

Maximum taxis fares to increase by 9.5%

Taxi fares in Edinburgh are set to be hiked by 9.5 per cent from next month – while the charge for being picked up or dropped off at Edinburgh Airport will rise to £6.

The council agreed new maximum taxi meter rates and increased additional costs for airport pick-ups and drop-offs on Tuesday, November 12.

It comes despite taxi drivers warning the council it would “drive more black cabs off the road” and be the “final nail in coffin” for the Hackney trade due to competition from often cheaper private hire firms such as Uber.

Regulatory convener Councillor Neil Ross admitted the hike “may seem like a lot in these relatively low-inflation times”. He said this reflected higher costs to operators of maintaining and replacing vehicles.

However the 9.5 per cent increase agreed is considerably lower than the 20 per cent applied last time maximum fares were revised in February 2023.

The latest change means from Monday, December 9 a three-mile trip between 6am and 6pm on a weekday would cost at least £11.50, up from £10.50 – unless an operator opts not to charge the maximum fare allowed.

A journey of the same distance but between 6pm and 6am on a weekday, or on the weekend, would cost at least £12.82, up

from £11.70.

A cap on the additional charge levied on passengers being picked-up or dropped-off at Edinburgh Airport will also rise from £5 to £6.

Cllr Ross said: "I appreciate that a 9.5 per cent increase may seem like a lot in these relatively low-inflation times. Nevertheless, given the task set out for us by the regulations around this, we ought and are reflecting increased costs for the trade and we're also taking into account the increase and very substantial cost of replacement vehicles – particularly replacement electric vehicles which is what we would like to see. As we know this is a maximum set of charges, and charges below that are perfectly legal."

A report said: "The fare tariff stipulates the maximum that may be charged, and a lower amount may be charged at the discretion of any person providing a taxi service."

It added this was "relevant to considering any representations to the effect that the proposed tariffs would result in operators providing a service which is too expensive for the market to sustain".

Comments to this effect were received as part of a consultation, which received 52 responses. "Approximately 25 per cent of those who responded were broadly in favour of the proposals," the report said. "However, several respondents suggested that a smaller percentage increase would be more appropriate than that proposed. Approximately 69 per cent of those who responded to the survey were against the proposals."

One respondent supported higher fares "as everything more expensive nowadays".

Others claiming to be taxi drivers warned it would be a "mistake" and "drive more black cabs off the road".

One said: "The taxi is already expensive and is affecting the trade and also the competition from Uber who are offering ridiculous fares, so in my opinion it won't be welcomed by the costumers which will damage the trade."

Going a step further, a different objector said approving the new maximum fares would be "taxi suicide for the trade," adding "The last increase was bad enough and turned many away from black cabs.

"I've recently sold-up as I see a decline in the black cab trade with Uber main impact so a 9.5% rise I'd say is the final nail in coffin for the Hackney trade, far to expensive to buy new taxis and insure now."

But one of the more supportive respondents described higher rates as "very well deserved due to high vehicle and insurance prices".

The report said: "Having reviewed the responses the directorate is of the view that there is insufficient material therein to justify not implementing the increased fares as recommended.

"Therefore, it is recommended that the proposed taxi tariff is agreed and implemented without any further changes."

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter