



St Albans Licensing

Newsletter

November 2021

Transport in Winter

In winter, it's important we look after ourselves, and the people in our lives who might need a little extra support.

Some people have mobility problems, or are living in particularly isolated locations with limited or infrequent public transport appreciate all of the help that St Albans Hackneys Carriage and Private Hire drivers provide them all through the year.

Help make sure everyone can get out and about safely. When it's icy or wet outside, it's easier to slip and fall. So helping to customers in and out the vehicle could make a big difference.

Payments

Cash and card

Where we are as a society right now, more business have moved to card only payments due to the pandemic. Many people have stopped carrying cash and more people are paying with card. If you do not have a card machine or yours is not working, please check with passengers prior to the commencement of their journey on how they wish to pay. Please refrain from taking passengers to a cashpoint in order for them to take out cash to pay for their journey (unless a passenger has specifically requested this).

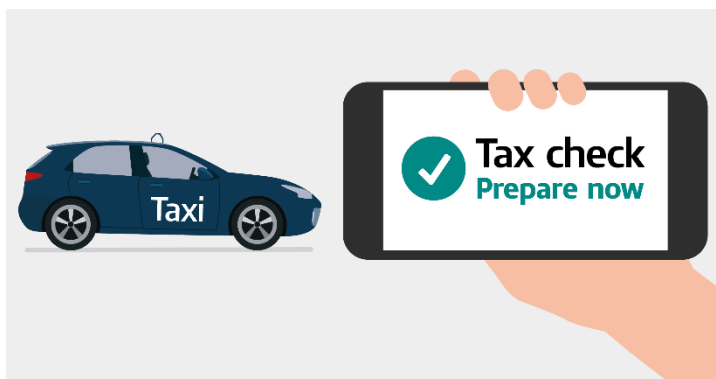
Dealing with non-payments

If someone refuses to pay a fare, you should never put yourself in danger trying to stop them leaving the vehicle. Always stay in the vehicle where you can call for help if an incident takes place. If the person is threatening you or is becoming violent then call 999.

If you ever feel unsafe or unsure about taking a job, refuse it. But please be mindful that it is an offence for a licensed driver to refuse to take a journey without a reasonable excuse. The fact the customer is drunk or the route distance is too short is not an excuse. You may wish to consider asking for payment before starting the journey.

Tax checks on licence renewal applications

The government is putting in place new tax requirements for applications to certain licences. This is supported by a new digital service, being developed by HMRC. It helps people in the hackney carriage and private hire industries to complete a new tax check.



Most people are registered to pay tax and this is about ensuring everyone pays the tax they should, creating a level playing field for the compliant majority. HMRC are working with industry bodies to make this as straightforward as possible. The check should take a few minutes every few years and is simply to confirm that someone is appropriately registered for tax.

You'll need to complete a tax check when you renew your licence as a:

- driver of a hackney carriage
- driver of a private hire vehicle
- private hire vehicle operator

You will be able to complete this tax check on GOV.UK, through your Government Gateway account. You will only need to answer a few questions to tell HMRC how you pay any tax that may be due on income you earn from your licensed trade. If you do not already have a Government Gateway account, you can sign up on GOV.UK.

The tax check should only take a few minutes. There'll be guidance on GOV.UK and anyone who needs extra support will be able to complete the tax check by phone through HMRC's customer helpline.

When you've completed the tax check, you'll get a code. You must give this code to the licensing authority. The licensing body cannot proceed with your licence application or renewal until the tax check is completed and they've received the code. We will only receive confirmation from HMRC that you've completed the tax check, we will not have access to information about your tax affairs.

Application forms

We have had a number of renewal applications recently, where applicants have sent in an old application form. Please ensure you submit the current application form when renewing your licence. The current application forms are always available on our website and can also be collected from reception.

If you submit an old application form it is likely that this application form will not be valid and you will need to complete the current application form.

Luton airport

We've had some reports that St Albans licensed hackney carriage vehicles have been seen waiting at Luton Airport. Hackney carriages licensed by St Albans Council cannot ply for hire at Luton Airport. We would like to remind you that you should only wait at Luton Airport if you have a booking.

We recommend hackney carriage drivers to keep a record of any bookings they have for any work completed outside of the district. As you are aware, we often receive allegations of plying for hire outside of the licensed area. If you keep a record of your bookings, this will mean you will be able to provide evidence that you are in an area completing a journey lawfully.

Face coverings



The Department of Transport has extended the offer of contingency face coverings for passengers and workers to all transport bodies at zero cost until 31st December 2021. This is to reflect the continued recommendation that people wear face coverings in crowded areas such as public transport, as well as to help reduce transmission rates during the winter period.

St Albans Council have a supply of face coverings available to drivers and operators to request. These masks are for driver and passenger use. If you would like a supply of face coverings please contact us on the below email:

Licensing@stalbans.gov.uk

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Update Service

All drivers are now required to sign up to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) update service.

Drivers who have renewed and have not signed up to the DBS update service are required to complete a new DBS check by 31 October 2022. If this applies to you we will be sending out letters in the near future, to confirm a DBS is required.

As of 31 October 2022, if drivers have failed to sign up to the DBS update service, their driver licence will be suspended until such a time as the requirements are met. If the licence is suspended, a driver will not be able to carry out any work or drive a licensed vehicle for personal use. Please ensure you have signed up to the DBS update service and notified the Licensing Team by 31 October 2022.

Events

Sunday 21 November is the Christmas Cracker Event, which means it will be incredibly busy in the city, but more importantly St Peters St will be closed for the entire day and the taxi rank will be relocated.

The rank will be relocated to civic close, this will be for Hackney Carriage licensed vehicles only. There will be a taxi marshal on the rank to ensure its correct use.



Other event days for the city are the Vintage Market – Sunday 5 December, Farmers Market – Sunday 12 December and the Christmas Charter Market which will run every day from Monday 13 December – Friday 24 December. Whilst there are no road closures for these days, we would expect the city to be busier than usual.

You can find out more information about what's on: www.enjoystalbans.com