

APPENDIX 1

VEHICLES

Specification Of Vehicle Types That May Be Licensed

1. The legislation gives local authorities a wide range of discretion over the types of vehicle that they can license as taxis or PHVs. Some authorities specify conditions that in practice can only be met by purpose-built vehicles but the majority license a range of vehicles.
2. Normally, the best practice is for local licensing authorities to adopt the principle of specifying as many different types of vehicle as possible. Indeed, local authorities might usefully set down a range of general criteria, leaving it open to the taxi and PHV trades to put forward vehicles of their own choice which can be shown to meet those criteria. In that way there can be flexibility for new vehicle types to be readily taken into account.
3. It is suggested that local licensing authorities should give very careful consideration to a policy which automatically rules out particular types of vehicle or prescribes only one type or a small number of types of vehicle. For example, the Department believes authorities should be particularly cautious about specifying only purpose-built taxis, with the strict constraint on supply that that implies. But of course the purpose-built vehicles are amongst those which a local authority could be expected to license. Similarly, it may be too restrictive to automatically rule out considering Multi-Purpose Vehicles, or to license them for fewer passengers than their seating capacity (provided of course that the capacity of the vehicle is not more than eight passengers).
4. The owners and drivers of vehicles may want to make appropriate adaptations to their vehicles to help improve the personal security of the drivers. Licensing authorities should look favourably on such adaptations, but, as mentioned in paragraph 35 below, they may wish to ensure that modifications are present when the vehicle is tested and not made after the testing stage.

Tinted windows

30. The minimum light transmission for glass in front of, and to the side of, the driver is 70%. Vehicles may be manufactured with glass that is darker than this fitted to windows rearward of the driver, especially in estate and people carrier style vehicles. When licensing vehicles, authorities should be mindful of this as well as the large costs and inconvenience associated with changing glass that conforms to both Type Approval and Construction and Use Regulations.

Imported vehicles: type approval (see also “stretched limousines”, paras 40-44 below)

31. It may be that from time to time a local authority will be asked to license as a taxi or PHV a vehicle that has been imported independently (that is, by somebody other than the manufacturer). Such a vehicle might meet the local authority's criteria for licensing, but the local authority may nonetheless be uncertain about the wider rules for foreign vehicles being used in the UK. Such vehicles will be subject to the 'type approval' rules. For

passenger cars up to 10 years old at the time of first GB registration, this means meeting the technical standards of either:

- a European Whole Vehicle Type approval;
- a British National Type approval; or
- a Individual Vehicle Approval.

Most registration certificates issued since late 1998 should indicate the approval status of the vehicle. The technical standards applied (and the safety and environmental risks covered) under each of the above are proportionate to the number of vehicles entering service. Further information about these requirements and the procedures for licensing and registering imported vehicles can be seen at www.businesslink.gov.uk/vehicleapprovalschemes

Vehicle Testing

32. There is considerable variation between local licensing authorities on vehicle testing, including the related question of age limits. The following can be regarded as best practice:

- **Frequency Of Tests.** The legal requirement is that all taxis should be subject to an MOT test or its equivalent once a year. For PHVs the requirement is for an annual test after the vehicle is three years old. An annual test for licensed vehicles of whatever age (that is, including vehicles that are less than three years old) seems appropriate in most cases, unless local conditions suggest that more frequent tests are necessary. However, more frequent tests may be appropriate for older vehicles (see 'age limits' below). Local licensing authorities may wish to note that a review carried out by the National Society for Cleaner Air in 2005 found that taxis were more likely than other vehicles to fail an emissions test. This finding, perhaps suggests that emissions testing should be carried out on ad hoc basis and more frequently than the full vehicle test.
- **Criteria For Tests.** Similarly, for mechanical matters it seems appropriate to apply the same criteria as those for the MOT test to taxis and PHVs*. The MOT test on vehicles first used after 31 March 1987 includes checking of all seat belts. However, taxis and PHVs provide a service to the public, so it is also appropriate to set criteria for the internal condition of the vehicle, though these should not be unreasonably onerous.

*A manual outlining the method of testing and reasons for failure of all MOT tested items can be obtained from the Stationary Office see <http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/bookstore.asp?FO=1159966&Action=Book&From=SearchResults&ProductID=0115525726>

- **Age Limits.** It is perfectly possible for an older vehicle to be in good condition. So the setting of an age limit beyond which a local authority will not license vehicles may be arbitrary and inappropriate. But a greater frequency of testing may be appropriate for older vehicles - for example, twice-yearly tests for vehicles more than five years old.

- Number Of Testing Stations. There is sometimes criticism that local authorities provide only one testing centre for their area (which may be geographically extensive). So it is good practice for local authorities to consider having more than one testing station. There could be an advantage in contracting out the testing work, and to different garages. In that way the licensing authority can benefit from competition in costs. (The Vehicle Operators and Standards Agency – VOSA – may be able to assist where there are local difficulties in provision of testing stations.)

33. The Technical Officer Group of the Public Authority Transport Network has produced Best Practice Guidance which focuses on national inspection standards for taxis and PHVs. Local licensing authorities might find it helpful to refer to the testing standards set out in this guidance in carrying out their licensing responsibilities. The PATN can be accessed via the Freight Transport Association.

Personal security

34. The personal security of taxi and PHV drivers and staff needs to be considered. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires local authorities and others to consider crime and disorder reduction while exercising all of their duties. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships are also required to invite public transport providers and operators to participate in the partnerships. Research has shown that anti-social behaviour and crime affects taxi and PHV drivers and control centre staff. It is therefore important that the personal security of these people is considered.
35. The owners and drivers of vehicles will often want to install security measures to protect the driver. Local licensing authorities may not want to insist on such measures, on the grounds that they are best left to the judgement of the owners and drivers themselves. But it is good practice for licensing authorities to look sympathetically on - or actively to encourage - their installation. They could include a screen between driver and passengers, or CCTV. Care however should be taken that security measures within the vehicle do not impede a disabled passenger's ability to communicate with the driver. In addition, licensing authorities may wish to ensure that such modifications are present when the vehicle is tested and not made after the testing stage.
36. There is extensive information on the use of CCTV, including as part of measures to reduce crime, on the Home Office website (e.g. <http://scienceandresearch.homeoffice.gov.uk/hosdb/cctv-imaging-technology/CCTV-andimaging-publications>) and on the Information Commission's Office website (www.ico.gov.uk). CCTV can be both a deterrent to would-be trouble makers and be a source of evidence in the case of disputes between drivers and passengers and other incidents. There is a variety of funding sources being used for the implementation of security measures for example, from community safety partnerships, local authorities and drivers themselves.
37. Other security measures include guidance, talks by the local police and conflict avoidance training. The Department has recently issued guidance for taxi and PHV drivers to help them improve their personal security. These can be accessed on the Department's website at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/crime/taxiphv/>.

In order to emphasise the reciprocal aspect of the taxi/PHV service, licensing authorities might consider drawing up signs or notices which set out not only what passengers can expect from drivers, but also what drivers can expect from passengers who use their service. Annex B contains two samples which are included for illustrative purposes but local authorities are encouraged to formulate their own, in the light of local conditions and circumstances. Licensing authorities may want to encourage the taxi and PHV trades to build good links with the local police force, including participation in any Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

Vehicle Identification

38. Members of the public can often confuse PHVs with taxis, failing to realise that PHVs are not available for immediate hire and that a PHV driver cannot be hailed. So it is important to distinguish between the two types of vehicle. Possible approaches might be:

- a licence condition that prohibits PHVs from displaying any identification at all apart from the local authority licence plate or disc. The licence plate is a helpful indicator of licensed status and, as such, it helps identification if licence plates are displayed on the front as well as the rear of vehicles. However, requiring some additional clearer form of identification can be seen as best practice. This is for two reasons: firstly, to ensure a more positive statement that the vehicle cannot be hired immediately through the driver; and secondly because it is quite reasonable, and in the interests of the travelling public, for a PHV operator to be able to state on the vehicle the contact details for hiring;
- a licence condition which requires a sign on the vehicle in a specified form. This will often be a sign of a specified size and shape which identifies the operator (with a telephone number for bookings) and the local licensing authority, and which also has some words such as 'pre-booked only'. This approach seems the best practice; it identifies the vehicle as private hire and helps to avoid confusion with a taxi, but also gives useful information to the public wishing to make a booking. It is good practice for vehicle identification for PHVs to include the contact details of the operator.
- Another approach, possibly in conjunction with the previous option, is a requirement for a roof-mounted, permanently illuminated sign with words such as 'pre-booked only'. But it can be argued that any roof-mounted sign, however unambiguous its words, is liable to create confusion with a taxi. So roof-mounted signs on PHVs are not seen as best practice.

Environmental Considerations

39. Local licensing authorities, in discussion with those responsible for environmental health issues, will wish to consider how far their vehicle licensing policies can and should support any local environmental policies that the local authority may have adopted. This will be of particular importance in designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), Local authorities may, for example, wish to consider setting vehicle emissions standards for taxis and PHVs. However, local authorities would need to carefully and thoroughly

assess the impact of introducing such a policy; for example, the effect on the supply of taxis and PHVs in the area would be an important consideration in deciding the standards, if any, to be set. They should also bear in mind the need to ensure that the benefits of any policies outweigh the costs (in whatever form).

Stretched Limousines

1. Local licensing authorities are sometimes asked to license stretched limousines as PHVs. It is suggested that local authorities should approach such requests on the basis that these vehicles – where they have fewer than nine passenger seats -have a legitimate role to play in the private hire trade, meeting a public demand. Indeed, the Department's view is that it is not a legitimate course of action for licensing authorities to adopt policies that exclude limousines as a matter of principle and that any authorities which do adopt such practices are leaving themselves open to legal challenge. A policy of excluding limousines creates an unacceptable risk to the travelling public, as it would inevitably lead to higher levels of unlawful operation. Public safety considerations are best supported by policies that allow respectable, safe operators to obtain licences on the same basis as other private hire vehicle operators. The Department has now issued guidance on the licensing arrangements for stretched limousines. This can be accessed on the Department's web-site at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/taxis/stretchlimousines.pdf>.
2. The limousine guidance makes it clear that most operations are likely to fall within the PHV licensing category and not into the small bus category. VOSA will be advising limousine owners that if they intend to provide a private hire service then they should go to the local authority for PHV licences. The Department would expect licensing authorities to assess applications on their merits; and, as necessary, to be proactive in ascertaining whether any limousine operators might already be providing an unlicensed service within their district.
3. Imported stretched limousines were historically checked for compliance with regulations under the Single Vehicle Approval (SVA) inspection regime before they were registered. This is now the Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA) scheme. The IVA test verifies that the converted vehicle is built to certain safety and environmental standards. A licensing authority might wish to confirm that an imported vehicle was indeed tested by VOSA for IVA before being registered and licensed (taxed) by DVLA. This can be done either by checking the V5C (Registration Certificate) of the vehicle, which may refer to IVA under the "Special Note" section; or by writing to VOSA, Ellipse, Padley Road, Swansea, SA1 8AN, including details of the vehicle's make and model, registration number and VIN number.
4. Stretched limousines which clearly have more than 8 passenger seats should not of course be licensed as PHVs because they are outside the licensing regime for PHVs. However, under some circumstances the SVA regime accepted vehicles with space for more than 8 passengers, particularly where the precise number of passenger seats was hard to determine. In these circumstances, if the vehicle had obtained an SVA certificate, the authority should consider the case on its merits in deciding whether to license the vehicle under the strict condition that the vehicle will not be used to carry more than 8 passengers, bearing in mind that refusal may encourage illegal private hire operation.

1. Many councils are concerned that the size of limousines prevents them being tested in conventional MoT garages. If there is not a suitable MoT testing station in the area then it would be possible to test the vehicle at the local VOSA test stations. The local enforcement office may be able to advise (contact details on <http://www.vosa.gov.uk>).

QUANTITY RESTRICTIONS OF TAXI LICENCES OUTSIDE LONDON

1. The present legal provision on quantity restrictions for taxis outside London is set out in section 16 of the Transport Act 1985. This provides that the grant of a taxi licence may be refused, for the purpose of limiting the number of licensed taxis 'if, but only if, the [local licensing authority] is satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of hackney carriages (within the area to which the licence would apply) which is unmet'.
2. Local licensing authorities will be aware that, in the event of a challenge to a decision to refuse a licence, the local authority concerned would have to establish that it had, reasonably, been satisfied that there was no significant unmet demand.
3. Most local licensing authorities do not impose quantity restrictions; the Department regards that as best practice. Where restrictions are imposed, the Department would urge that the matter should be regularly reconsidered. The Department further