

Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section
Chief Executive's Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

5th February, 2016

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

In addition to those matters previously notified to you, the following item(s) will also be considered at the meeting to be held at 5.15 pm on Wednesday, 10th February, 2016.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

- (d) DRD Consultation exercise - Taxi ranks in Donegall Square (Pages 1 - 6)

This page is intentionally left blank



Subject:	<i>Taxis ranks – Donegall Square</i>
Date:	<i>10th February 2016</i>
Reporting Officer:	<i>Donal Durkan</i>
Contact Officer:	<i>Anne Doherty Planning & Transport Officer</i>

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To provide a proposed response to the issues raised by the Belfast Public Hire Taxi representatives at the City Growth and Regeneration Special meeting on the 3rd of February and in this context consider the Department of Regional Development’s proposals to increase the Belfast public hire taxi rank capacity in the Donegall Square area and provide an agreed Council response.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>In relation to the DRD proposal to increase the Belfast public hire taxi rank capacity in the Donegall Square area, it is recommended that elected members consider the response below and if appropriate agree the submission to DRD as the Council position. In summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is recommended that the Council would support the proposed removal of restrictions on taxi access to one lane on Donegall Square West closest to City Hall; • It is recommended that Council would support the amendment to the taxi rank on Donegall Square North to allow increased capacity for ranking; and • Given the discussion at the Special Committee the Council would suggest that DRD consider whether it would be appropriate to reallocate part/or all of the public hire taxi rank at Chichester Street for coach parking and allocate some of the coach parking space at Donegal Square West for a public hire taxi feeder rank, even on a trial basis. Any proposals would be subject to further Council consideration and consultation with relevant stakeholders.
2.2	The Committee is requested to consider the invitation by the Belfast Public Hire Taxi representatives to organise a tour of taxi rank facilities in the city centre and for elected members to decide if they wish to avail of the offer on a future date to be agreed.

2.3	<p>It is also requested that elected members note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the Council will contact DRD to consider proposals to improve signage information to the public hire taxi ranks in the city centre; • that public hire taxi access will be considered as part of ongoing implementation of the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan and experience of how the public taxis operate in other UK cities is investigated as part of this process; and • that information will be sought from the NI Assembly Committee for Regional Development on discussions relating to public taxi hire access in the city centre.
3.0	<p>Main report</p>
3.1	<p>Representatives from the Belfast Public Hire Taxi association attended the City Growth and Regeneration Special meeting on the 3rd of February to highlight a number of issues relating to their operations in the city centre.</p> <p>The two main issues highlighted by the representatives related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inadequate provision for public hire taxi operations in the city centre and in particular for ranking in the Donegall Square area; and • lack of directional signage to the public hire taxi rank locations.
3.2	<p>Currently, there is an existing public hire taxi rank at Donegall Square North with additional space on Donegall Square East, however the representatives state that additional capacity is required in this area. There is also a public hire taxi rank nearby on Chichester Street outside Victoria Square but it is rarely used by drivers due to low footfall.</p>
3.3	<p>Taxis ranks – Donegall Square</p> <p>Previously, members considered a number of proposals to provide additional capacity by DRD at the September 2015 Committee, in particular a new feeder rank in Donegal Square West, using part of the area currently allocated for coach parking (pick up and drop off), which would be in direct line of sight of the Donegall Square North rank. However, at this time the Council did not support a new feeder rank in Donegall Square West as this would reduce the space available for coach parking in the city centre by 20 metres and requested further assessment for an alternative site.</p>
3.4	<p>Following the Council's response, DRD considered the following alternative arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers would use the existing taxi rank in Donegall Square East acting as a single feeder rank to the Donegall Square North rank; • Access to Donegall Square West (the lane closest to City Hall only) would be amended to remove existing restrictions allowing taxi access; and • Amendments to the taxi rank in Donegall Square North by removing the existing island to permit a double line of queuing taxis therefore increasing ranking capacity. A map of the proposal is attached in Appendix 1.
3.5	<p>Donegall Square West currently has restricted access for buses and service vehicles only and the removal of the restrictions on taxi access to one lane on Donegall Square West will allow public hire taxis waiting at the feeder rank on Donegall Square East quicker access to the rank at Donegall Square North. It is suggested that the Council would support the proposed removal of restrictions on taxi access to one lane on Donegall Square West closest to City Hall.</p>
3.6	<p>It is also suggested that Council support the amendment to the existing taxi rank on Donegall Square North to allow increased capacity for taxi ranking.</p>
3.7	<p>An alternative option was raised by DRD representatives at the Special meeting relating to</p>

	<p>options for additional capacity for ranking on Donegall Square West. There is an option to reallocate part/or all of the under used public hire taxi rank at Chichester Street for coach parking and allocate some space at Donegal Square West for a feeder rank as previously proposed by DRD in September 2015. This proposal could address the Council's previous concerns regarding loss of coach parking in the city centre which is considered an important tourism asset for the city. It is suggested that DRD consider this option in consultation with relevant stakeholders such as representatives from coach operators and the PSNI and it is bought back to Council committee for further consideration.</p>
3.8	<p>Signage The taxi representatives suggested that signage was needed and this was largely supported by the Members. It is suggested that Council would liaise with DRD to consider proposals to improve signage to the public hire taxi ranks in the city centre.</p>
3.9	<p>City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan The need to consider public hire taxi access as part of the overall city centre access strategy was raised. It is suggested that public hire taxi access should be considered as part of ongoing implementation of the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan and experience of how the public hire taxis operate in other UK cities is investigated as part of this process. DRD representatives also stated that discussions are ongoing at the NI Assembly Committee for Regional Development relating to public hire taxi access in the city centre. It is suggested that information will be sought from the committee discussion. An update on the above issues will be bought back to committee at a later date for consideration.</p>
	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.10	<p><u>None</u></p>
	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p>
3.11	<p><u>None</u></p>
4.0	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - DRD Transport NI proposals and layout drawings

transportni

Eastern Division

Hydebank
4 Hospital Road
Belfast
BT8 8JL

Mr Donal Durkan
Director of Development
Belfast City Council
City Hall
BELFAST
BT1 6RB

Telephone: 0300 200 7893
Fax: (028) 9025 3220
Textphone number: 028 9054 0022
Email: traffic.eastern@drdni.gov.uk
www.roadsni.gov.uk

Being Dealt With By: Roy Gordon
Direct Line: 028 9025 3007

Your Ref: 208491
Our Ref: MT Taxis-15

Date: 4 December 2015

Dear Mr Durkan

TAXI RANKS - DONEGALL SQUARE, BELFAST

Thank you for your letter of 22 September 2015 opposing a proposed taxi rank in Donegall Square West due to the effect it would have on the coach pick up/drop off bay.

We have been considering an alternative arrangement and the Belfast Public Hire Taxi Drivers have confirmed that they could operate with the existing taxi rank in Donegall Square East acting as a single feeder rank to the Donegall Square North rank. This would require the removal of the existing restriction on taxis using section of Donegall Square West closest to the City Hall.

We are also considering amending the existing taxi rank in Donegall Square North by removing the existing splitter island to permit a double line of queuing taxis.
I have attached a drawing showing the proposal.

I would appreciate any comments Belfast City Council would have on these proposals.

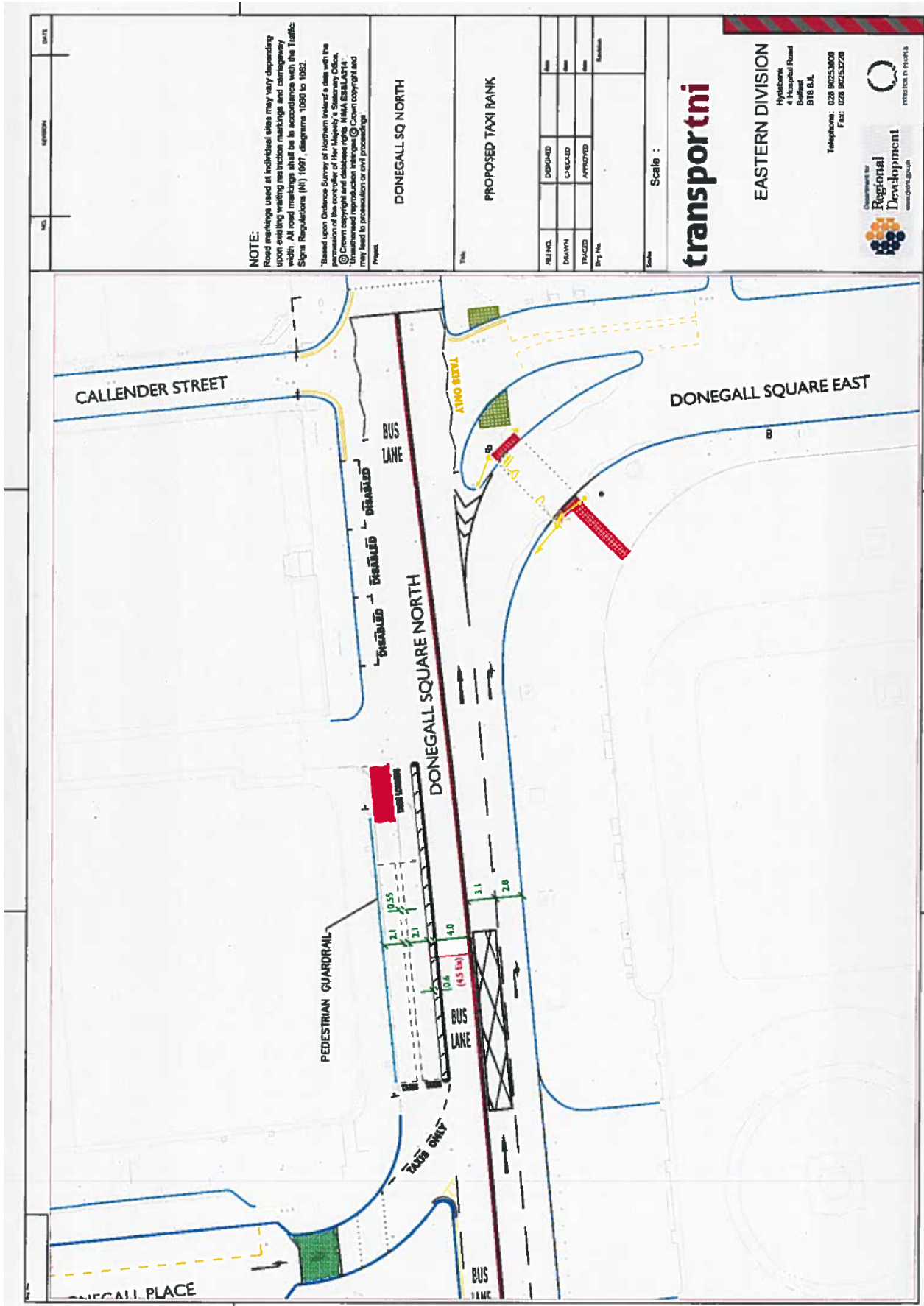
A reply by 8 January 2016 would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely



R Gordon
Network Traffic Management

Encl.



This page is intentionally left blank