

PLEA TO COUNCILS

PHTM has received the letters below from members of our trade - however we are well aware that these issues are affecting our industry nationwide. Whilst we are not suggesting that DBS checks and training are unnecessary, councils need to urgently implement procedures to speed up the whole licensing process OR it is inevitable, although not condoned, that more operators and drivers will consider licensing out of area with councils such as Wolverhampton that have very efficient and quick licensing systems in place.

Furthermore, whilst we do appreciate that some councils have already approved or are reviewing fare increases, you only need to look at our latest Hackney Fares Table on pages 80-81 to see that there are still many areas in the country that have not had a fare rise for many years.

The reality is that in this current economic climate many operators and drivers are undeniably struggling to survive.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACROSS THE UK; WE IMPLOR YOU TO ACT NOW TO SUPPORT OUR TRADE IN YOUR AREA BEFORE IT REALLY IS TOO LATE AND THERE IS NO TRADE LEFT TO SUPPORT!!

A DESPERATE OPERATOR'S PLEA FOR NORTH DEVON COUNCIL TO SPEED UP THE LICENSING PROCESS

Dear **PHTM**

I am writing to you in hope you can offer some advice or can look into an issue for me. I am having a lot of problems putting new drivers through lately. I took on two new drivers in early April and despite the fact I have been on the ball with all applications, DBS etc, they still don't have their badges.

I initially had to wait for the BTEC provider, they cancelled our initial training as they did not have enough candidates. Eventually they both went through their training last Tuesday and I thought I was home and dry but then spoke to one of the licensing officers who said we would be lucky to receive the badges within two weeks.

I had asked if there was any way temporary badges could be issued when there was only the BTEC to complete but the answer was a very swift no.

We do really sympathise with these

department's staffing struggles but we cannot continue to expand the business or even replace any staff that may leave when it takes this long.

We have been lucky with these two candidates as continuous employment was not an issue for them as they were (thankfully!!) happy to wait, but going forward I really feel very negative about putting new candidates through - I don't think I can reasonably ask people to work for us when it will be three months before they will receive their first pay cheque. It just feels like we are hitting brick walls constantly.

Our main source of income is school contracts for Devon County Council, so we also have to wait for the separate DBS to go through, despite us asking they were not willing to start the DBS process without the drivers' hackney badge being complete - even though we have sent all relevant paperwork.

If I chase things up with the training provider, local or county council, I am made to feel that I am at fault for doing so. Yet I do not see a reduction in the fees we are being charged - but we are expected to wait for badges, and they refuse to give us a completion date.

There is obviously a shortage of new drivers coming into the industry and I genuinely want to help the situation. We currently have 30 employees and 15 vehicles and the work is there for us. Because of the fuel prices and minimum wage going up, the only way we can keep going is to expand and take on more contracts - but it is just impossible. I do feel that we are being forced to adapt to the authority's time frames but there is no such consideration towards our predicaments.

We provide an excellent service, our vehicles are maintained to the highest standard, our employees are all paid an hourly rate above minimum wage, with holiday and pension.

We also provide an invaluable service to the children and patients we transport - but it doesn't seem to mean anything.

To be honest the way things are, I am finding it hard to see a way forward for us - we are struggling to cover our expenses and are behind with our VAT and PAYE payments, so I really hope you can offer some advice.

Simon @ A Taxi Ilfracombe Ltd

VALE OF WHITE HORSE COUNCIL IGNORES CABBIES' PLEAS

Dear **PHTM**

Vale of White Horse District Council is ignoring our urgent request for a fare increase.

We have not had a fare rise since 2014, but have been told by the council that it won't be until mid to late July that it

will even consider a consultation.

We have launched a petition to ask the licensing department to grant emergency measures to allow cabbies to use tariff 2 during the day time.

Disgruntled hackney carriage drivers