

To consultation committee.

I have driven a Southampton hackney disabled taxi since 2006 and still today, approximately 15 years. During this time I have only picked up approximately 30/50 disabled passenger's from the taxi stand. Some disabled passengers prefer saloon vehicles as they are not permanently wheel chair bound.

I do not understand the need for more hackney carriage disabled taxis on the streets of Southampton, if more disabled taxis are allocated, then the taxi stands need to be made bigger as there is never enough spaces available to park on the taxi stands.

I do see the requirement for private hire companies to register more disabled taxis, as majority of disabled customers need a vehicle from there home, shops, restaurant, pubs, cinema or work place. Acknowledge Uber, Bolt, Didi, Ola and Waymo, all international companies or westquay cars do not allow Southampton hackney carriage drivers to join their companies. Some taxi drivers do not want to join a private hire company.

Since the government changed cross border hiring rules for private hire vehicles and Uber being given a operator licence in Southampton and soon Bolt and in time Didi, Ola and Waymo, there is alot of competitiveness for customers.

The influx of private hire vehicles/ drivers has been so immense this has reduced the income of a hackney carriage driver.

In 2016 Southampton licencing department abolished the topography test for private hire drivers because drivers could not pass the topography test. Explanation was a private hire driver can use a satnav to move around the city.

They have kept the topography test for the hackney carriage drivers, stating a Hackney carriage driver needs to know where he/ she is driving to, there are very few potential applicants passing the hackney carriage drivers topography test.

If there is a demand for disabled hackney carriages, the licensing department will abolish the topography test for a Hackney carriage drivers licence. I would disagree with this decision should this happen, as many customers do expect a taxi driver to know where they are going to. A hackney carriage can also use a satnav to move around the city, so you could argue why is there a topography test at all, even today!

If a driver was to purchase a new disabled taxi:

Full electric disabled taxi the cost is £45,000 to £55,000.

Diesel disabled taxi cost is 25,000 to £36,000

A second hand disabled taxi would cost between £13,000 to £18,000.

If a second hand taxi is purchased, a additional £2,000 is required to have the taxi sprayed white. This is a licencing requirement set by Southampton city council.

Myself I was fortunate to change my disabled taxi to a euro 6 diesel a year before the covid pandemic happened. I am worried about the future if I will be able to afford to replace my vehicle, with inflation and costs keep on rising and the decreasing number of customers.

In the future as more big international companies start to operate in Southampton with the ethos to remove all hackney carriages from any major city, purchasing such expensive vehicle's is not sustainable with

the income taxi drivers are earning solely from the taxi stand.

Regards,

Kuldip Sahota.