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Grampian
Chamber of
Commerce**

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Aberdeen City Council Taxi and Private Hire Policy Consultation – AGCC Response

Question 1 - Vehicle Limits

There is a limit of 1079 as the maximum number of taxis that can be licensed at present. Currently there are 508 taxis licensed.

Applications for private hire vehicles can be refused if the licensing authority consider there to be overprovision of private hire vehicles in the area. There is no overprovision policy for Aberdeen City. There are currently 361 private hire vehicles licensed.

Do you think the taxi limit needs changed?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

There is a significant difference between the current maximum limit of 1,079 taxis and the 508 currently licensed. This suggests the key issue may not simply be the formal cap, but whether the current system is supporting sufficient active supply at the times demand is highest. Our recent business and public research found that 75.8% of respondents find it difficult to obtain a taxi or private hire vehicle, while 65.8% describe availability as difficult or limited. The greatest pressure points are evenings, weekends and late-night periods.

The Chamber would therefore support a review of vehicle limits and wider market conditions to ensure Aberdeen has a licensing framework that can respond to real demand patterns, particularly during peak periods.

Do you think there is overprovision of private hire vehicles?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes **No** Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

Based on our research, the dominant concern from users is insufficient availability rather than oversupply. Respondents consistently highlighted long waits, booking difficulties and a lack of available vehicles at busy times.



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Any overprovision policy should therefore be approached cautiously so that it does not unintentionally reduce consumer choice, resilience or the ability of the market to respond when demand increases.

Question 2 - Taxi Zoning

The licensing authority area is split into 2 zones for taxi licensing. A licensed taxi may only pick up passengers from ranks in the relevant zone. The 2 zones are the airport and the city.

The airport zone encompasses the area within the legal boundary of Aberdeen International Airport. The city zone is the remainder of the licensing authority area.

Do you think any changes need to be made to the zoning position?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

The Chamber believes the current zoning position should be reviewed to improve flexibility and responsiveness, particularly at major transport hubs such as Aberdeen International Airport, Aberdeen Railway Station and the Port.

These are important gateways to the city and first impressions matter for visitors, investors and business travellers. Our research identified repeated concerns regarding shortages, delays and long waits at transport hubs.

This is reinforced by recent independent polling of more than 1,300 people across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, which found that 73% support easing rules which restrict which licensed vehicles can pick up passengers at transport hubs such as Aberdeen Airport.

We would therefore support targeted reforms that allow licensed vehicles to respond more efficiently across zones during peak demand periods, while maintaining appropriate regulation and enforcement standards.

Question 3 - Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs)

The composition of the taxi fleet must have at least 50% WAVs. All new applications for taxi licences must be for WAVs. A waiting list is available for licence holders seeking to change from a WAV to a saloon vehicle. This part of the policy was recently adopted and transition to a 50% ratio is underway.

Do you think any changes are required?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

*Please provide reasons for your answer
This question is required.*

Accessible transport provision must remain a priority, and the Chamber supports maintaining a sufficient supply of wheelchair accessible vehicles across Aberdeen.

However, we believe the current requirement should be reviewed to ensure it is proportionate to actual demand and demographic need, while also supporting overall vehicle availability.

A high mandatory WAV ratio may create barriers to entry for new drivers or those seeking part-time / second-income opportunities, as these vehicles can involve higher purchase and operating costs.

It is also important to recognise that not all disabilities or mobility needs require a wheelchair accessible vehicle, and some passengers may be better served by standard saloon vehicles. We would therefore support an evidence-led review that ensures:

- sufficient WAV provision and reasonable wait times*
- broader accessibility needs are considered*
- unnecessary barriers to entry are reduced*
- a more flexible and sustainable fleet mix overall*

Question 4 - Vehicle Types

There are no restrictions on the type of vehicle that can be licensed as a taxi or private hire vehicle provided the vehicle meets the following minimum specifications.

<i>Maximum ground clearance</i>	<i>185mm</i>
<i>Minimum rear legroom</i>	<i>700mm</i>
<i>Minimum rear headroom</i>	<i>900mm</i>
<i>Minimum boot capacity</i>	<i>450l</i>
<i>Minimum rear seat width</i>	<i>1200mm</i>

Do you think any changes are required?

This question is required.

Select one option

*Yes No **Unsure***

*Please provide reasons for your answer
This question is required.*

The Chamber has no strong view on specific vehicle dimension requirements provided safety, passenger comfort, luggage capacity and accessibility standards are maintained.

We would support periodic review to ensure standards remain appropriate for modern vehicle design, including newer low-emission and electric vehicles.

Question 5 - Age of Vehicles

WAV vehicles must be no older than 10 years old when first licensed.
Saloon vehicles must be no older than 5 years old when first licensed.

Do you think any changes are required?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

The Chamber supports high safety and presentation standards. However, if age limits are overly restrictive, they may create unnecessary barriers to entry or increase costs for operators and drivers.

A more flexible condition-based approach could be considered, allowing well-maintained vehicles that pass inspections and meet emissions standards to remain in service. This may help improve supply while preserving standards.

Question 6 – Roof Signs

There are currently 4 main types of roof sign approved for use:

1. Small green sign for airport taxis only.
2. In-built sign for custom vehicles.
3. Pod sign where standard sign is not appropriate/possible.
4. Standard sign.

Do you think any changes are required?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

The Chamber has no significant concerns regarding current roof sign arrangements provided signage remains clear, professional and allows passengers to identify licensed vehicles safely.

Question 7 – Meters

All taxis must have an approved meter fixed. Private hire vehicles may have a meter but are not required to have one fixed. The legislation states that the meter must be used to calculate the maximum fare for any journey within the licensing authority area. Where there is no meter the fare must be agreed in advance with the passenger and must not be altered unless the journey is changed at the request of the passenger.

Do you think any changes are required?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

Fare transparency remains important and meters continue to have a valuable role.

However, passenger expectations have evolved, and many users now expect upfront pricing, digital receipts and app-based booking. Our research found that 66% value upfront fare estimates, 91% value the ability to pre-book and 93% value accurate estimated arrival times.

We would support policy flexibility that allows both traditional metering and modern digital systems to operate effectively.

Question 8 – Advertising.

Advertising is permitted on taxis subject to the exclusions below.

Prohibited advertising:

- 1. Alcoholic products*
- 2. Tobacco products*
- 3. Any advertising which may be seen as offensive*

No advertising is permitted on private hire vehicles.

Are any changes required to the list of excluded items for taxis?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

The current exclusions appear proportionate and appropriate.

Should advertising be permitted on private hire vehicles?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

Subject to professional standards and content controls, this could provide an additional income stream for operators and drivers.

Question 9 – Inspections

All vehicles must undergo an inspection every 6 months to ensure the vehicle is fit for purpose.

Do you think any changes are required?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes **No** Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

Regular inspections are important for passenger confidence and public safety. The Chamber supports maintaining robust inspection arrangements.

Question 10 – CCTV

CCTV that meets GDPR requirements is permitted in all vehicles.

Do you think any changes are required?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

The Chamber supports continued permission for CCTV and would encourage wider voluntary uptake where GDPR compliant.

CCTV can enhance passenger safety, driver safety, dispute resolution and overall confidence in licensed transport services.

Question 11 – Street Knowledge Test

Applicants for a taxi driver or private hire driver licence must first have passed the Street Knowledge Test. Following a working group involving external stakeholders the contents of the Test were recently reviewed.

What do you think would be most appropriate of the following options?

This question is required.

Select one option

- Current position of the test for all applicants
- Amended test for private hire drivers
- **No test for private hire drivers**
- No test for any applicants

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

The Chamber supports retaining a proportionate local knowledge requirement for taxi drivers, who can be hailed on-street, use ranks and are expected to provide immediate point-to-point services across the city.

However, we do not believe the same requirement is necessary for private hire drivers, where journeys are pre-booked and modern GPS/navigation systems are standard.

Our research found that 57.1% of respondents consider the current local knowledge requirement not very important or not important at all, while 64.1% would prioritise speed and ease of securing a vehicle over detailed local knowledge.

The current pass rate also appears exceptionally low, which raises legitimate questions about whether the existing test is fit for purpose or acting as an unnecessary barrier to entry.

We would therefore support:

- an amended, practical and proportionate test for taxi drivers*
- no street knowledge test for private hire drivers*
- continued use of GPS and modern navigation technology*
- maintaining customer service, safety and licensing standards for all drivers*

This would help remove unnecessary barriers to supply while preserving standards where they are most relevant.

Question 12 – Medical fitness

All licensed drivers must meet DVLA Group 2 standards.

Do you think any changes are required?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes **No** Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

Public safety must remain paramount. Current DVLA Group 2 standards appear appropriate.

Question 13 – Dress Code

All licensed drivers must adhere to the dress code. Prohibited items are jeans, t-shirts, tracksuits, trainers and football shirts.

Do you think any changes are required?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

Professional presentation remains important. However, dress code rules should be modern, practical and focused on cleanliness, professionalism and customer confidence rather than overly prescriptive clothing restrictions.

Question 14 – Payment of Fares

Licensed drivers need not accept payment by card but passengers must be notified of this is the case in advance of any journey.

Do you think any changes are required?

This question is required.

Select one option

Yes No Unsure

Please provide reasons for your answer

This question is required.

This is one of the clearest areas for improvement. Our research found that 83% of respondents consider the ability to pay by card or other cashless methods important.

Residents, visitors and business travellers increasingly expect card or contactless payment as standard. Requiring licensed vehicles to offer cashless payment would modernise the customer experience and align Aberdeen with expectations seen in comparable UK cities.

Anecdotal examples were cited that passengers had reached the front of taxi queues to be advised by the driver that cash was the only payment option despite electronic payment options being available and promoted in the vehicle and this behaviour should not be permitted.

Question 15 - Any other comments

If you think other changes are required to the policy document please detail those here

This question is required.

Taxi and private hire services should be viewed as an important part of Aberdeen's economic and social infrastructure, rather than solely a licensing issue.

Our research demonstrates that this debate has become increasingly polarised. The Chamber wishes to make clear that we recognise the professionalism and contribution of many existing taxi drivers across Aberdeen, and that during standard daytime hours taxis are often available and provide an important service to residents, visitors and businesses.

However, the evidence also shows clear pinch points where the current system is not meeting demand. These are most commonly evenings, weekends, major events and late-night periods, as well as key transport gateways such as Aberdeen Airport, the Railway Station and the Port. This matters because transport availability has wider economic consequences. Our research found:

- *88.2% agree reliable and accessible taxi/private hire services are important to Aberdeen's economic competitiveness*
- *64.7% changed plans because they were unsure they could get home safely or reliably*
- *57.9% of those decided not to go out at all*
- *43% left earlier than planned*
- *95.9% said they would use hospitality, events or evening services more often if availability improved*

*Among respondents affected by these issues, estimated lost discretionary spend equated to approximately **£23,100 per month from respondents alone**, demonstrating the potential economic benefit of improved transport availability.*

This is reinforced by separate independent polling of 1,303 adults across Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire which found:

- **36% would visit Aberdeen city centre more often if taxi availability improved**
- **73% support easing transport hub pick-up restrictions**

Together, these findings indicate a direct link between transport availability and city centre footfall, hospitality spend, event attendance, workforce mobility and visitor experience.

There is also an opportunity to create more flexible earning opportunities for drivers, including those seeking a second income or part-time work, while helping meet demand at the times supply is currently most constrained.

The Chamber would therefore encourage Aberdeen City Council to pursue a balanced package of reforms focused on:

- *Improving peak-time availability*
- *Reviewing zoning arrangements at transport hubs*
- *Supporting modern booking and payment methods*
- *Reducing unnecessary barriers to market entry while maintaining standards*
- *Protecting accessibility and wheelchair-accessible provision*
- *Maintaining strong safety, inspection and medical requirements*
- *Supporting the growth of Aberdeen's evening economy and wider city centre recovery*

In summary, this should not be framed as a choice between protecting standards or improving access. Aberdeen requires both. A modern, well-regulated and responsive taxi/private hire market would benefit drivers, passengers, businesses and the wider city alike.