

Taxi de-restriction consultation – Summary of options

Maintaining the current policy of restriction of numbers

- Goes against government guidance
- Should only be retained where there is shown to be a clear benefit for the customer
- Should be justified with reasons made public
- Potentially is not in the interests of the public
- Is likely to satisfy most elements of the existing hackney carriage trade
- Restricts new entrants to the trade
- Requires a survey with results showing there is no unmet demand to justify its retention otherwise leaves the Council open to legal challenge

Moving to a policy of issuing a set number of licences either immediately or over a period of time i.e. current policy with the addition of quality controls namely wheelchair accessible vehicles only

- Goes against government guidance
- Should only be retained where there is shown to be a clear benefit for the customer
- Should be justified with reasons made public
- Potentially is not in the interests of the public
- May satisfy some elements of the existing hackney carriage trade
- Provides some opportunities for new entrants to the trade
- Once all licences are issued the Council will have to reconsider the matter and decide whether to retain a limit or issue more licences

Moving to a policy of complete de-restriction with no form of controls (other than the Council's existing licence conditions)

- Potentially a better service for consumers e.g., decreased waiting times and more choice
- Any perception or potential allegation that market forces are unnecessarily interfered with by restricting entry to the trade is removed
- There will be no need for a survey with associated costs
- This option lets market forces immediately dictate the number of hackney carriages without Council intervention and fully accords with Government wishes
- Whether a better service would be provided overall would only be ascertained after a period of implementation
- Is unlikely to satisfy any elements of the existing taxi trade
- May result in a sudden increase in numbers which would be difficult to administer without increased resources

Moving to a policy of complete de-restriction but with some form of quality control i.e. recommended new policy

- Potentially a better service for consumers e.g., decreased waiting times and more choice although possibly not to the same extent as above

- Any perception or potential allegation that market forces are unnecessarily interfered with by restricting entry to the trade is removed although if controls are too stringent this comment will still apply
- There will be no need for a survey with associated costs
- This option lets market forces immediately dictate the number of hackney carriages without Council intervention and fully accords with Government wishes
- Whether a better service would be provided overall would only be ascertained after a period of implementation
- Is likely to satisfy some elements of the existing taxi trade
- Should not result in a sudden increase in numbers which would be difficult to administer without increased resources
- Scope to introduce quality controls which reflect local needs (see below)

Taxi de-restriction consultation – other matters

Quality control – factors to consider

- Quality controls for vehicles are generally restricted to only one type of vehicle e.g., wheelchair accessible
- 66% of local licensing authorities require all or part of the taxi fleet to be wheelchair accessible¹
- 44% of the existing hackney carriage fleet in Test Valley comprises wheelchair accessible vehicles but anecdotal evidence suggests wheelchair users experience problems in booking vehicles
- There is no direct correlation between the population size of a local authority and the size of its taxi fleet. There is no direct correlation between the size of a taxi fleet and how accessible it is
- The UK has more wheelchair accessible taxis than most European nations although there are only a few manufacturers of purpose-built wheelchair accessible taxis and several small companies who convert standard production vehicles into wheelchair accessible taxis
- Council policy currently is that there is no age restriction although once a vehicle reaches six years since first registration it will only be licensed for six months (instead of 12) although the proposed new policy will alter this
- Any new quality controls would not apply to the existing first 35 hackney carriages
- Only 8% of disabled people are wheelchair users²; introducing quality controls in the form of wheelchair accessible vehicles would therefore not be an appropriate means of introducing vehicles more suited for the ambulant disabled
- Considering the above, requiring all newly licensed vehicles to be wheelchair accessible is not always appropriate or necessary
- A new wheelchair accessible taxi (either purpose built or a converted multi-purpose vehicle) can cost between £20,000 and £40,000³. The second-hand market for these vehicles is small as drivers tend to purchase such vehicles new and then keep it until the end of its life (typically 12 years)

¹ DfT Taxi and private hire vehicle statistics, England 2022

² CSR Europe, Disability: facts and figures 2007

³ Based on prices in Private Hire & Taxi Monthly May 2022

- The average typical purchase cost of a three-year-old second-hand car for use as a taxi is £17,418⁴. Drivers of these vehicles tend to buy second-hand cars when they are three years old and sell them on (for very little) at seven years old

Equality and diversity

- Specific groups are at risk of social exclusion including those in most poverty, those without qualifications and those with a mental illness
- In 2020, on average, people in households without access to a car made over 4 times as many taxi or PHV trips than those with access to a car (18 trips per person versus 4 trips per person respectively), and travelled over twice as far (61 miles per person versus 23 miles per person respectively). This pattern has remained broadly stable since 2002⁵
- As in previous years in 2020, the average number of trips taken by taxi or PHV was higher for those with mobility difficulties (13 trips per person per year) compared with those with no mobility difficulties (6 trips per person per year). In both cases, these numbers represented a fall from the previous years. Between 2011 and 2019 people with mobility difficulties took between 16 and 23 trips per year, while those without difficulties took around 10 trips⁶
- Average taxi or PHV usage makes up 3% of all trips for those with mobility difficulties, compared to just 1% for those without mobility difficulties. These proportions have remained broadly stable since 2010⁷
- The average number of trips taken by taxi or PHV was relatively similar across income quintiles. However, those in lower income quintiles tended to travel less far by taxi than those in higher income quintiles, with those in the bottom quintile travelling 20 miles per person per year, while those in the highest income quintile travelled 32 miles per person per year⁸
- There are over 14.6 million people in the UK with a limiting long-term illness, impairment or disability⁹
- The growing number of disabled and older people will have social and economic implications and there will need to be a focus in the coming years on accessibility of public transport
- Hackney carriage (and private hire vehicle) services will continue to play an increasingly important role in helping people travel and to connect to other public transport services
- We do not know the extent to which disabled people want wheelchair accessible taxis, given that such vehicles may not meet the needs of many disabled people e.g., the ambulant disabled such as those with a sensory impairment

⁴ Auto Trader May 2022

⁵ DfT Taxi and private hire vehicle statistics, England 2022

⁶ As above

⁷ As above

⁸ As above

⁹ Family Resources Survey 2020/21

Numbers of taxis

- As 2022, there were 74 local authorities including Test Valley that restrict numbers of hackney carriages i.e. 75% of councils do not restrict numbers¹⁰
- Most local authorities in Hampshire do not restrict numbers. In addition to Test Valley, Havant, Portsmouth, and Southampton still restrict. The table below gives details for each authority.
- Whilst there is no direct relation between population size and size of a Council's licensed hackney carriage fleet, it is interesting to note the variation in numbers of taxis between the different Councils in Hampshire:

Council	Hackney carriages	Numbers restricted?	Ratio of hackney carriages to population**
Basingstoke & Deane	50	No	1:3726
East Hampshire	86	No	1:1488
Eastleigh	106	No	1:1316
Fareham	133	No	1:869
Gosport	61	No	1:1375
Hart	137	No	1:751
Havant	40	Yes	1:3192
New Forest	114	No	1:1573
Portsmouth	234	Yes	1:910
Rushmoor	94	No	1:1060
Southampton	283	Yes	1:936
Test Valley	44*	Yes	1:3071
Winchester	92	No	1:1436

* With a further two plates available for issue

** 2022 Population Forecasts using Hampshire County Council 2021 Small Area Population Forecasts

¹⁰ DfT Taxi and private hire vehicle statistics, England 2022