

Taxi Licensing Newsletter

June 2025



1. Forums

The latest Taxi forum took place at the Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) Civic Centre on Friday 13 June 2025, which was attended by 2 drivers and no Operators.

The next in-person forum will be next held when there is significant news/information to discuss, the date will be confirmed to the trade via an email and text.

The Newsletter which covers the matters discussed can be seen online:

<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/taxi-licenses/taxi-private-hire-news>

2. Last financial year 2024-25

(A) Statistics

The chart below shows that whilst there has been some variance in HC and PH numbers, the **total** number of drivers and vehicles has remained stable since the last financial year.

	2023/24	2024/25	% difference
Hackney Drivers	60	53	12% decrease
Hackney Carriage Vehicles	48	41	15% decrease
Private Hire Drivers	35	42	20% increase
Private Hire Vehicles	30	37	20% increase
Private Hire Operators	25	23	8% decrease
TOTAL DRIVERS	95	95	No change
TOTAL VEHICLES	78	78	No change

(B) Suspensions, refusals and revocations

There were three cases of suspensions, refusals and/or revocations in this financial year, in comparison with none in the previous financial year;

Licence type	Evidence	Decision	Reasoning
Current HC Drivers Licence holder	Surrey Police raising significant concerns in terms of public safety and/or crime and disorder; <ul style="list-style-type: none">Arrest for failing to provide breath sample	Revocation with immediate effect on the grounds of public safety	Proportionate to the seriousness of the allegations and intelligence received, previous case history and breaches of policy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intelligence regarding vulnerable adult incidents/extreme volatility. 		
Application for renewal of HC Drivers Licence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving licence endorsements for the offences of exceeding the speed limit (4 offences, 12 points in total) No declaration of these motoring offences on renewal application form Failure to notify the Council in writing within 48 hours of receiving a driving licence endorsement on four occasions Previous written warning in 2019 for the same failure to notify. 	<u>Refusal</u> of application to renew licence	<p>Serious concerns regarding conduct, honesty & integrity, thus not meeting the 'fit and proper person' requirements.</p> <p>Offences show a pattern of repeated unacceptable behaviour that cause greater concern for public safety than isolated occurrences.</p>
Current HC Drivers Licence holder	<p>Upon submitting a required GP Medical assessment and accompanying documents from the Cardiology Department, these were reviewed by the Council's independent medical advisors.</p> <p>Their report concluded that on balance, given the diagnosis of heart disease and lack of evidence regarding functional requirements, that the driver failed to reach the Group 2 standards in relation to medical fitness.</p>	<u>Suspension</u> with immediate effect of current HC drivers licence	<p>Considered medical history & the report by the Council's independent medical advisor.</p> <p>Proportionate in the interests of public safety given the lack of evidence of physical fitness.</p> <p>Licence will be considered for reinstatement if we receive satisfactory evidence from the driver demonstrating that they meet the functional requirements of Group 2.</p>

(C) Complaints received about Runnymede drivers

There were 7 complaints received in relation to RBC drivers, compared with 6 in the last financial year that were investigated and dealt with in accordance with the Departmental enforcement procedures. Issues complained about were in relation to;

- PH Operator overcharging and alleged use of Transport for London vehicles for bookings;
- Alleged incident regarding threatening behaviour from licensed driver towards another road user;
- Illegal use of London Taxi rank;
- Behaviour and attitude of driver – passenger alleged driver acted in an odd way, asked questions and walked into the hallway of her property;
- PH Operator overcharging;
- Driver seen by complainant driving aggressively - weaving, beeping and flashing to get past other vehicles and alleged speeding;
- Threatening behaviour between driver and member of the public.

3. Government and Devolution

The Government will consult on whether to make all Local Transport Authorities (including Strategic Authorities) responsible for taxi and private hire vehicle licensing.

This aims to address out-of-area working by private hire vehicles by reducing the incentives for people to licence out of their usual working area, increase the consistency of standards and enable more effective use of enforcement powers across a wider economic area. This would be a significant change for the sector, and the Government will work with stakeholders to understand possible impacts before taking a final decision. In London, taxi and private hire vehicle licensing is already the responsibility of the Mayor and Transport for London.

Local Government Reorganisation (Devolution) will have a significant impact on the trade. As of 2027, licensing authorities across Surrey will cease to exist in their current form. The licensing function will be delivered by another larger authority, likely to be an amalgamation of 2 or 3 current Councils. The next step will be for the Government to decide whether it wishes to accept a three council proposal, which most boroughs support, or a two council proposal, which is being led by the county council, or whether it wishes to go in a different direction.

How licensing will be organised and function in terms of aligned policies and procedures over a greater geographical area, fares, fees and areas where HC's can ply for hire, all remain to be determined. Drivers and Operators will be kept informed as and when the future becomes clearer.

4. Enforcement

On Wednesday 14th May a joint operation at Runnymede Pleasure Grounds car park was carried out. This was in partnership with Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead licensing officers, HMRC, Runnymede Community Safety and Environmental Health teams, Surrey Police, and Surrey & Sussex Commercial Vehicle Unit. In total there were 12 taxis stopped, most were licensed by TfL and a few warnings were given. There were 10 commercial vehicles stopped, of which 3 were given fines for various offences.

5. VAT treatment of private hire vehicles outside of London

This issue still remains unresolved. Uber had brought a case following a 2021 decision by the Supreme Court that its drivers were 'workers', which had an impact on their tax and other obligations. Uber sought a declaration that private hire Operators enter into a contract with passengers and the High Court ruled in its favour in 2023. That decision meant that operators outside of London must pay a tax charge on their profit margins (VAT at 20%). However, the ruling was reversed by the Court of Appeal in July 2024, following a challenge by private hire Operators.

Due to the High Court judgment, the Government ran a public consultation (until August 2024) on the potential tax impacts on transport legislation. One option proposed by the Treasury was to simply remove the requirement for private hire vehicles to be booked through a licensed operator – a significant change to the current legislation. We encouraged drivers and operators to respond to the consultation and have kept them informed via our forums and newsletter.

The consultation didn't progress any further as the Court of Appeal ruling negated any impact, but there was always the possibility that the matter may be considered by the Supreme Court - Transport for London have now confirmed that this is their intention. Therefore, we will await the outcome of the further case in July and subsequent ruling.

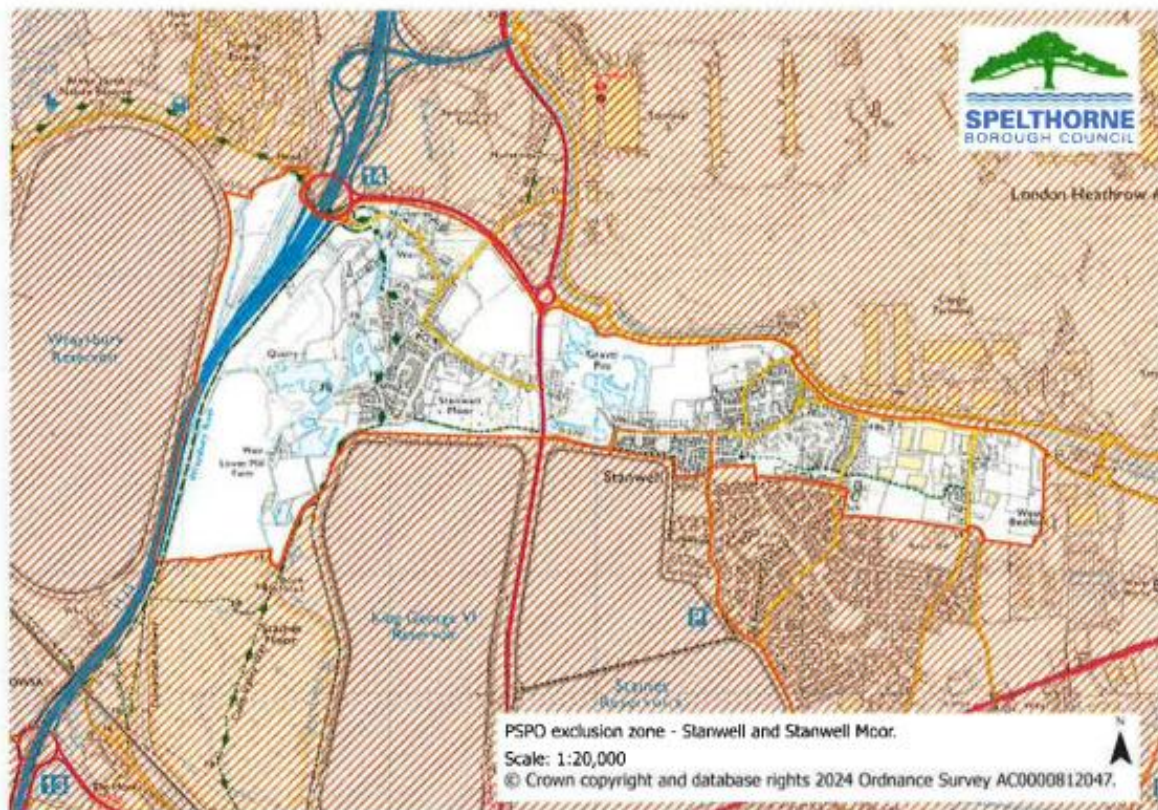
6. Spelthorne Public Space Protection Order - reminder

From May 2024 a Public Space Protection Order came into force within Spelthorne, one part of which creates an exclusion area in Stanwell Moor and parts of Stanwell where no taxis or private hire vehicles are permitted to park. The Order is enforced with Fixed Penalty notices.

Further details can be seen here:

<https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/21804/Public-Space-Protection-Orders>

Schedule 3 – Exclusion area prohibiting parking of taxis and private hire vehicles



Licensing News

March 2025 - Taxi driver fined for failing to comply: driver refused to co-operate with routine licensing checks, got into his vehicle and drove away. The Council took the matter to Court where he was fined for obstructing an authorised officer and the Council will now review his HC driving licence.

April 2025 - Taxi driver loses licence for driving offences: application to renew his PH drivers licence was refused by Officers and then at Committee, as he had not made the Council aware of three DVLA speeding endorsements. He appealed the decision at Magistrates Court which determined he was not a fit and proper person to hold a licence - the Appeal was dismissed and the Council was awarded costs.

April 2025 - Council revokes private hire driver's licence due to vehicle safety concerns: following a vehicle compliance check both front tyres were found to be bald - due to the serious public safety concerns posed by the illegal tyres, the driver was referred to Committee for a review of their licence which was revoked. The driver had not been carrying out regular checks of his vehicle to a level expected of licence holders.

April 2025 - Private hire driver fined for operating illegally at Reading Festival: a Transport for London driver was given more than £700 in financial penalties after a covert operation by Licensing Officers identified him illegally plying for hire during Reading Festival in August 2024. As a private hire driver without a prior booking, the driver was not permitted to pick passengers up from the street, and in doing so, invalidated his insurance.

UK driverless taxis coming in 2027.....? *"We're ready to launch robotaxis in the UK as soon as the regulatory environment is ready for us,"* said Senior Vice President of Mobility at Uber in May 2025. The Government has reportedly pushed back its timeline for approving fully autonomous vehicles to the second half of 2027. Companies like Wayve and Uber already operate robotaxis in the US, China, UAE, and Singapore, but UK adoption will depend on regulatory readiness and public acceptance.