

Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter

Autumn 2023

issue 11

Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter Autumn Edition 2023

Message from Councillor Zee Russell, chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee and Regulatory Committee.

With autumn comes more leaves on the road and colder weather. Braking distance is dependent upon tyre tread depth, which I encourage you to check is at least 1.6mm on your vehicle.

We have purchased TreadReaders for all of our compliance teams to use on the streets up and down the country. These devices will measure your tread for you and check that your tyres are correctly inflated and aligned.

The hackney carriage and private hire trades transport all kinds of people across the country every day. Almost everyone will travel in a licensed vehicle at some point in their life.

People with disabilities and children are particularly reliant upon being safely transported around. This edition of the newsletter highlights the impact that improper care for these groups can have.

I would also like to take this opportunity to promote StreetLink. As eyes and ears travelling our communities night and day, you have an invaluable opportunity to help people sleeping rough. Please read on to see how you could save a life!



Councillor Zee Russell



TreadReaders help improve tyre safety

TreadReader HandHeld 3D scanners are now in use by each of our compliance teams.

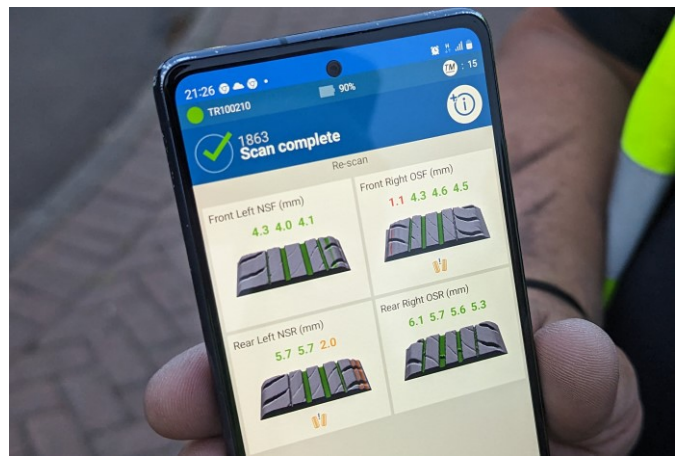
These devices accurately check the tyres' tread depth and pressure, as well as the wheel tracking, ensuring that they are legal and safe for the travelling public. Several vehicles have been suspended as a result of the TreadReaders work.

Ensuring you have sufficient tread depth means your braking distance will be reduced, reducing the risk of you being involved in a road traffic collision.

Councillor Zee Russell, Chair of the Regulatory Committee, said, "Our priority is public safety and the use of TreadReader scanners demonstrates our commitment to continue investing in state-of-the-art technology to protect the public. In less than a minute, this kit will measure all tyres' tread depth, which legally must be at least 1.6mm, as well as tyre pressure and tracking. I personally used this as part of the super operation with West Midlands Police in June.



The following image shows a driver whose tracking was off. He was unaware of this and very grateful to be advised so he could attend a garage for maintenance."



Access for assistance dogs to taxis and private hire vehicles

The government is committed to ensuring that people with assistance dogs have the fullest possible access to goods and services. Assistance dogs are trained to help people with visual and hearing impairments, epilepsy, diabetes, physical mobility problems and more.

The [Equality Act 2010](#) obliges taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers, and PHV operators, not to refuse to carry passengers because they are accompanied by an assistance dog, or to charge them more than other passengers. Local licensing authorities are responsible for investigating alleged incidents and prosecuting drivers where appropriate.

Local licensing authorities have a vital role to play, not just in ensuring the operators and drivers they licence understand their legal duties, but that effective action is taken in response to instances of alleged discrimination.

Assistance Dogs UK (a coalition of assistance dog organisations) has produced some general information for service providers: <https://www.assistedogs.org.uk/the-law/>

Guide Dogs UK has also produced guidance for service providers, including taxis and PHV operators, which you can view [here](#).

Unlicensed prom vehicles

A Hummer and a limousine were seized by council officers after being used as prom vehicles without the correct licence or insurance.



Officers from City of Wolverhampton Council stopped the unlicensed vehicles after they were used to transport young people to their prom night destinations.

The vehicles were seized during a joint operation between the council's taxi compliance service, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) and West Midlands Police.

During the spot checks, officers found that the Hummer's driver was operating with two illegal front tyres and without the correct licence or insurance. Meanwhile the limousine, which had several mechanical faults, was suspected to be stolen and also had no insurance.

Councillor Craig Collingswood, cabinet member for city environment and climate change, said: "Passenger safety is the key reason operations like this are regularly taking place in the city.

"You cannot put a price on your child, and we want to ensure that parents can feel confident that the vehicle taking them to their well-deserved celebration is fully insured and licensed."



Officers warn that not all companies that advertise the services of stretch limousines and other luxury or performance vehicles are licensed or meet required safety standards.

Councillor Collingswood continued: "As prom nights continue to be popular, we are making parents and carers aware of the importance of checking companies to make sure they can be trusted.

"Unlicensed drivers or vehicles could put you child and their friends at risk. The driver may not have had a criminal record check, or the vehicle might not be roadworthy. Please take time to check who you are hiring."

Along with the two vehicles mentioned, three more vehicles were also found to be driving with a number of mechanical faults.

To find out if a vehicle is licensed, contact the local authority where the vehicle is based.

UK GDPR and your responsibilities

What is GDPR?

GDPR stands for "General Data Protection Regulation". Following exit from the European Union, UK GDPR was implemented and the Data Protection Act amended.

This is part of the UK's data protection regulation.

What does it cover?

Any organisation or individual that controls or processes:

Personal Data -

e.g. Name, Address, D.O.B
ID Numbers
Email address'
Telephone numbers

Sensitive data -

e.g. Physical Characteristics
Health details
Religion
Ethnicity

How does this affect me?

In your role as a hackney carriage or private hire driver, you will have access to personal information of your passengers – such as name, address and telephone numbers. You have a responsibility to ensure that this information is not shared with anyone and not used inappropriately.

You must not contact passengers for personal purposes.

Private hire drivers hold a position of trust and respect and the City of Wolverhampton Council would like to remind you of your responsibilities and ensure that you comply with data protection rules.

If you are unsure of what your obligations are, please review full details [here](#).

Go Electric!

The council is working to support hackney carriage and private hire vehicle proprietors in making the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs).

On 15 June 2023, the Energy Saving Trust hosted a Go Electric! webinar for Council licensees.

Additional information can also be found within the [Go Electric! presentation](#).

Relaunch of StreetLink

Wolverhampton's licensed vehicles cover over half a billion miles across the country each year. As professional drivers, you are the eyes and ears of the streets, patrolling neighbourhoods and city centres.

You can help save lives by referring rough sleepers to [StreetLink](#). If you see someone sleeping rough, or preparing to sleep rough, please park your car and visit their new website, which allows you to make a report without creating an account, for greater convenience.

Your report will be sent to a local outreach team, wherever you are in England or Wales. [StreetLink](#) will be able to help them get the support they need, which is particularly important during winter when temperatures drop.

[StreetLink](#) can only accept alerts for people who are sleeping rough or preparing to sleep rough and are over 18. If someone is under 18 years old, call 999. Please do not make an alert if the person is begging or engaging in anti-social behaviour if they are not rough sleeping.

To make a report, please visit <https://thestreetlink.org.uk/start>

Taxi rank etiquette

hackney carriage drivers are reminded of the following:

- Should you be approached by customers, in the first instance you should advise them that the rank is a queue and the driver at the front has been waiting longest. This is good etiquette.

- The meter must be running for all journeys which start and end in the district. You may not charge more than the meter.
- You must have contactless payment facilities available to the customer.
- You must take passengers with assistance dogs and mobility aids. You cannot charge more for this.

DVLA launches new online account for motorists

From 2 August 2023, motorists can opt for digital vehicle tax reminders rather than having to wait for a paper reminder to drop through their letter box. The change comes as part of DVLA's new [Driver and vehicles account](#) service.

The new service, which allows motorists to easily access their driver and vehicle information in one place, has been launched as a public beta and DVLA are asking motorists to provide feedback to help develop the service.

The Driver and vehicles account is easy-to-use, secure, and it only takes around 5 minutes to sign up. Once an account has been set up, motorists can simply sign in using their email and password, and will be able to:

- view their driving licence information, including endorsements and penalty points
- view vehicles that are registered to them including tax and MOT status
- change their contact preferences
- set up vehicle tax reminders by email and for the first time by SMS text
- choose to stop getting vehicle tax reminders by post

Julie Lennard, DVLA Chief Executive, said:

We are asking motorists to help us test the service. It is free, and simple to sign up for an account. This new service is being developed

and we will be adding more features but we want to give customers access as early as possible so they can try it out and let us have their feedback.

Motorists with a UK passport can set up an account today and give their feedback on the new service at www.gov.uk/driver-vehicles-account

To sign up for a driver and vehicles account, motorists should:

- go to www.gov.uk/driver-vehicles-account
- provide an email address and validate their details with a one-time passcode
- provide their personal details including name, date of birth, and address
- verify their identity using a UK passport (which can include those expired within the last 12 months)
- provide a GB Driving Licence or a National insurance number (DVLA may also carry out additional identity checks)
- create a password

Expand your knowledge – learn British Sign Language

Private hire drivers come into contact with many of different people, some of these people may be deaf or partially deaf.

Driver's might be interested in expanding your knowledge and providing an additional service to your passengers by communicating with your passengers using British Sign Language.

An online course available which can be downloaded to your mobile. You could learn whilst you are between jobs or on a break.

Visit [British Sign](#) for more information.

COVID information

With the spread of a new COVID variant (BA.2.86 a.k.a. Pirola) and as we approach winter, where viruses are more easily transmissible, we would like to take the time to ensure we are all taking sensible steps to reduce illness.

Washing your hands regularly with soap is very effective in reducing the spread of viruses and we encourage everyone to do so, particularly before eating. If you need to cough or sneeze (regardless of whether you feel ill) you should always do this into a tissue or your elbow – never your hands.

You may wear a face covering if you feel more comfortable; however, this is not a requirement.

Don't be this driver!

CCTV caught this private hire vehicle using the Railway Drive. The metro tracks in and around Wolverhampton are for trams only. They should not be used for vehicles – even if you are stuck in traffic or it is the early hours of the morning.



Any damage to the tracks would be expensive to repair and could potentially cause a significant accident, causing injury or even death.

Please familiarise yourself with the routes of the metro in the city and ensure you do not use them to drive on.

The importance of wearing your private hire badge

A private hire or hackney carriage driver's badge is a sign of approval. It states the local authority feels the holder is fit and proper and suitable to drive passengers safely and gives the travelling public reassurance that all relevant checks have been carried out.

You must wear your badge whenever you are working as a PHV driver, including when you are waiting to receive a booking or travelling to pick up a passenger. This is a legal requirement and a condition of licence.

When you wear it, you must make sure that it is in a position and manner as to be plainly and distinctly visible at all times whilst acting as a private hire vehicle driver (e.g. on the upper part of the body).

It is an offence not to wear your driver's badge.

The badge is for you to use only. You must not allow any other person to use it to carry out bookings.

Private hire drivers contacting licensing services

All drivers are asked to please register to use the "My Licence Portal". You can use the portal to maintain your licence details and notify us of any amendments and changes you may have.

The email address you use to register with the portal **must** be the same email address on your driver/vehicle records. Register your email address here: [Signup](#).

You must verify the email address before you can log in - check your junk/spam folder for a verification email from "IAPPLY"

Once you have verified your email address you can log in [here](#) - if you are having issues on your mobile device, try a laptop/PC.

If you have forgotten the password that you have used and verified previously then use the "Forgot Password" – again, please check your junk/spam folder for password reset as this email will be from "IAPPLY"

If you are notifying us of a change address, please ensure you include a copy of your driving licence showing your new address. A replacement paper licence cannot be issued showing your new address until we have received a copy of your driving licence showing your new address.

When sending emails to the licensing team, please ensure you include your badge and/or plate number. This will allow us to locate your records and respond to your enquiry quickly and efficiently.

DBS Update Service

It is a requirement for all drivers with enhanced DBS certificates to remain registered with the Update Service for the period of their licence. Drivers with enhanced DBS certificates have 30 days to subscribe to the DBS Update Service at the cost of £13 a year.

The subscription will automatically be cancelled if your bankcard has either expired or been replaced due to the previous card being lost or stolen.

It should be noted that manual certificates cannot be registered on the Update Service, if you have a manual certificate then a new certificate would be required by Licensing Services every 6 months.

Licensing Services are notified when drivers come off the Update Service – drivers will receive an email from Licensing Services.

To purchase a new DBS certificate, please visit:- [Wolverhampton City Council: DBS Checks for Taxi, Private Hire and Hackney Drivers — TaxiPlus](#)

Drivers must ensure their most up to date card is registered with the Update Service – failure to register or remain on the DBS Update Service is a breach of the licensing conditions and can result in a licence being reviewed and can subsequently mean that a licence could be revoked or suspended or a renewal being refused.

To subscribe to the Update Service please click here. [DBS CRSC \(crbonline.gov.uk\)](#)

Any queries regarding the Update Service is can be sent to Driver.Lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk

How to register on the Driver Portal

If you hold a current driver or vehicle licence with City of Wolverhampton Council, please register to use the My Licence Portal. You can use the portal to keep your licence details up to date and notify us of any amendments and changes you may have.

You need to register with your email address that is held on file. If you have amended your email address you must notify Licensing Services by emailing driver.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk.

Once you have registered your email address, you will need to check your email account, including junk folders, for the verification email. Once you have clicked this link, your account will be activated. Follow the instructions to log in.

Once you have logged in, you can update details such as your address, operator and even report an accident.

Driver fined £75 whilst attending Loxdale for littering

A driver who attended the Taxi Licensing Depot, Loxdale was issued a Fixed Penalty Notice for littering. An enforcement officer witnessed the driver drop a cigarette end on Chapel Street.



If an Environment Enforcement Officer spots someone dropping litter, they are within their powers to take details and issue an FPN. When visiting our depot please be reminded that we are situated within a residential area and all visitors should respect the local vicinity, the dropping of any litter is not acceptable and enforcement officers will continue to patrol and issue FPNs if anybody is witnessed littering. Please use litter bins situated on or around the site.

Your FAQs answered

How do I renew my driver licence?

In order to renew your current private hire/hackney carriage driver licence you will require a personal reference number that will be issued to you at least 4 weeks prior to

expiry via email in the form of a renewal letter.

The letter will detail the documents that are required in order to renew along with the personal reference number. It is important to ensure Licensing Services have your current email address on file.

If you haven't received your renewal letter with less than 4 weeks to expiry please email driver.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk with your current badge number and current email address.

Can I put a private plate on my vehicle?

In order to have your private hire vehicle licence registration amended with a new private DVLA registration, you are required to provide the following documents via email: V778 Retention Document, V750 Certificate of Entitlement with the online reference number or V5 document and insurance certificate showing the new registration has been transferred.

Please contact us using our [web form](#).

Once received you will be contacted via telephone to make the £37 payment and then emailed with an appointment to attend to collect the new licence plate.

How to 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 Hickman Avenue, Wolverhampton, WV1 2HS. All operations are now at Chapel Street, Bilston WV14 0PH.