which is set by the council. This is to ensure that the driver has learnt and understands what he or she is able to charge at certain days and times. Also the driver would need to understand the tariffs when he or she is estimating the cost of a journey, when a passenger has asked the driver for the approximate cost of the journey before entering the vehicle.

8 All new applicants to take a driving standard agency test.

This would be done to ensure the safety of the public and to be sure that the driver is at a standard that is to be expected from a professional driver. This

could also be implemented when drivers have exceeded six penalty point on their licence.

#### 9 and 10. Age of vehicles.

As it stands today any vehicle whether it is Hackney Carriage or Private Hire can be licensed up to ten years old, regardless of the age of when the vehicle was first plated, before council policy dictates that the vehicle is too old for the purpose of being used as a licensed vehicle. The introduction of a five year maximum age limit on a replacement vehicle for Hackney Carriage, but then allowing the vehicle to be used until it is ten years old as it is under today's policies. Private Hire Vehicles should not be included within this change of policy and should remain at today's requirements; this would act as an incentive and would encourage Private Hire drivers to revert back to plating their replacement vehicle as Private Hire. These policies are implemented by many other councils throughout the country for the reason of keeping Hackney Carriage at a healthy and at a viable level.

The remaining Hackney Carriage Drivers who only work the taxi ranks would then see an increase in trade, which would give these driver a fair income, whilst the Private Hire Companies would also be able to control their drivers a lot more easily, this would enable them to give a more reliable service which would then increase their trade and again the Private Hire drivers would also increase their income as trade improved.

10a. All new applicants for Hackney Carriage would only be able to license a Hackney Carriage Vehicle provided that the vehicle is a brand new Disabled Friendly Black Cab type vehicle, this would only apply to new Hackney Carriage applicants and not to Private Hire Vehicles. All existing drivers would be exempt from this change to policy, but part 9 and 10 would apply. (Again Private Hire would not be affected by either part 9, 10 or 10a). Although the cost of buying a new TXI 4 Black Cab costs £33000, the cost per week would work out to only £53.00, over the 12 years that this vehicle would be allowed to operated under today's policies. As and when the Hackney Carriage numbers have been reduced to a sustainable level this kind of investment would be viable to anybody wanting to work the Hackney trade within the Bromsgrove area.

I have looked at many other council policies over the last few months and I have taken the best parts of their policies that would help to provide and

maintain a good and sustainable taxi trade within the Bromsgrove area. Indeed as the two sectors return to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire respectively, they will once again flourish and provide an excellent service for the Bromsgrove community, without having the problems created by having Hackney Carriage and Private Hire dual badged drivers.

Although some of these changes may seem to be extreme, in reality there has not been any real changes to these policies for many years, therefore Bromsgrove has been left behind, in keeping up with new procedures and with new technology that exists within the ever changing taxi world that we live in today.

Just for once it would be nice to see Bromsgrove as a showcase and a place of excellence, with other councils looking to us for inspiration, rather than rejected drivers from other councils, coming to Bromsgrove to be badged and plated because they see Bromsgrove with old and out dated policies that are seen as an easy touch, whilst at the same time protecting the existing drivers, who have a wealth of respect from the public and who are very knowledgeable about their job and about the town that they work in.

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Bromsgrove Taxi Association



