

Our ref: RJS/mae

16 July 2010



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Berkshire
SL5 0NZ

Dear [REDACTED]

Signs on Licensed Vehicles

The Council presently has a policy which permits the placing of signs upon the door or roof of the vehicle as long as they meet certain requirements. I would draw your attention to Section 18 of the Guidance Book. This book can be viewed on line at:

www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/environment/env-licensing/env-hackney-carriage-licences.

The Council has been approached by the Bracknell Licensed Taxi Forum, following the Unmet Demand Survey, and they have asked the Council to consider making it compulsory for all private hire vehicles to have a sign on the side of the vehicle which includes words such as "Advance Booking Only".

The compulsory use of signs of this nature is common throughout the UK. There are a number of reasons for this, including:

1. Most private hire vehicles are indistinguishable from normal privately owned vehicles particularly in low or poor light. There have been many reported occasions of unlicensed drivers and vehicles (i) touting for business and, in some very unfortunate cases, (ii) using the vehicle as an opportunity to entice a vulnerable person into the vehicle.
2. Public knowledge of the difference between a Hackney Carriage (taxi) and a Private Hire vehicle is not always as good as we would hope and unfortunately there are some unscrupulous private hire drivers who take advantage of this and ply for hire. This puts at risk the safety of passengers.
3. There is also "poaching" of rides within the private hire trade itself. This occurs where a number of operators have despatched vehicles to meet bookings at a busy location and other private hire vehicles poach the booking prior to the arrival of the booked vehicle. This is possible due to a lack of information on a vehicle to enable the customer to correctly identify the vehicle booked.

The Council is seeking the views of all members of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade on the following:

2/...

ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Time Square, Market Street, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1JD
T: 01344 352000 F: 01344 352555 Minicom: 01344 352045 www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk

- Is it necessary or appropriate for a condition to be applied to a Private Hire licence requiring a sign on the vehicle stating:
[REDACTED]
 - (i) the name of the operator
 - (ii) the telephone number of the operator
 - (iii) the licensing authority's logo
 - (iv) the licence number
 - (v) the words "Advanced booking only" or "No booking, no ride"?
- Should the sign be permanent or removable, i.e. stuck on or magnetic?
- Are there any grounds for a vehicle to have a dispensation from such a con [REDACTED]

Officers would be pleased to receive your responses by 1 September 2010, which will then be reported to a meeting of the Licensing and Safety Committee for consideration.

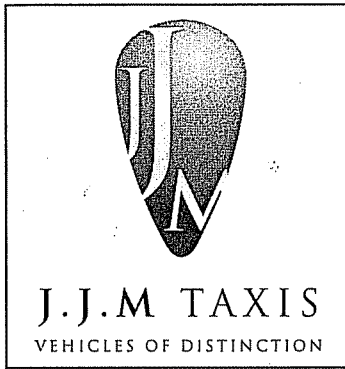
If you have any other comments or observations you wish to make on this issue that you do not feel have been addressed within this letter please feel free to include them within your response.

I look forward to hearing from you either by writing to the address on this letter or by e-mail to licence.all@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully



R J Sexton
Head of Trading Standards and Licensing



JJM Taxis,
Popeswood Garage,
London Road
Binfield,
Berks,
RG42 4AA
(01344)455355
Fax: (01344)306777
bookings@jjmtaxis.com

27th of July 2010

Dear Niamh Kelly,

With regards the question of signs for private hire vehicles, we at JJM Taxis have long been proponents of them. As you may be aware we recently had a long discussion with the council about them which ended with our having to redesign our signs as the council deemed they could be mistaken for a hackney carriage as a response to our having our company name, JJM Taxis, on. Therefore whilst we are happy for them to have the name of the operator and telephone number we would oppose the inclusion of the Bracknell Forrest logo as Rob Sexton promised me that after our, in my opinion, unnecessary redesign that we wouldn't be forced into another redesign straight away, which is what this would be.

Whilst that is a specific quarrel we have, the inclusion of a license number is totally unacceptable as it would require individual signs to be produced for each car at great expense to us for no explainable gain.

It should be mentioned that in respect to the logo and license number they are already on display in multiple locations on each car.

With regards the words "advanced booking only" they are fine and we would much prefer them to the far more asinine "no booking, no ride".

It was mentioned to me that the issue of roof signs was raised. Given that our problems with the council have all been around them saying that our door signs incorrectly conveyed that it was a hackney carriage and could lead to customer confusion, it seems strange that we should now consider something which would definitely do that and should it pass we would take it as a personal slap in the face after our prior problems.

Yours truly,

Mr. A. K. Ball

JJM Taxis & Zulu Cars Ltd

From: Licence All
To: Niamh Kelly
Date: 28/07/2010 09:29
Subject: Fwd: Signs on Licensed Vehicles

>>> "ian.thornton@tiscali.co.uk" <ian.thornton@tiscali.co.uk> 27/07/2010 19:45 >>>
Dear Mr Sexton,

I am sceptical about the need for private hire vehicles to have extra signage in addition to the rear plate and window badge. In nine years of operating I have only once witnessed an instance of a 'possibly'(not confirmed) unlicensed driver attempting a pick up. I have not witnessed any private hire drivers in that time plying for hire, nor have I 'poached' or been the victim of deliberate 'poaching of rides'.

However, I accept that some local authorities require this signage and suspect that there is a momentum in Bracknell for this to happen. If this is the case, then I believe the signage should be removable. There is a dispensation for vehicles largely involved in executive/corporate work not to display a taxi plate. In the same fashion, many private hire drivers conduct a good percentage of their work doing corporate/executive jobs and take pride in the appearance of their vehicles. It should be acceptable for any new signage introduced to be removable when engaged in corporate/executive work.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Thornton

MR C BUNN
31 WHEATLEY

29.7.10

ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE
& COMMUNITIES
RECEIVED
BLACKNELL
BORO
RG128UF

20 JUL 2010

BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL

DEAR MR SEXTON,

In Reply to your Letter 16 July 10

Passed To:

(Private Hire/Hackney Signs)

I In fact tried this a few years ago I found the following things Against it.

1. THE SIGN Had a Reverse affect enabling Private Hire to show they were more Like a Hackney.
2. When Sub Contracting ie a CAR doing a Job for me (PRIVATE HIRE) (C.B. CARS) while attached to another firm ie (JTM) and carrying these Signs the Customer would think he was bawling and reluctant to get in.
3. At a time of deep recession these signs are not cheap and just another cost we would struggle to find.

I feel poaching has fallen to nearly zero in our Borough due to the fact work being so slack. Cars arrive a lot quicker so eliminating this.

If A Sign was Inforced upon us which I hope it doesn't happen it has to be Magnetic and just operators NAME and Advanced Bookings only with 'no dispensation' BFBC Logo

Yours faithfully



C.F. BUNN

J & S Chauffeur Services

Airports.Weddings.All Occasions

8 Bruton Way,
Forest Park,
Bracknell,
Berkshire.
RG12 0GJ
Mobile: 0771 806 0467
Telephone: 01344 649359
Email: jschauffeurs@aol.com

ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE
& COMMUNITIES
RECEIVED

2 - AUG 2010

BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL

DATE 29.07.2010 Sent To:

Your Ref:RJS/M.A.E
Dear Mr Sexton

With regard to your letter dated 16 July 2010 in connection with signs on licensed vehicles. We would like to comment and raise a few points on your letter.

On point 1

My car clearly shows a private hire badge on both front and rear windows so I believe is distinguishable from privately owned cars.

For unlicensed drivers and vehicles we totally agree that these people/cars should not be able to operate. We also feel that the fees each year that the licensed drivers pay some of this fee should be nominated and fund to get these people/cars off the roads.

As of course as well as them being unlawfully operating they are also taking paying fares from both the correctly licensed Taxis and Private Hire companies.

JS Chauffeur Service has never touted for business

On point 2

The Public know that a Taxi has a sign both on the roof and a plate on the rear. A private hire car has plate on the rear of the car and a badge in the front. A dispensation private hire car has a dispensation certificate as it is of executive travel we have this certificate so we did not have to have a plate on the back of the vehicle. As we are executive travel and have paid a fee to be able to operate without plates we feel that any sign on any part of the car would cheapen both the car and company the Executives we drive for would not be impressed. With the private hire drivers who do tout and in correctly pick passengers up ply for hire should lose their license.

On point 3

For these driver who poach other companies fares they should get fined or lose the license as well. The company that has lost the fare should ring the customer to find out which company Took them so the Council can take action against them for poaching. It is a probable fact that the people that tout / poach are not professional chauffeurs and very much doubt wether they

have licences/insurance to cover private hire.


JS Chauffeur Services can assure the Hackney carriage office that all bookings are placed via phone or email. There has never been an occasion that J and S Chauffeurs' have ever touted or poached. Unfortunately we can agree it has been done to us.

We are a small Chauffeur Company who takes pride in our services we give. We drive a Lexus car which Your Council have commented on the condition etc. We strongly feel that putting any plates on the car as suggested would look very tacky and a shame to ruin such a well maintained car

And would also not be appropriate going to a customer's offices with a sign reading Advanced Booking Only all over the side.

We feel also that the fee you asked each year for a single operator like ourselves is very unfair the tariffs would be much fairer based on a single operation not 1-5 cars. A small company like ourselves are just about keeping our heads above water i.e. Council charges / private hire insurance and of course the full two inspections a year we have to keep our prices in line with the other companies but the income would be a lot greater on the fleets of 1-5

Yours faithfully



S.B. Richardson
JSChauffeur Services

Mr J Cole
9 Dashwood Close
Bracknell
Berkshire
RG12 2ND

01344 459524 (H) 07836204150 (M)

29 August 2010

Mr R Sexton
Head of Trading Standards and Licensing
Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Times Square
Market Street
Bracknell
RG12 1JD

Your ref. RJS/mae **Signs on Licensed Vehicles**

Dear Mr. Sexton,

In reply to your letter of 16 July 2010 I am only able to put forward limited comments together with some facts that cover my own situation, not for selfish reasons, but because although licensed in Bracknell I do not work the area.

It would appear that the same set of problems outlined in 1, 2, and 3 are those which have been present since I drove a Hackney Carriage in Bracknell during the 80's and 90's and all attempts by successive administrations seem to have been unable to eradicate them so far.

Putting signs on doors will not change the attitudes of drivers or the general public.

There will always be drivers who take a chance and illegally tout, or poach work despite the harshest consequences, from experience both past and present people waiting at venues for a 'taxi' or 'private hire' will always try to take any available car if it arrives there prior to the one they've ordered, irrespective of which company it is from or whether it's 'Hackney' or 'Private Hire'.

In addition I have one or two points and observations that are peculiar to my own situation of concern to me, which may also be of interest to you and as yet unaddressed.

Most of my clients are high profile corporate personnel with Board of Director, Chief Executive or Chairman status, whilst some still enjoy the facility of in house chauffeurs employed by the particular companies they represent, some of the companies have made a significant move towards using outside contractors such as myself to perform these duties, this is not only because of the the present cost conscious climate, it is often the case that these clients when visiting Government establishments, and venues chosen for high level meetings attract less unwelcome attention from militant groups and or 'paparazzi' than if they were in one of a small number of pool cars operated by in house chauffeurs.

One of the major factors surrounding these clients particularly those with the highest profile is that what they do remains as far as practicable secret.

One particular company deals in pharmaceuticals, there have been attacks on both property and personnel employed directly and indirectly with the company, by Animal Rights Activists.

I think that the personal security of those I drive and myself is already lessened by not being able to apply for a dispensation not to display the front windscreen sticker, which of course being the bright colour it is with large numbers makes any vehicle stand out already as 'Private Hire' and more worryingly traceable.

I believe there is little to be gained and a great deal to be compromised by putting any or all of the details mentioned in (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v) on the doors of vehicles engaged in such delicate areas.

I think these circumstances would at least merit consideration of a dispensation, not only my own case, but anyone engaged in similar duties.

Finally, and I may be wrong here, the council currently allows (section 18.5 of the guidance notes) the removal of the 'taxi' roof sign when working outside the borough, this isn't something readily adopted in other boroughs, and this significantly blends the identity of a 'taxi' with other vehicles on the road, this would seem to go against the general premise of the letter particularly item 2 the distinguishing of 'Hackney' and 'Private Hire from each other and normal privately owned vehicles.

I hope I have always demonstrated a desire to be compliant with all the necessary rules and regulations that are put in place.

I now feel overburdened with more and more Council led legislation that reduces my ability to effectively serve my clients to the best of my ability, whilst abiding by the rules.

As you know the vehicle I drive is a 2009 Audi A8 LWB 3.0L Tdi, the cost of this vehicle is in excess of £50,000.00, many other BFBC private hire vehicles are expensive and top of the range, I should like your opinion as to whether stick on/magnetic signs heightens the image of such vehicles, and as to whether it correctly raises the profile of BFBC.

I would welcome a reply in due course, and any opportunity to discuss these issues with you should you feel the inclined to do so, thank you for taking the time to consider the points I have raised

Yours Sincerely

John Cole

(Plate no: 235 Badge no: 90)

(Unsigned to avoid delay)