

Scottish Government to investigate taxi licensing



Tighter controls on taxi licensing to crack down on rogue firms and support responsible businesses are being consulted on.

The Scottish Government today launched a consultation on the plans in response to concerns about the influence of criminality within the trade and the working of the current licensing regime.

The proposals offer a range of changes to the current regime which aim to tighten up the licensing process for taxi and private hire car drivers, vehicles and booking offices.

Proposals include:

- Allowing local authorities to restrict the number of private hire cars and to require testing of private hire car drivers, for example in knowledge of the area
- Convening a working group to consider the creation of updated licensing conditions for taxi and private hire car drivers, vehicles and booking offices
- Extending the licensing scheme to cover businesses with fewer than four cars and without offices, and to ensure vehicles and drivers used on contract are included within the licensing regime
- Requiring applicant for any level of licence – driver, vehicle, booking office – to prove they are “fit and proper”
- Exploring options to enhance enforcement, including potentially a statutory basis for licensing enforcement officers.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said: "These proposals should make a significant step towards addressing concerns raised about the need to make improvements to the current licensing regime. While the vast majority of taxi firms operate within the law, this will also address the influence of criminal groups and individuals within the taxi and private hire trades.

"The taxi and private hire sectors are very important to the Scottish economy and it is essential that they are regulated to the appropriate standards, so that the public is protected from harm while using the service and the industry is protected from infiltration by organised crime.

"Our views are not fixed and we are committed to an open and productive discussion on these proposals.

"Ultimately we want to bring all drivers and firms up to the correct standards to benefit people and businesses who make use of and rely on these services."

Bill McIntosh of the Scottish Taxi Federation said: "The Scottish Taxi Federation has long been calling for changes to the licensing regime so we welcome this consultation. Passengers will want to know that they are being served by responsible businesses, and taxi firms and drivers also need more protection from rogue elements, and assurance that the licensing regime is consistent in its aims across Scotland."