



**Make sure you book your place on our Licensing Drop ins designed to help trade members with any complex issues they may have experienced as part of the licensing process.**

*See inside for more details*

## Message from the Public Safety and Protection Committee Chair

**Hello. In May I was elected as Chair of Public Safety and Protection Committee again, and wanted to start to write an article for each of the newsletters to improve communication.**



I know there are many issues that are of concern to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade at the moment in Bristol. Many are to do with deregulation legislation and cross boundary working, which we have no power over, but I am

determined to keep raising your concerns with the Mayor, MPs and national government. Other issues are ones that Bristol City Council needs to address, and I am working with officers to do that. We intend to review our licensing systems and make them more user friendly and efficient, to introduce a 'drop in' where you can come in and have licensing queries answered, to put pressure on the Highways Department to increase the number of taxi ranks and review their locations and enforcement, and to review the criteria for PH operators' licenses.

I am sure that all of you are committed to making sure your customers are safe as a top priority, and we rely on you to support us to do this by reporting hate crime anti-social behaviour etc. We also have a duty of care to you, and we hear many incidents of drivers being verbally abused and this is totally unacceptable and needs to be reported and addressed. I am sure you will agree that having our 'taxi cop' is making everyone feel safer and more confident in our enforcement.

One of our roles on the Public Safety Committee involves seeing people when a license renewal or application is being questioned. We have to decide if a driver is still deemed to be a 'fit and proper' person before we can issue a license. There sometimes seems to be a misunderstanding about what the committee members can do. Often we are bound by national guidance or local policy that we have to follow which says we cannot issue a licence for a certain amount of time (e.g. after a particular conviction or medical condition). In these cases it is unlikely, however many good references people can provide, that we can go against a policy. There are other situations where we are allowed to be a bit more flexible in the interpretation of the policy but it is more likely that we will consider someone 'fit and proper' if they have been totally honest. This means telling the Licensing Team about any offence or conviction (including speeding fines) as soon as they happen, declaring them on application or renewal forms, and telling us truthfully about the circumstances. Hopefully few of you will find yourselves in this situation.

I want to improve communication with drivers and operators and would like to encourage people to come forward as representatives to the Taxi Forum, which is where we can talk about any policy changes and get your views in advance, but will also look forward to meeting a lot of you at the next Taxi Conference in the spring.

**Cllr. Ruth Pickersgill MBE**

## Meeting the needs of disabled customers

**Bristol City Council prioritises meeting the needs of disabled people, and taxi drivers are often key people in their lives, giving them the freedom to access the wider world when other public transport is less accessible.**

We hear a lot of positive feedback from disabled people, often from those who have a regular driver or operator they use who is polite and helpful and meets their needs well. However, we also do get a significant number of concerns raised and recently the PSP Committee has had to take action against drivers who have refused to take wheelchair using customers and someone with a guide dog.

This is also an issue nationally, and Private Hire and Taxi Monthly has highlighted a number of cases. A taxi driver in Coventry lost his licence after twice failing to secure a disabled passenger with the restraining straps. A Bolton driver was convicted under the Equality Act for over-charging a wheelchair using passenger- getting a conditional discharge and having to pay costs. A Stoke-on-Trent driver who was convicted of refusing a disabled woman was fined £300 and £70 costs, and now has to go before the Licensing Committee to see if further action will be taken.

Bristol is taking a strong approach to dealing with complaints regarding accessibility, and these complaints will be prioritised and dealt with by the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team. New policies regarding accessibility are due to go before committee, and measures have also been put into place to tackle the issues nationally. A new national database of revocations and suspensions means councils can check to see if an applicant has been suspended or revoked elsewhere, meaning it will be more difficult for drivers to move from one council to another.

The fact that fines could be as much as £1000 and licenses revoked, should be a major deterrent to anyone treating disabled people badly, and clearly there is a moral argument that no one should be discriminated against because of their impairments. However, the other key point is that it is poor business practice. So many disabled and older people in Bristol report being unable to get an accessible cab when they need one (particularly during the school runs) that it has to make commercial sense to recognise that this group are often totally reliant on taxis for their travel, and if treated well and communicated with, could bring a lot of new business.

## Bristol welcomes first electric taxi



### **The first electric taxi to operate with a Bristol City Council taxi licence has begun operating in the city.**

taking passengers from Friday 20 July after the handover of licence plates at City Hall the same day.

Marcin Kosiecki, the city's first electric blue hackney cab driver, received his plates from Councillor Mhairi Threlfall at a small gathering at City Hall. The taxi driver, who has lived in Bristol for 15 years, spoke passionately about his commitment to playing a part in introducing further electric vehicles and infrastructure to the city.

Marcin said: "I am extremely excited to be the first operator of an electric blue hackney cab in Bristol and to be on the forefront of a new wave of environmentally friendly taxi options. I believe passionately that Bristol is a city with a strong eco-friendly core with a desire to do something to tackle climate change. I have made this investment to do my bit and to encourage others to do theirs. I hope that residents, visitors and those passing through Bristol will begin to see and use more electric taxis in future as we move together as city towards becoming carbon neutral by 2050."

Councillor Mhairi Threlfall, Cabinet Member for Transport and Connectivity, said: "I am delighted to welcome Marcin and his new electric blue hackney cab to Bristol. His passion and determination to be a part of the solution to climate change is inspiring – we couldn't ask for a better ambassador for what we're trying to achieve in Bristol.

"In the long term, we hope to see many more electric vehicles hitting the streets of Bristol and are taking steps right now to expand charging points and make better use of these types of vehicles as part of our own fleet. We have a bold ambition to be a carbon neutral city by 2050 and tackle our poor air quality, which requires that we work across sectors and with a range of private and public bodies to lay down action that will contribute to meeting that target. Whilst we have major investment programmes being laid out by the City Leap prospectus, we recognise that individual actions and investments play an important role in moving us closer to achieving our ambitions."

The TX model is supplied by London Electric Vehicle Company (LEVC) and is the world's first purpose built electric taxi. Styled on the classic black cab the vehicle is built from the bottom up to include a range of accessibility features that ensure the vehicle can be accessed by users with a range of needs. Features including an accessibility ramp, retractable step, swivel seat and quick-fasten wheelchair restraints make this model one of the most accessible vehicles on the road.

Councillor Ruth Pickersgill, Chair of Bristol City Council's Public Safety Committee, said: "Council officers have been working behind the scenes to engage with the taxi trade about investing in the use of electric vehicles in future. Working as a link between drivers and LEVC the council has made a number of introductions that we hope will bring further electric taxis to the city. It's important also to note that although the environmental benefits of choosing an electric taxi are clear to see, they are also an essential part of our public transport network, and the vehicle Marcin will be using will allow less-mobile passengers to have a more comfortable and accessible journey. As a disabled

and older transport user myself, I have tried the taxi and can testify that it has much easier access and several features that will benefit passengers like me."

### Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Incentive Scheme

There is a scheme available to those drivers wishing to purchase an Electric Vehicle;

A package of incentives offered to Hackney Carriage proprietors for purchasing a ULEV. These incentives would be offered over a 5 year period and total £3,635 per proprietor.

A breakdown of the package is presented below:

- Subsidising full cost of Licensing fees: £187/annum
- Subsidising Certificate of Conformity fee: £50/annum
- Subsidising full cost of permit to operate at Temple Meads Rail Station: £490/annum

Please contact us for further information at [licensing@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@bristol.gov.uk)

## Crimestoppers County Lines Campaign

The charity Crimestoppers has launched a national campaign to highlight County Lines and encourage the public to report their concerns.

### What is County Lines?

County lines refers to gangs and organised criminal networks which export illegal drugs into suburban, rural and coastal areas, using dedicated mobile phone lines or a "deal line."

The crime sees County Lines gangs exploit children and vulnerable adults to move drugs and money.

The gangs move into a rural or suburban area for a short time, taking over the home of a vulnerable person where they set up a base.

Many of those taken advantage of by these gangs have been forced to carry out criminal activity by threats, grooming and extortion and can be described as modern day slaves.

### Spotting the Signs

Have you noticed:

- A child or young person (sometimes as young as 12), during school hours or unusual hours (e.g. early in the morning, late at night)? They might be in a shopping centre or high street, or on public transport.
- A child or young person who seems unfamiliar with the local area?
- A child or young person being approached or intimidated by a controlling peer or group?
- A child or vulnerable person who is deliberately avoiding authority figures such as police officers or security guards?
- More people calling at a local address than normal? Sometimes at unsociable hours?
- Suspicious vehicles or people at an address?
- A neighbour has not been seen for a while?

If you see something concerning either a young or vulnerable person that doesn't feel right, or looks suspicious, you can report your concerns 100% anonymously to the charity Crimestoppers. You can contact us on **0800 555 111** or send an untraceable online form at [crimestoppers-uk.org](http://crimestoppers-uk.org) Alternatively you can call Avon and Somerset Police on **101**.

# Taxi Cop Update – Juggling

A large part of my job is about juggling.

Not just about keeping lots of tasks going at once but also about working in a way that is seen to be fair, proportionate and effective. Some Hackney Carriage drivers think that I mostly target them and want me to spend more time dealing with the Private Hire Vehicles for things like Plying for Hire and stopping on ranks instead. The Private Hire drivers think I mostly target them and want me to deal with

the overcharging, refusals and bullying behaviour of Hackney Carriages. Bristol City Council licensed vehicles want me to leave them alone and just deal with the “out of town” vehicles. South Gloucestershire Council licensed vehicles point out that Bristol vehicles turn up at UWE and Parkway and take their jobs, and that they are entitled by law to work in Bristol. The truth is, of course, that I try and deal with all the issues in a fair way, without showing prejudice or bias towards one particular group. It helps that I have a priority list which I have agreed with the council based on public safety (which as you know is my first priority). That’s why I’ve been on patrol a bit less over the last few weeks as I deal with investigations into Unlicensed Vehicles and Drivers which is very high on my to do list.

I also juggle effectively having four bosses, who don’t always have precisely the same view. I’m led by Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Avon and Somerset Constabulary, and of course you.

At the moment I have 19 criminal investigations and prosecution files on the go. I have 13 live Plyer investigations, and five drivers going to Committee in

September for plying and not using the meter/overcharging. In June I had 50 messages from drivers which needed following up or action, 45 in July and so far this month (25/8/18) 34. Since June I’ve also completed 31 full driver and vehicle inspections at Bridewell police station in addition to the dozens of vehicles I check each week on the road.

And of course, there’s also the multiagency work with licensing officers from different local authorities and the DVSA. I also try to find time to educate the public and colleagues about taxi matters.

Oh, and I should mention about dealing with traffic issues like Motion, going to the Taxi Forum and Public Transport Safety Meetings, providing advice to colleagues on their investigations, dealing with lost property and the “normal” police work I have to do.

This all means that there’s a lot of juggling to keep everything going, and sometimes I do drop a ball. And sometimes the results of my jobs take much longer to happen than I would like. Thanks to the support from my supervisors and council officers, and to the help I’ve had from PCSO Paul Caines it has just about been manageable. I’m very excited to say that I am going to have a Volunteer working with me for half a day a week to help with some of the admin and phone calls.

Most importantly, I feel I have your confidence and support and that makes the biggest difference of all.

So I will carry on juggling, trying to keep everyone safe and happy, and do my part in providing an excellent taxi service in Bristol and South Gloucestershire. Please do your part too!

Have a safe shift,

*PC Patrick Quinton Taxi Cop.*

## Policy Update

### Accessibility Policies

The Licensing Team are currently working on introducing new policies surrounding vehicles and accessibility. The policies, in relation to the carriage of wheelchair users and assistance dogs, will be made available for consultation as soon as they have been approved by the Public Safety and Protection Committee. The Licensing Team hope that the new policies will bring clarity to an area which has undergone legislative changes in recent years, and they will also bring greater enforcement powers.

A provisional date for the policies to be presented before the Public Safety and Protection Committee has been set for 18th September 2018.

More information will be made available when the policies go live for consultation.

### DVLA enquiries

The way that driver checks are carried out with the DVLA is due to change. Currently, the Licensing Team make the checks online by using a DVLA Mandate. The Mandate authorises us to make the check for a period of three years and has been used as part of the grant and renewal process for a number of years.

In December 2018, the DVLA will be withdrawing this service to all Local Authorities, meaning the way checks are carried out will change.

Whilst we are aware of the significance of this, we are hoping to cause minimal disruption to the way our grant and renewal processes are carried out. We are working with the DVLA to find out what the plan will be for the future, and when changes occur the details will be made available.

### Medical Reports

The Licensing Team have received multiple queries lately concerning Medical Reports and what to do if your registered GP cannot carry out your medical report.

If your GP cannot carry out your Medical Report, the Council's Occupation Health Department can provide this for you. Please contact us on **0117 357 4900** if this affects you. Please note we can only use this service if your GP CAN NOT complete your report. If your GP can complete Medical Reports, it is your responsibility to ensure this is completed in good time.

Please remember Medical Reports and appointments to see your GP can take time; we notify drivers of pending checks three months before the licence expiry, which means there should be enough time to get your Medical Report completed.

## Trade Representatives

I'm proud to serve Bristol Blue Licence Taxi Association (BBLTA) and blessed to have a very good team. Our focus is to build up good relations with the council and all other related organisations to bring a positive attitude in the taxi trade.

The Bristol Blue Licensing Taxi Association (BBLTA) is working in partnership with other agencies to create more business for the hackney trade. Hackney Taxis are an important part of the public transport network in Bristol.

We are trying our best to get public confidence back for the blue taxis. We are working hard with Licensing and Sustainable Transport to resolve many issues, mainly focusing on ranks and a fare increase.

We are overwhelmed by the impressive support of Bristol City Council.

I'm proud to live in a great city and our aim is to make Bristol Blue Taxis a good example for other cities.

*Patrick Masih Chair of the BBLTA*



## Licensing 'Drop ins'

**The Licensing Team will be holding a number of licensing 'drop ins' over the next three months.**

The drop ins are designed to help trade members with any complex issues which they may have experienced as part of the licensing process, licensing staff will be on hand to help together with Avon and Somerset Police and SARI representatives, depending on the issue raised. In order to get the most value out of the sessions, and for the agencies to do some preparatory work, the service will need to run on an appointment only basis. The drop ins will take place at the Citizen Service Point at 100 Temple Street on the following dates;

**Tuesday 09/10/18 10:30 –14:30**

**Tuesday 13/11/18 10:30 –14:30**

**Tuesday 04/12/18 10:30 –14:30**

If you would like to book an appointment, please email [licensing@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@bristol.gov.uk) with your request, and details of the issue you would like to discuss.



## Vehicle Identification

Please be aware that the internal/side vehicle licence sign does not carry an expiry date, and therefore does not need to be replaced annually.

Historically this identification sign, which is on display for the benefit of your passengers, used to carry an expiry date. This has been amended and as a result can stay in the vehicle without the need to be changed, meaning when you renew your licence, you will only need to replace the front and rear licence plates.



## The Horsefair Taxi Rank

The Licensing Team have received complaints about hackney carriages operating on the Horsefair/Penn Street Rank near Cabot Circus.

The rank, situated outside Cabot Circus on Penn Street, currently has capacity for six Hackney Carriage vehicles only. This means if the rank is full, it cannot be used by any further vehicles. Please note the space directly in front of the rank (as seen in the picture below) is not a parking bay, it is double yellows and not part of the rank. Other bays within this area are clearly marked for loading or disabled parking; please make sure you have regard to this. A rank for a further five vehicles is available further down The Horsefair outside of Debenhams.

There will be increased patrols by Parking Services in this area for the time being.

## Mandatory Training for Drivers

As you will be aware, training is key in continuing to improve your skills as a licensed driver and enhancing customer experience.

As part of recent policy changes, it was agreed that all drivers will be subject to regular mandatory training - this is likely to be on a three year rolling programme and will come at no additional cost to your existing licence fees.

To assist developing this programme we want to consult with the trade to help inform content of the training programme. If you have any comments or ideas we want to hear from you – please let us know by emailing [taxi.feedback@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:taxi.feedback@bristol.gov.uk)



## What would you like to see?

The Licensing Team aim to improve communication between the council and the trade.

Remember, this is your newsletter! If you have something you think would be useful, or would like to see included in future issues, or you have a good news story or information you want to share, please get in touch at [licensing@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@bristol.gov.uk) with the subject 'Newsletter' only.

### Previous Newsletters:

The Taxi Newsletter is a good way for the Licensing Team to communicate with the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage trade. Past issues of the newsletter are available on our website: [bristol.gov.uk/licences-and-permits/taxi-forum](http://bristol.gov.uk/licences-and-permits/taxi-forum)