

Appendix 1: Taxi Consultation Responses

Taxi Fare & Taximeter Regulations

Development Department

Your Reference

Our Reference 115683

Being dealt with by Anne Doherty

Date 7 March 2011

Ext: (Tel: 028 90 320202) ex 3477

Clare Aldridge
Department of the Environment
Road Safety Division
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GB

Dear Ms Aldridge

Re. Taxi Operator Licensing Supplementary consultation on Proposals for new fee structure and fee level

In a previous response to Taxi Operator Licensing consultation submitted on the 17th February 2011, the Council expressed concern in relation to the implications of the proposed fee structure on smaller taxi operators. I have attached the Council response to the consultation in Appendix 1.

The Council would support the alternative fee structure proposed in the supplementary consultation which aims to ensure the fee is more proportionate to the size of the taxi business.

If you require any further clarification on the response please contact Anne Doherty, Planning and Transport Officer on 02890270387 or by email dohertya@belfastcity.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

John McGrillen
Director of Development

Belfast City Council, Development Department,
The Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BP
Tel: 028 9032 0202 Textphone: 028 9027 0405 Fax: 028 9027 0325
Email: development@belfastcity.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Council response to Taxi Operator Licensing consultation

The Council welcome the proposal for a new system of operator licensing for taxi services. The Council recognise that it should prevent the problem of illegal taxiing and contribute to higher standards in quality and safety of the service.

The Council would suggest that in order to create a level playing field for taxi operators and ensure a choice of service for the users that the Taxi regulations covering fares and taximeters, the use of taxi ranks and hiring of taxis in bought forward in line with this legislation.

The Council would request further consultation on the fee structure. Taxi operators provide an important service to the local community and contribute to the evening economy. An adequate supply of taxis along with a reasonable fare is needed to ensure customers are not deterred.

The Council would be concerned in relation to the impact of small firms who provide a valuable local service. Steps must be taken to ensure costs and administration is kept to the minimum.

Question Number	Question	Agree/Disagree
1	Do you agree that all persons who wish to operate a taxi service must hold or be named on a Taxi Operator Licence?	Agree
	The Council would welcome proposals to regulate taxi operators and their booking offices in Northern Ireland	
2	Do you agree that all drivers and vehicles associated with an Operator Licence should be properly licensed?	Agree
3	Do you agree that a driver may only work for one Licensed Operator at any one time?	See comments below
	The Council seeks clarification in relation to part time drivers and if a reduced rate or sharing of a license can be considered.	
4	Do you agree with the above proposal only to allow bookings to be accepted in licensed operation centres?	Agree
5	Do you agree with the proposal that any person, who wishes to be a Licensed Operator, completes the required application forms?	Agree
6	Do you agree to the proposals relating to application and the licensing of operators?	Agree

7	Do you agree that everyone listed on an application for an operator licence sign a personal declaration that all the information provided is correct?	Agree
8	Do you agree that the Department may decline to proceed with applications where the application process has not been sufficiently completed?	Agree
9	Do you agree that a Taxi Operator Licence will be valid for a maximum of five years?	Agree
10	Do you agree that applicants must be considered to be 'fit and proper' in order for the Department to grant them a licence?	Agree
11	Do you agree with the proposed 'fit and proper' criteria?	Agree
12	Do you agree with the proposed conditions of licence?	Agree
13	Do you agree with the details which will appear on each licence?	Agree
14	Do you agree that records relating to bookings, drivers, vehicles, complaints and lost property should be kept and maintained as proposed?	Agree

15	Do you agree the proposal for publishing a public register?	Agree
16	Do you agree with the proposals for replacement and variation of licences?	Agree
17	Do you agree with the proposals for display of licences?	Agree
18	Do you agree with the proposals for information on licences?	Agree
19	<p>Do you agree with the proposals for fee structure?</p> <p>The Council would request further consultation on the fee structure. Taxi operators provide an important service to the local community and contribute to the evening economy. An adequate supply of taxis along with a reasonable fare is needed to ensure customers are not deterred.</p>	See comments below
20	Do you agree with the proposals for enforcement?	Agree
21	Do you agree with the proposals for inspecting operating centres?	Agree
22	Do you agree with the proposals for suspension and revocation of licences?	Agree
23	Do you agree with the proposals for appeals?	Agree

24	Do you agree with the assumed impacts outlined in this EQIA? If no, please can you explain why and provide any evidence which supports that view?	Agree
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25	Are there any issues that will impact specifically on Section 75 groups? If there are any such issues, can you explain them and provide evidence that supports that view?	
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26	Do you agree with the assumptions of the impact of the proposed changes on the various categories of taxi operator? If not, please can you explain why and provide any evidence which supports that view?	See comments below
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The Council would be concerned in relation to the impact of small firms who provide a valuable local service. Steps must be taken to ensure costs and administration is kept to the minimum.

Development Department

Your reference

Our reference 125441
Date 14th February 2012

Taxi Reform Team
Road Safety Policy Branch 1
Road Safety Division Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT1 8GB

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re. Council response to Taxi Fare and Taximeter Regulations – Proposals for Public Consultation

I would inform you that the Council's Development Committee, at its meeting on the 7th February 2012, agreed the Council's response to the above consultation. The response is subject to Full Council ratification on the 1st March 2012 and I will be in touch if any changes are required

The Council response is attached and if you require any further clarification, please contact Anne Doherty, Development Department Tel: 90270387.

Yours faithfully

John McGrillen
Director of Development

Belfast City Council response to Public consultation on Taxi Fare and Taximeter Regulations
14th February 2012

General comments

- The Council welcome the introduction of regulations which should prevent overcharging by taxi drivers and operators. There is concern that the new regulations to require all taxis to be fitted with a taximeter may be unaffordable to smaller local operators.
- The Council recognise that the introduction of a new maximum fare tariff for all taxis in Northern Ireland, along with the requirement to have a taximeter calibrated to this fare is intended to promote fair competition and enhance consumer protection however, the Council is concerned that the maximum set tariff proposed will make travel by taxis unaffordable for individuals and families on low income. In particular the Council would not support the premium flag drop tariff for what is termed 'unsociable hours' for providing a taxi service between 8pm – 6am during the week, at weekends and on bank holidays when there are reduced or no public transport services.
- The recent Travel Survey for Northern Ireland 2008-2010 indicated that 43% of households in Belfast have no car ownership and therefore are dependent on other forms of transport to access jobs and services. The Council would be concerned that for economically or socially disadvantaged communities, the costs of travel by taxi could be a major barrier to participating in everyday activities in particular activities in the evenings, weekends and Bank Holidays.
- The Council considers that the flag drop tariff which is the fare showing on the meter at the beginning of the journey is not affordable in particular the premium drop flag tariff of £4.20 for providing a taxi service for unsociable hours at weekends and Bank holidays. The proposed premium could have an adverse impact on the evening economy at a time when businesses are struggling to attract users. Consideration should also be given to implications for community safety where individuals may opt to walk home at night time rather than pay the premium fare proposed.

Q1 Is there under supply of taxis at these times? Do you consider that provision of an unsociable hours premium is appropriate?

The Council does not consider the provision of an unsociable hours premium at the rate proposed as appropriate. Any additional charges in the evening during the week, weekends, bank holidays so called 'unsociable hours', may discourage people from travelling, given that public transport provision is reduced in evenings and during holidays or weekends. The Council considers the proposed maximum fare tariff of £4.20 for weekends and bank holidays could be unaffordable for lower income individuals and families. The proposed premium could also have an adverse impact on the evening economy and potential impacts on personal safety.

Q2 Do you agree with the proposals for the maximum Fare Tariff in Northern Ireland?

The Council agree that a maximum tariff may be beneficial to the users and prevent over charging but as previously stated there is concern at the high rate proposed for the maximum flag drop tariff by the Department may have adverse implications for the city. Although drivers would have the opportunity to agree a reduced fare, the Council believe this introduces uncertainty; may not be apparent to the user or offered by the drivers and may deter individuals from using taxis.

Q3 Do you agree that a taxi operating under regulated fare should have only one Taximeter fitted?

There is concern that the new regulations to require all taxis to be fitted with a taximeter may be unaffordable to smaller local operators

Q4. Do you agree that permitted taximeters should be held on a list controlled by DVA until October 2016 when all taximeters should be compliant with Measuring Instruments Directive (MID) standards?

Yes

Q5. Do you agree that taximeters should continue to be clock calendar type?

Yes

Q6 Do you agree that a taximeter should be designed to ensure clarity of fare for ease of use by passengers, including on screen display, position of the meter within the taxi, single currency display and verbal clarification from driver if required?

Yes

Q7. Do you agree that all taximeters must be capable of operating a receipt printer which has secure transmission from the taximeter?

Yes and it should be a requirement to offer a receipt to all passengers. The Council would request clarification if a receipt will be provided if a lower fare is agreed.

Q8 Do you agree with the proposed acceptable optional functionalities being permitted but not required for all taximeters?

Yes

Q9 Do you agree that DVA should be responsible for the approval of taximeter, including publication of a list documenting permitted taximeters, until full implementation of MID?

Yes

Q10 Do you agree with the Department making it an offence to forge alter break or use a seal with the intention to deceive?

Yes

Q11 Do you agree that it is the drivers' responsibility to report if the taximeter is broken, and that until the taximeter is fully repaired and sealed the taxi will not be used for Hire and Reward?

Yes

Q12 Do you agree that all taxis operating to a regulated fare should have an illuminated sign which is extinguished automatically when the Taximeter is turned on?

Yes

Q13. Do you agree Taxis operating within a regulated fare must display a 'fares board' which can be viewed clearly by all seated passengers?

Yes this will allow for a transparent fare charging scheme, however the display should include information that a reduced fare can be agreed.

Q14 Do you agree with the assumptions of the impact of the proposed changes? If not please can you explain why and provide any evidence which supports that view?

The Council agrees that the proposed changes will create a transparent fare charging regime which should reduce the risk to users from over charging. However there are concern that the high levels for the flag drop down charges are not affordable.

The recent Travel Survey for Northern Ireland 2008-2010 indicated that 43% of households in Belfast have no car ownership and therefore are dependent on other forms of transport to access entertainment, jobs and services. The Council would have concerns that for economically or socially disadvantaged communities, the costs of travel by taxi could be an additional barrier to participating in everyday activities especially activities in the evenings, weekends and Bank Holidays when there are reduced or no public transport services.

Use of Bus Lanes by Taxis

Belfast District Council (Shadow)

MEETING OF BELFAST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall on Monday, 8th December, 2014
at 6.00 o'clock p.m., pursuant to Notice

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Presiding Councillor);
Councillor R. Patterson (Deputy Presiding Councillor);
Councillors Armitage, Attwood, Bell, Boyle,
Bradshaw, Brown, Browne, Campbell, Carroll,
Carson, Clarke, Convery, Copeland, J. A. Corr,
S. Corr, Dudgeon, Garrett, Graham, B. Groves,
E. Groves, Haire, Hanna, Heading, Howard,
Hussey, Hutchinson, Johnston, Jones, Kingston,
Kyle, Long, Magee, Mallon, Mullan, McAllister,
McAteer, McCabe, McConville, McCoubrey,
McDonough-Brown, McGimpsey, McKee,
McNamee, McVeigh, Newton, Ó Donnghaile,
O'Hara, L. Patterson, Robinson, Rodgers,
Sandford, Spence and Stalford.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillors Austin, Bunting, Craig and Magennis.

Councillor J. A. Corr

The Presiding Councillor, on behalf of the District Council, extended congratulations to Councillor Julie-Anne Corr on the occasion of her recent wedding.

Mrs. Una Crudden

The Council agreed to extend its condolences to the family of the late Mrs. Una Crudden on the sad news of her death.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by Presiding Councillor Hargey,
Seconded by Councillor E. Groves and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast District Council of 4th November be taken as read and signed as correct.

Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Stalford,
Seconded by Councillor Hutchinson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 28th November be approved and adopted.

Shadow Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Mullan,
Seconded by Councillor Armitage and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Shadow Planning Committee of 20th November be approved and adopted.

Notices Of Motion

Use of Bus Lanes at Times of Emergency or Chronic Congestion

(At the request of Councillor Boyle, the Council agreed to consider a slightly amended wording to the motion as to that which had been set out on the agenda).

Moved by Councillor Boyle,
Seconded by Councillor Mullan,

“Belfast District Council urges the Department for Regional Development to implement measures permitting the use of bus lanes by all vehicles at times of chronic congestion as a result of an emergency situation; thereby saving thousands of lost working hours to the economy of our City.”

On a vote by show of hands, twelve Members voted for the motion and ten against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Use of Bus Lanes by Registered Taxis

Moved by Councillor R. Brown,
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and

Resolved unanimously – that Belfast District Council expresses concern at the proposal to permit all registered taxis to use the City’s bus lanes, notes that this proposal will allow for an 8 fold increase in the number of taxis permitted to use these lanes from 500 to approximately 4000 vehicles, believes that this proposal will have a detrimental impact on the levels of cycling and the efficiency of public transport, considers this proposal incompatible with the Council’s vision of Belfast as a sustainable City and calls on the Government to limit the use of the City’s bus lanes by taxis which are wheelchair accessible only.



Belfast District Council

Report to:	Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Notice of Motion: Use of Bus Lanes by registered taxis – Response from the Minister
Date:	Friday, 16th January, 2015
Reporting Officer:	Mr. Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Officer, 6314

1.0	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>The Committee will recall that the Shadow Council, at its meeting on 8th December, passed unanimously the following motion, which had been moved by Councillor R. Brown and seconded by Councillor Robinson:</p> <p><i>“Belfast District Council expresses concern at the proposal to permit all registered taxis to use the City’s bus lanes, notes that this proposal will allow for an 8 fold increase in the number of taxis permitted to use these lanes from 500 to approximately 4000 vehicles, believes that this proposal will have a detrimental impact on the levels of cycling and the efficiency of public transport, considers this proposal incompatible with the Council’s vision of Belfast as a sustainable City and calls on the Government to limit the use of the City’s bus lanes by taxis which are wheelchair accessible only.”</i></p>

2.0	Key Issues
2.1	A letter to the Department (DRD) outlining the Council’s decision was forwarded on 9th December and a response from the Minister’s secretary (as appended) was received on 8th January.
2.2	The response is self-explanatory and indicates that the Minister (Danny Kennedy) will take a final decision on the use of bus lanes by taxis only when he has seen the DoE’s revised regulations.
2.3	The Minister will base his decision on the responses which had been received during the 2012 consultation process on the proposed regulations. Notably, it is pointed out that the Council’s viewpoint will be taken on board by the Minister in making a final decision.

3.	Resource Implications
	None
4.	Equality and good relations implications
	None
5.0	Call-in
	This decision is subject to call-in.
6.0	Recommendations
	The Committee is requested to note the information provided.

Chief Executive's Office		
Date	9/1/15	
Seen by CX		
Referred to		
ACX	Corp Comms	Dem Serv.
GR	SPP	Bus Supp.
Dev	F&R	H&ES
P&L	P&P	Other
Ref	SW 10/1	



Department for
**Regional
Development**
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Ms Suzanne Wylie
Chief Executive
Belfast City Council
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Clarence Court
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Belfast
BT2 8GB

Tel: 028 9054 0105
Fax: 028 9054 0028
Email: private.office@drdni.gov.uk

Your Ref: SW/as
Our Ref: DRD/COR/1361/2014
Date: 8 January 2015

Suzanne

Thank you for your letter of 9 December 2014 to Mr Danny Kennedy MLA, Minister for Regional Development, regarding the use of bus lanes by registered taxis.

As you may be aware, in 2012 this Department consulted on possible changes to the access of bus lanes by taxis. This consultation was in direct response to a Department of the Environment (DoE) proposal to introduce a single tier taxi licensing regime during 2013.

The DoE legislation, The Taxi Licensing Regulations (NI) 2014, was subsequently made on 9 December 2014 and has since been laid in the Assembly. The proposed Taxi Licence Regulations would see the definition of the existing taxi classifications change. As a result, the legislation, when enacted, will require this Department to amend its bus lane orders to reflect the new taxi definitions. However, we are aware of some political opposition to the regulations, which may see them amended, and until Minister Kennedy sees the final version of the DoE regulations, a final decision in terms of access arrangements for taxis cannot be taken.

Minister Kennedy has asked me to confirm that he will make his decision on taxi access when he has seen the final version of the DoE regulations and in doing so, will take on board all the issues raised during the 2012 consultation process as well as the City Council's viewpoint.

I hope this reply is helpful.

R Galwey

RUTH GALWEY

Private Secretary to Danny Kennedy MLA

Increasing Taxi Rank Capacity

Development Department

Your reference

Our reference #109014

Date 11 June 2010

Being dealt with by: Anne Doherty

Tel: 02890270387

Mr McCourt
Divisional Roads Manager
Eastern Division
Hydebank
4 Hospital Road
Belfast
BT8 8JL

Dear Mr McCourt,

Re. Proposed new, and extensions to existing, Taxi Ranks – Belfast

In relation to your letter sent on the 17th December 2009 requesting comments on the Roads Service proposals for taxi ranks, I would like to inform you that the proposals were considered by the Development Committee in April and May 2010. The Council welcomes the proposed extension and additional provision of ranks for public taxi hire in new locations which could enhance provision for customers in Belfast. This support recognises the important role that taxi operators perform in supporting access and contributing to the successful management of the night time economy in Belfast. However, a number of issues have been raised by our elected members and are outlined below:

- In relation to the geographic distribution of the proposed provision the Council would highlight that there are no proposals for provision outside of the centre or the South of the city. The Council would therefore request clarification of the criteria for provision and the process for ongoing review of provision to ensure future equity and access to services for customers across the city.
- As part of the assessment for the final locations and the extent of provision consideration should be given to limiting the extension of taxi ranks which are in close proximity to residential areas such as the Chelsea Bar on the Lisburn Road. The potential for adverse impacts arising from noise and potential disruption in these more sensitive locations should be carefully assessed and future operation monitored.
- Further consideration should to be given to the location of the taxi rank in Smithfield Square North, strict enforcement will be needed to ensure it does not impact on the disabled parking spaces at this location.
- The Council have concerns on the suitability of proposed taxi rank on Berry Street as it is a dead end and therefore could cause traffic congestion. Further consultation and monitoring should be undertaken to determine suitability.

- This review and increase in provision should form part of a clear process to enact the provisions of the 2008 Taxi Act to address all aspects of the service operation. The Council would request that the initiation of consultation and enactment of the Taxi Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 is progressed expeditiously to ensure effective regulation and enforcement of taxi services across both the public and private hire sectors.

The internal Council consultation confirmed that the proposals are unlikely to adversely impact on council operations such as licensed street trading and cleansing. However, the Council would like to highlight that the current concentration of public hire taxis on Donegall Square North causes traffic disruption and should be monitored and enforced as an important element of this review of operational provision.

If you require any further clarification on the response please contact Anne Doherty, Planning and Transport Officer on 02890270387 or by email dohertya@belfastcity.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

John McGrillen
Director of Development

Development Department

Your reference

Our reference 211669

Date 16 October 2015

Roy Gordon
Department for Regional Development
Eastern Division
Hydebank
4 Hospital Road
Belfast
BT8 8JL

Dear Mr Gordon,

Re: Council response to proposed Taxi Ranks – Bridge Street, Dublin Road, Botanic Avenue & High Street

I would inform you that the Council's City Growth & Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 14th October 2015, agreed the Council's response to the above consultation. The response is subject to Full Council ratification on 2nd November and I will be in touch if any changes are required.

The Council welcomes the proposed extension and additional provision of ranks for public taxi hire which could enhance provision for customers in Belfast. This support recognises the important role that taxi operators perform in supporting access and contributing to the successful management of the economy in Belfast. This is subject to DRD engagement with the frontages along the proposed ranks.

If you require any further clarification, please contact Anne Doherty, Development Department Tel: 90270387.

Yours faithfully

Donal Durkan
Director of Development