



GUILDFORD  
BOROUGH

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# Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter November 2020



Welcome to November's newsletter. It will not have escaped the attention of the licensed trade that yesterday (5 November) we entered a second lockdown alongside the rest of England and it is now more important than ever that we continue to play our part to reduce the spread of the virus by following new government restrictions, to save lives and protect the NHS.

The government took this decision in response to the rapidly rising infection rates across the country, including Guildford. The legislation was passed the day before lockdown by Parliament and we appreciate that these are difficult times, and that many businesses are experiencing significant difficulties as a result of the pandemic. We also recognise the passing of important legislation the day before it is due to come into effect does not give much opportunity to adjust however is unfortunately not something we control as the Council receives the legislation at the same time as the wider public and business operators.

The new restrictions require us to stay at home, not meet up with people outside of your household and for non-essential businesses and venues to close. There are some differences to the first lockdown guidance, such as schools, colleges and universities continuing to open and for those in a support bubble (a support bubble is a close support network between a household and a single-adult household) who are still able to meet. While socialising is not permitted as the point of the lockdown is to limit our contact with others, everyone is also able to meet with one other person outdoors in a public place.

The Coronavirus outbreak has had a major impact on our local, national and global economy and there will be more government grants coming soon. The Council also has a free online 'Skills for Employment' course running to help get people who may have lost their jobs back into work - please email [business@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:business@guildford.gov.uk) for more details. As always, we would remind the trade that the latest Government advice is available at: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).

We need to make sacrifices over the next four weeks that will hopefully allow our High Street retailers and licensed premises to reopen again before Christmas. If we show discipline now, we can minimise the impact on our local businesses, keep our children in schools and reduce pressure on the NHS.

For members of the trade who may have visited the town centre, you may have seen our new Safety Marshals. They will be on hand at peak times during the day and night to help everybody stay safe and follow government guidelines. Most people are now used to wearing a face covering, washing and sanitising their hands regularly and staying two metres apart but we want to do all we can to allow everybody to continue to enjoy our beautiful and historic town in safety.

## Taxi Policy Consultation

We wished to remind the licensed trade that public consultation on the updated Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy is currently taking place until 10 January 2021. A dedicated consultation web page has been set up at: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/taxipolicy>.

This web page contains a draft of the Policy, a summary of the changes and a link to complete an online questionnaire to submit feedback. We are keen to receive feedback from all members of the licensed trade and your customers, so please do take the time to submit your views.

## Taxi and Private Hire Advisory Group Meetings

We still have spaces left for our 'virtual' TAG Meetings. Unfortunately due to current circumstances we cannot hold a TAG meeting 'in person' however in order to engage with the licensed trade about the draft policy in consultation we are hosting a number of 'virtual' meetings in order to discuss the draft policy, and answer any questions the trade may have.

Meetings will be held using Microsoft Teams. Attendees will not need to download Microsoft Teams and should be able to join over the internet.

We will be hosting sessions at the following dates/times:

- Wednesday 11 November – 11.30
- Thursday 12 November – 19:00

Should you wish to attend a meeting, please email us with your name, your licence number(s) and details of the meeting you would wish to attend. You will also need to provide us with the email address you would like the invitation to be sent to.

**Emails must be sent to:** [regulatoryservices@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:regulatoryservices@guildford.gov.uk)

Numbers for each meeting will be limited and allocated on a first come, first served basis. If demand is high then we will explore offering more sessions.

## Submitting applications

We are aware that a small number of the licensed trade are still submitting applications incorrectly, resulting in delays. Whilst the offices remain closed, we prefer applications to be emailed to us at: [regulatoryservices@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:regulatoryservices@guildford.gov.uk)

Please do not email application documents to individual officers or the Customer Service Centre, as this can result in delays.

## Online Knowledge Tests Go Live

We are pleased to advise that following the suspension of Knowledge Tests earlier this year we have now relaunched both the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Knowledge Test in an online test format.

Bookings can be made as previously by contacting Customer Services on 01483 505050.

## Walnut Tree Close One Way Trail

Surrey County Council will be implementing a trial one-way system on the northern section of Walnut Tree Close between December 2020 and mid-February 2021. During the two-and-a-half month trial, vehicular traffic will only be allowed to travel in the northbound direction. The effect of the trial on surrounding roads will be monitored and a decision on a permanent solution will be made after the trial period.

Further information can be obtained from: <http://ourroads.today>.

Any questions can be directed to Surrey County Council by emailing: [WalnutTreeClose.Trial@surrey.gov.uk](mailto:WalnutTreeClose.Trial@surrey.gov.uk).

We have been asked to facilitate a meeting between Surrey County Council and the Taxi trade. If you are interested in attending a meeting with Surrey County Council about the Walnut Tree Close works please email us at: [regulatoryservices@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:regulatoryservices@guildford.gov.uk) and we will provide further information.

## Woking Road Depot

We would like to remind the trade that the Woking Road Depot remains open for vehicle tests and MOTs. However due to reduced capacity and demand for MOTs, there may be a delay in booking a vehicle test. We would advise members of the trade to book a vehicle test 6 weeks in advance.

Slots on Mondays and Tuesdays will be reserved for the licensed trade in order to try and reduce some of the delay in getting a test booked.

## Lost Property

The licensed trade will be aware that it is a requirement to return lost property to the Council upon its discovery. As the Council offices remain closed, private hire drivers should notify their operator upon discovery of any lost property so that the operator can arrange for its return if they are contacted by a customer.

Hackney carriage drivers should notify the Council upon the discovery of any lost property and retain it until further instructions are received.

## A3 Roadworks

### **A3 Potters Lane (Send, Surrey) – Carriageway Maintenance and Improved Signage**

Highways England will shortly be carrying out work to refresh the anti-skid material on the A3 northbound carriageway at the junction with Potters Lane, to improve the skid resistance and safety to road users. This will be followed by work to install new signage and reflective bollards at the junction.

For the safety, the following restrictions will be in place overnight between 9pm and 6am (Monday to Friday only):

- . Thursday 12 November for one night – full closure of the A3 northbound carriageway from Compton to Send
- . Friday 13 November for three nights – overnight closures of the northbound exit and entry slip roads at Potters Lane
- . Monday 23 November for eight nights – overnight closures of the northbound exit and entry slip roads at Potters Lane

Unfortunately works cannot be done using the same overnight closures due to safety reasons. There is insufficient room at the junction to accommodate the equipment/plant required for both the surfacing and signage works on the same nights.

Residents of Potters Lane wishing to exit the A3 will be diverted through Send on the A247, then left onto Potters Lane. In addition, those wishing to enter the A3 northbound will be diverted through send on the A247, then along Portsmouth Road to Ripley to join the A3.

Please note that these works are subject to change due to weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances. Highways England will advertise the closures on yellow signs placed in advance at the junction.

## **Further Guidance and Advice from the Department of Transport on Taxi and Private Hire Face Covering Requirements**

The DfT has issued further advice and guidance in light of the fact that compliance is not as high in taxis and PHVs as it is across the rest of the network.

In the communication, the DfT wrote:

“We have seen high levels of face covering compliance across the public transport network since the regulations were introduced, with the latest ONS figures showing usage to be at 91%. However, from feedback with your industry, we have been made aware that compliance is not as high in taxis and PHVs as it is across the rest of the network.

“Through our Safer Transport campaign, and the hard work of our stakeholders, we have promoted our safer transport guidance including mandating face coverings, car sharing, and social distancing. In a continuation of this, we are asking companies within the taxi and private hire vehicle sector to continue to promote our safer transport guidance. You may wish to focus on key messages such as:

- It is a legal requirement for passengers to wear a face covering when using taxis or private hire vehicles, unless they are exempt.
- Passengers can be refused travel if they do not wear a face covering.
- Passengers should follow the advice of the operator and driver. For example, they may be asked to sit in the back left-hand seat if travelling alone.
- Use contactless payment if possible
- Passengers should sanitise their hands when they have finished their journey

“This could take the form of a banner on your website or app, signage at a taxi rank or a notification when booking a service. Our priority is to lead with the face covering message, making sure to include a line on exemptions, and then other interventions from the guidance to then follow.

“We have several assets on our extranet page which you can use to help promote this should you wish - including taxi and PHV specific assets here. However, it is up to you how you display the message. As ever, if you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to ask”.

The links are below:

<https://extranet.dft.gov.uk/safer-transport-campaign/>

<https://extranet.dft.gov.uk/safer-transport-campaign/resources-for-taxi-phv/>

## **Child Trafficking and County Lines – Information from Surrey Police**

We have been asked to distribute the following information and attached leaflet from Surrey Police:

### Child Trafficking and County Lines

Please be mindful that criminals will use taxi and private hire vehicles to travel in, including those committing some of the most serious crimes. Drug dealers see this form of transport as less risky than using their own vehicle or a hire vehicle, and can be travelling to exploit some of the most vulnerable. More local dealers have recently been seen in a taxi around Guildford and the taxi stopped and the suspected dealers searched at the roadside. Officers speak to local users regularly who say a taxi has been their form of transport to travel and obtain drugs.

While we know that exploitation can take place anywhere, locations such as hotels, pubs and places licensed to sell alcohol are particularly common sites, with taxis and public transport often used to transport children who are then exploited. As a taxi driver, this puts you in a heightened position to potentially spot the warning signs of exploitation.

Trafficking, particularly child trafficking, can be facilitated in this way as well, and the below link to a video highlighting the issue is worth watching.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYipy-PMw-o&list=PL2lr5-qOdS31QTdvPZ7wD7IN8RW8oVRIG>

There is advice and information on numerous topics, including county line drug dealing and modern slavery, and how to report suspicious incidents. Information reported to police, or anonymously to Crime Stoppers, can help protect the vulnerable and keep the Borough safe.

<https://www.surrey.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/>

### So, what do we need from the taxi and PH trade?

In a nutshell, any information that helps shed light on a situation or scenario that will help police and partners build the bigger picture.

Think about it this way...Do I think the police would want to know this, will it help safeguard the public, police or other professionals, ID a victim, ID a suspect or highlight underlying crime or criminal activity? If yes, or even a maybe, then share it. It's the information that may not be directly relevant to you but your professionalism tells you it may help someone else, such as:

- The behaviour of people travelling together especially if there are adults with young people
- Adults putting a young person, who may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, into your cab

- Young people who look concerned or frightened in the company of adults
- Young people being picked up and taken to hotels, particularly at odd times of the day and night
- Adults who appear edgy in the company of young people...The possibilities are literally endless.

And how do we need you to share it?

Contact Surrey Police:

- Online at **surrey.police.uk/reportcrime**
- **Dialling 101 (or 999 in an emergency** or if a crime is in progress)
- Sending us a message via **Facebook** or **Twitter**
- If you would rather remain anonymous, you can contact the independent charity **Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111**

Many thanks for your continued support.