



Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Newsletter - Summer 2014

There are a few things that you need know. The Licensing Team have therefore decided to distribute a newsletter to ensure all of the information gets to you all.

Vehicle Testing

We have recently re-tendered for the contracts to garages in Torfaen to test and inspect licensed vehicles, your cars. The tender process has now concluded and the contracts awarded which commence on the 1st September 2014 the garages that you will have to take your cars for test or fitting of plates and signs will be:

MOT-A-ZONE
Unit 5 North Site
Ty Coch Way
Cwmbran
NP44 7EZ
Tel: 01633 860606

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Pontypool Service Centre
Unit 1 Gemini Works
Estate Road
Pontnewynydd
Pontypool
NP4 6YW
Tel: 01495 758213

If your test is due any time from the 1st September 2014 you must book it into one of these garages, if it is due up to the 31st August it must be booked in to the existing garages; Pontypool Service Centre (as above) and

Forge Motors Mechanical Ltd.
Oldbury Road
Cwmbran
NP44 3JU
Tel: 01633 862000

I am sure like us you will be appreciative of the service provided by Ian and his team at Forge Motors over the past years.

One of the knock on effects of the change in provider is that the fee we currently charge for a vehicle test will reduce from £40 to £34 per test that is required for any

new or renewal of a vehicle licence from the 1st September 2014.

Criminal Conviction Certificate

There have been a number of letters sent out from the licensing team advising of the changes to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) [Previously the Criminal Record Bureau (CRB)] procedure that affected the way in which the licensing team now deal with applications for a criminal disclosure certificate from the DBS.

The reminder for your DBS application will be sent to you 3 months in advance to ensure there is plenty of time to get the certificate back before your licence is due for renewal. If you have not got your certificate when you apply for the renewal of your licence it will NOT be renewed and you will not be able to work.

We recommend that all drivers and operators who require a criminal disclosure certificate subscribe to the DBS Update Service which will alleviate some of the issues encountered. Information can be found on the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-update-service-applicant-guide>

Policy Change

The consultation on the proposed changes to our Policy on the Administration and Regulation of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Licences to add the intended use of hackney carriages and the revised fitness criteria for applicants has closed, there were very few responses none of which were negative.

The Licensing Committee approved the changes on the 17th July 2014 and they are now in effect. A supplementary document with the changes is included with this newsletter and the full policy can be found on our website:

www.torfaen.gov.uk/licensing

DVLA Tax Disc

The paper tax disc will not be required or available from 1st October 2014. It is being replaced by an online invoicing service where you just pay the fee as long as your vehicle has a valid MOT and insurance cover.

As we issue certificate of exemptions for an MOT for licensed vehicles, when used for business of taxi or private hire, you will not have an MOT registered on the VOSA system.

We have checked with DVLA and they inform us that in these circumstances you will have to take your

reminder to a post office with your certificate of exemption as you do now, pay the fee but you will not get a paper disc to put in your vehicle.

DVLA Driving Licences

The DVLA are proposing to withdraw the paper counterpart of the driving licence, you will therefore only require to produce your photocard licence to anyone wishing to see it. There is no date for this at present but it will be Some time in 2015.

Those of you without photocards will be able to retain your old style paper licences but it is recommended to update to a photocard style of licence, further information can be seen on the DVLA website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/driving-licence-changes>

Smartphone Apps

There are a number of smartphone Apps increasingly coming onto the market, to assist punters to hail hackney carriages or book private hire vehicles. In themselves they are not illegal, however their use may be if they are used by private hire drivers to by-pass the private hire operator.

Private hire vehicle drivers are not permitted to accept any fare that is not pre-booked through a licensed private hire operator.

What is acceptable if an operator wishes to sign up to the service to give potential hirers access to the telephone number of private hire operators to make bookings.

Hackney carriage proprietors can accept bookings without the need of an operator and therefore may sign up to the services.

Beware, none of these Apps are approved by the council and the council does not accept any responsibility for their use. Their use is entirely at the risk of the user.

Private Hire Vehicles Plying for Hire

A reminder to all private hire drivers

If you exhibit your vehicle in any place where the public frequent and may approach a licensed vehicle for a hiring, you commit an offence, even if you do not actually get a fare, and you may be prosecuted for just parking there.

Private hire vehicles are parking in the bus terminus, Railway Station, car parks in Cwmbran and the taxi rank in Pontypool, are locations we know that private hire drivers are parking illegally.

Licensing Officers will be proactive in dealing with any private hire driver plying for hire illegally.

New Taxi Rank **Glyndwr Road ~ Leisure@Cwmbran**

This rank is now legally marked and the parking restrictions enforceable. Licensed hackney carriages are now encouraged to use it to ensure it is always available. If there are problems with other vehicles parking there please report them to the police.

Inappropriate Conversations

Recently an incident occurred where allegations were made against a driver which could not be refuted by firm evidence. Drivers are vulnerable of being the victim of false allegations that are difficult to defend.

Drivers should be aware that friendly conversations can be taken in the wrong sense, please be careful what you say to your passengers.

CCTV in Licensed Vehicles

Some drivers have fitted CCTV units in their vehicles to record any activity in the vehicle. Some of the more complex systems look forward with a driver's view of the road and also have a number of views within the vehicle passenger and driver locations.

Torfaen have no policy regarding the fitting and use of CCTV in vehicles, it is entirely the choice of drivers if you wish to install CCTV in or on your vehicle.

However, you must be aware of the codes of practice of the Information Commissioner to protect the privacy of your passengers and comply with the Data Protection Act. The guidance can be found on the following website:

http://ico.org.uk/for_the_public/topic_specific_guides/cctv

Briefly:-

- You must NOT record sound under any circumstances, this is to protect the personal conversations of passengers.
- You must clearly display signs to inform passengers that CCTV is in operation.
- You must ensure that any recorded images are stored securely.
- You must not keep images any longer than is necessary.

The licensing team can be contacted in the following ways

Telephone ~ 01633 64 7286/7284

Email ~ licensing@torfaen.gov.uk

Website ~ www.torfaen.gov.uk/licensing