

# Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Newsletter



February 2019



## Renewing your hackney carriage and private hire driver licence

A licensed driver is responsible for ensuring he/she commences the licence renewal process well in advance of the licence expiry date. A driver must not rely on reminders sent by the Council (this service may be withdrawn in the future).

Drivers will not be entitled to work after the expiry date of their existing licence until they have received their new paper licence and photo badge.

You will receive a renewal reminder letter approximately 8 weeks prior to the expiry of your licence. NB: this carries an appointment time and date approximately four weeks prior to expiry. Please add this to your calendar immediately, as a number of appointments have been missed recently. If the date should subsequently prove inconvenient, please ring Licensing in good time to rearrange. Where possible, bring the appointment forward, as delaying it could impact on your right to continue driving should your licence expire before all checks can be carried out.

The purpose of the appointment is to get your DBS check underway (your Medical Report can follow). Your letter will ask you to complete an on-line application via uCheck; this cannot be approved until you have seen an officer, paid the fee, and provided your identity documents. At the appointment, you will be provided with details of how to sign up to 'DBS Update' (see below) and every driver is strongly encouraged to do so.

## DBS update service

Drivers should sign up to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) update service (annual fee payable). Drivers must be able to provide evidence of continuous registration and nomination throughout the duration of their licence.

<https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>

You can only sign up if your latest DBS Certificate is less than 19 days old, and it is imperative that you do not lose this certificate – we are not permitted to take or hold a copy and you may need to continue bringing it to the Council for many years!

Benefits to you include the portability of the Disclosure Certificate. You will be able to use it for many other purposes, not just driving; it will considerably speed up the renewal process, including the issue of your new licence; and it will reduce the uncertainty of a delayed response leading to a period of non-driving. It also works out cheaper!

We are actively considering on-line renewals for drivers licences, and **being signed up to the DBS update service will be a pre-requisite.**

## Payments

We have recently revamped our online payment system and are encouraging all drivers to use this instead of paying by cheque, which will be phased out in the future. Since re-launching the service back in September, 65% of all taxi licensing payments have been made online and feedback from drivers has been very positive.

The system is easy to use and you receive an emailed receipt for your records straight away. All taxi licensing payments can now be made by visiting [www.rother.gov.uk/makeataxipayment](http://www.rother.gov.uk/makeataxipayment)

The computer in the reception area at the Town Hall can be used for this purpose if necessary but, for your own protection, we would encourage you to do this on your own phone/home computer. Wherever possible, the process should be completed prior to any appointment. Both you and the Licensing Team will be sent a receipt number in acknowledgement.

## NR3 National Register of Refusals and Revocations

The Local Government Association (LGA) has launched a national register of hackney carriage and private hire licence refusals and revocations. We are responsible for adding basic details about drivers when we refuse an application or revoke a licence.

When we receive an application for a licence, we check the applicant's details on the register to confirm that there is no record of them having been previously revoked or refused elsewhere.

Details contained on the register are limited to information that will help to identify an individual to a certain degree of accuracy. They will not give a reason as to why actions were taken.

## Rear door signs

Your hackney carriage or private hire vehicle licence number door signs must be fixed to the upper panel of both rear passenger doors. The only exception is (with our agreement) for professionally liveried vehicles where our door signs will significantly interfere with the livery.

The majority of drivers comply with this licence condition but some appear to be fixing them all over the place; front door, rear quarter panel etc. Where company adverts are applied, these should be positioned on the front doors.

Please fix them on straight; they look terrible if they are skewed.

## Replacement rear door signs

These can only be ordered from ABC Signs in Hastings, because there are security arrangements and checks in place. This is set up to prevent persons with criminal intent, or unlicensed drivers, from ordering them. Apart from ABC Signs, no other print shop has permission to reproduce the Council's logo.

Later this year we plan to find a supplier nearer to Bexhill on Sea.

## Vehicle licence renewals

Following the launch of the on-line application system last summer, the number of drivers using this facility has increased to the point that the Council will now be offering a discounted fee for future users (see Licensing Fees below).

When renewing your vehicle licence, please do not send in your application until all required paperwork is to hand; this is particularly important when renewing on-line. If you are concerned the delay will impact on the expiry of your licence, please email [licensing@rother.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@rother.gov.uk) to ask for advice.

If you allow the vehicle licence to lapse before renewing it, then your application will be treated as a new application, and vehicle conditions applicable today (eg age limits, tinted window requirements etc) will immediately come into force.

## Licensing Fees

Good news – There will be no increase in licence fees for the year 2019/20 and, from 1<sup>st</sup> April, the Council will be offering a £10 discount for all complete on-line vehicle renewal applications.

## Vehicles being licensed for the first time must be less than SEVEN years old

For vehicles licensed before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018, there is no age limit. All vehicles must continue to meet the Vehicle Compliance Test and other vehicle specifications.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018, a vehicle will only be accepted for licensing if the date of first registration is less than **SEVEN** years at the date the licence is issued (the vehicle must be licensed for use within one month from the date of the application). Subject to other requirements, a licensed vehicle (first licensed after 01/04/18) will continue to be re-licensed until it is **TEN** years old. The age of a vehicle for licensing purposes shall be determined by the date of first registration on the V5 document.

Exemption to the age criteria: applications may be considered to licence and re-licence a classic, novelty or vintage vehicle for example a Rolls Royce. The expectation being that they would not work from a taxi rank or carry out routine work.

## Replacing your vehicle

Please speak to a licensing officer if you are not sure whether your new vehicle will meet our licensing requirements –do this before purchasing the vehicle.

Licensing officers are happy to look at a vehicle before purchase and give advice. Please make an appointment.



We will not give a definitive answer about the suitability for licensing from photographs or videos.

## 6, 7, 8 seat vehicles

The Handbook clarifies our strict licensing requirements for these types of vehicle; please read these and then contact a licensing officer before purchasing.



Multi purpose vehicles/people carriers/4x4: e.g. Scenic, Zafira, Picasso, Touran, C Max, Tourneo Connect, Caddy Maxi Life, Sharan, Galaxy, Q7, XC90 etc. The third row seating in this type of vehicle will not be licensed due to the smaller nature of the seats, reduced legroom and limited luggage space.

## Vehicle Compliance Test

A VCT certificate is not required for a brand new vehicle out of the showroom, with delivery mileage of less than 600.

The garage will give you two copies of the Certificate and Inspection Form; the white copies are for the Council and the yellow for your own record. The responsibility for getting a copy of **both the Certificate and Inspection Form** to the Council is yours, not that of the garage. Emailed copies are acceptable; in which case, please scan the white copies because they are clearer.

## Rother HC/PHV rear licence plates

These must be securely attached to the outside of the rear of all Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles at all times.

Licence plates and door signs must never be removed from the vehicle e.g. on your day off, personal holiday trips etc.



## Hackney fare cards

The Council's fare card must be prominently displayed in each Hackney Carriage vehicle. Where the Hackney rate charged is less than the Council's maximum rate, then an appropriate fare card for this lower rate must also be prominently displayed in addition to the Council's fare card (i.e. **both fare cards must be on display**).

**NB:** It is compulsory for meters to be operated for all journeys that start and finish within the Rother District. The meter must not be started until passengers and their luggage etc. are fully on board and you are ready to move off.

## Private hire plate exemption

If your private hire work qualifies for an exemption certificate, you must carry the plate, door signs and the exemption certificate in the vehicle. If you also undertake circuit work which does not entitle you to the exemption, the rear plate and side door signs must be re-attached for these journeys.

Due to misuse of exemption certificates, we are strictly enforcing existing rules. An exemption application must be accompanied by indisputable proof from a number of sources that exempt work is being undertaken e.g. contract papers with blue chip company, references from executive clients. Up to date evidence and proof must be produced upon vehicle licence renewal. A decision whether to grant an exemption certificate will be made based upon the evidence provided and the type of vehicle to be used.

## Mobile phone and other hand held devices



Drivers will be aware it is illegal to use a hand-held phone or similar device while driving, or riding a motorcycle. The same rules apply if you're **stopped at traffic lights or queuing in traffic** and also to the use of booking Apps on phones.

Please note that our Convictions Policy states that an *application for a licence will not normally be considered if an applicant has more than one conviction for an offence of driving whilst using a mobile phone* (this includes renewal applications).

If you receive a conviction, or a passenger or member of the public reports you to the Council for using a mobile phone whilst driving, your Rother Dual Driver Licence could be endorsed with 9 penalty points.

# Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Handbook



Please make sure you download and read the Handbook, as it applies to both new and existing licensed drivers/vehicle owners/private hire operators. Please check our website every 3 months thereafter, to ensure you have the most up to date version of the handbook

## You must notify us about.....

a number of matters during the period of a licence. This should be **in writing** (by letter or email) and you must ask for acknowledgement to prove you complied with the notification requirement:

- Loss of driver badge - **Immediately.**
- Loss of vehicle plate, internal badge, side door badges - **Immediately.**
- Accident or damage to licensed vehicle (regardless of whether it was working at the time) - **Within 72 hours.**
- Change of medical circumstances of a licensed driver - **As soon as possible or within 7 days**
- Change of address - **Within 7 days.**
- If you have been arrested or charged for an offence by the Police or any other enforcement agency - **Within 7 days.** You must also notify us again to confirm whether or not you were subsequently convicted - **Within 7 days.**
- If you have been cautioned by the Police or any other enforcement agency - **Within 7 days.**
- Arrest, caution, convictions in your capacity as a Ltd Company /Partnership /Director /Company Secretary etc - **Within 7 days.**
- All motoring convictions relating to a licensed driver, including a fixed penalty - **Within 7 days.**
- You must request permission before you install internal facing CCTV in a licensed vehicle - **Before installation.**
- You are concerned that a passenger is at risk of sexual exploitation, trafficking etc. - **Immediately.**

## Website

You should be familiar with the information available on the taxi pages of the Council's website, and it is good practice to review this every 3/4 months. The latest version of the Taxi Handbook is held here and should be reviewed before changing your vehicle. On the tab marked 'Existing drivers and licence holders', you will find the forms you need to, for example, renew a licence, report an accident, transfer a vehicle licence, change your vehicle registration.



## Multi Agency operation at Gatwick airport

Many of you will know that we take part in these operations at the airport with the Police, VOSA, Customs, Immigration, TFL etc.

During the last operation we stopped a number of vehicles licensed by other Councils in poor visual and mechanical condition, but we were pleased to note how clean and smart the Rother vehicles seen passing were.

Only one Rother vehicle was stopped and unfortunately for the driver he received penalty points for not having his licensed driver's badge on him.

The VOSA inspector spotted a Prius with a front tyre that was worn through to the wire on the inner shoulder. The driver then proceeded to change the tyre using a jack but doing this whilst sitting on the tarmac with both legs straight out under the car. He was saved just before the unstable jack collapsed the car on him.

We sat in a brand new electric London cab, spacious with level access from both rear doors; clever design but very expensive. The driver was from East Kent and on a working day he reckoned he only put in £4 worth of petrol in the range extender engine (this engine only charges the battery and doesn't drive the wheels).

## Licensing Panel Hearings

Where necessary we prepare reports to take to the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Panel for consideration and decision. Recent cases include:



- Dual Driver unsatisfactory behaviour or conduct - driver, vehicle and operators licences revoked.
- Dual Driver overcharging and using an unlicensed vehicle. Driver licence revoked.

A bogus driver, working in the Wadhurst area, was prosecuted at Magistrates Court and fined £1,500 for not holding a private hire driver licence, vehicle licence or a private hire operator's licence.

He was also fined £150 and received six DVLA points for no insurance.

The Council were awarded full costs of £513.90.



## Post and contacting us

Please make sure you have to hand your DD/HC/PH number before contacting us; this will enable us to quickly locate your records and answer your query.

### Your important documents

If you post documents to us, please take a photocopy in case they get lost, and make sure you apply the correct postage. Post that is sent without the full postage will not be delivered to us.

**Staple** your cheques (whilst still accepted) to application forms, in order to prevent them from becoming detached. If you hand deliver documents to reception at Bexhill Council offices you can ask for a 'receipt' on a compliment slip.

Please ensure that any post you send to us is **addressed correctly** and use the address below.

### Our Address

Taxi Licensing Team  
Rother District Council  
Town Hall  
Bexhill on Sea  
East Sussex  
TN39 3JX



Our website address [www.rother.gov.uk](http://www.rother.gov.uk)  
Please email us on [licensing@rother.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@rother.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01424 787550

We hope the information that we have drawn to your attention in this newsletter is useful for you. **If there are any other areas that you feel could usefully be included in our next edition, then please do forward suggestions.**



We are aware that the most of our licensed drivers and operators work hard to ensure that a professional service is provided for customers. The Council has a great deal of respect for the hackney and private hire trade within our area and is grateful and well aware that the vast majority of our drivers and operators consider protection of vulnerable members of our community as being very important. It is essential that we continue to work together to ensure that public safety is protected and look forward to continuing to work with you in delivering a safe hackney carriage and private hire trade within our District in the future.