

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH

Web site: <http://www.DurhamCity.org>

15 July 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

The Trust is grateful for the opportunity to respond to these proposals.

Vehicle emissions and manufacture criteria

The Trust welcomes the phasing out of vehicles which do not meet the Euro 6 standard. For newly-registered vehicles the Trust would like to see stronger criteria. The first registrations for Euro 6 compliant vehicles were seven years ago. Requiring newly-registered vehicles to meet the Euro 6 standard and to **be less than 4 years old** as required by Newcastle, Darlington, Gateshead and Hartlepool would be of benefit, as newer vehicles will tend to be even more fuel-efficient.

The Trust would like to see the policy strengthened to encourage a move to low emission vehicles (e.g. fully electric). Giving notice of a future date when licence renewal for fossil-fuel vehicles will start to be phased out would enable taxi companies to plan their replacement programmes. Perhaps for firms with large fleets the council could require a steadily-increasing percentage of vehicles to be electric over the rest of the decade. The Council should also require higher emissions standards within air quality management areas like Durham City Centre.

Environmental sustainability

Although environmental sustainability is listed as one of the aims and objectives of the licensing policy at 5.1(c) there is little, other than the inspection and testing of vehicles, to deliver this aim. The policy should include a requirement to turn off engines when waiting at taxi ranks or when a taxi or private hire vehicle is collecting a passenger. This would reduce both emissions and noise pollution. Newcastle and Darlington each have statements to this effect in their policies. Prior to the commencement of the bus station works, idling taxi engines contributed greatly to the localised air pollution in North Road. Could compulsory training for drivers also include fuel-efficient driving techniques?

Taxi ranks

The more popular taxi ranks may be oversupplied with vehicles, and when a taxi rank is full, taxi drivers may be tempted to park their vehicles in loading bays and other locations approaching tail end of the rank. The Trust would also like to see stronger wording against this practice coupled with enforcement. Long taxi ranks, such as on North Road, occupy a lot of valuable street space without the level of demand during the daytime to justify the number of waiting vehicles. It is essentially parking provision in premium street space which should be reallocated to sustainable transport or features such as seating to make streets more liveable. Could a common online/telephone taxi hailing/booking system reduce the need for taxi ranks and improve the taxi service by spreading vehicles more evenly? Reducing the distance travelled by taxis travelling empty would reduce emissions and help support our climate change objectives.

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Road safety

Some insurers now offer motorists lower premiums in return for installing a “black box” which monitors the style of driving and compliance with speed limits. Is it possible for the council to require telematic monitoring through the licensing regime to improve road safety?

Yours faithfully,

Francis Pritchard
Hon. Secretary