

Licensing Committee

Hackney Carriage Roof-Signs – Review of Policy Decision

3 October 2024

Report of Licensing Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To review the policy requirement regarding Hackney Carriage roof-signs.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That members consider the contents of the report, the views of the taxi and private hire liaison group and public safety in its widest context before reviewing the mandatory requirement for all Hackney Carriages to display a standardised, Council-issued roof-sign.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the Introduction of the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy in April 2022, Members of Licensing Committee considered, along with other vehicle signage requirements, Hackney Carriage Roof-Signs.
- 1.2 At the time of the consultation into intended changes and updates to the policy, disparities were identified across the 108 licensed Hackney Carriage Roof-Signs, colour, shape, size and wording were inconsistent.
- 1.3 Members wished to create a sense of uniformity across the fleet (to assist public with recognising a Hackney Carriage and creating a separation between HC/PHV) and a prototype was approved by Licensing Committee. The roof-sign was sourced from a local supplier, who also supply current door signage to members of the local trade.
- 1.4 Once it had been agreed members of the trade expressed dissatisfaction with the chosen sign and the associated uplift in annual vehicle fee at the time of economic recovery following the covid pandemic. Furthermore, the local fitter of roof-signs contacted the department to also express their position regarding the chosen sign; they refused to fit any of the roof-signs.
- 1.5 Following this period of unrest, members of Licensing Committee decided to pause the implementation of the standardised roof-signs for a period of 12 months, due to other service priorities and workload, it has taken a further 12 months for this matter to be considered.

- 1.6 Implementation of the roof-signs and an update on the position was highlighted to members of Licensing Committee via the taxi surgeries, with members being requested to review the initial decision around their introduction and explore any potential refund for fees paid in lieu of the roof-signs if the decision is reversed.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 Members of the Taxi Liaison Group held a meeting on Thursday 19th September to discuss the policy position and implementation of the standardised roof-sign, additionally the group discussed the suitability and design of the signs and any barriers to their re-introduction.
- 2.2 The group is chaired by Cllr Maddocks, Chair of Licensing Committee and made up of members of Licensing Committee, Licensing Manager and Officers, representatives of the local licensed trade and by invitation, other interested parties.
- 2.3 Members of the local licensed trade remain dissatisfied with the standardised roof-sign and call into question its safety and suitability. Assurances were provided by the Licensing Manager regarding the product materials.

The material used for the roof-signs is "PLEXIGLAS® resist, It is highly weather resistant and durable. Unlike other plastics (e. g. PC, PET, PETG) it requires no additional UV protection. (so will not fade or discolour). "PLEXIGLAS® resist is therefore a highly versatile and absolutely reliable material for signage, e. g. illuminated signs". The data sheet relating to the material used is available.

The ferrite magnetic pad (that connects the roof-sign to the vehicle) are UK manufactured magnets, tested to 100mph, independently. They offer excellent hold strength and provide substantial resistance to shear forces. Making them an effective solution for the fixing of roof-signs or other industrial sites and warehouse environments.

- 2.4 A roof-sign is available for members inspection as part of the meeting.
- 2.5 The Taxi Liaison Group supports the roof-sign as an option for those who wish to have one, but not imposed as a mandatory requirement.

3.0 Financial Position

- 3.1 The cost of the 110 Roof-Signs was £9,900, it was agreed that the cost would be recovered through vehicle licence fees, it seemed most appropriate to minimise the impact of the cost of the signage to the vehicle proprietors by spreading the cost over a period of 3 years, at a cost of £30 per vehicle, per year.
- 3.2 Licensing fees are reviewed and set annually, the cost of each licence represents the true cost of the administration and issuing of that specific licence. The fee implemented in July 2023 for a Hackney Carriage Vehicle licence accurately reflects the cost at that time. If a decision is taken to reverse the decision to introduce the standardised roof-sign, previous parts of Hackney Carriage Vehicle licence fees will not be eligible to be refunded.
- 3.3 Any change to the current mandatory requirement to have a standardised roof-sign must be reflected in future Hackney Carriage Vehicle licence fees.

- 3.4 The total annual cost recovered is approx. £3240 (July 23-July 24). If members decide to make the roof-signs requirements optional and make an adjustment to the Hackney Carriage Vehicle licence fee, then an agreed shortfall in costs must be highlighted.
- 3.5 Alternatively, members may wish to recover the costs by selling the roof-signs externally (remove LCC logo) or as a bundle to a third-party provider at a discounted rate. Options could be explored with neighbouring Licensing Authorities.

4.0 Options

Options available to members are as follows.

- a) Reintroduce the mandatory requirement for the standardised roof-sign with immediate effect.
- b) Introduce an optional requirement for the standardised roof-sign with immediate effect and update the Hackney carriage Vehicle specification to reflect the changes.
- c) Confirm, any fee recalculation will be accessed via the fee review and budget process for 2025/26.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Members are asked to determine the policy position regarding the introduction of a standardised Hackney Carriage roof-sign. The implementation was paused due to trade unrest and dissatisfaction with the roof-signs for a period of 12 months, it has taken a further 12 months to bring the issue back to members for decision given other service priorities.
- 5.2 Members are asked to consider the views of the Taxi Liaison Group, the information contained in the report and determine how to progress. Any updates will need to be reflected in the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy as necessary.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):
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The decision to implement a standardised roof-sign was to allow the public to recognise the difference between a Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle licensed by Lancaster City Council.
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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Any decision will need to be reflected in the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy, Hackney Carriage Vehicle Specification.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If members decide to make the roof-sign requirements optional, any adjustment required in licensing fees may result in an overall shortfall. As far as practicable, licensing fees should

accurately reflect the cost of the administration and issuing of each individual licence.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces

None.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

None.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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