

St Albans Licensing Newsletter

June 2023

Wheelchair Accessible Contact List

Wheelchair users are very dependent on our licensed trade. Having the ability to contact a Hackney Carriage Driver directly, to book a wheelchair accessible vehicle, is very beneficial to them.

We have a list of hackney carriage drivers with wheelchair accessible vehicles on our website, this list provides contact details so that members of the public are able to contact them and book them directly.

If you would like to be included on this list, and you have a wheelchair accessible vehicle, please contact us on the following email:

licensing@stalbans.gov.uk

Please include the following within your email:

- Your vehicle licence number
- Contact number
- Booking availability (days of the week, hours)
- Do you need 24 hours' notice for a booking

Mogo direct fulfilment

The licensing authority has taken on the services of Mogo direct fulfilment. As such, all license (driver badges and vehicle plates) will be posted out to you.

As a result of this change, licence plates and badges will no longer be made at the Council. Licence plates and badges are now made by Mogo, this will ensure that licence holders will receive their licences sooner and direct to their home address.

While the majority of time this is quicker and more efficient, new vehicles will not receive their plates at inspection. Instead they will be dispatched on the same day of vehicle inspection and sent to your home address.

This is sent by second class post, however there is an option to pay £3.50 for priority postage with FedEx.

If your plate or driver badge has been lost or stolen you will need to contact the Licensing Team to arrange for a replacement. Once we have received all necessary details and replacement fee, we will arrange for a new plate/badge to be posted to you.

Refusals of Fare

We have seen an increase in complaints about refusal of fares with Hackney Carriages, so please note we will be monitoring this situation closely. You are only able to refuse a fare if you have reasonable grounds to refuse.

Hackney Carriages have a requirement under law, if they are standing for hire they should take a fare. The caveat is “unless they have reasonable grounds to refuse”, and that leaves it open to broad interpretation. There is case law on this matter, so we have a decent understanding of what is reasonable.

This is the Law:

“A driver of a hackney carriage standing at any of the stands for hackney carriages appointed by the commissioners, or in any street, who refuses or neglects, without reasonable excuse, to drive such carriage to any place within the prescribed distance, or the distance to be appointed by any byelaw of the commissioners, not exceeding the prescribed distance to which he is directed to drive by the person hiring or wishing to hire such carriage, shall for every such offence be liable to a penalty not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.”

Plates on the Vehicle

We have seen an increase in complaints about drivers using their vehicles before they have received their licensed plates, in many cases linking to vehicle transfers and new vehicles. If you use your hackney carriage vehicle without your vehicle plates you are breaching a licensing condition and are likely uninsured

Case law has established that once licensed as a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle, the vehicle remains a licensed vehicle at all times until the licence expires, is surrendered, is suspended or is revoked. Even if a licensed vehicle is being used for private purposes, it must still meet all the requirements of a licensed vehicle, for example displaying a licence plate, complying with all requirements of this Policy and being driven by a licensed driver.

By not displaying your plate correctly drivers will be in breach of their licence conditions and due to this they will not be insured.

All drivers must display their licence plates on their hire vehicles; this is a part of the conditions of the licence granted.

Card payments

A reminder to all drivers from 3rd May 2023, all licensed Hackney Carriages vehicles, must have available at all times, an electronic device that allows contactless or card payments to be made. The driver must ask the passenger if they require a receipt. If the passenger requires a receipt, the driver must provide one which accurately states the time and date of the journey, driver number and fare.

From 3rd May 2023 all licensed Private Hire vehicles, must ensure at all times, they can provide a means for passengers to pay for fares by card or as a contactless payment. This can be, but is not limited to, electronic card payment devices or operator websites and apps.

Using your meter

Hackney Carriages should make sure that, when carrying out a journey that starts and ends in the district, pick up and drop of point are in the St Albans City and District Council area, you use your meter. You must charge the metre price or below. If you are completing the journey for an Operator and the charge is higher than the meter, you cannot charge the higher amount.

If the Journey starts or finishes outside the district, pick up and drop of point are outside the St Albans City and District Council area, you can, with agreement of the hirer, not use the meter. It's Important you get agreement from the hirer and there is an agreed fixed price.

Taxi Operation

The licensing team have been carrying out spot operations over the past year. We held a taxi operation on Friday 25th November. We were pleased to see many drivers out and about working.

While the vast majority of the drivers we spoke to were compliant, there were a few drivers who were sent home for not having their driver badges present. We can take further enforcement action when required to do so, however we would like to avoid this.

We would like to take this time to remind everyone that they are required to have their driver badges visible to members of the public.

On Friday 9th June 2023, a second operation was carried out at Harpenden Station from 6am until 8:30am. In that time we witnessed multiple St Albans Licensed Hackneys carrying out work. There was one out of area vehicle (TFL) that dropped off, it didn't pick up. It did drive on to the rank, it was a driver formally licensed with us. They have since been written to, and advised that they cannot go on the rank as it appears as though they are for hire.

On Wednesday 14th June 2023, another operation was carried out at Harpenden station from 4pm until 6pm. The station was a lot busier. At multiple times there were people waiting for a taxi, these were all picked up by Hackney Carriages. In the time we were there, there was 2 out of area vehicles (TFL). Both were booked by persons via an app, making them legal pick ups.

Hackney Carriage Fares

You can collect a new fare card from the Council reception, once you have had your meter updated please ensure you display the new fare card as per the requirements.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that you must charge what is on your meter or less, you cannot ever charge more. This will mean you will need to charge the old meter rates, until such a time as you have the new rates programmed in. Please keep in mind that you should only use Tariff 5 when carrying 5-8 passengers.

Driver News

If there is anything you would like to see included within our next newsletter please get in touch with the Licensing Team on licensing@stalbans.gov.uk