

# Outcome of the West Berkshire Statutory Hackney Carriage Tariffs Consultation - 2024

## Background

Under the [Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976 Section 65 Hackney Carriage Fares](#), we're undertaking a three week statutory consultation prior to making any amendments to the Licensed Hackney Carriage (Taxi) fares. The period has been extended as the consultation will be taking place over the Easter break. The proposal to amend the fares for 2024 was submitted by a member of the trade on the 26 December 2023 and was discussed at the [Licensing Committee of the 08 January 2024](#) and the meeting of the [Executive on the 14 March 2024](#).

The current fares which came into effect on the 19 June 2023 can be viewed on [the Public Protection Partnership website](#).

## What We Proposed

	Current	Proposed
<p><b>Tariff 1</b></p> <p>Any journey with 1-4 passengers</p> <p>Applies for any hiring when journey commences between 06:00 and 21:59 Monday to Saturday (Excluding Bank Holidays, Public Holidays, 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> December and 1<sup>st</sup> January)</p>	<p>For the first 1340.307 yards <b>£5.00</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 243.692 yards <b>40p</b></p> <p>Waiting time per hour £33.00</p>	<p>For the first 1276.5 yards or 231 seconds <b>£5.00</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 232.1 yards or 42 seconds <b>40p</b></p> <p>Waiting time per hour £34.65</p>
<p><b>Tariff 4 (Unchanged)</b></p> <p>Any journey with 5 or more passengers</p> <p>Applies for any hiring when journey commences between 06:00 and 21:59 Monday to Saturday (Excluding Bank</p>	<p>For the first 1340.307 yards <b>£7.50</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 243.692 yards <b>60p</b></p>	<p>For the first 1340.307 yards <b>£7.50</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 243.692 yards <b>60p</b></p>

<p>Holidays, Public Holidays, 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> December and 1<sup>st</sup> January)</p>	<p>Waiting time per hour £49.50</p>	<p>Waiting time per hour £49.50</p>
<p><b>Tariff 2</b></p> <p>Any journey with 1-4 passengers</p> <p>Applies for any hiring when journey commences between 22:00 and 05:59 Monday to Saturday, 06.00 and 21.59 Sundays, bank holidays, and public holidays, between 06:00 and 23.59 on 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> December.</p>	<p>For the first 1340.307 yards <b>£7.50</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 243.692 yards <b>60p</b></p> <p>Waiting time per hour £49.50</p>	<p>For the first 1276.5 yards or 231 seconds <b>£7.50</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 232.1 yards or 42 seconds <b>60p</b></p> <p>Waiting time per hour £51.98</p>
<p><b>Tariff 5 (Unchanged)</b></p> <p>Any journey with 5 or more passengers</p> <p>Applies for any hiring when journey commences between 22:00 and 05:59 Monday to Saturday, 06.00 and 21.59 Sundays, bank holidays, and public holidays, between 06:00 and 23.59 on 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> December.</p>	<p>For the first 1340.307 yards <b>£11.25</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 243.692 yards <b>90p</b></p> <p>Waiting time per hour £74.25</p>	<p>For the first 1340.307 yards <b>£11.25</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 243.692 yards <b>90p</b></p> <p>Waiting time per hour £74.25</p>
<p><b>Tariff 3</b></p> <p>Any journey with 1-4 passengers</p> <p>Applies for any hiring when the journey commences between: 00.00 and 23.59 on 25<sup>th</sup> December; 00.00 and 05:59 on 26<sup>th</sup> December; 00.00 and 05:59 on 1<sup>st</sup> January</p>	<p>For the first 1340.307 yards <b>£10.00</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 243.692 yards <b>80p</b></p> <p>Waiting time per hour £66.00</p>	<p>For the first 1276.5 yards or 231 seconds <b>£10.00</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 232.1 yards <b>80p</b></p> <p>Waiting time per hour £69.30</p>

<p><b>Tariff 6 (Unchanged)</b> Any journey with 5 or more passengers</p> <p>Applies for any hiring when the journey commences between: 00.00 and 23.59 on 25<sup>th</sup> December; 00.00 and 05:59 on 26<sup>th</sup> December; 00.00 and 05:59 on 1<sup>st</sup> January</p>	<p>For the first 1489.235 yards or 264 seconds (whichever is reached first) <b>£15.00</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 135.385 yards or every 24 seconds (whichever is reached first) <b>60p</b></p> <p>Waiting time per hour £90.00</p>	<p>For the first 1340.307 yards <b>£15.00</b></p> <p>For each subsequent 243.692 yards <b>120p</b></p> <p>Waiting time per hour £99.00</p>
<p><b>Fouling Charges</b></p>	<p>Fouling charge to be retained and charged at: Interior - maximum £100 Exterior - maximum £25</p>	<p>Fouling will be charged at a maximum of (Interior T1/T4 £150, T2/T5 £225, T3/T6 £300)</p> <p>(Exterior T1/T4 £50, T2/T5 £75, T3/T6 £100)</p> <p>Payable to driver immediately.</p>
<p><b>Extra Charges</b></p>	<p>If a hackney carriage is booked by telephone, text, email or other electronic means a booking fee may be charged by prior arrangement only</p> <p>Congestion Charge, Ultra Low Emission Zone, or any tolls will be applied for any journey where such charges or tolls are incurred. <b>These charges would not appear on the meter.</b></p>	<p>If a Hackney Carriage is booked by telephone, e-mail, app or other electronic means a booking fee may be charged.</p> <p>Congestion Zone Charges, Ulez, Tolls or similar will be applied for any journey where such charges or tolls are incurred.</p>

## ***Why We Wanted Your Views***

The Council is committed to balancing the legitimate aims of the taxi trade to maintain profitability in the face of increasing costs, while protecting the public from excessive fares. The issue of setting fares for hackney carriage drivers is an important one for two reasons: the fare set by licensing authority largely determines the ability of drivers to earn a decent living, but also aims to ensure that passengers receive a fair deal when taking a journey in a licensed hackney carriage. We therefore welcomed your views in order to ensure that we are balancing these two objectives.

The procedure for setting fares and public notice requirements are stipulated within [section 65 of the Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976](#).

The procedure is prescriptive and requires that a decision to make/vary a table of fares is made first. Following this, there is a statutory consultation requirement, to allow for any objections to the new/varied table to be made. The remainder of the process is dependent on whether any objections are received (and not withdrawn) or not.

## ***Who and How we Consulted***

- A notice was placed in the Newbury Weekly News on the 21 March 2024
- It was also posted on the Council's Consultation Hub on the 21 March 2024 and on the Public Protection Partnership's website on the same day.
- A copy of the notice was also placed in the Market Place Reception on the 21 March 2024.
- An email was sent to all licensed Hackney Carriage Proprietors to alert them to the consultation.
- A notification was also sent out to the 2440 people on the Community Panel
- A Facebook message was posted on the 21 March 2024.
- A press release was issued on the 22 March 2024
- A tweet was sent out from the PPP X Account on the 22 March 2024
- The consultation ran from the 21 March to 11 April 2024.

## ***What you Told Us***

The Council has received 35 separate responses to the consultation. Fourteen responses were from drivers, three from operators, eight from residents, nine from members of the Community Panel and one from an officer in the Home to School Transport Team. Some responses are a mixture of support or objections and additional comments. We have also received a separate response signed by 78 drivers from Cabco with 77 of those drivers indicating that they are not in favour of increasing the tariffs.

Some of the respondents have indicated that they do not want to see the tariffs increase but would like to see the fouling charges increased. A number of suggestions around fouling charges are set out below.

In total 19 objections to the proposals have been received. Thirteen of these were from drivers, two from operators, one from an officer in the Home to School Transport Team and three from residents.

Nine respondents supported the proposals, five of these were from members of the Community Panel, one from a resident, two from drivers and one from an operator.

We received six comments specifically about the fouling charges (three from drivers, two from operators and one from a member of the Community Panel). Some supportive of the sliding scales and others not.

Eight of the respondents provided more general comments which were neither supportive of nor objected to the tariffs. In addition some of the supporters and objectors also provided more general comments. These are set out in the final table below and cover a range of topics including wheelchair accessible vehicles, Uber and other ride share operators, presentation of the table of fares, waiting times and supporting the trade to go greener.

<b>Objections</b>
<b>Driver</b> Please do not put fares up there to expensive now I'm totally against it.
<b>Driver</b> I strongly object to the fare increase planned. As the current climate, I think people will struggle immensely with this. It's as bad as it is with the cost of living crisis.
<b>Operator</b>

**Objections**

I don't think a price increase will help anyone. Some people avoid getting a taxi because prices are already high. From what I hear from my customers, they're on tight budget. It's a serious matter and a price increase would force them to give up using their services. T1 is ok for the vast majority but T2 can get pricey after 2 - 3 miles.

**Driver**

I would like to vote AGAINST the Tariff Increase please

**Driver**

please count my vote as objecting.

**Driver**

I would like to vote against this being done.

**Operator**

I would like to see no changes to the current Tarriff through 2024 with revision next year. I feel that customer confidence in our prices is tentative and with Uber out there chomping at our heels i feel it will only help their cause.

**Driver**

I am voting against any increase of taxi fare at during this difficult period.

**Driver**

I don't agree with the fare increase.

**Driver**

I'd like to vote AGAINST the tariff increase.

**Driver**

Personally I don't believe there should be an increase. Customers are struggling with the cost of living and I believe that people will vote with there feet and not get a taxi. The trade is struggling as it is at the moment and think a rise would harm the trade.

**DRIVER**

I would like to vote against the the tariff increase

**DRIVER**

I'd like to vote AGAINST the tariff increase

**DRIVER**

My vote is to leave tariff as it is.

**RESIDENT**

## Objections

I think its scandalous that there is yet another increase in taxi's, don't you think people are already struggling with tax increasing, fuel level is high and now the taxi rates are to go up, people cannot afford these increases all the time, like the water meant to be going up by 40%....

### RESIDENT

Having recently been quoted £5.50 for a short trip from Russell Road Newbury to Market Place Newbury...I decided to walk. I don't approve of increasing the fare especially by the backhanded way it is presented.

### RESIDENT

I feel the addition of a "or 42 seconds 40p" for 1-5 passengers to be dreadful especially for the single passenger in this section. Could not a single person have a separate section - and it be 2-5 passengers that are charged "or 42 seconds 40p"

Imagine a disabled or someone whom has missed their bus, or needs to get to Minor Injuries at West Berkshire or needs to get to work in Newbury from Thatcham or further, these added costs will make getting beyond economical and puts people off using at Taxi at all. I know that I will no longer use a taxi with this added charge for not actually moving.

### Home to School Transport Officer

I would not agree with the proposed changes to the hackney carriage fares on the basis that it will have a negative impact on Home to School Transport, who are already forecasting an overspend. Home to School transport rely heavily on the local Hackney drivers as there is a shortage of transport providers in the area.

## Support

### Community Panel

I see no problem with the suggested increase in taxi fares. However, I would support a greater rise in waiting charges as I feel that keeping a driver and car waiting is wasteful in the extreme and should be discouraged.

### Resident

Overall I can see the need for the increases at this time.

### Community Panel

Generally I think the percentage increases proposed are fair and proportionate given the UK inflationary background and considering the general rise in the cost of living. Drivers or their employers will have faced significant increases in cost of fuel, repairs and vehicle insurance over the past year.

## Support

That said I think it is also important to ensure that the taxi operators are actually supportive of these increases. I am mindful that imposition of standard fares for Hackney Carriages can prevent drivers securing rides due to the increased competition from private hire vehicles (e.g. operating via the Uber phone App). Does the feedback from drivers/operators indicate they are losing business to private hire? If so increasing the tariff could accentuate their problem?

I don't understand the logic for not increasing the waiting time charge in Tariff 2, 4 and 6 unless the feeling is that the previous rate was already too generous? All the other tariffs show a proposed increase in waiting time charge so why freeze these?

## Operator

I feel the jump on multi seater vehicles last rise was a big increase from the previous t2 rate so this staying the same is sensible.

## Community Panel

I am content with the proposed changes to taxi fares.

## Community Panel

I believe the fares suggested are inline with current inflation and general expenses ~ I would vote in favour of proposed fare increases.

## Community Panel

The proposals look good.

## Hackney Carriage Driver

After having read the proposal for the tariff increase and few other changes such as the fouling charges write to you in order to express my full support of the tariff increase.

In terms of the opposition for the price increase, I can put myself in the general public's shoes and think it shouldn't go up but as a driver, we keep on seeing the cost of everything going up. One of the clearest examples and one noticed by everyone in the industry and outside of it being insurance. As we all know insurance for motor vehicles has rocketed over the last 6 months.

Find below a snippet of a article published by the ABI ( Association of British Insurers ) on the 31 of January 2024.

"Figures released today show the average price paid for motor insurance has continued to rise. Costs are up 12% on the previous quarter (Q4 vs Q3 2023), driven by record increases in the cost to insurers to pay claims. This means motor cover was 25% more expensive on average across the whole of 2023 than in 2022".



## Support

Another example, is the cost of fuel within Newbury area. Matter that even our MP Laura Farris (MP-LF) had to get involved in. Diesel in Newbury tends to be on average 10p dearer than in the surrounding areas. After MP-LF was brought this to her attention and she carried out several conversations with the fuel suppliers in Newbury we saw a drastic drop in price which lasted at max a month. Price since then has crept up back to 1.65.

So unless the price of fuel can actually be controlled to a certain extent in the area. ( which would not only benefit the trade but everyone ) We will always be paying above average which from my point of view is another reason why the tariff increase should go forward.

## Fouling Charges

### Operator

I would like to see fouling charges at one rate of £150 interior and £25 exterior.

I recently had my rear seat removed and cleaned at a cost of £165, so I feel £150 is fair for both customer and owner.

### Driver

I do agree the soiling charge should go up although I do not work evenings and cars tend not to get soiled during the day.

### Community Panel

I fully support the proposed uplift in fouling charges but don't think it's fair to vary the charge based on tariff time bands. The local valet/car wash for example will usually close at 6pm so a tariff change referencing a 10pm supplement makes little sense. Can the time bands be altered to reflect maybe 9am -5pm Mon-Sat and a premium for any fouling outside these times? (The charge is after all NOT meter controlled) Either way I think that a difference should be made between 1- 4 passengers vs. 5+ passengers. The latter will usually be a larger vehicle that will attract a premium cost if taken for washing or valeting. To me a simpler anytime maximum interior charge of £225 1-4 passengers or £300 5+ passengers would make sense and maybe exterior charge of £75 1-4 passengers or £100 5+ passengers. The new addition stating this is to be paid to the driver immediately makes me wonder if there should be a requirement for ALL licenced drivers to have the capability to accept card payments rather than demand cash which often goes unrecorded/undocumented.

The Extra Charges wording is a major concern to me as you have proposed removing the need for the operator to agree these in advance with the booker? To avoid unscrupulous operators charging hidden booking fees there either needs to be a requirement to clearly and prominently disclose the fee at point of booking OR otherwise regulate the maximum amount of such a fee that may be applied. Similarly there should be a requirement for Tolls or Ulez to be charged at cost without further mark-up or admin fees.

## Support

### Operator

I agree with the sliding scale fouling charge & the tariff increase on Saloon cars is correct.

### Driver

I agree fouling charge need to go up.

### Hackney Carriage Driver

I am glad to see my comments regarding the fouling charges were taking into account and accordingly changed to what I think a fair outcome.

We also received the following **comments** in relation to the consultation which are set out below:

## General Comments

### *Cost and Concerns About the Table*

#### Resident

I don't think it's fair that the prices for taxi journeys of 1-4 people (which has to be the vast majority of journeys taken) are increasing yet those for 5 people and above remain the same.

All journeys should be increased by the same amount - irrespective of the number of people using the service. That way it's fair... otherwise you are punishing those that aren't able to travel in large groups.

#### Community Panel

The Extra Charges wording is a major concern to me as you have proposed removing the need for the operator to agree these in advance with the booker? To avoid unscrupulous operators charging hidden booking fees there either needs to be a requirement to clearly and prominently disclose the fee at point of booking OR to otherwise regulate the maximum amount of such a fee that may be applied. Similarly there should be a requirement for Tolls or Ulez to be charged at cost without further mark-up or admin fees.

#### Operator

I would suggest making the word maximum on the bottom of the tariff card needs highlighting maybe use capital letters.

#### RESIDENT

The hackney carriage fares in Newbury have always been high compared with surrounding areas, the trade assertion that without constant increase it is not possible to make a decent living has been used as an excuse since the 1970s when I was Newbury's licencing Officer.

## **General Comments**

### **COMMUNITY PANEL**

I start by saying I support the need to find a fair balance between providing low cost transport for consumers and a decent living wage for drivers. I am concerned that it is not easy to see in real terms what the price rises actually are. By adjusting the distances and times instead of the fees, it makes the price rises unclear. I strongly recommend that the distances are fixed and the prices are adjusted accordingly so that taxi drivers and consumers can compare in a transparent way.

Should this not be possible, then a simple means of comparison should be published, such as the cost of a standardised journey before and after the changes.

I am also concerned about the table of fares. It is too complex and difficult to understand. I would ask that a simplified table is considered. Possibly by splitting it into two tables (e.g one for 5+ occupancy and one for 1-4 occupancy) or by removing the super peak times since they are very rare

I don't wish to hold up the publication of the new fares but I really hope the committees can quickly agree to insert some transparency into the new arrangements.

### **COMMUNITY PANEL**

The dilemma for a taxi service is that a comfortable vehicle is generally larger and will have a bigger engine requiring more fuel and more expensive servicing.

There are two considerations involved. Firstly is the running cost per mile/kilometre. Secondly is the hourly man-rate to obtain a fair wage over a 40 hour working week, based on an 8-hour day, 5 days a week. If a longer time is worked then a greater income will be forthcoming. The earnings should be a minimum of £30,000 or so, which would be the national average for an average person. A two tier system might be best where smaller vehicles are offered for short distance journeys and for airport or long journeys a "large car" rate may be considered.

## **Public and Other Transport Providers**

### **Community Panel**

As part of your representation process, I'd like to ask why the council continues to block the entry of ridesharing providers such as Uber from West Berkshire. I would like to ask that this is reconsidered to provide more competition and choice.

## General Comments

The costs for taxis in West Berkshire are becoming prohibitive. Given the current cost of living crisis I know a growing number of people in the community who are having to reduce how often they go out in Newbury and the surrounding area because when the cost of a taxi fare home is factored in going out and supporting the local economy is not viable.

For people who want to be responsible and avoid drink driving, walking home alone etc. the cost of taxis needs to be addressed and ride-sharing would be an extremely positive move in that direction.

## RESIDENT

The fact is that the monopoly of operators prevents true competition hence why cabs are often not available at peak times . The Council should be encouraging more independent operators by the issue of more licenced and the encouragement of companies like UBER to come to Newbury, only then will Newbury have a fair & reasonable service

## Vehicle Standards

### COMMUNITY PANEL

My concern is complaints have been lodged over the years about the lack of taxis that will carry wheelchairs both manual and electric. Healthwatch did a full report on the Mayjor issues when it comes to disabled people needing a accessible taxi.

I myself have logged a complaint with the licencing department regarding xxx (name of firm deleted) discrimination.....both to fall on deaf ears by being told we are really busy, and we will get back to you. This tells me disability is not viewed by WBC as important enough to look into .I would ask that before licences are issued that its in forced that a percentage of cabs must be accessible and also not treat disabled people as second-hand citizens.

## Emissions

### Community Panel

My final comment is regarding the wider green or environmental impact of taxi travel. To tackle their environmental footprint in a progressive way it would be really good to see the fare structure set to reward those drivers with the least polluting vehicles e.g. Electric or other engines that are categorised for road tax purposes as being low or zero emission. Conversely perhaps WBC should be actively discouraging those vehicles that are regarded as high polluters. A yardstick might be the ULEZ classification as applied in central London? Taxi Vehicles that don't meet the ULEZ standard should either pay a levy to the council (% of all metered fares) or longer term perhaps even prevented from holding a taxi licence? This green aspect may have been considered as a separate topic by WBC alongside the fare tariff consultation but I just wanted to make sure the long term challenge was not being ignored or overlooked?

## General Comments

### General Support

#### COMMUNITY PANEL

Having read the proposed changes to the Hackney cab tariffs, I would propose that the 'waiting times' be increased by inflation for all tariffs and that they should commence after a wait of more than say 5 minutes. There is no excuse for making a person doing his job to wait when you have had an easy option to set a time. I also believe that in the case of a 'no show' by the driver, a free journey of the same length, payment for an alternative company who then fulfilled the booking and a fine to the driver would be adequate compensation to the passenger

### ***What We Are Proposing To Do***

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 section 65 gives a Local Authority the power to determine the table of fares for the hire of hackney carriages. This legislation also prescribes the statutory consultation process that must be followed and the procedures for ensuring that objections are properly considered in relation to a Local Authority's adoption of or variation to a table of fares before the table comes into effect.

As objections to the tariffs have been received and not withdrawn, the Executive is required to decide whether or not the revised table of fares should be modified before it is implemented and decide the date for implementation. The matter will be discussed by elected Members at the [Executive meeting on the 16 May 2024](#), who will make a decision on implementation. Should the Executive Committee approve implementation, the revised table of fares will then come into operation no later than 11 June 2024.

The outcome of the consultation will also be fed back to the Licensing Committee at their meeting on the 08 July 2024.