

Midlothian taxi drivers under siege

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

Taxi drivers have asked for help in a row over rogue operators taking their business.

Claims that drivers who are licensed to operate in neighbouring East Lothian and Edinburgh areas are picking up passengers in Midlothian will be made to Midlothian Council's Police and Fire and Rescue Board on Monday.

In a letter submitted on behalf of Midlothian's Taxi and Private Hire Trade, councillors are warned local operators could be put out of business by the rogue traders.

It says: "We implore the council to act, as Scottish law is being broken on a daily basis within the constituency of Midlothian, which as the fastest growing authority in Scotland, is certainly not the type of news we want put in the public domain.

"The public require and should deserve the backing of their local authority on these matters as what will it take to happen before action is taken?

"An accident? Fraud? Or worse, a crime of a sexual nature? Single women after a night out jumping into a vehicle that isn't licensed and who knows what may happen without any tracking mechanisms or recourse?

“The introduction of preventative measures, therefore being proactive instead of reactive is required.”

In their appeal for support, taxi drivers express frustration that when drivers and operators who are crossing the local authority boundary lines are reported to Midlothian Council’s licensing officers, they are told it is a police matter.

They say when they raise it with Police Scotland, they are told it is a licensing matter.

They say: “Strong enforcement must be enacted within Midlothian immediately and certainly, along with the proper agreements between each local authority and Police Scotland, to give our trade some respite.

“If the out of authority vehicles are allowed to ply their trade with no repercussions, then the impact on the hackney trade could be disastrous due to the Midlothian vehicles losing work constantly and therefore exiting the trade.”

The letter also calls for a Taxi Examination Centre to be set up in Midlothian adding it would be supported by drivers in the county.