

BHTTFA

Brighton & Hove Taxi Trade Forum Association

United Taxi Drivers Association - Brighton Sudanese Taxi Forum - Independent Taxi Drivers
 City Cabs - Radio Cabs - Streamline Taxis - NPTTU - Unite the Union - GMB BHTS
 Brighton & Hove Private Hire Association - email: info@bhttfa.co.uk

Jim Whitelegg

Regulatory Services Manager (Licensing and Trading Standards)
 Brighton & Hove City Council

January 23 2019 V2

Dear Jim

With reference to Plate Transfers – WAV’s – EV’s – Plug in Hybrids and so on and where at the conclusion of the last Trade Forum Meeting on 17/1/2019 whereby I stated that I would endeavour to try and get a proposal from the trade with the limit time given to be in by January 23 2019.

Firstly I would like to comment about the notion of ‘Plug in Hybrids’ as opposed to ‘Hybrids’

As we know the infrastructure of electric charging points is not in place and there is currently no time scale for this to be implemented. Therefore the idea to put forward the option of ‘WAV – EV’s or Plug in Hybrids’ is unrealistic.

This may look good for the council to have this in place but does not benefit the local taxi trade.

The option should be ‘WAV’s - EV’s or Hybrids’. However this change of conditions of licensing in general is opposed as explained further down. This is especially relevant to the report of one proprietor of the only two electric cabs in the city being driven to near suicide due to lack of charging points or access to them resulting now only having a single electric cab in the city

I would like to first point out the following which was also stated in my previous email dated 18/1/2019 which reflected on recent matters:

There are members of the trade who consider that ‘Item 8’ on the Agenda – Vehicle Transfers was confusing.

The information given on the revised Agenda with regards to the matter of ‘Item 8 Vehicle Transfers’ was not as expected to be relating to the withdrawn Item from the Licensing Committee Meeting in November 2018.... but instead specifically related to vehicle transfers under ‘Medical Conditions’ which was a very different matter.

We had a driver attend the meeting which we welcomed to express his personal view and circumstances which related to a ‘Medical Condition’ and the fact that he had recently had a hackney carriage licence transferred into his name. This meant that under the current conditions he would be compelled to have a WAV when the vehicle is next relicensed even though I understand that that he would be exempt from handling wheelchairs.

It is believed that the intention was to change the conditions of licensing to allow those proprietors with a medical condition to be exempt from being compelled to purchase a WAV and was this was mainly debated on that point.

However there was very little debate on the withdrawn proposal made by the council at the November Licensing Committee meeting with regards to changing the current condition of plate transfers compelled to be WAV compliant at the next licensing to 'WAV.. EV or Hybrid' instead of just 'WAV'.

It needs to be reminded that we were actually informed that at one point we had two EV's in the city but now only one because the owner of one was "Driven to despair" (or worse) because of the distinct lack of charging points in the city.

Therefore it could be considered that changing the condition to 'WAV..EV or Hybrid' is in fact unrealistic as these really only offers a Hybrid as a further option.

Moving on slightly:

I have put some questions to the trade reps via email of which there are variations in replies so I have had to take the majority of the responses supplied in the limit time allowed.

Since the Trade Forum Meeting I put the following to the trade:

1:Do we consider that the notion of transferred plates to now have the choice of 'WAV..Electric or Plug in Hybrid' to have had full consultation with the trade?

The majority was answer of **No.**

There are several factors on this point of consultation which would have been raised if a proper proposal was given to the Trade at the meeting other than what was listed at Item 8 regarding a 'Medical Condition' where the following would have been raised:

With the major impact of non-licensed Brighton & Hove cabs now working in the city the trade considers that our high standards are being undermined and indeed there is now considerable unrest in the trade.

We now have Brighton & Hove licensed drivers/proprietors in the trade speaking about obtaining a licence in another area instead... such as Lewes where the standards of conditions of licensing are much lower.

There is also the consideration of effectively forcing the trade by default to adopt electric vehicles now at a time when the infrastructure for this is not in place.

It needs to be stressed that even with the impending review of the Lewes Conditions of Licence.. the details of which I have been involved in... these still do not reach the standards expected of Brighton & Hove.

For example – Emission Standards

There is no proposed condition of licensing to ensure that all vehicles have Euro 4 petrol and Euro 6 Diesel

The following is taken from the recent LDC consultation document which relates to both Hackney Carriages and PHV's

"Environmental Considerations"

The Council has given careful consideration to introducing tougher emissions standards for all licensed vehicles and considers its responsibility in protecting the environment to be an important objective of the Guidance.

The Council is committed to reducing emissions through raising awareness of environmental issues with the trade and other interested parties.

However, at this time the Council considers that its requirement for all vehicles to be tested every six months means that it does not require tougher emission standards for licensed vehicles.

There is also the factor of much cheaper CCTV and the LDC proposed conditions do not meet the current Brighton & Hove specifications. No Medical 2 standards and effectively an 18 year old could be licensed to drive a cab.

The matter of emissions of course is very alarming and may be adding to the factor that instead of getting licensed in Brighton & Hove in the first place drivers are just going to the lower common denominator route.... to work on an APP platform such as Uber or Ola which is no doubt on the way.... and indeed why not?

We appreciate that the conditions of licensing we are referring to relate to hackney carriages. However... if the council makes such changes to one side of the trade then this could equally be applied to the other side as well ... being the private hire trade... at some point... which we have to take into consideration.

However the fear is that existing or indeed potential Brighton & Hove licensed drivers may also follow this route which means a lower size fleet

The consequences of a lower size fleet means a reduction in revenue which then means either the licensing fees will have to up or maybe even redundancies in the HCO as the Brighton & Hove fleet diminishes over time.

A big change in legislation on cross border hiring may be the remedy but the trade cannot see this happening for a long time.

I put the following question to the trade:

2: Transfer of 'Unrestricted' Vehicle Licence Interest:

2A: That at the next licensing of a transferred vehicle licence it must be either 'WAV..Electric or Plug in Hybrid'

This is the same as what was withdrawn at the November Licensing Meeting.

The majority answer to this was **No**

Or:

2B: That there to be no restrictions on vehicle specification on vehicle transfers other than Euro 4 Petrol and Euro 6 Diesel.

The majority answer to this was **YES** which means that a hackney carriage vehicle licence transfer on a current 'Unrestricted Plate' would open up the full choice and not limit the proprietors option.

It is reiterated that this would only apply to current 'Unrestricted Plates'.

It is very clear from the recent Unmet demand Survey that the city is very well served with WAV's.

This is the result of many years of the 'Managed Growth Policy' ...which continues to be in place ...where such newly issued plates have the condition of being a WAV compliant that when considering that there is now the option for such vehicles to also be "EV or Plug in Hybrid" the costs of these two types is prohibitive and cannot be easily charged due to no mass charging infrastructure being in place. Therefore the choice is only really considered to be window dressing.

The other way that WAV numbers have increased was due to the policy of 'Transferred Vehicle Licences' compelled to be WAV compliant upon the next date of licensing... which is what we are addressing now.

It is considered that the target of increasing WAV's in the city has been achieved and we now have the taxi trade in city catering for all needs.

However this last policy should now be revised to ensure that there is not an imbalance.

I put the following question to the trade:

"I am aware that we had agreed at the Pre-Trade Meeting that any currently 'Restricted Plate' should remain as 'Restricted' and this was stated at the meeting. I also suggested that all such 'Restricted Plates' should be prefixed with 'W' which would avoid any possible confusion in the future."

3: I believe it was debated that all newly issued plates under 'Managed Growth' would be restricted to WAV only.

The answer came back as **YES** therefore the trade considers that all existing' Restricted Plates' must remain WAV compliant. To ensure no errors are made then it is recommended that all such 'Restricted Plates' must be assigned 'W' to the plate number. This can be achieved at little cost to existing 'Restricted Plates' just be adding a separate vinyl cut 'W'. Newly printed 'Plates' could have the 'W' properly printed.

It must be made clear that there are currently some 'Unrestricted Plates' that have volunteered through choice to be WAV compliant and as such these specific plates must remain as 'Unrestricted' should the proprietor decide to change to a saloon at some point. Effectively no 'W' assigned.

Lastly...

I have also been asked to clarify an important point relating to where there are two names on an Unrestricted hackney carriage licence that where a name is removed this does not affect the status of the licence.

For example there may be a case of such a hackney carriage licence being in the name of a married couple where a divorce may occur. Or indeed in more dire circumstances where there may a death of a person on the licence.

So please confirm that under these circumstances the status of the hackney carriage vehicle licence remains unaffected.

Thank you

With regards

Andrew Peters

On behalf of the Brighton & Taxi Trade Forum Association