

Consultation Responses

1. I have received your letter concerning the proposed changes. I have no comment on them.
2. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Consultation – Thank you for your letter detailing Amendments numbered 4921 – 4926. I am in full agreement with them all.
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9. I would welcome the introduction of the new tariff, Btec certificate, retest fee and points system.

We became Cheshire East in 2009 yet we still have zones and different tariffs. It is therefore time the council stopped pontificating and harmonised vehicle tariffs and scrapped the zones. All those against change can always continue charging less than the proposed new tariff if they so choose.

10. We have already had a meeting which was encouraging so I have only a few comments to make!!

7159 I would not wish the Sunday rate to do to plus 50%. I feel that enough people quibble about a third extra on that part of the weekend and we need to remain competitive with private hire companies. I know we can charge less but not adhering to the meter causes confusion and the general public already views the taxi trade with suspicion so that is definitely not a good idea.

We want to cooperate, as a public who can see that the Macclesfield Taxi Trade is well regulated will trust us and use us more which is why we bought a licence in the first place.

11. On receipt of your recent letter there are a few issues I would like to raise :- 1
You state meetings with the trade, yet as far as I am aware **No Members from Crewe** were contacted or spoken to inform us of any meeting taking place and as such, that would mean **an entire zone excluded from your consultation to date**. More needs to be done to inform the trade on meetings and serious matters like this either by letter or by the licensing officers talking to drivers.

You state that the structure of fare card in each council zone should be the same, this was supposed to have been being phased in in a series of small increases at the last meeting I was invited to 2 years ago and Crewe fare was agreed to hold back a year to allow the other zones to equal out, this has **not** been the case and as such we of Crewe have twice put in for a price increase in the last 18 months but not given one. When we were Crewe and Nantwich Borough we were on request awarded a **yearly increase** yet since we went to Cheshire East this has stopped and now I feel insulted that you do not consult with us but put forward a new tariff which would not increase our rate but in fact result in a decrease in our rate, with the price of fuel, insurance and running costs and your proposed increase in fees and retests fees this seems ludicrous and needs a serious increase to reflect the previous rates being fixed and a serious review of your proposal with **all zones involved**.

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14. As requested below are my views/concerns over the proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing changes.

Section 1429 Amended Hackney Carriage Table of Fares

With respect to the above I am firmly in favour of the proposed alignment of the structure across the Zones, however, as currently there is such a disparity in the current fare rates, that to try and align these tariffs in one step will be harmful to businesses and to customers. In the current climate of job uncertainty and financial pressures I think that the proposed increase of 60p to the Congleton flag fall rate to £3.50 (21% increase) is just too much for our customers to accept in one hit. I understand that these proposed fares are the maximum charges and that lesser amounts could be charged, however, in practice this is not as easy as it sounds. In the Hackney Carriage Business customers are usually unvetted and enter the taxi off the street with no agreement of the total cost of the service until the journey end. In an evening or at weekends in the early hours of the morning these customers can be intoxicated and aggressive. The taxi meter is sometimes the only way both the customer and driver is protected from fare arguments. By asking the driver to vary the fare displayed on the meter is only inviting trouble between them and the customer or by the customer and other drivers on future occasions. All drivers in each Zone have to appear to be charging the same otherwise tensions can arise between customers and the meter is there to provide this! Please be aware that one of the Congleton Taxi drivers was beaten badly last week and ended up in hospital for several days by two Congleton Residents taken to Tunstall on the Saturday night. I personally have to call the police at least once a week due to fare disagreements.

I think the only solution is to phase in the changes across the Zones.
Current daily rates for first mile are:- Congleton £2.90, Macclesfield £3.30, Crewe £4.20.

ie. An increase of 30p on the first mile daily rate for Congleton now followed by another increase of 30p in 9-12 months time. No increase on the daily rate for the first mile for Macclesfield and change the minimum fare to one mile now followed by an increase of 20p in 9-12 months time. For Crewe a reduction of 40p on the first mile rate to £3.80 and change the minimum fare to one mile now followed by a further decrease of 30p in 9-12 months time. This would result in alignment of all Zones within 12 months.

15. I write in response to the proposed changes to fares and regulations for hackney carriages.

Please note that I find the changes to the fares to be unacceptable. I have no objection to the first mile being charged but the proposed rate is a large drop from our current charge for a mile. Most of our fares in the Crewe area are short journeys. Such a reduction would be completely against the trend of rising running costs. A figure of around five pounds would be more acceptable. I can see problems if the fares are low for a mile. The meter won't be used and fares will be made up by many drivers.

An increase of the rate one figure for subsequent miles of 20-30p is also required.

The cost of fares after midnight is way to high. I see no need for a separate rate after midnight. The 20% load is adequate. Such an increase in these economic times will drive trade away. No business can justify a hike like this.

The comment that less can be charged if desired is ill informed. Private hire work prebooked at prearranged prices is one thing, explaining to a car full of drink fuelled yobs off a rank that the price on the meter is high and only a starting point for negotiation is a recipe for disaster. The meter is a way of showing the customer that they are being charged a fair rate approved by the local authority and as such should be retained at a sensible figure.

I don't know what consultation was done with the trade but suspect that it doesn't represent the views of the many and would cause a significant reduction in incomes for those operating in the daytime.

16. I understand the Council's wishes to harmonise the three Zones of Cheshire East, but feel that a 60 pence increase on the first mile would be too much and is unprecedented in the twenty years that I have been a taxi driver in the town. With the additional increase after 9 o'clock taxi drivers would be placed in a very awkward and potentially dangerous position, this is why a fare increase of this magnitude needs to be phased in over two or three fare increases. Although the Council explained that drivers can charge less than the price on the meter, the meter is there to provide clarity for both customer and driver and this would no longer be the case.