



Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter August 2020



Welcome to August's newsletter. Despite the Summer Holidays being in full swing there is still plenty of news to update the taxi and private hire trade on, including details of a recent appeal against a decision to revoke a hackney carriage driver's licence, and test and trace resources available for businesses from Surrey County Council. As always, we would remind the trade that the latest Government advice is available at: www.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Making applications

We wanted to remind the licensed trade that the Council offices are still closed and we will update the trade when this situation changes. In the meantime, we would prefer application documents be emailed to us, as there have been occasions where items apparently posted to us have not been received. As staff are also working remotely, there may be delays in returning original documentation. Payment can be made by calling Customer Services.

We are pleased to advise that work to introduce an online application system is continuing, and we hope to update the trade on this system later this year.

Delayed renewals

We wanted to remind the licensed trade that as restrictions have begun to lift, we are no longer offering the 3 month delay for licences expiring after 31 July. **As such, any licences expiring from 1 August must now be renewed on time.** If licence holders are genuinely experiencing difficulties then they are advised to contact us.

Go Safe, Go Taxi Scheme

A nationwide Charter has been launched for the UK taxi and private hire industry, lead by three of the UK's biggest taxi dispatch software providers Autocab, Cordic and iCabbi. The 'Safe Taxi & Private Hire Charter' asks taxi operators including private hire, chauffeur and executive companies, to sign up and create a safe and hygienic environment for both customers and drivers.

Operators wanting to sign up to the scheme can do so at: https://www.gosafegotaxi.com/?fbclid=IwAR2G2D_sGLNA9N_zcluDkdVqQncYjVQolzKEPPQBKkP1I9obh8AU_uVqK1o

Draft legislation on Tax Conditionality

Legislation proposed in the Finance Bill 2020-21 will introduce new measures requiring a tax check for applications to renew licences for:

- Hackney carriage and private hire drivers
- Private hire operators
- Scrap metal dealers
- Scrap metal – mobile collectors

The measures will be implemented from April 2022 and are intended to make it more difficult for non-compliant traders to operate in the hidden economy and help level the playing field for the compliant majority.

Licensing bodies will be required to signpost first-time applicants to HMRC guidance about their potential tax obligations and obtain confirmation that the applicant is aware of the guidance before considering the application. Where the application is not a first-time application (a renewed application) the licensing body must, before considering the application, obtain confirmation from HMRC that the applicant has completed a tax check.

An applicant will carry out a tax check by providing information to enable HMRC to satisfy itself that the applicant has complied with an obligation to notify their chargeability to tax, where such an obligation applied. The check will be completed when HMRC is satisfied the applicant has provided all information requested. Where a HMRC failure prevents the licensing body from meeting its requirement to obtain confirmation of the completion of a tax check, that requirement will cease to apply. HMRC will also have discretion to waive the requirement where an HMRC failure prevented the applicant completing their tax check.

In cases where the licensing body has been unable to obtain confirmation of completion of the tax check for 28 days other than because of an HMRC failure (for example, where an applicant refuses to complete a tax check and therefore HMRC cannot provide confirmation that they have completed one) amendments to section 17 of the Transport Act 1985 and paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 will cause the extended licence to expire.

The draft primary legislation for this measure has been published for technical consultation alongside supporting documents. This is in line with the government's tax consultation framework, under which draft clauses for a Finance Bill are generally published for scrutiny at least 3 months before the Bill is introduced to Parliament.

The technical consultation for hidden economy conditionality will run until 15 September 2020. The documents published are intended to help both applicants and licensing bodies in England and Wales understand how the new tax check will affect them. Prior to this change taking effect in April 2022, full guidance to support applicants and licensing bodies will be published on gov.uk.

The draft legislation and supporting documents are available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-tax-checks-on-licence-renewal-applications>

Screens in licensed vehicles

By way of a reminder should you wish to install a partition screen in a licensed vehicle the you will need to contact the Council for approval.

Crown Court dismisses taxi driver appeal

A hackney carriage driver has had their appeal against the Council's decision to revoke their driver's licence dismissed by Guildford Crown Court.

The Council revoked the driver's licence in July 2019 for a number of reasons, including having a poor record of vehicle maintenance by failing to ensure it was roadworthy and safe for customers, and driving without an MOT certificate. The Council also received several complaints about the driver's behaviour, including the driver being on a Skype call whilst driving a passenger.

The driver had unsuccessfully appealed to the Magistrates Court in December 2019 and lodged a further appeal to the Crown Court which was dismissed following a hearing on 12 August 2020. The Crown Court awarded the Council £1800 in costs, on top of the £2137 awarded by Magistrates Court. As the Crown Court has dismissed the driver's appeal, this ends the appeal process and they cannot continue driving a licensed vehicle.

Cllr James Steel, Lead Councillor of Environment says: "We are pleased with the court's decision to dismiss this appeal, these decisions are not taken lightly. We have a duty to ensure the safety and protection of our residents, visitors and those who work in Guildford and they can be confident that their journeys with our licensed taxis will be safe.

"If you are planning to make the most of mid-week or to enjoy a night out with friends and family on the weekend, take one of our licensed taxis from a rank or book a private hire vehicle through a Guildford licensed operator to help you get home safely. Guildford taxis and private hire vehicles are easy to recognise with their distinctive teal colour vehicle or door sticker, so you can be confident you are taking a properly licensed, safe vehicle. Remember to continue to follow government guidance and wear a face covering when taking a taxi or private hire vehicle and wash your hands regularly.

"All of our taxis are fitted with meters and accept card payments to offer convenience and fair prices to offer the best possible service. If you do have any comments about the standards, then please let us know by using our online complaint form, quoting the licence number of the vehicle."

Guildford town centre was awarded Purple Flag status for the sixth time last year for providing evenings and nights out that are safe, vibrant and varied. It remains the only town in the county, and one of around 70 in the UK, to hold the award. The taxi trade helps contribute to a safe night out in Guildford.

Police reminder to report 'suspicious' activity

We would again remind the trade that there have been concerns that the taxi and private hire trade is being used to transport individuals dealing drugs in Guildford and as such Surrey Police have asked us to remind the licensed trade of their duties to report 'suspicious' activity.

Any concerns can be reported by calling 101 or online via the Surrey Police website. If there is a risk of immediate danger or a crime is being committed then you should call 999. The Home Office has also produced material to assist the 'taxi' trade in identifying the signs of 'County Lines' where drug dealers use vulnerable people to expand their dealing network. This is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/county-lines-posters-for-taxi-and-private-vehicle-hire-staff>

Government encourages motorists to MOT their vehicle this summer to 'beat the rush'

Motorists are being encouraged to bring their MOT forward if it's due in September, October or November 2020, to help beat the expected rush for tests.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is encouraging motorists whose MOT is due this autumn to get their vehicle's MOT done as soon as possible to beat the expected rush for tests.

Cars, motorcycles and light vans that were due an MOT between 30 March and 31 July 2020 were given a 6-month extension to help keep motorists moving during the coronavirus pandemic. Vehicles that are due an MOT from 1 August 2020 will not get an extension and will need to be tested as normal.

Face Coverings

We would remind the licensed trade that all passengers using taxi and private hire vehicles are recommended to wear face coverings.

Face coverings are particularly important where two metre social distancing is hard to maintain, for example when travelling by taxi.

The advice to the public is at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles>.

Whilst taxi drivers are not specifically required to wear a face covering by legislation, in order to reduce risk and promote confidence in the taxi and private hire service, we would also recommend that drivers wear a face covering, as we have received a number of concerns from passengers about drivers who are not wearing coverings.

Information on how to wear and make a face covering can be accessed via these links: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

Have your say on current social distancing measures on the highway

Surrey County Council Highways are currently undertaking a public engagement exercise on social distancing measures in Guildford.

More information and the opportunity to have your say are available at: <https://surreycovidswest.commonplace.is/>

Test and Trace Communications

Surrey County Council has launched a phased communication campaign entitled 'Keep Surrey Safe' to raise awareness that everyone who has symptoms of Coronavirus can now get tested and that if they test positive they need to share contacts with NHS Test and Trace to stop the spread of the virus. By continuing to follow safety guidelines and engaging in Test and Trace, we can all play our part to Keep Surrey safe and avoid local lockdowns.

Surrey County Council are keen to work with businesses to support the Government's Test and Trace programme so that life can start to get back to normal and that our businesses can thrive again.

To support businesses in spreading the work, Surrey have produced a number of promotional materials which can be obtained by email from surreymatters@surreycc.gov.uk. **Further information is also available as follows:**

Testing and Surrey's Local Outbreak Control Plan is available on our website: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/emergency-planning-and-community-safety/coronavirus/coronavirus-testing>

NEW: Action cards for a range of settings explaining what to do in the event of an outbreak: <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/reporting-an-outbreak/resources/workplace-action-cards/>

Reopen your business safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-reopening>

Find out how to apply for a grant if you're self employed: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme>

Find out what financial support schemes you may be eligible for <https://www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder>

CORONAVIRUS
PLAY YOUR PART

Got symptoms?

- START ISOLATING**
 - You for 10 days
 - Household for 14 days
- BOOK A TEST**
 - NHS.uk/coronavirus
 - or call 119
- NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19**
 - Household stops isolating immediately
 - You stop isolating if you feel well
- POSITIVE FOR COVID-19**
 - Share your contacts via NHS Test and Trace

If you have been in close contact with someone who tests positive

- ALERT**
 - You may be alerted by NHS Test and Trace
- ISOLATE**
 - For 14 days after close contact
- If you develop symptoms**
 - BOOK A TEST**
 - Household isolates for 14 days
 - NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19**
 - Household stops isolating immediately
 - You complete 14 day isolation
 - POSITIVE FOR COVID-19**
 - You begin new 10 day isolation
 - Household completes 14 day isolation

KEEP SURREY SAFE

CORONAVIRUS **STAY ALERT TO STAY SAFE**