

Taxi trade in Midlothian to be discussed with police and council

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

Police will meet with representatives of the taxi trade and council in Midlothian to address concerns about rogue drivers.

Midlothian's taxi and Private Hire trade have claimed they are losing business to operators from Edinburgh and East Lothian who are illegally picking up passengers on their patch.

Representing the industry at a meeting of Midlothian Council's Police and Fire and Rescue Board this week, Angela Reid told councillors the activities were threatening the livelihood of drivers licensed to work in the county.

And she said drivers from outside the authority area were seen parked in car parks waiting for jobs in breach of the law.

She said Edinburgh drivers, in particular, had been coming into the county and parking up while waiting for a job adding that attempts to tackle the issue led to frustration with police saying it is a licensing issue and licensing officers saying it is a police matter.

She said: "No one seems to know who deals with it."

A letter to the board said it was both Edinburgh and East Lothian drivers and operators who were crossing the borders however the board was also told by legal adviser Alan Turpie that the legislation was difficult to police.

Taxi and private hire firms are able to travel across local authority boundaries if they have a passenger who is travelling from their own area, travelling back to their area or part of the journey back.

It is against the law to operate solely in another area unless they can prove they are heading back to their licensing authority area and any driver convicted can face a fine of up to £2,500.

Mr Turpie said: "There are ways in which these cars could be legally travelling through Midlothian, the difficult the is trying to police it."

Chief Superintendent John McKenzie, divisional commander for Lothians and Scottish Borders, told the meeting he was "not convinced we are the only people who have a role in this".

It was agreed representatives of the taxi trade would sit down with police and council officers to discuss the issue and look at ways to resolve it.