

Changes to the taxi policy

Issue	Original Proposal
<p>Accessibility</p>	<p>That all new licensed Hackney Carriages must be accessible for people with disabilities and meet the following criteria:</p> <p>The vehicle must be wheelchair accessible and able to load wheelchairs from the side.</p> <p>The vehicle must have achieved European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval.</p> <p>Existing licence holders will have “Grandfather” rights, meaning those vehicles licensed before any implemented licensing policy will not be required to be accessible for people with disabilities. This will provide a mixed fleet of vehicles.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">New Proposal</p> <p>The licensing authority proposes that any wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage meeting European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval, or full M1 specification will be given a reduce licence fee. The council will also look at other possibilities to increase the number of disabled access vehicles within the district and will discuss these with the trade.</p> <p><u>Reason for the new proposal:</u></p> <p>The council has removed the requirement that all new Hackney Carriages have to have disabled access. Following receipt of a letter from the Department for Transport on the 18th March 2008 stipulating that local authorities were no longer required to introduce a disabled access policy by 2010, the council will wait for further guidance.</p> <p>The proposed policy is supported by the trade, although Reading Borough Council considers that all Hackney Carriages licensed by the council should have disabled access as is stipulated in their policy.</p> <p>(The proposal can be found on page 8 section 30 of the proposed policy)</p>

Knowledge Test**Original Proposal**

The licensing authority recommends that all new drivers must undertake a knowledge test. The knowledge test would not only test the drivers geographic knowledge but also a number of other skills listed below:

- local geography (with use of a map)
- the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing conditions
- the highway code.

New Proposal

It is still proposed that a knowledge test will be required for all new drivers who wish to be licensed as a Hackney Carriage / Private Hire driver. The proposal will not depart from the original proposal as highlighted above.

Reason for not amending the original proposal:

Officers consider that a knowledge test is one of the most appropriate methods of assessing a candidate's ability to drive a licensed vehicle and also their ability to communicate with passengers. Generally knowledge tests are used to ensure drivers know the district, however, the test proposed focuses on the driver's ability to understand taxi legislation and the rules of the road (UK highway code). It will also check a driver's ability to read a map, calculate fares and communicate with their customers.

The knowledge test is not supported by the majority of the trade as they believe that the test will be a barrier for new drivers entering into the trade. It is also felt that South Oxfordshire is such a large district that it is impossible for drivers to know every area. The trade also stipulates that the majority of the work they undertake is pre booked and the introduction of satellite navigation systems mean a knowledge test is not required.

The knowledge test is supported by other local authorities but Reading Borough Council considers that the knowledge test is not stringent enough. As the test will ensure driver awareness of key legislation and regulations this will be useful in establishing driver's knowledge when taking any enforcement action.

The Customers and Community Scrutiny Committee recommended that a knowledge test should be introduced, however they state that the test should not overburden the taxi trade and they recommended that the arithmetic section of the test be removed, this recommendation has now been implemented in the policy.

	(This proposal can be found on page 13 section 69 of the proposed policy)
Livery	<p style="text-align: center;">Original Proposal</p> <p>It was proposed that all Hackney Carriage vehicles should have a standard livery. The livery would be a 24 inch long illuminated roof-mounted sign bearing the words South Oxfordshire District Council TAXI alongside the licence number.</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">New Proposal</p> <p>It is now proposed that all Hackney Carriage vehicles should display at all times a standardised roof sign measuring 18 inches long. The front face of the roof sign must display the prescribed livery logo, which consists of the council logo and Hackney Carriage licence number. The rest of the sign must be used by the taxi company to display their company name or unique identity.</p> <p><u>Reason for the new proposal:</u></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The trade did not support the original proposal of the roof signs, stating the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the roof signs were too large • that they would increase the vehicles carbon footprint • that the roof sign would stifle competition as they could not advertise the company name on the roof sign • that the roof sign cannot be taken off whilst off duty or if the vehicle was being used for an “executive” journey. <p>To accommodate the trade views while not impacting on the goal of public protection, the licensing authority re-designed the signs, making them smaller and providing space for taxi companies to place the company name on the roof sign. This compromise was still not supported by the trade.</p> <p>It should be noted that the roof signs are supported by other licensing authorities and also Thames Valley Police. The Police stated, “As a community safety issue the identification of licensed vehicles is important and we need to have an easy and consistent way of achieving this”</p>

	<p>It is understood by the licensing authority that particular customers may prefer to use “unmarked” vehicles. In this case the taxi company can apply for a Private Hire vehicle licence.</p> <p>There is a misunderstanding within the trade that roof signs can be removed under the current taxi policy, this is incorrect as case law states that a Hackney Carriage is a Hackney Carriage twenty four hours a day seven days a week. The vehicle is determined as a public service vehicle and can no longer be classified as a private vehicle.</p> <p>Customers and Community Scrutiny Committee agreed with the proposed Hackney Carriage livery but recommended that the signs should be able to be fully illuminated.</p> <p>(This proposal can be found on page 9 section 41 of the proposed policy)</p>
<p>Age of vehicles</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Original Proposal</p> <p>It was proposed that all vehicles are tested twice a year once they are five years old.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">New Proposal</p> <p>The Customers and Community Scrutiny Committee recommended that vehicles over four years old at the time of licensing must be tested twice a year.</p> <p>The working group felt that licensed vehicles should be tested more frequently before five years because they acquire a higher mileage than normal vehicles.</p>

Notes from the Taxi Sub Group

In attendance: Patrick Green, Jane Murphy, David Dodds, Ann Midwinter, Matt Prosser, Paul Holland, Alastair Dearling, Jeanette Cox

Knowledge Test

The group discussed the introduction of a knowledge test; it was recommended that a knowledge test should be introduced by the working group, however they stated that the test should not overburden the taxi trade and they recommended the arithmetic section of the test be removed.

Taxi Livery

The group also discussed the proposed introduction of Hackney Carriage livery and particularly roof signs (known as top hats). The Sub group agreed with the proposed Hackney Carriage Livery but recommended the introduction of fully illuminated roof signs to meet the new criteria. It should be noted that no livery is required for South Oxfordshire District Council private hire vehicles.




Age of vehicles




It is recommended by the Dft guidance that vehicles are tested twice a year once they are five years old. It was recommended by the working group that licensed vehicles are tested more frequently before five years because they acquire a higher mileage than normal vehicles. After much discussion the group concluded that vehicles over four years old at the time of licensing must be tested twice a year.

Age of Drivers

Some members of the group had concerns that drivers can apply for a taxi licence after twelve months of obtaining there DVLA drivers licence. Though the authority understands this concern section 59 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions Act) 1976 permits this and therefore there are no changes to the current proposals.

Table of comparison regarding other Local Authority Hackney Carriages

	Livery	Knowledge Test	Set Passenger Fares
<p>South Oxfordshire District Council (current policy) Hackney Carriage Fee £154.</p> <p>Tested once a year, no age limit.</p>	<p>A Roof sign that stipulates:</p> <p>(a) Be of translucent plastic dome or box type</p> <p>(b) Be mounted transversely, approximately halfway along the vehicle roof and suitably secured.</p> <p>(c) Be capable of illumination by means of the vehicles electrical system.</p> <p>(d) Display the owners or company name(the word Taxi may also be displayed in addition)</p> <p>(e) measure approximately 15 inches long by 4 inches high and 3 inches deep.</p>	No	No
<p>Reading</p> <p>Hackney Carriage Fee £300.</p> <p>Tested twice a year Whatever the age.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">“Black London” Cab only</p> 	<p>Knowledge test and Driving Standards Agency test (DSA) (no maps)</p>	Yes
<p>West Berks</p> <p>Hackney Carriage Fee £212 for vehicles under 6 years old (one test a year)</p> <p>Fee £242 for vehicles 6 to 8 years old (two test a year)</p> <p>Fee £277 for vehicles 8 or more years old (three test a year)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Roof sign, Side Stickers.</p> 	<p>Knowledge Test (no maps) plus Disability awareness training.</p>	Yes
<p>Oxford City</p> <p>Hackney Carriage Fee £483</p> <p>Vehicles tested twice a year whatever age</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">“Black London” Cab only & Window stickers highlighting the vehicles licence number.</p> 	<p>Knowledge Test</p>	Yes
Wokingham	Purposed built Hackney Carriages only	Knowledge	Yes

<p>Hackney Carriage Fee £242 for vehicles under 5 years old. Vehicle tested once a year.</p> <p>Hackney Carriage Fee for vehicles over 5 Years Fee £270, Vehicle tested twice a year.</p>	<p>with built in roof sign.</p> 	<p>Test and DSA. (no maps)</p>	
<p>Cherwell</p> <p>Hackney Carriage Fee £350 (vehicles can not be licensed over 5 years old)</p>	<p>All Hackney Carriages have to be white and have a taxi roof sign.</p> <p>(No examples available)</p>	<p>Knowledge test (no maps) It proposed to introduce DSA test</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>West Oxon</p> <p>Hackney Carriage Fee £290</p> <p>(vehicles can not be licensed over 8 years old and all vehicles are tested twice a year)</p>	<p>Side Stickers as livery and a taxi roof sign.</p> 	<p>No</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Vale of White Horse</p> <p>Hackney Carriage Fee Vehicle Under 3 Years of Age £312 Vehicle tested once a year</p> <p>Vehicle Between 3 & 7 Years of Age £405 Vehicle tested twice a year</p> <p>Vehicle Over 7 Years of Age £459 Vehicle tested three times a year.</p>	<p>Side Stickers as livery and a taxi roof sign.</p> 	<p>Knowledge Test (no maps)</p>	<p>Yes</p>

Please note the Hackney Carriage fees are calculated to the nearest pound and represent the council fee and vehicle test.

Draft taxi licensing policy