

1 COPY SENT TO
LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Mr. G Johnson,
10 Watlands Avenue,
Wolstanton,
Newcastle U Lyme,
Staffs.
ST5 8AS
25th January 2015

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you regarding the proposed Taxi Licensing Policy 2014-2019, with particular attention to the paragraphs regarding vehicles considered to be of "Exceptional Condition". (Page 16)

I have held a licence to drive taxis in the Borough of Newcastle Under Lyme continuously since 1991. During this time the car industry has seen many changes in terms of quality, safety and durability; the taxi licensing policy, however, does not reflect this in favour of suggesting that cars older than eight years may be in some way inadequate when it comes to serving the general public. I would like to suggest that this is outdated, unnecessary and unfair.

The suggestion is that for any vehicle over eight years old, in addition to the council test (designed solely to ensure vehicles are fit for purpose) a further test must also be undertaken by either the RAC or AA in order to ensure that the vehicle is road safe. For my current vehicle, this would mean my incurring an extra cost of at least £202 annually.

It is no secret, I'm sure you'll agree, that local bus companies are allowed to run vehicles which are over twenty years old; are these vehicles not intended to transport the paying public in the same way that taxis do? Why and how is it then that busses of a certain age can be deemed as fit for purpose when much newer and more modern vehicles are subject to stringent and costly tests before being given the green light.

As, of course, you are aware, there have been fundamental changes to the taxi industry in Newcastle Borough for example the delimiting of the number of Hackney Carriages on the road, causing hardship to already long serving and reliable drivers. No regard appears to have been given to how drivers are able to make a reasonable living in a town now saturated with taxis. And it would appear this latest proposal has been made in the same vein and will only serve to cause more hardship and in fact unrest in an already fractured local business. I fail to see the need for an additional test – surely this suggests that one of the tests is inadequate and therefore an unnecessary cost. In times of austerity, as councils are so keen to draw upon when it is in their favour, has any thought been given to the hardship inflicted on taxi drivers and their families as a result of unjustified and flawed proposals?

The council test has indeed been in operation for many years and as far as I am aware served the Borough well. This insistence of a further test by an outside organisation will once again prove detrimental to local people and so the very Borough we work hard to serve. Some faith needs to be invested in the engineers presently testing vehicles for the council. This would prove fruitful not only for these men and women but for the Borough per se as locally earned money is being put back into the Borough and not into outside and much larger, wealthier organisations. A little loyalty often goes a long way.

I ardently believe that we have a duty to serve the public well and that vehicle safety is of paramount importance. Furthermore, I take pride in ensuring that my vehicle is not only safe but clean and presentable. However, I do not feel that in addition to the statutory MOT required by law to ensure a vehicle is road worthy and the council test, designed specifically to approve a vehicle as fit for the purpose of transporting the general public, the already squeezed taxi driver should be expected to pay out for another test. This is non-sensical and try as I have, I cannot understand how you can reasonably justify this.

I await your response.

Yours faithfully,

Gordon Johnson