

Rother Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Newsletter - September 2016



Website: www.rother.gov.uk/article/768/Taxi-Licensing

Email: licensing@rother.gov.uk

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Handbook

The current version of the Handbook is dated February 2015. We are now drafting the next version so please email us if you have any suggestions about what should be included or changed. Please check the Taxi Licensing pages on our website every 3 months (follow link above), to ensure you are working to the latest version of the Handbook.

Are you thinking about replacing your vehicle?

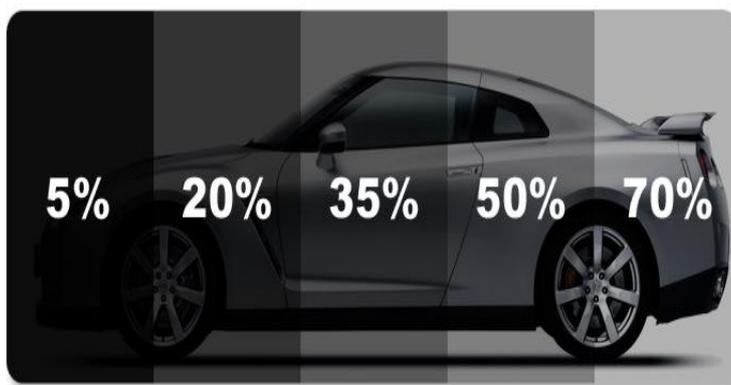
To avoid expensive errors, always check the up to date version of the Taxi Handbook on the website for current vehicle specifications.

Tinted windows

The Taxi Handbook states "all windows should be **tint free** to the extent that the inside of the vehicle **should be clearly visible at all times**...the driver and any passengers should be clearly visible when looking into the vehicle from all windows at all times".

Vehicles presented for their first licence will need to comply with this public safety requirement, and you may have to replace tinted rear passenger windows, even if the glass is factory fitted.

It is a legal requirement that front side windows permit 70% visual light transmission (VLT). We have a standard tint meter that can be used to check the levels of rear passenger windows but, as a rule of thumb, they should be no darker than the front. If you are unsure, please contact the licensing team before purchasing a vehicle.



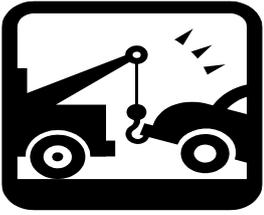
Please note rear tinted windows are not part of the Vehicle Compliance Test. Some drivers have gone to the expense of a VCT only to find that we subsequently refuse to licence until the glass has been replaced.

As an indication, below are examples of tint meter results from vehicles with darker rear glass (the lower the reading, the darker the tint):

57 reg Citroen Picasso	30%	63 reg Toyota Avensis	25%
63 reg VW Golf	32%	11 reg Mondeo Titn. X	10%

As a guide, the cost of replacing rear passenger door glass on a Toyota Avensis is £400 - £600.

Age of the Vehicle



There is currently no age restriction for vehicles, but they must be in showroom condition on first inspection. The restriction was dropped to allow vehicles that remain in 'as new' condition to continue to be licensed after they reach the age limit.

Licence plates – replace rear plastic plate with a sticker

A number of Councils, including Brighton & Hove CC, now issue rear licence plates in a sticker format. This is an option we are considering and, if you have any reasoned views “for or against” this proposal, please email us.

Vehicle Insurance



Do you use your licensed vehicle outside Rother? If you do, please double check the conditions attached to your vehicle insurance. The following exclusion in a policy was recently brought to our attention:-

*The following uses **are not covered** unless specifically shown as included in your certificate of motor insurance and/or your schedule.*

*ii) the use of your vehicle as a taxi, PHV or PSV **outside the area in which you are licensed to operate.***

Fares

A number of objections were received to the proposed variation to the Council's Table of Fares, as advertised in the Bexhill Observer on 15 July. No changes will now be made to fares until the matter has been discussed by the Council's Licensing & General Purposes Committee on 24 October. Any variation to tariff rates will now be delayed until 5 December 2016.

Taximeters

Two important reminders:

1. All Hackney Carriage drivers **must** use the taximeter for fares that take place wholly within the Rother District; even if you do not plan to charge the full amount.
2. Meters may only be switched on once your passenger is loaded, and you cannot charge for dead mileage at the start or end of your journey.



Penalty Point Scheme

In July 2016, the Licensing Committee agreed changes to the Penalty Point Scheme. Please take the time to familiarise yourself with them, by visiting the website.

To avoid an all too easy possibility of incurring points, please note the following deadlines:-

- **Accidents** – any accident involving a licensed vehicle, whether or not you are at fault and/or working must be reported to the Council within 72 hours. The Council will determine whether the vehicle is fit to continue operating. Failure to do so will incur 4 penalty points.
- **Change of Address** - the Council must be notified in writing of any change to the address shown on your licences within seven days of the move taking place. Failure to do so will incur 3 penalty points.
- **Change in Medical Circumstances** – failure to notify the Council in writing of a change in your medical circumstances will incur 6 penalty points.

CCTV

There is **no** Council requirement for licensed vehicles to have internal facing CCTV. However, if you choose to have this fitted, it must meet the conditions attached to your vehicle licence. You should also refer to the CCTV Specifications document available on our website.



In brief:

- Approval in writing must be obtained from the Council before CCTV equipment is installed and used in the vehicle.
- The CCTV equipment shall be of a type approved by the Council.
- The equipment shall be installed, operated and maintained in a manner to the satisfaction of the Council.
- Any material recorded on the equipment shall only be used as evidence in court proceedings, or to aid the investigation of crime, or to confirm or rebut complaints made against the driver, or in evidence in motor insurance matters.
- No tape recording or other material created by the system shall be used or distributed for any purpose other than allowed by (d), or kept for more than thirty days if not required under (d).
- Access to any digitally recorded material **shall be limited** to the Police; any authorised officer of the Council and persons covered by the Information Commissioners CCTV Code of Practice and access to any material otherwise recorded must be made available upon demand to the police, any authorised officer of the Council.

In practice, this means you will have to have the system fitted by a third party specialist installer who offers a data controller service, **and thus they will be the only person able to access any recordings**. This means you cannot access recordings unless requested to do so by the Council or Police. If you require footage you must obtain permission from the Council before doing so.

The CCTV system should be operational all the time the vehicle is being used a licensed vehicle.

Licensing Criminal Convictions Policy

The Council has approved a new policy, a copy of which has been added to the website. Its purpose is to provide guidance on the criteria taken into account by the Council when determining whether or not an applicant, or an existing licence holder, is a fit and proper person to hold a hackney carriage and/or private hire driver, vehicle or operator's licence.

The overriding aim of the Licensing Authority is to protect the safety of the public by ensuring:-

- A person is a fit and proper person.
- The person does not pose a threat to the public.
- The public are safeguarded from dishonest persons.
- The safeguarding of children and young persons.



Licensing Hearings

Where necessary, reports are prepared for consideration and decision by the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Committee. Since November 2015, five drivers have appeared before them for the following reasons:-

- Dual Driver received 12 Rother DC penalty points for the carriage of an offensive weapon in a licensed vehicle. Points to remain on licence.
- Dual Driver licence granted after consideration given as to whether new applicant was fit and proper.
- Dual Driver received 12 DVLA points, but retained DVLA licence. Driver made strongly aware that the award of any further DVLA points will result in the loss of this licence and automatic revocation of his Dual Driver's licence.
- Dual Driver with matter disclosed on DBS on renewal. Panel decided driver remained fit and proper.
- Dual Driver with matter disclosed on DBS on renewal. Licence revoked.



How to Safeguard Vulnerable and Disabled Passengers

For full details, visit the [Guidance for Passengers](#) page on our website. For the Top Ten Tips to help you provide a service to the partially sighted, see below:-

How to assist blind or partially sighted passengers



Help me find you

I might not be able to find you without your help, so you'll need to find me and help me to your car.

Ask me what I need

Ask how you can help guide me to your vehicle. It's really helpful to explain the layout of the vehicle so that I can get into it safely.

Wait for me to sit down

Please make sure I'm sat down safely before driving off; I might need your help to find and secure my seat belt.

Me and my guide dog

If I have a guide dog, you can ask me to make sure that it is lying down by my feet.

How is the journey going?

Please remember to talk to me and let me know about any delays, diversions or other things which might affect the journey.

Are we there yet?

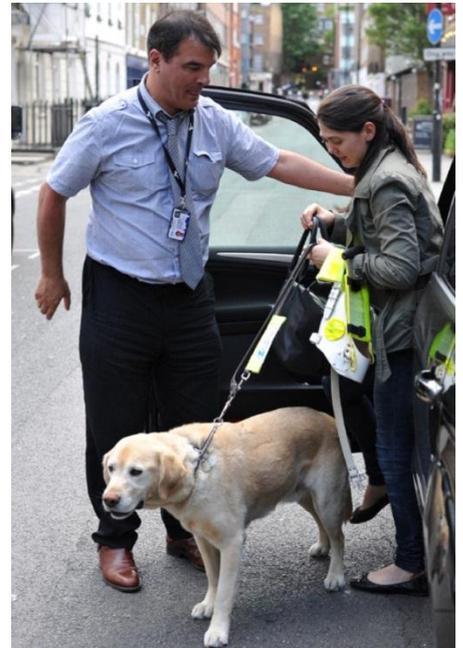
Let me know when we've arrived at my destination, and tell me what the fare is or what the meter says, remembering that there's no extra charge for guide dogs.

When we get there ...

At the end of my journey, you might have to help me to get from your car to my final destination.

Allergic to dogs?

If you can't take my guide dog because of a medical problem, it's really important that you or your company find me someone else who can get me where I want to go.



Thank you for your help!

Licensing Service



We would like to thank drivers and operators for their cooperation over the last couple of years. The Council, like so many public bodies, is going through a great deal of change, and resources continue to be stretched. We must therefore work hard to adapt our Services and appreciate this can sometimes affect those using them. We are keenly aware of the importance of continuing to protect the public, and that this is best achieved by working with you wherever possible.

We have enclosed a customer satisfaction survey and pre-addressed envelope, and would ask for your feedback on the Licensing Service. There have been some changes in staffing this year, and we have had to change some operating practices. It is therefore useful to hear your views on how we are doing, and it would be very much appreciated if you could complete and return the enclosed form to us. We do consider comments received, and have responded by making changes to the way we operate.

Newsletter

We hope you find the information provided in this newsletter useful. If there are other areas that you feel could be included in our next edition, then please do bring this to our attention.

The Council has a great deal of respect for its licensed drivers and operators, and is aware that most members work extremely hard to provide customers with a professional, courteous service, with particular emphasis on the more vulnerable members of our community. It is essential that we continue to work together to ensure the protection of our residents, and we look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.



Post

Please ensure any post you send to us is clearly marked: "**Rother Taxi Licensing Team**". Wherever possible, please provide payment in the form of a cheque, which should be stapled to the application form to prevent it from becoming detached.

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