

TAXIS ALLOWED TINTED GLASS

Taxi drivers in Cardiff have been told they may have tinted glass on the vehicles - if CCTV is installed. According to Wales-Online, Cardiff council public protection committee heard taxi drivers in the city are having to pay up to £2,000 to replace tinted glass on new vehicles to comply with council rules. The committee was asked to remove a council condition for all Cardiff's private hire and hackney carriage vehicles - which stated that windscreens must allow at least 75 per

cent of light to pass through, with all other windows allowing 70 per cent. Councillors have voted to allow tinted glass in new vehicles if it has been installed by the manufacturers. The move would mean taxi drivers would no longer have to pay to replace tinted glass on new vehicles. But taxi drivers must install CCTV in their vehicles if they want to keep glass which is darker than allowed currently. Councillors passed the new measure put forward by commit-

tee member Cllr Adrian Robson, despite some concerns about safety. *Mmmm... How is it that so many local authority conditions of licence override Construction and Use regulations? It has been in the C&U regs since 1986 that windows behind the door pillars do not have to adhere to the 70 per cent light restriction. Never mind - the compromise of mandatory CCTV will amount to a quarter of the cost of replacing standard spec windows, and provide driver safety as well. - Ed.*

ALLERDALE:

DRIVERS SET TO FACE KNOWLEDGE TESTS

Taxi drivers are set to face a Knowledge-style test to ensure customers are given the best service. The Times and Star reports that Allerdale Council's licensing committee voted to bring in the test to improve the service provided to passengers and reassure them about safety and security when using taxis. The electronic test will form part of the application process for new taxi licence holders. Existing drivers will be required to pass it within 12 months of its introduction. It will cover topics including general knowledge about the area, relevant

legislation on areas such as safeguarding and disabilities, and the Highway Code. It will also cover basic numeracy, general licence conditions and taxi legislation. The unanimous vote followed a consultation with licensed drivers, vehicle proprietors and private hire operators, which took place from May 16 to June 4. Eighty-three responses to the consultation disagreed with the introduction of the test. Fourteen agreed. People in favour said it would help ensure a more professional service, and ensure drivers

had a good knowledge of the area. But people against said the test could add further to the cost of a licence and said existing drivers should be exempt. The test will be introduced once a company has been appointed to run it. *Mmmm... So what was the purpose of a consultation if the licensing committee took absolutely no notice of the overwhelming majority who voted against the test? Sardar v Watford upheld that if consultation is to take place, amongst other things it must take into consideration the responses... don't think that happened here. - Ed.*

RULES ON TINTED GLASS MAY CHANGE

Sheffield City Council is to reconsider its policy on tinted windows in taxis and PHVs. The council's current taxi licensing policy is the same as Cardiff, opposite. Self-applied tints are also banned under council regulations. But according to the Star, a report to the licensing committee states that with

newer cars, rear windows are typically darker allowing only 65 per cent light density. The report asks the council to consider the impact of this shift and explore options including forcing drivers to replace windows at their own expense, or installing CCTV in vehicles as an alternative. In making any deci-

sion, councillors must take into account protecting the public, safeguarding children and the vulnerable, and preventing crime, disorder and public nuisance, the report states. It will be considered at a meeting of Sheffield City Council's licensing committee on Thursday, July 26 at Sheffield Town Hall.

LIVERPOOL:

LAWS TO INCLUDE UPFRONT CHARGING BAN

Liverpool's black cab drivers could be set to come under a new set of rules that would include a ban on charging customers up front - an issue that has been repeatedly raised in the city.

The council's licensing committee were to consider creating a number of new byelaws for black cabs at their next meeting. The Liverpool Echo reports that drivers would be stopped from demanding any kind of upfront payment from passengers travelling in Liverpool or that end within four miles of the council border.

The planned move from the council comes after a campaign by the Echo which highlighted how a number of black cab drivers are continuing to demand large fares

from customers ahead of journeys - rather than using the taximeter. It appears the council have listened to these concerns.

Along with the clamp-down on charging up front, the council is planning to bring in a number of other new byelaws. Passengers could get increased rights when it comes to paying, with all drivers who have a card machine being required to use it and supply a receipt if asked.

The use of e-cigarettes by drivers will also be banned under one of the new rules. And wheelchair users would be the beneficiary of a rule requiring all drivers to be fully aware of how to use the wheelchair ramp in their cars, as well as other features.

Once debated at a meeting on July 10

the rules would go to the full council to be voted on.

It comes as Liverpool City Council continues a crack-down on black cab and PHV drivers who flout rules, with prosecutions of individual drivers continuing. The council wants to go a step further and introduce a range of specific new byelaws to tackle the issues affecting the trade.

Mmmm... Anything debated and then voted on by the full council would have to be either policy or conditions of licensing. Byelaws (which only apply to the conduct of hackney carriage drivers, not private hire) must be ratified by the Secretary of State; this can be a lengthy process, and does not usually cover the likes of a ban on e-cigarettes. - Ed.

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