

Appendix D

Project	Wirral Unmet Demand Taxi Study 2011	Date	1 st June 2011
Note	Consultation Responses	Ref	CTDAOD000
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- 1** *Introduction*
- 1.1 Guidelines issued by the Department for Transport state that consultation should be undertaken with the following:
- all those working in the market;
 - consumer and passenger (including disabled) groups;
 - groups which represent those passengers with special needs;
 - the Police;
 - local interest groups such as hospitals or visitor attractions; and
 - A wide range of transport stakeholders such as rail/bus/coach operators and transport managers.
- 2** *Direct Consultation*
- 2.1 A number of organisations were given the opportunity to attend a meeting in April 2011 to discuss a series of issues regarding the taxi market in Wirral. Separate meetings were organised with the following:
- Hackney Carriage Trade Representatives;
 - Private Hire Trade Representatives;
 - MerseyLearn;
 - Disability Representatives;
 - The Police; and
 - Wirral Highways Department
- 2.2 The comments that were received are detailed below.
- Wirral Hackney Carriage Trade**
- 2.3 Two representatives from the Independent Wirral Hackney Drivers Association and one representative from Unite Union attended the focus group. The representatives commented that they would like a limit to be introduced on the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences. It was felt that an ideal number of hackney carriages would be 240 vehicles.

- 2.4 The trade also wanted to see a greater presence of enforcement, especially at night.
- 2.5 With regard to vehicle conditions it was felt that the E7, Mercedes Veto and VW should not be allowed as they don't meet the conditions. They also are unhappy about the use of 'discretion' for vehicles outside of the criteria.
- 2.6 When asked for their opinion on rank provision, the representatives commented that due to the large numbers of hackney carriages, there is a lot of over ranking. The busiest ranks are those located in Birkenhead and Liscard however the trade have been told that there is no room to extend a lot of the ranks due to their locations. There was a request to see new ranks at Oxtan bar and Terrace. They would also like to see the introduction of 'floating ranks'.
- 2.7 With regard to the image of the trade, it was stated that vehicle conditions are too stringent. Drivers are generally smart, but it was commented that it is important to be comfortable when driving all day. It was not felt that there is a need for any additional training.
- 2.8 The representatives were concerned about the fare tariff; they would like to see an increase but are worried that this could further discourage customers. In addition, it was commented that the private hire trade charge lower fares than hackneys.
- Wirral Private Hire Trade**
- 2.9 It was felt that a 'managed growth' policy should be introduced. This would also mean that there is a sufficient amount of work for drivers to make a living. It was commented that there is a lack of demand generators on the Wirral, there is no mainline rail station or large hotels.
- 2.10 It was noted that the vehicle age policy has improved the vehicle fleet. With regard to driver training it was felt that operators should have to complete the training before being licensed.
- 2.11 With regard to ranks it was recognised that new ranks need to be developed but this will only happen if the trade sit on the ranks. It was suggested that bus stops could be utilised as ranks after midnight. It was noted that the rank at Conway Street was often over ranked.

2.12 It was felt that taxis and private hire vehicles are not treated as part of the public transport network and that Wirral BC should promote them more locally.

Operators

2.13 A representative from Satellite Cars attended the focus group. He was in favour of seeing the numerical limit introduced. He felt that since the policy of derestriction not all drivers work Saturday night which makes it more difficult for customers to obtain a vehicle.

MerseyLearn

2.14 The representative from MerseyLearn was of the opinion that since derestriction, the vehicle fleet on the Wirral has improved. With regard to ranks, the representative commented that it may be beneficial for Wirral Borough Council to subsidise ranks in rural areas whilst the trade generate demand. It was also stated that taxi marshals may be useful at some of the town centre ranks late at night.

2.15 When asked about fare tariffs, the representative commented that the private hire operators do not consult with drivers when they set the fares in order to grow their customer base and be competitive. The fares are lower than those for hackney carriages and private hire drivers are finding it difficult to make a living. It was felt that a structure should be in place to allow private hire drivers to have an input into the setting of fares.

2.16 Finally, the representative commented that integrating public transport is an important part of LTP 3 and suggested that shared taxis may be beneficial.

Disability Representatives

2.17 With regard to the type of vehicles, the representative felt that the range of vehicles currently licensed were inadequate to cope with transporting wheelchair users. It was commented that the older vehicles do not have sufficient head room and even the new vehicles do not have the dimensions to allow the wheelchair passenger to turn and face the correct way. The representative commented that a small number of vehicles meet the specifications, however no vehicles in Wirral are able to accommodate electric wheelchairs. In addition, the vehicles do not have provision to secure the wheelchair at the front which means that the wheelchair is likely to move around in transit. The representative would like to see vehicles with wheelchair access at the rear to allow the user to face forward.

2.18 With regard to drivers, the representative did not feel that they were adequately trained and often have rusty access ramps that are not maintained. It was also stated that they are often rude and do not secure the wheelchair user correctly in the vehicle.

Police

2.19 A representative from Merseyside Police attended the focus group. It was felt that there are too many hackney carriages on the Wirral with over ranking evident on Argyle Street and at Central Station and a limit should be introduced on the number of licences. A limited number of licences would also make monitoring the behaviour of drivers easier. At present private hire vehicles often illegally ply for hire on Conway Street and Argyle Street.

2.20 On the other hand, the representative was of the opinion that restricting the number of hackney carriages may reduce safety during the night time economy.

2.21 The representative commented that a dress code should be introduced to make drivers look more professional.

2.22 Driving ability of both the hackney carriage and private hire trades was considered 'good', however it was felt that a driving test should be a condition of the licence. In addition, drivers should know how to maintain their vehicle to a high standard.

2.23 Finally, it was felt that there is a lack of public awareness of the differences between hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and maybe advertising to this effect would be beneficial.

Highways

2.24 A representative from the Highways department at Wirral Borough Council attended the focus group. It was commented that over ranking is starting to cause issues, particularly in Birkenhead town centre where drivers are performing U-turns in the middle of the road.

2.25 The representative stated that it is never a problem getting a taxi during the day on the Wirral, however there can be a lack of taxis at night around Birkenhead.

2.26 With regard to the image of the trade, the representative would like to see smarter drivers however it was not felt that there are any issues with the quality of the vehicles. Driver training may be beneficial for new drivers.

2.27 Finally, it was considered that advertising of taxi services on the Wirral could be better, however the best promotion is taxis actually waiting on the ranks.

3 *Indirect Consultation*

3.1 In addition to the face to face consultation undertaken a number of stakeholders were contacted by letter. This in turn assured the DfT guidelines were fulfilled and all relevant organisations and bodies were provided with an opportunity to comment.

3.2 In accordance with advice issued by the DfT the following organisations were contacted:

- Wirral Borough Council;
- User/disability groups representing those passengers with special needs;
- Local interest groups including hospitals, visitor attractions, entertainment outlets and education establishments; and
- Rain, bus and coach operators.

3.3 The comments received are outlined below.

Liscard and Egremont Partnership, Wallasey

3.4 The representative from the Liscard and Egremont Partnership commented that there are too many hackney carriage drivers trying to make a living and as a result they are working very long hours. This means that they spend a large proportion of their time waiting on the ranks with their engines running. It was felt that no new licences should be given out until the numbers have reached a reasonable level. It was considered that this level should be considerably lower than it is now.

3.5 With regard to the provision of ranks, the representative stated that the rank on Wallasey Road is well placed and it was a good decision to move the head of the rank further up the road, however it is important that the rank should not extend too far down the road to protect Mosley Avenue. It was felt that a sign should be placed on Mosley Road stating 'No Taxis'. It

was commented that the rank on Liscard Crescent adjacent to McDonalds is not used and therefore should be removed.

3.6 In order to make hackney carriages more widely used, it was felt that telephone access to the ranks would be beneficial. In addition, telephone access to private hire services at stations and supermarkets would be helpful.

3.7 It was stated that the availability of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles is an important addition to the public transport system and reduces the use of private cars. However, hackney carriages waiting for fares with their engines running is bad for the environment and it is important to reduce this as much as possible in an areas where poor breathing is a common symptom of ill health.

Grange Pyramids & Cavern Walks Shopping Centres

3.8 A representative from the Grange Pyramids and Cavern Walks Shopping Centre responded to the consultation. It was felt that there could be an improvement in the provision of both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles across all times of the day. However, it was also felt that a limit should be placed on the number of hackney carriage licences.

3.9 With regard to the image of the trade, the representative commented that the type and quality of the vehicles is generally poor and a livery would be beneficial so that taxis are easily recognisable. On the other hand, the driver quality was perceived adequate and it was not felt that there is a requirement for additional training.

3.10 The representative commented that additional rank provision is needed on Conway Street and Salisbury Street and further advertising of taxi services is required. In addition, it was commented that although the representative feels safe using taxis during the day, this is not the case at night and taxi marshals would be a beneficial idea.

3.11 Finally, it was suggested that taxis have a negative impact on the environment.

Private Hire Trade Representative

3.12 A representative from the private hire trade responded to the consultation. It was felt that there is an oversupply of both hackney carriage and private

hire drivers and a limit should be placed on the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences.

3.13 With regard to the image of the trade, it was commented that the type and quality of the vehicles is average to good, although the attitudes and quality of the drivers is average to poor and additional training is needed in some cases.

3.14 The representative commented that there are many ranks located in Birkenhead that are not used such as Conway Street and Borough Road. No additional ranks are required but existing ranks need to be in the correct locations such as at supermarkets and hospitals. In addition, the Hamilton Square rank would benefit from being on the opposite side of the road to improve accessibility.

3.15 With regard to fares, the representative commented that they are too low and there is too much advertising of taxi services on the Wirral.

3.16 Finally it was commented that taxis complement other types of public transport very well on the Wirral.

Allports Chauffeur Services

3.17 A representative of Allports Chauffeur Services commented that due to changes in recent years, chauffer vehicles are now licensed under the private hire system. The representative felt that although it is important to be governed by medicals and police checks, a different plate to the private hire trade would increase business. In addition, it was stated that chauffeur services should not be required to display door signs, they do not serve a purpose as it is a personal service and drivers phone before arrival.

3.18 With regard to the NVQ Level 2, it was felt that many of the questions did not relate to chauffeurs and was more geared towards hackney carriage drivers.

Eastham Ward Representative

3.19 It was commented that the representative would like to see hackney carriages in the Croft Retail Park in Bromborough as there is no rank there at the moment. In addition, Wirral would benefit from a better supply of vehicles for disabled access across all areas.

3.20 With regard to the image of drivers, it was felt that a dress code is required as most drivers are not very smart.

Wirral Councillors

3.21 A councillor responded to the consultation and commented that there is a good provision of taxis during the day, however there are insufficient hackney carriages operating at night, particularly at Thornton Hall or Thornton Hough.

3.22 Another councillor commented that a rank is required at the Croft Retail Park, Bromborough. It was also felt that a dress code is needed for all drivers to improve the image of the trade.

Wirral Resident

3.23 A resident responded to the letter of consultation and stated that there is an oversupply of taxis on the Wirral. This leads to a frequent nuisance, obstruction and potential safety hazard in Liscard around the Wallasey Road ranks. Several attempts have been made to move the position of the feeder rank to reduce the amount of over ranking, however a small minority of drivers continue to park in the residential street on double yellow lines whilst waiting for a fare.

Central Liscard Area Residents Association

3.24 A representative from the Central Liscard Area Residents Association commented that there is an oversupply of taxis who are plying for too few fares. In addition, there is a lack of rank provision and it was felt that consultation should take place with the drivers on where they would like new ranks to be placed.

3.25 The representative commented that users do not like being taken on 'short cuts' if they simply mean they avoid the traffic lights but have to endure residential streets with traffic calming measures.

3.26 With regard to the supply of hackney carriages it was stated that the limit should be reintroduced as fares have increased significantly as drivers try to make a living out of fewer fares.

3.27 With regard to the environment, the residents association would like to see air quality tests at two points in Liscard;

- St Albans Road / Wallasey Road junction; and

- Liscard Crescent / Liscard Road / Liscard Village / Manor
Road junction

3.28

There are concerns that the level of pollution is higher than that in other areas of Wirral and there are more cases of lung cancer in adults and asthma in children