

Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter

Winter 2021

issue **5**

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Message from Councillor Philip Page, Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee and Regulatory Committee.

“As we are fast approaching the festive period, I would like to personally thank you all for your hard work during an incredibly difficult year.

I understand what a trying year the trade has experienced due to Covid and national restrictions, but you have continued to provide a vital service to key workers and members of the public across the UK.

This winter edition newsletter contains important information regarding key changes for 2022, including the introduction of Tax Conditionality checks and changes in the law regarding the use of hand-held devices.

Please take this time to familiarise yourself on these changes ahead of the new year.

I would also like to take this time to thank our officers for their continued hard work in maintaining out service throughout the pandemic.

Lastly, I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year. Please continue to keep yourselves and the public safe.

Councillor Philip Page



Tax Conditionality

From 4 April 2022, all applicants renewing their licence will be required to carry out a tax check with HMRC.

If you need help registering for tax, please contact HMRC via [email](#) or phone at **0300 200 3300**.

HMRC are currently conducting research on the new service and are running a study to test this in a real-life environment.

Drivers who will be renewing their licence in January and March 2022 are invited to participate in a trial of the service before it goes live.

These sessions will allow drivers to familiarise themselves with the service before it is rolled out and includes a one-to-one discussion of your experiences using the service.

As a thank you, drivers will also receive an £80 Love2Shop voucher. To sign up, please click [here](#).

Upcoming ban to hand-held devices

The government is planning to change the law in 2022, so that drivers will face a £200 fine and six licence points if they are caught using a handheld device (e.g. mobile phone) while driving.

It is already illegal to text or make a phone call, other than in an emergency, using a handheld device while driving.

The law will go even further next year banning drivers from using their phones to take photographs, videos or scroll through playlists.

The Highway Code will be updated to reflect the new rules and to make clear to drivers that it is illegal to use a hand-held device while stopped at traffic lights or in traffic.

Motorists will still be allowed to use hands-free devices while driving, such as a sat-nav or mobile phone, if it is secured in a cradle. However, drivers must ensure that they take full responsibility for their driving and can face charges if police find them not in proper control of their vehicle.

There will be an exemption to the new law for drivers making a contactless payment using their mobile phone while stationary to ensure the law keeps pace with technology.

Face covering update

From 30 November 2022, face coverings must be worn by passengers when using public transport, including taxis and private hire vehicles. Drivers are not required to wear a face covering but it is recommended in order for you to protect yourself and others. For more information, please click [here](#).



Covid-19 Information

Around one in three people with Covid-19 do not have symptoms but could still infect others. Getting tested is the only way to know if you have the virus, so regular testing is recommended.

Anyone who does not have symptoms can now get free regular rapid flow tests to check for Covid-19. Wolverhampton residents can click [here](#) to access information regarding home test kits and rapid testing sites across the city.

For those based out of Wolverhampton, we encourage you to make use of the Rapid Testing sites available within your local authority. To locate your local rapid testing site, or to order rapid lateral flow test kits online, please click [here](#).

If you are experiencing symptoms of Covid-19, click [here](#) to access your free PCR home test kit.

You can book your 1st, 2nd, 3rd or booster dose of the Covid-19 vaccine by clicking [here](#). You can also evidence that you are vaccinated using the [NHS app](#).

To help control the spread of COVID-19, drivers are also encouraged to download and use the [NHS COVID-19 app](#).

PREVENT training

From 13 December, our driver training programme will be updated to include a section on PREVENT. This section aims to help drivers identify the risks from terrorism and radicalisation.

This training will include specific advice and guidance from the “[Run-Hide-Tell](#)” initiative from Counter Terrorism Policing and will contain further advice from ACT (Action Counters Terrorism).

Drivers can also access advice, provided by National Counter Terrorism, on steps they can take to keep themselves safe in the rare event of a firearms or weapons attack. To access this advice, please click [here](#).

A short public information film, called ‘[Stay Safe: Firearms and Weapons Attack](#)’, has been released by the Police service which sets out the key options for keeping safe should the worst happen.

Drivers are reminded that any suspicious activity can be reported via the [ACT website](#) or you can contact the police in confidence on 0800 789 321. In an emergency, or if you need urgent police assistance, you should always dial 999.

Christmas Closures

Please take the time to familiarise yourself with our Christmas closure for 2021-22. Our offices will be closed from 12:00pm on Thursday 24 December 2021. No one will be permitted onto the site after this time. Services will reopen at 9:00am on 4 January 2022.

It's important that you submit your renewal applications as soon as possible if you are due to expire during this time. The following timescales currently apply to correct and complete applications:

- Driver Renewals (Hackney/Dual/Private Hire) - 10 working days
- Vehicle Applications (New/Renewal) - 10 working days

Consultation

Our consultation on the Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Policy is now live and will close on 15 March 2022. To respond to the Consultation, please take part in our online survey by clicking [here](#).

DBS Update Service

From 1 April 2021, all driver licence applicants purchasing an enhanced DBS certificate will be required to subscribe to the DBS Update Service at a cost of £13 per year. Existing drivers will not be required to subscribe to the update service until their current DBS certificate expires.

Under the new Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards issued by the Department for Transport (DfT), licensing authorities must carry out criminal record checks every 6 months on drivers.

Drivers who do not subscribe to the update service when providing a new DBS certificate will be required to purchase a new certificate every six months.

Applicants have 30 days from the issue date on the DBS certificate to apply for the Update Service.

The DBS certificate must be for an enhanced check for the position of 'Other Workforce - Taxi Licensing' or 'Other Workforce - Taxi Driver'.

If you are already subscribed to the Update Service and want to provide your details, you can do so [here](#). Alternatively, you can subscribe to the DBS update service by clicking [here](#). (link not working). For further information, or for help in signing up to the update service, please see the following [Driver Guide](#).

Drivers are reminded that all DBS certificates should be retained and not thrown away (as the authority can request a copy of this at any time).

Renewal drivers are also encouraged to renew their DBS certificates at the earliest possible opportunity to avoid delays in their applications.

Please click [here](#) to watch our step-by-step video guide on how to register with the DBS update service.

Get Home Safe

We've recently relaunched our Get Home Safe taxi campaign to help highlight the risks involved in taking an unlicensed vehicle.

The campaign also looks to educate the public of the differences between hackney carriages and private hire vehicles and how to identify legitimate taxi or private hire drivers.

As part of our campaign, Councillor Phil Page and compliance officers have been busy visiting city centre pubs and clubs to promote the scheme and hand out promotional material and flyers.

The team have also visited the Wolves Student Union and the Mander Centre as part of the initiative and handed out 'spikeys' as part of a wider safety campaign to help reassure the public visiting the night time economy. For more information, please click [here](#).



Councillor Visit

The continuing hard work of the Council's Licensing Services has been praised by Councillor Phil Page during a visit to the service's headquarters last week.

Councillor Phil Page, Chair of the Regulatory Committee, visited Hickman Avenue last week to personally thank staff for their efforts in keeping the service operational during the pandemic.

During the tour, Councillor Page helped issue a private hire vehicle driver's licence and assisted officers with checking fleet vehicles, ensuring they met the Council's high standards and remained safe for public use.

Licensing Services relocated to Hickman Avenue to keep the service operational during the pandemic, helping to maintain a vital transport service which was heavily relied upon by key workers.

Officers continued to inspect vehicles, conduct background checks on drivers and undertook compliance operations across the country to ensure the services commitment to public safety was met.

The service also slashed licensing fees for the hackney carriages and private hire trade during the pandemic and provided a £2,000 support grant to all drivers living in the city, including those licensed by other councils.



Your FAQs answered

How do I replace the vehicle on my existing licence?

For help on replacing vehicles on your existing licence, and to fill out our Vehicle replacement form, please click [here](#).

What do I do if I haven't received my renewal letter?

Renewal letters are sent out via email one month prior to the expiry of your licence. If you are due to renew but have not received your renewal letter within this time frame, please email Driver.Lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk with your badge number and a member of the team will assist.

Contact Us

For driver enquiries – driver.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk

For vehicle enquiries – Vehicle.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Please make sure to include your name and badge/plate number in all correspondence. If you are a new applicant, please include your WTP reference number in all enquiries.

Please note, we no longer operate from out of the Civic Centre, St Peters Square. All operations are now at Hickman Avenue, Wolverhampton, WV1 2HS.