

# **Taxi and Private Hire Car Licensing – Impact of Modern Technology**

## **Summary of Consultation Responses**

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# TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR LICENSING- IMPACT OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY:

## SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

### Introduction

The consultation document “*Taxi and Private Hire Car Licensing – Impact of Modern Technology*” (<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/03/9280> ) was published on 21 March 2016. The consultation closed on 15 June 2016. Sixty-nine responses were received.

This report provides a summary of responses to each question in the consultation document. The information gathered through the consultation process will be considered along with other available evidence to help inform future policy.

Thirteen Local Authorities responded including urban and rural areas (“**Local Authorities**”). Twelve trade organisations responded representing both taxi and private hire and also traditional operators and newer entrants to the trade (“**Trade Organisations**”). Thirty three individuals (including ten who identified themselves as being from the taxi trade) submitted responses (“**Individuals**”). Five organisations responded representing a wide variety of disability and accessibility interests (“**Disability and Accessibility Organisations**”). Six other miscellaneous organisations representing a range of interests responded including legal, industry, government and enforcement bodies (“**Miscellaneous Organisations**”).

Responses which expressly permitted publication have been published here:

<https://consult.gov.scot/licensing-unit/taxi-private-hire-modern-technology/>

A number of respondents did not give permission for their responses to be published.

### Background

During the Parliamentary passage of the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015, concerns were raised about the impact of modern technology on the licensing regime for taxis and private hire cars and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice made a commitment to undertake further work. This summary of consultation responses forms part of that work.

Taxis are able to use taxi ranks and be hailed in the street as well as being pre-booked. However, a private hire car may not ply for hire in this way and must be pre-booked. Drivers of taxis and private hire cars are licensed by local authorities who administer the regimes. Also in 2009 the booking office licence was introduced to increase control and oversight of offices that take bookings for taxis and/or private hire cars. These arrangements allow local licensing authorities to require licences for

taxis and private hire car vehicles, for drivers and for booking offices to ensure they provide safe services for the public.

## **Section A**

### **The regulation of the taking of bookings:**

#### **Question 1. Should the current booking office licensing regime be updated and the definition of the licensed activity amended?**

The overall majority agreed that the booking office regime should be updated and the definition of the licensed activity changed with support being strongest from **Local Authorities** and the **Trade Organisations**.

Overall forty-six responded “yes” and sixteen responded “no” to this question. The remaining respondents did not provide a response or were unclear.

#### **Yes - the current booking office licensing regime should be updated and the definition of the licensed activity amended:**

Of the thirteen **Local Authorities** that responded “yes”, a number of reasons were given. The main ones were that the current arrangements did not reflect the recent developments in methods of communication such as mobile phones and smart apps which were used increasingly for the taking of bookings. Concern was expressed that the existing regulations were based on the location of physical premises which may no longer be necessary due to the modern technology. Other **Local Authorities** expressed concerns about cross border issues between neighbouring local authorities.

**Trade Organisations** from a variety of sectors agreed that change was necessary to keep up with the advance of modern technology. Representatives of the taxi trade were concerned that the regime should reflect modern technology and treat all businesses in the same way in the interests of public safety and preventing criminal activity. They suggested there was potentially a gap in the coverage of the current regulations.

Differing views were expressed on the need for office premises. One respondent stressed the importance of maintaining an office to deal with customers. However, more recent entrants to the trade suggested that there was no need for a physical office to be located within the local authority area. It was suggested that data can now be made available to the Police or local authorities electronically without the need for them to visit an office. A private hire car organisation also stressed the potential benefits of modern technology which should be encouraged to develop.

**Individuals** in favour of change (especially those from the taxi trade) believed this was needed to improve control and enforcement.

The **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** were concerned that the regulations should be made more enforceable and improved in the interests of safety and making services more accessible for the disabled.

**Miscellaneous Organisations** were also concerned that the regime be brought up to date with modern technology. There was a suggestion that modern technology could provide an opportunity for a more integrated transport system that could encourage the growth of this sector.

**No - the current booking office licensing regime should not be updated and the definition of the licensed activity amended:**

Opposition to change mostly came from **Individuals** and focussed on retaining the presence of physical premises in a licensing area to provide a point of contact and access to records. It was suggested that this was necessary for resolving complaints.

**Question 2. In what ways should the booking office regime be amended?**

Many **Local Authorities** suggested amending the definition of the licensed activity by removing the reference to premises and replacing it with the activity or business of taking of bookings which would need to be redefined. It was proposed that a single licence could cover all booking office activity across Scotland as long as it was still possible for bodies such as local authorities to access data.

**Trade Organisations** also proposed a focus on licensing the activity of taking of bookings rather than licensing premises.

Uber suggested “*To obtain a licence, a business would not need to have a physical presence but would need to enter into a service level agreement with each relevant local authority, to ensure that the authority can contact the business at all times and have its queries responded to within a reasonable timeframe*”. It was suggested that the advantage would be consistent national standards enforceable through good established point of contact and enforcement could be undertaken by any local authority in whose area the journey begins, ends or passes through.

Some **Individuals** suggested that the regime should be amended so that smart apps bookings identify a specific office premises. Others suggested that it was important that the customer was able to contact a person in an office at any time of day or night.

The **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** suggested that mandatory national conditions for booking offices could lead to more consistency and higher standards for record keeping and accessibility for the disabled.

The **Miscellaneous Organisations** suggested that the regime could be amended to better reflect modern technology. The potential benefits of modern technology were also highlighted.

### **Question 3. What would be the impact for local Licensing Authorities, the trade and the public?**

The **Local Authorities** suggested the updating of the regime and amendment of the definition of the licensed activity would improve protection for the public and enforcement. They also believed it would provide for greater consistency in the trade and remove the resentment among those who currently need a booking office licence against those that do not.

Generally it was felt that the cost of compliance and licensing fees, might increase for the trade, but any increases were not expected to be particularly significant.

**Trade Organisations** suggested that the changes would result in improved enforcement and control by local authorities as well as a more level playing field for operators. Others anticipated increased fees payable to local authorities to cover their additional work.

**Individuals** also believed the changes would result in improved public safety and more public confidence in the services being offered.

**Disability and Accessibility Organisations** suggested the impact could be improved controls and data to help study supply and demand to improve services. However concern was expressed that the beneficial impact could be reduced by the lack of network coverage in some areas as this means there are many passengers and operators who are unable to access mobile technology.

Other **Miscellaneous Organisations** also anticipated an impact of improved public safety and more flexible services.

### **Question 4. Should the current exemption to the licensing regime for booking offices with three or less relevant vehicles be amended?**

A slight majority agreed that the current exemption should be amended with twenty nine responding “yes” and Twenty two responding “no” to this question.

A range of views were expressed. The **Local Authorities** were almost evenly split. And although there was a majority of the **Trade Organisations** in favour, there was a majority of **Individuals** against.

### **Yes - the current exemption to the licensing regime for booking offices with three or less relevant vehicles should be amended:**

Some **Local Authorities** expressed concerns that the exemption was being abused by some operators leading to difficulties in enforcement.

**Trade Organisations, Individuals, Disability and Accessibility Organisations and Miscellaneous Organisations** that were in favour of removing the exemption gave reasons relating to enforcement. In particular **Trade Organisations** suggested there would be advantages in all operators being subject to the same regulations. **Miscellaneous Organisations** also suggested all licensed activity should be regulated.

**No - the current exemption to the licensing regime for booking offices with three or less relevant vehicles should not be amended:**

Of the five **Local Authorities** that responded “no”, one suggested that there was no evidence that the exemption was causing any difficulty. Another suggested small businesses should be exempt and the current limit seemed to be reasonable. It was also suggested that the current exemption was proportionate as the additional fees imposed on small businesses would be unfair and that any problems could be resolved through the licensing regimes already in place for drivers and vehicles.

**Trade Organisations** and **Individuals** suggested there were no convincing reasons for this change. And one of the **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** was concerned the removal of the current exemption could cause the removal of necessary services in rural areas as they do rely on small businesses which could be adversely affected.

**Question 5. What should the limit be amended to?**

Responses were varied. But from **Local Authorities, Trade Organisations, Disability and Accessibility Organisations, Miscellaneous Organisations** and **Individuals** it was suggested that there should be no limit and the licence should be required irrespective of the number of vehicles involved or alternatively it was suggested the limit should be reduced to one or two vehicles.

**Question 6. What would be the impact of amending the limit for local Licensing Authorities, the trade and the public?**

Responses were varied. But **Local Authorities, Trade Organisations, Individuals, Disability and Accessibility Organisations** and **Miscellaneous Organisations** all suggested that improved scrutiny, enforcement and public safety could result.

**Local Authorities** expressed some concerns about the impact on small operators and additional work for local authorities, but it was also suggested that there were very few additional booking offices that would require to be licensed.

From the responses of the **Disability and Accessibility Organisations**, concern was also expressed the start-up of small businesses could be discouraged.

### **Question 7. Should the current position and status quo be maintained?**

Due to an error this question was omitted from the online form. When this error was identified, respondents were contacted and offered the opportunity to respond.

Only twenty responses were received. The majority of the **Local Authorities, Trade Organisations** and **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** answered “no” many referring to reasons already stated. The responses from the **Individuals** and **Miscellaneous Organisations** were more evenly divided.

Glasgow City Council responded that the lower limit should be removed as *“experience in Glasgow has shown that the lower limit is used to support the illegal activity of private hire cars taking hires which have not been pre-booked (i.e. pirating) where they claim to operate from a booking office with 3 or less vehicles. Without the requirement for a licence for booking offices with 3 or less vehicles there is no means to obtain information and records regarding any bookings taken, which causes greater difficulty in establishing sufficient evidence to demonstrate that a private hire car driver has been engaged in illegal pirating. It is difficult to understand the public interest rationale for requiring booking service providers with more than 3 vehicles to maintain records, but not make the same requirement of those with less than 3 vehicles.”*

### **Section B**

#### **Where should the taking of bookings be regulated:**

#### **Question 8. If a business is taking bookings where should it be registered? For example should it be registered in every local authority where it takes bookings?**

The responses to this question produced no strong consensus with differing views being submitted. These varied from those who supported registration in every area for reasons of enforcement to those who suggested this was no longer appropriate due to advances in modern technology.

From the **Local Authorities** responses were varied. Some suggested it was no longer appropriate for a business to be registered in each local authority area. Instead a new type of licence should be introduced that could operate in adjoining local authority areas in recognition that modern technology made such a restriction inappropriate and difficult to enforce. However, others offered differing views and suggested it was essential for enforcement to have an office premises in each local authority area where the business operated.

From the **Trade Organisations** responses were also varied. A majority of eleven trade respondents suggested a local office is essential and businesses should be registered in all areas where they take bookings. It was suggested this was necessary for public safety to ensure good effective local enforcement. But others

suggested it was not necessary to be registered in every area where it takes bookings.

The Scottish Taxi Federation responded as follows: *“As further explained above, in order to ensure the achievement of the policy objectives, the STF considers that it is per se the activity which should be regulated. In order to do so in the light of technological advances in the system for taking bookings, apparent in the industry since 2009, the focus must shift from the physical location of the communicative act of making and taking of a booking and shift to concentrate on the location within which the booked activity is to be carried out. Accordingly, any operator who offers services for hire and reward within the area of jurisdiction of a licensing authority should require to keep a regulated record, and to provide those records on request of an authorised officer or constable, of all bookings for the provision of the services within the area of the licensing authority. The STF would anticipate that the trigger for the recording obligation would be a journey which is intended to commence within any part of the licensing area, regardless of where the intended destination is stated to be”*.

From the **Individuals** responding, a majority of twenty nine responded that a business should be separately licensed in each local authority area.

#### **Question 9. What sort of information or assistance should a business taking bookings be required to provide and to whom?**

The **Local Authorities** responses suggested data should be available to other parties where appropriate.

The **Trade Organisations** suggested the owner’s details or details of directors responsible should be made available to the local authority and Inland Revenue. It was also suggested where appropriate data should be available for passenger safety, enforcement and dealing with complaints.

Uber suggested that information provided to the public should include: “estimated time of arrival of vehicle (in minutes); name (and, if possible, photograph) of driver, and make, model and number plate of car; before the trip, on request, an estimate of the fare and information on how fares are calculated; at the end or after the trip, the final fare charged if the price was not agreed upfront; and a mechanism to provide feedback / make queries or complaints”.

The **Individuals`** responses suggested journey data, driver and vehicle details, driver background checks, and details of vehicles in particular specifying those that are accessible and suitable for the disabled should be available as appropriate to the relevant authorities and parties.

The **Disability and Accessibility organisations`** responses suggested proof of equality and disability training in particular for drivers, data on accessibility and equality, support for disabled people, accessibility vehicle details, data on levels of

service such as for guide dogs and any extra charges. It was also suggested the public including the disabled have access (for example via a website) to the appropriate information.

**Miscellaneous Organisations** suggested that regulatory bodies have access to hirer, driver, vehicle and journey data. Other suggestions included estimated arrival times, live mapping of vehicle progress and traffic patterns to develop city traffic systems.

#### **Question 10. Do you have other concerns about where the taking of bookings should be licensed?**

The **Local Authority** responses included comments that there must be clear responsibility for the safety of the passenger, the maintenance of the vehicle and fulfilling the contract. For example City of Edinburgh Council suggested: *“The legislation should prohibit drivers of licensed vehicles taking any booking from a booking office or app not licensed under the 1982 Act, irrespective of the location of the office”*. And Glasgow City Council also commented: *“It is important that the conditions applied to a booking service provider complement and support those applied to taxi/private hire car operators and drivers. This can only be achieved if booking service providers are required to hold a licence in each local authority where they operate taxis and/or private hire cars”*.

The **Trade Organisations`** responses were varied. The Scottish Taxi Federation commented as follows: *“There is no good reason to exempt any operator providing hire and reward services in any licensed area from the terms of the 2009 Order. The landscape has changed in the industry and this is the opportunity to ensure it is levelled in furtherance of the attainment of the policy goals”*. However Uber commented: *“Per the principles of good regulation, it is important that whatever regulations are developed are proportionate to the public policy issue that they seek to address. Regulations that continue to require a physical presence in every licensing area may well be disproportionate to the benefits (if any) that they provide in terms of the ability of licensing authorities and the police to request booking records and other information in a timely and efficient manner”*.

The **Individuals`** responses suggested it would be preferable if all bookings went through a local office, licensing was done by local authorities and driver details are available to local authorities for public safety.

The **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** commented that in the absence of appropriate structures it will be difficult for the disabled to get complaints resolved and there must be clarity and accountability to enforce regulations.

The **Miscellaneous Organisations`** responses included comments that a national framework for taking bookings could help take advantage of the opportunities modern technology offers. The Scottish Council for Development and Industry

stated: “As more companies develop their own modern technology such as mobile phone apps, it should be expected that more providers would operate city – region /nationwide provision and booking services. Therefore creating a national system for bookings would be preferable”.

#### **Question 11. Should the current position and status quo be maintained?**

This question asked if the status quo should be maintained with no change for matters relating to where the taking of bookings should be regulated and what information should be provided. A majority of the **Local Authorities, Trade Organisations, Disability and Accessibility Organisations and Miscellaneous Organisations** said “yes”. But the **Individuals`** responses were almost evenly divided.

#### **Yes - the current position and status quo should be maintained:**

One of the **Trade Organisations** suggested no change was necessary provided drivers were aware that they have the flexibility to work for more than one booking office or independently.

One of the **Individuals** suggested no change was necessary as the current arrangements were working well.

#### **No - the current position and status quo should not be maintained:**

The **Local Authorities** that were in favour of change suggested there was a need to adapt to modern technology and business practice.

**Trade Organisations`** and **Individuals`** responses both suggested public safety and security were reasons in favour of change.

### **Section C**

#### **Taxi and private hire car fares and the control of fares:**

#### **Question 12. Would it be appropriate for taxis and private hire cars to be required to have a taximeter?**

This is an issue of current concern. Modern technology now enables “surge pricing” when the use of smart apps can lead to an increase in fares at times of peak demand where operators do not have taximeters fitted in their vehicles.

Forty four responded “yes” and seventeen responded “no” to this question. The remaining respondents did not provide a response to the question or were unclear. Opposition was strongest from the **Local Authorities**. The support was strongest from the **Trade Organisations** and the **Individuals** responding who all said “yes”.

**Yes - it would be appropriate for taxis and private hire cars to be required to have a taximeter:**

Just two **Local Authorities** were in favour of private hire cars being required to have taxi meters giving reasons centred around the need to avoid “surge pricing” at times of peak demand and provide certainty of fares for passengers.

West Lothian Council commented: “*The vast majority of PHCs in West Lothian already have meters and these make it clear to the public what the charges are. The main source of complaints regarding overcharging arise when meters are not used during cross border hires. The public should be protected from overcharging by all fares requiring to be the metered fare or less*”.

The **Trade Organisations** who were in favour were concerned about surge pricing and providing clarity over fares.

Respondents from the taxi trade stressed the advantage of the objective consultation process used for the setting of taxi fares.

The **Individuals** who were all in favour focussed on the need to prevent surge pricing.

Three **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** responded in favour and included the suggestion taximeters help to provide all customers, including disabled people, with clear, consistent and transparent pricing.

**No - it would not be appropriate for taxis and private hire cars to be required to have a taximeter:**

A majority of **Local Authorities** were opposed to private hire cars being required to have taxi meters and gave a variety of reasons. These focussed on the adverse cost impact that this would have on small operators potentially reducing the service provided in rural areas. This concern was also shared by one of the **Disability and Accessibility Organisations**.

**Local Authorities** expressed concern regarding the impact on contract work undertaken on their behalf. Given that many private hire cars operate under fixed price contracts, they were concerned that the fitting of a taxi meter would be an unnecessary expense with no real benefit.

The **Trade Organisations** who were against taxis and private hire cars being required to have taximeters gave a variety of reasons including the advantage of choice for the public. One company suggested that the distinction between private hire cars and taxis gave the public a good choice as the market would ultimately determine fares in the private hire car sector.

A recent entrant to the private hire trade suggested requiring all private hire cars to have meters would reduce customer choice, the number of vehicles and rides

available and damage the economy. They also suggested there were not enough taxis available at peak times in some cities. They argued they were thus providing an essential service in the interest of public safety as this reduced the risk of drinking and driving.

Also one of the **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** suggested it is likely that technology has moved on from the current type of taximeters. They suggested new technology should be able to facilitate customer choice and negotiations before the journey begins and record the quotation given prior to a booking being agreed.

Of the **Miscellaneous Organisations** against taxis and private hire cars being required to have taximeters the Scottish Council for Development and Industry stated as follows: *“Introducing regulation requirements for all taxis and private hires to have a taximeter would not be appropriate. There is concern over ‘surge pricing’. When there is mismatch of supply and demand, surge pricing helps clear the market at peak times and through apps customers are made aware if pricing is peaking, this gives the choice for people to book a taxi or private hire at high price or use another mode of transport. Introducing mandatory taximeters and limiting fares would limit the choice for customer and potentially wipe out innovation, which is bad for the industry, drivers and customers. Another option which could be explored by the Scottish Government is to introduce new regulation which would encourage taxi and private hire companies to develop their mobile software. Mobile software can allow companies to easily predict and track the route of journey which could be a more effective pricing model than taximeters.”*

Another of the Miscellaneous Organisations also suggested that in the future an electronic, server based and interactive system could replace the current meters.

### **Question 13. Should the Scottish Government impose the requirement of a taximeter on all taxis and private hire cars?**

The majority of respondents supported the Scottish Government imposing a requirement for a taximeter on all taxis and private hire cars. Forty responded “yes” and twenty two responded “no” to this question. The remaining respondents did not provide a response to the question or were unclear.

The support was strongest from **Individuals** responding who all said “yes” apart from one. Opposition was strongest from the **Local Authorities** and a majority of the **Trade Organisations** were also opposed.

### **Yes - the Scottish Government should impose the requirement of a taximeter on all taxis and private hire cars:**

Only two of the **Local Authorities** responding supported this proposal.

A minority of the **Trade Organisations** suggested this proposal would give the public the added assurance of a known pricing regime prior to commencing the journey. And most of the taxi organisations also supported this proposal.

The strong majority of **Individuals** in favour of the proposal gave a variety of reasons centred around the need for passengers to know how their fare will be calculated in advance and to prevent the situation where apps can be manipulated to give the passenger an unexpected increase in fare.

One of the **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** in favour still qualified this response by suggesting rural areas should be exempt.

**No - the Scottish Government should not impose the requirement of a taximeter on all taxis and private hire cars:**

The majority of **Local Authorities** were opposed to the proposal and gave a variety of reasons. Some referred to answers to previous questions. Others suggested it was preferable that the local authorities were able to determine this at a local level.

East Lothian Council commented: *“it would be better for individual authorities to deal with such matters at their own discretion as and when a problem is identified, rather than having the matter enforced nationally which would impact on areas where this is not and may never have been a problem”*.

The majority of **Trade Organisations** (excluding the taxi trade) were opposed to the proposal. And Uber suggested: *“Mandating a taximeter will remove the ability for firms to compete on either the level of price or the way in which they price, with no offsetting benefit. The result will be less choice and diversity of supply, higher prices for customers, and lower efficiency in the sector.”*

Of the **Miscellaneous Organisations** opposed to this proposal the Scottish Council for Development and Industry stated: *“new innovations can give the consumer estimates. As more companies improve innovation in their service physical taxi meters will gradually become irrelevant.”*

Transform Scotland stated: *“An outright enforcement of taximeters on all taxis and private hire cars does not seem appropriate in all situations.”*

**Question 14: Should the requirement of a taximeter for taxis and private hire cars be left instead to the discretion of each local licensing authority?**

Due to an error this question was omitted from the online form. When this error was identified, respondents were contacted and offered the opportunity to respond. Only nineteen responses were submitted for this question with mixed views.

**Yes - the requirement of a taximeter for taxis and private hire cars should be left instead to the discretion of each local licensing authority:**

Five **Local Authorities** supported the use of discretion at local authority level.

The Scottish Disability Equality Forum supported the use of local authority discretion with the proviso that *“exemptions from taximeters are consistent and meet a set of criteria recommended by Scottish Government.”*

Two **Miscellaneous Organisations** also supported the use of local authority discretion.

**No - the requirement of a taximeter for taxis and private hire cars should not be left instead to the discretion of each local licensing authority:**

West Lothian Council was opposed to the use of local authority discretion as *“there would be confusion for the public when moving from area to area. The public should be able to rely on a consistent charging mechanism throughout Scotland.”*

Two **Trade Organisations**, two **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** and two **Miscellaneous Organisations** were also opposed to the use of local authority discretion.

**Question 15: What would be the impact for example additional cost, of requiring all taxis and private hire car vehicles to install and operate a taximeter, in particular could this jeopardise provision in rural areas?**

The responses from the **Local Authorities** were varied. One suggested that the cost is minimal and already borne by the majority of the private hire trade. Another suggested after the initial outlay the increased cost should be minimal. And many **Individuals** also suggested the cost was minimal and could be absorbed without difficulty.

However the majority of **Local Authorities** were concerned. The Highland Council stated: *“The mandatory requirement for PHC’s to have a meter fitted would involve the additional cost of the operator having to purchase the meter, have it calibrated to the Council tariff and then have it checked and sealed by the Council. Within Highland there are a significant number of rural areas which principally are serviced by PHC’s rather than taxis. The imposition of additional costs for purchasing and maintaining a taximeter, together with the inability to charge in excess of the tariff may make some rural PHC businesses unviable. This would also increase costs for Council school transport and demand-responsive transport contracts, with no corresponding benefit, at a time when budgets are under pressure”.*

Some referred to answers to question 12 with rural **Local Authorities**, **Trade Organisations**, **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** and **Miscellaneous Organisations** all repeating concerns already made that service provision could be adversely affected in rural areas.

**Question 16: Are you aware of particular problems with the charging of fares in your local area?**

Concern was most evident from **Individuals** and a majority of **Trade Organisations** as well as two of the **Disability and Accessibility Organisations**.

**Yes: We are aware of particular problems with the charging of fares in our local area:**

One of the **Local Authorities** was concerned that surge pricing could have an adverse effect on traditional businesses.

From the **Trade Organisations**, some in the taxi trade suggested legislation was necessary to address surge pricing. However a recent entrant to the trade suggested that unlike taxis, customers for private hire have ample opportunity to choose between different services and instead regulation should focus on making pricing transparent and the service safe.

From the **Individuals** many were concerned about surge pricing and the charging of unreasonable excess fares at peak times when vehicle availability is limited.

The **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** were concerned regarding additional costs being included in the charging of fares.

**No: we are not aware of particular problems with the charging of fares in our local area:**

A majority of eight **Local Authorities** from both urban and rural areas all confirmed they were not aware of problems in their area.

One of the **Local Authorities** reported that they were aware of complaints from the taxi trade regarding surge pricing at times of peak demand but they had not received complaints from members of the public who had paid a “surged” fare. They suggested this was a matter of customer choice and instead a statutory requirement to disclose the fare before the journey began would be sufficient.

**Question 17: Can you suggest, or have you experienced licensing authority good practice in relation to fares?**

**Local Authorities** stressed the importance of regular consultation with the trade. Informal meetings with the trade prior to the formal fees review process can identify potential problems and save time.

One of the **Disability and Accessibility Organisations** singled out Perth Council for praise as they have delivered a fair charging policy and disability equality training. And they also mentioned Clackmannanshire Council for their efforts to improve services and charging policies for the disabled.

## Section D

### Any additional concerns or suggestions:

#### Question 18: Do you have any additional concerns regarding the issues raised in this consultation?

One of the **Local Authorities** suggested that the UK and European law still had not decided how to deal with and define a smart app. It was suggested that as the law currently stands a smart phone app-based system is not capable of meeting the description of a “taximeter”. And it had to be considered how the public should be protected.

**Disability and Accessibility Organisations** also highlighted the value of disability awareness training for drivers.

#### Question 19: Do you have any suggestions or are you aware of existing good practice, for addressing the issues raised in this consultation?

Overall twenty eight respondents offered comments, the majority of these were from **Individuals**. A wide variety of views were expressed, some of which were also covered in responses to previous questions (e.g. on booking offices and taxi meters). Comments ranged from “*There are no existing good practices*” to “*I think Edinburgh Council taxis are a good example for taxi licensing*”.

One **Local Authorities** recommended a licence condition to ensure 3rd party bookings were only accepted from licensed booking operators. This was echoed by one **Miscellaneous Organisation** and similar comments regarding booking offices were made by another three respondents. Another **Local Authority** proposed legislative changes: to require booking offices to be licensed in the areas where they are taking bookings and to have a website to provide information to the public; to require all private hire cars to use meters; and to clarify the law on charging for cross border hires to make it clear that fixed fares for the journey cannot be greater than the metered fare. Two **Individuals** and one **Trade Organisation** also suggested that all private hire cars should have a meter installed while one **Miscellaneous Organisation** considered that it was not feasible for all vehicles to have a meter.

A **Trade Organisation** cited the mandatory taxi training required by Dundee City Council as good practice while a **Disability and Accessibility Organisation** pointed to the disability/equality awareness training available for taxi and private hire car drivers in Perth.

Other views put forward covered the provision of taxi ranks, the benefits of regulation and of embracing new technology and fares.



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