

Subject: Licensing Unit Update **Status:** For Publication

Report to: Licensing Committee **Date:** 17th October 2006

Section Head: Head of Legal & Democratic Services **Report Author:** Susan Chadwick, Licensing Manager

Portfolio Holder: Leader of the Council

Key Decision: NO

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To advise members of appeals, hearings and other licensing issues arising from the previous meeting of the Licensing Committee.

1.2 To request that members note the report.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of the report.

3. BACKGROUND

Taxi Licensing Appeals

Upheld indicates that the decision of the Licensing Committee was upheld. Dismissed indicates that the decision of the Licensing Committee was overturned.

Name	Court Decision	Costs
Nasar Ramzan	Upheld	£100
Saqib Younis	Dismissed	None

Taxi MOT Tests

Period = 30th August 2006 – 3rd October 2006
(includes new, 6 monthlies and annual tests)

No. of Tests	Passes	Failures	% Failure
34	24	10	29.4%

Failure summary

Name	No. Failures
Owner Drivers	3
Red Baron	1
Arrow	1
Bacup Taxis	4
AK Taxis	1

DSA assessments

Figures in brackets indicate the total for the same period 2005.

Period	Monthly Totals		Cumulative Totals	
	Total Tests	Pass Rate	Total Tests	Pass Rate
March 2006	11	9% (0%)	11	9%
April 2006	11	55% (50%)	22	32%
May 2006	9	44% (67%)	31	35%
June 2006	12	42% (38%)	43	37%
Period Totals	43	37% (43%)		

The national average for the period March 2006 to June 2006 is 49%.

Hackney Carriage News

Please refer to Appendix A for the article reproduced from the September 2006 issue of TAXI "talk".

Licensing

Temporary Event Notices (TENs)

The Licensing Unit have received 13 TENs for the period 30th August 2006 to 3rd October 2006. Of these, 6 were for extensions or additions to current licensable activities on licensed premises and 7 were for events taking place on premises where there is no Premises Licence in force.

Pub & Club Watch Initiatives

This scheme has been extended to all licensed premises and a poor response has been received. There may be some lack of clarity regarding the benefits of the scheme and it is quite possible that "off-licences" and similar premises do not fully comprehend the role that they can play within this. Pubwatch schemes have been proven to work very well and it is reliant on all premises actively participating. Whilst the scheme is administered and monitored by nominated licensees, the Licensing Unit work very closely with the scheme to offer support and guidance where appropriate.

Licensing Act 2003 Facts & Figures

We have done some DPS variations and licence transfer analysis and this has produced some interesting figures. There are currently 242 alcohol licensed premises, excluding clubs, in the Borough. We are now in the 10th month of the first year of the new licensing laws and one must bear in mind that we have another 2 months to go before the first year is completed.

A total of 83 valid applications to vary the DPS have been received during this period. This equates to 59 premises having changed their DPS, some more than once and this represents 24% of premises which have varied the DPS. With a further 2 months to go, we expect that this figure can easily rise to around 36%.

A total of 35 valid applications to transfer the licence have been received. This represents 15% of premises which have transferred licence holders. We expect that at the end of the next 2 months, this figure could rise to 20%.

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Appendix A – TAXI “talk” article	Attached

55 Local Authorities Have Said They Will Accept EU Drivers

Hundreds of central European 'wanabee' taxi drivers are being lined up to work in Plymouth under a training scheme run by city based Taxifast. For the past two years the firm has been recruiting drivers from the Czech Republic and already employs about 100 Europeans - a quarter of its workforce. But apparently, as demand grows in Plymouth the firm says it needs to bring in 100 more foreigners now, just to meet existing requirements. Ten are being brought to Plymouth every month, and hundreds could be imported.

The firm is expanding its training operation in the Czech capital, Prague. Working with British recruitment firm Dunross, it is targeting Polish workers to form the next generation of Plymouth's private hire drivers. Slovaks are also enrolling. The workers often graduate in professional jobs can earn five times their present salaries by working in the UK as Taxi or Private Hire drivers.

The training programme is, by all accounts, being rolled out to other Private Hire and Taxi companies right across the country including London. The Plymouth based newspaper 'The Evening Herald' visited Taxifast's Prague training school; it found 18 trainees - 13 poles and 5 Slovaks being prepared to drive private hire vehicles in Plymouth, London and Inverness. Last month it began training foreign drivers for Swindon and Yeovil too! Firms from Portsmouth, Nottingham, Barrow, Cambridge, Oxford and other towns are prepared to travel to the Czech Republic to view the Dunross/Taxifast operation. Indeed, 55 local Authorities have said they will accept EU drivers.

However, other Taxi and Private Hire drivers are understandably unhappy and don't agree with the scheme. Chris Wheeler, manager of Crownhill Taxi Services Ltd, said: "I don't believe there is a need for it, we don't have any problem whatsoever recruiting new drivers here."

Les Palmer, Company Secretary of Silverline Taxis, commented: "We would prefer to have local drivers working for a local company, for local people. What Taxifast do is up to them?"

Taxifast and Dunross have produced a DVD, which includes an information pack and is being circulated to every major taxi and private hire operation across the UK. Apparently, Sunderland and

Newcastle said that if they found 500 drivers tomorrow it would help to cope with existing demand and it is understood that a firm in Swindon wants to import 35 European drivers a month!

"City jobs can provide cash beyond their wildest dreams"

While the UK's Taxi and Private Hire drivers work excessive hours to earn a decent living, Pole, Danuta Gutkowska and Jacek Szymanski can't wait to get to Plymouth, and earn the megabucks that they've heard about. Central European workers can earn up to five times their current salary by becoming Taxi and Private Hire drivers in the UK and make themselves a new fantastic life here!

Jacek, 39 who is married with 4 children,

Both people answered adverts in the Polish press, enrolled and flew to Prague. However, Taxifast won't take just anyone. The company doesn't have a high opinion of the taxi drivers already working in the Czech Republic; they are seen as poor at driving and customer care. "We want new people that we can mould," said Mr Derek Merry, Taxifast's head of European recruitment. "We are customer orientated we can afford to be selective."

Recruits must speak fluent English, have no criminal record or convictions, have a clean driving licence and still pass a driving assessment test, also a medical before they are accepted. Even during training they must be clean-shaven or have a tidy beard, and dress in a uniform of Taxifast or whatever firm they will join. Taxifast will train anyone aged



said salaries were very low in Poland, where he earns just £500 per month. He said: "I was told we could earn £3,000 a month, or at least £2,000 (as a taxi driver) it certainly is a big difference. If I'm successful in the UK I would like to bring my family over as well."

Danuta, a mother of two and the only woman currently on Taxifast's Prague school was attracted by the cash, but also the chance to work with 'friendly people.' She wants to bring her 12 and 13 year-old daughters to Plymouth, and said: "I want to live there permanently. I have read about it on the Internet; it's an interesting place."

over 25 years, below that age insurance premiums are prohibitive. Training is free, but they pay £5.00 per night for accommodation in Prague. Taxifast pays for flights to the UK. When they continue learning in Plymouth, they are not paid, but receive free food and board in one of two houses, which Taxifast supplies. When the foreign recruits qualify and have worked for a while many will buy houses and cars in Plymouth, and bring all their families over as well. Mr Merry said that Taxifast helps them to find jobs for girlfriends and wives; he wants them to be happy, earn good money and stay in the UK.