



cts

TRAFFIC + TRANSPORTATION

THE DATA COLLECTION SPECIALISTS

South Tyneside Council

7909: Taxi Survey

January 2013



Contents

Executive summary	vii
1. Introduction	1
2. Background to taxi licensing in South Tyneside.....	5
3. Results from rank surveys	11
4. Public Consultation results	23
5. Stakeholder Consultation.....	33
6. Licensed Vehicle Trade Consultation.....	37
7. Responses to DfT Best Practice Guidance 2010	39
8. The Equality Act 2010	43
9. Summary and conclusions	45
10. Recommendations	51

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Executive summary

CTS Traffic & Transportation were appointed by South Tyneside Council to undertake an unmet demand survey during 2012. The study included:

- Public consultation in October 2012
- Stakeholder consultation between October 2012 and January 2013
- Rank surveys in October 2012
- Trade consultation in December 2012

At present, no person can obtain a hackney carriage vehicle license to operate in the South Tyneside area. At the time of starting the study, there were 235 hackney carriages in the fleet. It is understood that the formal limit on vehicle numbers is actually 236. There is an established council allocation criteria and wheel chair accessibility policy which delayed the reallocation of this licence (which was replaced finally in February 2013). Current provision of hackney carriages in the area is amongst the best in Tyne and Wear, and at a relatively high level compared to population.

At the time of the survey, 11% of the hackney carriage fleet was wheelchair accessible (DfT formal statistics, 2011), a low proportion, although this is partly offset by the private hire fleet having some wheel chair accessible according to the DfT 2011 information.

The area has a good number of active ranks, with daytime demand at Smithy Street and to a lesser extent Mile End Road. Passengers also use the ranks at East Street and more significantly at Chichester. Night demand is met by Ocean Road, Smithy Street and Mile End Road, all near to entertainment venues. Two non-central ranks see reasonable evening demand, which is excellent. Although there was some unmet demand observed, it was not significant.

Overall rank demand is around 7,339 passengers per week with 36% at Smithy Street, 32% at Mile End Road and 15% from Ocean Road.

Discussion with members of the public identified 59% had used a licensed vehicle in South Tyneside in the last three months. Some 2.4 licensed vehicle trips were made per month by those we talked to. 96% obtained their licensed vehicle by phone and just 3% used ranks. 1% hailed - a typical level.

Demand for wheel chair accessible vehicles was a relatively high proportion, although there was an even split between need for wheel chair accessible and other adapted accessible vehicles.

Our stakeholder consultation found most stakeholders to be dependent on the good service they obtained from private hire companies, mainly by free phone agreements.

Our trade consultation found reasonable response by questionnaire return (6%)
Consultees told us:

- most vehicles are now operated by owner-drivers
- the average working week is 52 hours over six days
- 57% had changed their working practices over the last three years

Key conclusions are:

- no evidence of any significant unmet demand
- high satisfaction with the overall licensed vehicle service in South Tyneside

Four options are technically available to the Borough of South Tyneside councillors

- Option 1 – reaffirm current policies and make no other changes
- Option 2 – retain the current limit and take other actions to retain a viable hackney carriage rank based trade
- Option 3 – remove the limit on hackney carriage numbers and make no other change
- Option 4 – remove the limit but attempt to restrict the negative impacts of this change by requiring further quality improvements

The technical recommendation is for Option 2 to be taken forward.

Other actions are listed in the detail in the recommendations chapter.

1. Introduction

South Tyneside Council is responsible for the licensing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles operating within the council area. The licensing authority has a limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences since 1986 (according to the detailed 2005 DfT survey information), with other reports suggesting 1987. Regular reviews of policy have occurred since that time, with previous surveys undertaken in 2009 and 2004.

Study timetable

South Tyneside appointed CTS Traffic and Transportation on 7th September 2012 to undertake this "Taxi survey" in line with our quotation dated August 2012.

The review was carried out between 2nd October and 23rd January 2013, with survey work undertaken in October 2012. Licensed vehicle drivers were consulted by a letter sent out during November 2012, with other stakeholder consultation during January. A draft final report was submitted and this was reviewed on 25th January 2013 to identify any factual or missing issues. The Final Report will be presented to the Council in Spring 2013 (date to be confirmed at writing of this report).

National background and definitions

At the present time, hackney carriage and private hire licensing is carried out under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 (as amended by various further legislation including the Transport Act 1985, especially Section 16) in regard to hackney carriages and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 with reference to private hire vehicles. A number of modifications have been made within more recent legislation and through case law.

The issue of limits on hackney carriage vehicle licences (and other potentially restrictive practices) were considered by the Office of Fair Trading (OfT) (and latterly the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport). The Department for Transport most recently published Best Practise Guidance in April 2010 to cover a number of more recent issues and take on board both the recommendations of the OfT and House of Commons Select Committee (HoC SC). More recently a further HoC SC has led to the Law Commission (LC) taking on a wide ranging review of vehicle licensing law to be completed over the next few years. The consultation document from the LC was released in mid-May 2012 and the initial consultation period is now closed.

At the present time, each licensing authority in England supervises the operation of two different kinds of licensed vehicle. Firstly, all vehicles able to carry nine or more passengers are dealt with under public service vehicle licensing and licensing authorities only have jurisdiction over those carrying eight or less passengers. These vehicles are further subdivided into:

- Hackney carriage vehicles (sometimes referred to as 'taxis' in legislation), which alone are able to wait at ranks and pick up people in the street (ply for hire). To operate such a vehicle also requires a driver to be licensed to drive within the area the vehicle is licensed to operate
- Private hire vehicles, which can only be booked through an operating centre and who, otherwise, are not insured for their passengers (often also known as 'taxis' by the public). To operate such a vehicle requires a vehicle and driver licence, and there must also be an affiliation to an operator. Such vehicles can only transport passengers who have made bookings via this operator.

For the sake of clarity, this report will refer to 'licensed vehicles' when meaning hackney carriage and private hire collectively, and to the specific type when referencing either specific type of vehicle. The term 'taxi' will be avoided as far as possible, although it has to be used in its colloquial form when dealing with the public, few of whom are aware of the detailed differences.

Review aims and objectives

South Tyneside is seeking a review of their current policy towards hackney carriage quantity control in line with current Department for Transport (DfT) Best Practice guidance as published in April 2010. Further background information about previous policy is contained in Chapter 2 to set the context of the current situation.

The "Best Practice Guidance" paragraph 47 states: "Most licensing authorities do not impose quantity restrictions the Department regards that as best practice. Where restrictions are imposed, the Department would urge that the matter should be regularly reconsidered..." Recent information suggests that some 75% of licensing authorities in England and Wales either have never limited numbers, or have removed their limit since the OfT published its results. Around 95 authorities currently retain a limit – although a small number have over recent years returned the limit on vehicle licences (notably including local Newcastle City, Sheffield and Birmingham, but also including Slough, Derbyshire Dales, Wirral, Watford and Chesterfield).

South Tyneside requires this review to make recommendations on what policy the Council should retain or adopt, considering the whole range of policy options open to the Council. This review report must contain reasoned, recommended policy options for the Committee to consider.

Report structure

This Report provides the following further chapters:

- Chapter 2 – current background to taxi licensing statistics and policy
- Chapter 3 – results from the rank surveys
- Chapter 4 – results from the surveys undertaken with the public
- Chapter 5 – up to date stakeholder consultation
- Chapter 6 – results from consultation with the taxi licensing trade
- Chapter 7 – consideration of the responses to BPG paragraph 47 and Annex A questions
- Chapter 8 – a review of options relating to the Equality Act
- Chapter 9 – potential impacts of Law Commission review
- Chapter 10 - summary and conclusions of this review
- Chapter 11 – recommendations for policy arising from this review.

2. Background to taxi licensing in South Tyneside

The South Tyneside Council area

South Tyneside is one of five councils within the former county of Tyne and Wear. Initial data is now available from the 2011 census, although the only projections remain those based on 2008 information. Using 2011 census information and growth from the 2008 projections suggests the current 2012 population for South Tyneside is 149,000. Amongst the five districts, South Tyneside is the smallest in population terms.

South Tyneside is made up of a number of settlements. The major urban area, located in the north, immediately south of the River Tyne, is South Shields. Two other large settlements exist at Hebburn and Jarrow. There are three large villages, Boldon, Cleadon and Whitburn.

Background Council policy

South Tyneside Council has several background policies underpinning the various strategies for the area. The South Tyneside Local Development Framework (LDF) remains current whilst the council is consulting and developing its new Development Plan Document. This will be consulted on during 2013 and eventually adopted in 2015/2016. In a similar manner, consultation is occurring in early 2013 regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and this should be adopted in Spring 2014.

The Borough has transport policies described in the latest Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan. This document contains details of the overall background policies both for environmental as well as transport policy. The latest, third, Local Transport Plan (LTP3), covers the fifteen year period from 2011 to 2026, and operates using a three year implementation plan.

Policy of restricting hackney carriage vehicle licences

South Tyneside Council has a power to restrict the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences it grants when it is satisfied there is no unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages which is deemed to be significant. This power has been in this format since the introduction of the 1985 Transport Act, Section 16 (before which the power to limit was unfettered).

The Department for Transport statistics (updated with 2012 information from the Borough and from National Private Hire Association sources) suggests that South Tyneside's limitation policy began in 1986, following the introduction of the 1985 Transport Act. Since that time, surveys have been undertaken most recently in 2009 and reported in November 2009.

The 2009 survey used similar methods of data collection, sampling and analysis to previous surveys of taxi usage dating back to the initial study in 1987. It included comparisons to the 2004 study. The survey focussed on a detailed 1007 respondent personal interview survey covering street locations, respondents' homes and at entertainment venues (although the detailed breakdown of sample is not given). Uniquely for demand surveys, there was no rank data, nor any wider stakeholder consultation undertaken.

The survey concluded there was a very high level of satisfaction with the service provided by licensed vehicles in South Tyneside. The overwhelming majority of users said they never had a problem obtaining a licensed vehicle, and are satisfied with the time they have to wait for one. It was concluded there was no need to increase the number of hackney carriage licences on issue.

Telephone bookings of licensed vehicles increased further, alongside a continuing fall in the proportion of the population using licensed vehicles – continuing a trend noted even before the recession. Most taxi users were found to use them for a single purpose – the main purpose being entertainment. Against the falling usage trend, increases were noted in usage of licensed vehicles during weekday daytimes, and after midnight at weekends. Non-users did not make any suggestion as to how they might use licensed vehicles. Age was found to be the most important factor in who used licensed vehicles.

These results are compared to the 2012 survey in Chapter 10.

Background statistics

Information was obtained to demonstrate the current make-up of the licensed vehicle fleet in the South Tyneside Council area, including current vehicle trends. The table below shows the historic level of vehicle numbers in this area.

	Hackney carriage vehicles	Private hire vehicles	Total licensed vehicle fleet	Driver numbers			Comment
				hcd	phd	Dual	
	DfT data states limit began in 1986						
1994	224	Unknown	n/k	280	319		
1997	224	266	490	295			
1999	224	295	519				
2001	224	329	553				
2004	224	374	598				
2005	224	420	644				
2007	236	406	642				
2010	234	364	600				
2011	235	352	588	196	349	127	23 op
2012	235	330	565	207	299	117	17 op

Note: DfT statistics used from 1994 to 2007 and 2011. 2012 are stats provided on 28/9/12 for inception meeting.

National Private Hire Association survey for 2010, Council statistics at start of study for 2012

"op" means number of private hire operators reported by DfT

Two hc plates lapsed in 2010. 1 was replaced in 2011, the other still remains awaiting replacement (was replaced Feb 2013 after survey undertaken).

The above figures show the policy of restricting hackney carriage plates has seen just one increase during the years since 1994. This occurred in 2005 where 12 plates were issued to wheel chair accessible vehicles in order to increase the level of such vehicles within the fleet. It took around two years for these plates to enter the active fleet. It is understood one plate was not on issue on 28 September, hence the slight drop in numbers for 2012. Two plates were not renewed and therefore lapsed, with one taking a year to be taken up, the other remained unused at the time of the survey but was taken up finally in February 2013. Delay in allocating this plate is related to local application policy. The limit, however, remains at 236 vehicles.

At the present time, the council has an established waiting list and short listing criteria to allocate any plates that become available. In addition, this stipulates any new plate must be a wheel chair accessible vehicle. Each person on the waiting list has to be reviewed in order, and the delay in allocation relates to the issue that many on the list who already have a licence do not meet the criteria in full, and therefore are not able to receive a plate.

Private hire vehicles have increased by 2.5 times during the 1997 to 2012 period, although they are currently marginally lower than the highest level of 227. This means that the proportion of the fleet that is hackney carriage has fallen from 64% in 1997 to 40% now.

During the same period, driver numbers have remained fairly consistent on the hackney carriage side but have increased more on the private hire side, generally in line with vehicle numbers. Current drivers are either hackney carriage or private hire, although the statistics suggest a period when dual licences were available, and had begun to increase. There has been a slight reduction in the number of operators arising from one operator acquiring several other businesses, although there have also been a few new operators added as well.

Comparative information

The Table below compares recent licensed vehicle numbers for other Tyne and Wear authorities, using a mixture of DfT and information from Councils where studies have recently been undertaken. The table is listed with the lowest provision of hackney carriages (hcv) per thousand of population at the top of the table.

Area	Popn (2012 000)	No of HCV (% WAV)	HCV per 1000 popn	No of PHV (% WAV)	PHV per 1000 popn	Total veh	Total veh per 1000 popn
North Tyneside(L)	202	204 (49)	1.0	960 (3)	4.8	1164	5.8
Sunderland(LZ)	276	349 (52)	1.3	642 (2)	2.3	991	3.6
Gateshead	201	258 (67)	1.3	490 (1)	2.4	748	3.7
South Tyneside (L)	149	235 (11)	1.6	330(11)	2.2	565	3.8
Newcastle upon Tyne (L)	282	780(54)	2.8	1200 (n/k)	4.3	1980	7.0

Note: Population values are 2012 estimates from 2008 based projections, in thousands Hackney carriage vehicle (HCV) and private hire vehicle (PHV) numbers are from NPHA 2012 survey WAV = wheelchair accessible vehicle L = limits vehicle numbers, LZ - limits vehicle numbers, also to 2 zones both limited numbers

In 2012, just Gateshead within Tyne and Wear does not limit hackney carriage vehicle numbers. North Tyneside, Newcastle upon Tyne and Sunderland all limit - Sunderland also retains a two zone system. The level of hackney carriages per thousand of population for South Tyneside is only exceeded by the value for Newcastle upon Tyne, which is excellent provision in comparison. Provision is higher than non-limited Gateshead.

In terms of private hire vehicles and overall licensed vehicle fleet, South Tyneside has similar levels per thousand of population to Sunderland and Gateshead. North Tyneside private hire provision is inflated by the presence of a large operator there who has built their fleet based on very low fares, whilst the high private hire level in Newcastle is expected for a large City.

The main disparity and concern shown in the figures above is the low level of wheel chair accessible provision in South Tyneside compared to other Tyne and Wear councils, although provision is spread better through the licensed vehicle fleet (which might perversely improve provision with vehicles being available by phone). However, this also

suggests much more cohesion between the hackney carriage and private hire fleet in South Tyneside.

In general, therefore, provision of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles in South Tyneside appears to provide sufficient choice for potential customers.

Vehicle Accessibility

As noted above, the current level of wheel chair accessible vehicles in the hackney carriage fleet is low, although there is an equivalent percentage in the private hire fleet, giving an overall level of 11% in the total licensed fleet.

This could be an issue were Section 161 of the Equality Act to be implemented and South Tyneside retains its limit on hackney carriage vehicle numbers. This is considered further in Chapter 8.

Driver ratios

At the present time, there are 207 hackney carriage and 117 dual drivers for 235 vehicles. This driver ratio of 1.38 suggests there is very little if any double shifting of the hackney carriage fleet. The private hire ratio is currently less than one, meaning some dual drivers must drive private hire vehicles.

Fares

Using the latest Private Hire and Taxi Monthly (January 2013) South Tyneside Council fares (currently £4-40 for a 2 mile tariff 1 fare) rank 345th equal of the 361 fares authorities in England, Scotland and Wales. Nine other authorities share this fare level, including several similarly located authorities (ie near a large conurbation within a metropolitan area – Knowsley, St Helens plus Kirklees, Oadby and Wigston, Pendle and three Scottish authorities.

The Tyne and Wear average is £4-96, with South Tyneside some 11% lower, and the lowest of the fares in Tyneside authorities overall. Gateshead and North Tyneside have the closest fares, at £4-80.

In terms of national fares, the highest fare at January 2013 was £7-30 and the lowest £2-80 for the 2 mile tariff 1. The national average fare is £5-50, some 25% higher than the current South Tyneside fare, whilst the average 'North' regional fare is £6-43, 46% more (the national average includes Scotland, East Anglia, the South, South West, Midlands and Wales and is then analysed by each of the other categories, of which North is one of the seven areas). The level of fare set therefore is quite low, but appears reasonable compared to similar authorities located in more rural metropolitan areas.

There is, however, a complication in this simple evaluation, since South Tyneside is believed to have the highest waiting time charge in the country. Every 30 seconds waiting time are charged 20p which equates to

£24 per hour. This tends to move South Tyneside up the fare ladder in real terms.

3. Results from rank surveys

The Table below shows the result of our review of the ranks available in South Tyneside. The 2004 survey covered operation at the ranks although more recent surveys did not. A list of ranks was provided with the brief for the survey, which was checked using on-line map searches which was supplemented by discussion at the inception meeting and a walk-round tour of ranks with and without the licensing officer after the inception meeting. The result of these reviews is shown in our list below, which documents the current status of all observed rank locations.

At the time of this survey, the main all day and night rank is Smithy Street. It is understood that this rank is fed by vehicles waiting at Mile End and then East Street on their way to Smithy Street in quieter times, although all three are active in their own right at key times. Chichester rank, near the Metro stop, is also used day and night. Ranks at the County Hotel and the Nook shopping centre see night time use, as does Ocean Road (whose location may be moved after the survey). Many other ranks exist but are not used. Some have missing signage. A unique practice in Tyne and Wear is the marking of the head of ranks with a large blue cube with "TAXI" in white on a pole, similar to the "M" used to mark metro stations (although this was missing at one key rank at the time of the survey). This is excellent practice and makes ranks highly visible to customers. Many ranks are also very clearly marked with individual vehicle spaces delineated rather than just an area of carriageway. This also helps to ensure the ranks are clear to those wishing to use them.

Other than the locations listed below, we are not aware of any other ranks within the South Tyneside council area. There are no ranks in the other urban areas nor at any of the other Metro or railway stations within the Council and licensing administrative area.

Rank / operating hours	Spaces	Comments
24-hour ranks		
Mile End Road	1+3+7	Set of three ranks. Header is single space outside Yates, facing the shopping area, and clearly marked by the cube. Fed by 3 space section adjacent to Wouldhave bar, fed by 7 space section on opposite side of road adjacent to car park. Often feeds vehicles on to East Street. Used by passengers and vehicles.
Smithy Street	3	Adjacent to South Shield Metro station. Ironically only rank with cube missing. Used day and night and is main rank for area. Fed from East Street and Mile End Road.
East Street	5	Rank behind shopping centre and bank. Used by vehicles at all times, and some passengers, but mainly feeds Smithy Street, although route through is tortuous as bus only access means hackney carriages have to proceed a long route round.
Prince Edward Road South	1	Adjacent to Prince Edward public house - no longer used.
Chichester Metro Stop	1	Not well marked, but outside public house and adjacent to exit from Metro stop. Previously operated 18:00 to 04:00 and more recently amended to be all day / all hour (and signed thus). Access along narrow one-way road, but obvious to Metro passengers if vehicle is waiting
Night ranks		
Ocean Road	6+3	Section adjacent to Wonderland Amusements has cube and head of rank facing towards town centre. Feeder is opposite adjacent to community centre. All spaces marked individually. Both operate 20:00 to 04:00 and are used. May be moved into Anderson Street in due course. Very accessible location for vehicles with roundabout helping circulation and egress / access
County Hotel	2	Two single space sections outside County Hotel. Markings currently faded. Fed by informal location in Grosvenor Road if busy. Operates 18:00 to midnight.
Sunderland Road, The Nook shops	6	Rank in shopping parade lay-by. Operates 18:00 to midnight and used during this period by passengers and vehicles.

Night ranks no longer used		
Fowler Street South (BBQ King)	?	Operating hours 19:00 to 05:30. No longer used and only marked by sign on wall.
Fowler Street South (building society)	2	Operating hours 20:00 to 04:00. In lay-by and unknown to licensing staff till recently. No longer used, shops / entertainment venues nearby have all closed.
Burrow Street	4	Operating hours 18:00 to 09:00, still with street sign, but road markings over-written by other street markings. No longer used.
Coast Road, Rattler public house	4	Operating hours 18:00 to 04:00. Actually observed to have two parts, second being near the Sundial public house. Very little used
Westoe Road, Britannia public house	3	Operating hours 18:00 to midnight. No longer in use.
Informal rank locations		
Riverside public house	n/a	On corner of road junction so hard to provide formal location, but vehicles do use this to collect passengers late at night
Sand Dancer beach bar	n/a	Used at night, may be private hire pick-ups.

Surveys were proposed during the tender stage of the project (as informed by the brief and our internet research), and were modified at the inception meeting to take account of current expectation of times of use of ranks and informal rank locations. The net impact of the revision was to slightly reduce the included survey hours from a total of 100 to 99 hours, but with a spread felt to more accurately record active locations, adding observations during the daytime at Chichester, night observations at The Nook and near the Riverside informal location.

The Table below shows the actual hours observed, using video methods with the recordings observed by trained staff, and analysed to provide details of the usage and waiting times for both passengers and vehicles. Passenger waiting time was kept to that which was true unmet demand, ie when passengers were waiting but no hackney carriage vehicle was there.

Location	Day / date (all 2012)	Time observed	Total hours observed
24 hour ranks			
Mile End Road	Saturday 13 th October	1200-0400	16
Smithy Street	Friday 12 th October	1000-0400	18
	Saturday 13 th October	1000-0400	18
East Street	Friday 12 th October	1100-2100	10
Chichester	Friday 12 th October	1400-0000	10
Night ranks			
Ocean Road	Friday 12 th October	2000-0500	9
County Hotel	Friday 12 th October	1800-0000	6
The Nook	Saturday 13 th October	1800-0000	6
Informal rank location			
Riverside	Saturday 13 th October	1800-0000	6
TOTAL HOURS			99

Full details of the observed volumes of passenger and vehicle traffic are included in **Appendix 1**. The survey comprised some 99 hours of observation. There are no feeder ranks in the licensing area which require any special consideration to ensure overall vehicle waiting times are observed – all backs of queue are visible from cameras watching the head of the queue.

The Table below summarises the time periods observed at each locations as well as providing overall operational statistics for each location during each period of observation. A detailed description of the observations follows below.

Rank	Period (2012)	Average passenger arrivals per hour that rank is active	Passengers per hackney carriage	Average wait time for passengers (sec)	Average vehicle arrivals per hour	No. of wheel chair passengers observed	% of hackney carriages leaving empty
Mile End Road	Saturday 13 th October 1200-0400	33	1.9	0	27	0	37
Smithy Street	Friday 12 th October 1000-0400	23	1.5	2	17	0	10
	Saturday 13 th October 1000-0400	31	1.7	7	21	0	12
East Street	Friday 12 th October 1100-2100	4	1.3	0	17	0	81
Ocean Road	Friday 12 th October 2000-0500	81	1.9	0.0	51	0	15
County Hotel	Friday 12 th October 1800-0000	35	2.3	0	23	0	36
Chichester	Friday 12 th October 1400-0000	7	1.5	5	9	0	48
The Nook	Saturday 13 th October 1800-0000	4	1.2	0	12	0	74
Riverside	Saturday 13 th October 1800-0000	2	1.3	0	19	0	92

Mile End Road rank

The Mile End Road rank is made up of a header space and two feeder areas. It is also understood to feed East Street and eventually Smithy Street via the central one-way systems. It is located close to a large number of bars and entertainment venues, as well as being near to the edge of the shopping centre of South Shields. The rank was observed on Saturday 13th October 2012, from 12:00 through to 04:00 on the Sunday morning.

During the Saturday, the rank saw around 33 passengers per hour with occupancy of loaded taxis being 1.9 persons, quite high. 37% of vehicles arriving at this location left without passengers. During the course of the day, no passengers ever had to wait for a hackney carriage to arrive at this location and vehicles were always available when passengers needed them.

During the Saturday a total of 527 passengers were served at this location. However, 95% of these passengers were served between 22:00 and 04:00. The largest daytime passenger count was 7 in the 17:00 hour, with many daytime hours seeing no passengers at all. This rank, is therefore, effectively a night rank but an important daytime feeder location.

Average vehicle waiting times were four to 17 minutes, with the longest wait recorded being 47 minutes, although most maximum waits were significantly less. This is consistent with the rank being a place that vehicles wait to get access to other ranks, although it also provides a service if passengers wish to obtain a vehicle here.

Overall service to this location is **good**

Smithy Street Rank

This rank has space for three vehicles just along from an exit from South Shields Metro stop. It is adjacent to the bus station and on a one-way stretch of road accessible to other vehicles, but in reality only used for access to this local area. It operates all days and hours. It is close to the main central area. The rank was observed between 10:00 and 04:00 on both Friday 12th October and Saturday 13th October 2012.

Friday operations

On the Friday, an average of 23 passengers per hour arrived at this location. Average occupancy of departing vehicles was 1.5 passengers. There were two instances of passengers arriving when vehicles were not available – a five minute wait around 12:00 and a short one minute wait in the 03:00 hour. When averaged over all passengers, the average wait was just two seconds.

During the course of the observations a total of 415 passengers used this location. Daytime passenger flows varied from 10 to 28, with the busiest hour being 16:00. After 23:00, flows increased with the highest passenger flow being some 57 in the hour after midnight. Half of all passengers arrived between 22:00 and 04:00, although the rank is also busy during the day

Maximum vehicle waits were between six and 59 minutes, although such waits were much lower after 22:00. On average, vehicles taking fares waited from four to 46 minutes. Just 10% of vehicles left this location empty, most likely in reaction to radio calls. This is clearly the main all day all night rank in the area.

Overall service to this rank on the Friday is **good**

Saturday operations

On the Saturday, an average of 31 passengers per hour arrived at this location – a third busier than the Friday. Average occupancy of departing vehicles was also higher at 1.7 passengers. There were 13 instances of passengers arriving when vehicles were not available. These waits occurred in the 01:00 and 02:00 hours and affected a total of 22 passengers. There were two waits of five minutes, but no waits any longer than this. Many were just a minute or two. When averaged over all passengers, the average wait was just seven seconds.

During the course of the observations a total of 557 passengers used this location. Daytime passenger flows varied from 8 to 25, with the busiest hour being 13:00. After 22:00, flows increased with the highest passenger flow being some 91 in the hour starting 02:00. 65% of all passengers arrived between 22:00 and 04:00, although the rank is also busy during the day.

Maximum vehicle waits were between 18 and 58 minutes, although such waits were much lower after 22:00. On average, vehicles taking fares waited from eight to 44 minutes. Just 12% of vehicles left this location empty, most likely in reaction to radio calls. This is clearly the main all day all night rank in the area.

Overall service to this rank on the Saturday is **good**

Variation of flow

An automatic traffic counter was installed on the section of road containing the Smithy Street rank for some six weeks. Whilst other traffic uses this road, and low speeds mean the actual numbers of vehicles are not accurately recorded, the pattern of flow gives a suggestion of the overall variance of demand over this lengthened period compared to the video surveys which were over a shorter period.

The data shows that Saturday is the busiest period, being 28% busier than the average day (Sunday). Friday is 14% above average, whilst Wednesday and Thursday are about 11% quieter and Tuesday the quietest at 13% below average.

The week including the video surveys was actually the quietest week during the six observed, with flows around 96% of the average, although the busiest week was only 2% above the average. This suggest our

observations covered the busiest days and an almost average period of demand.

East Street rank

East Street rank is a larger area, with five marked spaces. It is located close to, but an awkward route from, the main central area.

This rank was observed on Friday 12th October 2012 from 11:00 to 21:00. During the hours the rank was used, it saw on average just four passengers per hour, with a low occupancy of 1.3 passengers per loaded departure. No passengers were observed to arrive when vehicles were not available. 81% of vehicles left the location without passengers. This confirms the suggestion that this rank is a waiting place to gain access to the main Smithy Street location.

Just 28 passengers used this location during the hours observed, with the busiest hour being at 12:00 when eight passengers were observed. Average vehicle waits for fares were not too long, however, from seven to 23 minutes, and the maximum wait observed was 25 minutes. This again confirms this is more a feeder rank than an active passenger rank, though it does provide some passenger service.

Overall service to this location is **good**.

Chichester rank

The Chichester rank is a single space rank very close to a public house and to the Chichester Metro stop. The rank is visible to those leaving the station if a vehicle is waiting there, but less so otherwise. The formal hours of the rank were 18:00 to 04:00 but it has more recently become an all day all hour rank, and is currently so marked.

Observations at this location were undertaken on Friday 12th October 2012, between 14:00 and midnight. Average passenger departures were 7 per hour. Occupancy of vehicles departing was 1.5 passengers per vehicle. Just one passenger had to wait six minutes for a vehicle to arrive during the 14:00 hour of operation. On average some 9 vehicles per hour served this location, with 48% leaving empty.

During the observations, some 73 passengers were observed to leave the area in hackney carriages. In the afternoon hours there were 2-6 passengers per hour, with ten passengers per hour in the 18:00 and 19:00 hours. The highest flow was 14 passengers in the 21:00 hour.

Vehicles maximum waits were up to 35 minutes, although on average the wait tended to be between one and 26 minutes for a fare. Given the very low demand, service to this location is **very good**.

Night ranks

There are several night only ranks in the South Tyneside Council area, mostly in the central South Shields area, although some are in suburban locations.

Ocean Road rank

Ocean Road rank is located adjacent to a major club (although not directly outside), and just off the main central area of South Shields. It is in two parts, either side of the road. The head of the rank faces the central area, but vehicles can easily use the nearby roundabout to return out of town if necessary. We were made aware of plans to move this rank to Anderson Street and noted that physical works to build the new rank were under way on the rank tour following the inception meeting. There are three six main spaces and three feeder spaces available.

Observations at this location were undertaken on Friday 12th October 2012, between 20:00 and 05:00. Average passenger departures were 81 per hour. Occupancy of vehicles departing was high at 1.9 passengers per vehicle. Just one passenger had to wait a minute for a vehicle to arrive during the last hour of operation when passenger flows were the second highest. On average some 51 vehicles per hour served this location, with just 15% leaving empty.

During the observations, some 567 passengers were observed to leave the area in hackney carriages. Passenger numbers rose each hour of operation, starting with 24 in the 22:00 hour and rising to 136 in the 03:00 hour. The last hour saw some 123 passengers leave the area in hackney carriages. This rank saw the busiest hour of passenger flow across any rank in the area, and also saw the third highest flow. Only Mile End Road saw a higher flow, at 125 passengers. The next highest flow in the survey was 91 persons.

Longest vehicle waits observed were 39 minutes in the earlier part of the evening, those taking fares averaged waits of four to 19 minutes, with the lower values as the evening progressed. Service to this rank is **very good**

County Hotel rank

This rank is located outside the main central area of South Shields on a major radial route. There are just two separate marked spaces, but we were told that vehicles often wait in Grosvenor Road opposite if there are more than two vehicles waiting to serve customers. The rank is outside the County Hotel, a busy public house. Observations at this location were undertaken on Friday 12th October 2012, between 18:00 and midnight.

Average passenger departures were 35 per hour. Occupancy of vehicles departing was very high at 2.3 passengers per vehicle. No passengers had to wait for a vehicle to arrive at any time. On average some 23 vehicles per hour served this location, with 36% leaving empty.

During the observations, some 173 passengers were observed to leave the area in hackney carriages. Passenger numbers rose from 20 in the 19:00 hour to a peak of 59 in the 21:00 hour, falling after this. The rank did not become active till after 19:00, and was quiet after midnight.

Vehicle waits were a maximum of 36 minutes, although average waits for fares tended to be between five and 25 minutes. For all vehicles, including those moving on without fares, the average wait was reduced a little (four to 21 minutes waiting).

Service overall to this location is **good**

The Nook rank

The Nook rank is located in a small suburban shopping area along Sunderland Road. There are six spaces, available from 18:00 to midnight.

Observations at this location were undertaken on Saturday 13th October 2012, between 18:00 and midnight. Average passenger departures were 4 per hour, although there were only three hours when the rank was active. Occupancy of vehicles departing was 1.2 passengers per vehicle. No passenger had to wait for a vehicle to arrive at any time. On average some 12 vehicles per hour served this location, with 74% leaving empty.

During the observations, just 11 passengers were observed to leave the area in hackney carriages. The rank saw passengers in the 19:00, 20:00 and 23:00 hours, with the largest number being 6 passengers in the 20:00 hour. Vehicle waits at this location averaged seven to 28 minutes, although one vehicle did wait some 44 minutes.

Service to this location is **fair**

Riverside informal pick-up area

We were advised that vehicles tend to pick up near a main junction near the Riverside public house. The area was observed on Saturday 13th October 2012 from 18:00 to midnight.

During the observations, just four passengers were observed to leave the area in hackney carriages. The largest number, three, were observed in the 23:00 hour. However, there were plenty of hackney carriages at this location, although 92% left empty. Most only paused for a short while, with average waits being very low. There does not appear to be sufficient demand at this location to justify a rank, even if one were possible given the accident risk of stopping close to the junction. The present arrangements appear to service passengers reasonably.

Disability use of ranks

No passengers with visible disabilities were observed during the course of our observations, nor any wheel chair users.

Comparison of overall supply and demand

The Table below provides a slightly different summary of supply and demand, comparing average vehicle arrivals per hour with average loaded departures per hour, ie seeing how supply and demand match on average.

Rank	Period	No of hours rank operated	Average vehicle arrivals per hour	Average loaded departures per hour	Overall judgment of service provided
Mile End Road	Saturday 13 th October 1200-0400	16	27	17	Good
Smithy Street	Friday 12 th October 1000-0400	18	17	15	Good
	Saturday 13 th October 1000-0400	18	21	19	Good
East Street	Friday 12 th October 1100-2100	7	17	3	Good
Ocean Road	Friday 12 th October 2000-0500	7	51	43	Very good
County Hotel	Friday 12 th October 1800-0000	5	23	15	Good
Chichester	Friday 12 th October 1400-0000	10	9	5	Very good
The Nook	Saturday 13 th October 1800-0000	3	12	3	Fair
Riverside	Saturday 13 th October 1800-0000	2	19	2	n/a

Our observations demonstrate that the bulk of the demand for hackney carriages is to serve the night life of the area, although there is daytime demand principally at Smithy Street, but also at Mile End Road. Chichester sees reasonable daytime use related to its proximity to the Metro stop. Ocean Road sees the busiest flows, followed by Smithy Street on Saturday then Mile End Road on Friday. Four other ranks see relatively low, but not negligible flows, which is commendable.

The supposition that Mile End Road feeds East Street which feeds Smithy Street seems to be a true reflection of operation based on the statistics of empty vehicle movements in the area. There is also a healthy night demand outside the main central area, possibly as vehicles who have taken people home pause on their way back and obtain return journeys from the two suburban ranks.

Overall, we observed 2,355 passengers of which just 1% had to wait for a vehicle to arrive (29 people). Averaged over all those using hackney carriages, their average wait was just 21 seconds, which is not significant.

Service at most ranks was good, with two locations seeing very good service, one of which was a location that might not be expected to see such service given the low level of demand. The overall statistics suggest that there is an active hackney carriage mentality in the area, where vehicles are seeking business from ranks. However, there remain a good number of ranks which are not used despite there being more ranks active than in many other authorities.

Demand in a typical week

The table below calculates a typical week from the observations undertaken in 2012. The factors are approximations but sufficient to give a general pattern of demand.

Rank	Period	No of passengers	Factor to week	Passengers per week
Mile End Road	Saturday	527	4.4	2319 (32%)
Smithy Street	Friday	415	5	2632 (36%)
	Saturday	557	1	
East Street	Friday	28	6	168 (2%)
Ocean Road	Friday	567	2	1134 (15%)
County Hotel	Friday	173	4	692 (9%)
Chichester	Friday	73	4.8	350 (5%)
The Nook	Saturday	11	4	44 (1%)
Total	Full Week			7339

Note –Total includes all observations at relevant points, but excludes hailing (10%).

Over the week, Smithy Street is the busiest rank, although Mile End Road sees almost the same amount, though more from its late night usage. Ocean Road sees the third most usage, 15%, followed by County Hotel, Chichester, East Street and The Nook. In total, there are around 7,339 passenger journeys in a typical week. This equates to just over 4,200 vehicle journeys made from ranks.

In general, this level of usage is quite healthy and more than expected – particularly the very healthy spread of use of different ranks.

Further discussion of the pattern of licenced vehicle service to customers in South Tyneside occurs below.

Level of hackney carriage vehicle activity

The plate numbers of hackney carriages were recorded during the inception visit, whilst the rank surveys were being undertaken (on a sample basis), and during the course of the inception rank visit.

Of the 235 hackney carriage vehicles, during the course of the study a total of 46 were observed. The survey sample observed 49 hackney carriages operating. Of these, three were seen twice, meaning 40 different vehicles (17%) were observed, very low. At the inception meeting visit, a further six different vehicles were observed. These results are consistent with a fleet in which many vehicles operate on private hire circuits with other hackney carriages operating on a part-time basis.

Licensed vehicles in South Tyneside

Information was provided regarding the number of operators in the South Tyneside area. 18 different operators exist. Of these ten have fleets operating hackney carriage alongside private hire vehicles. Three operate only specific contracts which tend not to be public facing, including those focussing on schools work or private company contracts (eg two companies have 'limos' in their name). The current situation is very fluid with the tendency towards large companies buying up smaller ones.

However, hackney carriages alone are allowed roof signs, so that even within a company fleet the two styles of vehicle are readily externally distinguishable. However, there is a potential for confusion internally as private hires also operate on meters in this area.

At the inception meeting we were advised that around 40 vehicles (17% of the fleet) remain independent hackney carriages during daytime hours. A further 60 operate independently but only at night and weekend. The remaining 135 vehicles also work on private hire circuits (57% of the fleet), but many of these will come 'off-circuit' at key rank times and effectively become pure hackney carriages at this time. Our fleet observations were consistent with this, with it proving difficult to observe a high number of the fleet active during our sample observations.

4. Public Consultation results

A sixteen question survey was undertaken with 601 persons in the South Tyneside Council area. Surveys were undertaken within the main central South Shields area (250). There were 100 interviews in Jarrow, 101 in Hebburn and 50 each in Cleadon, Boldon and Whitburn. Responses were mainly from those available during the day time, following standard practise for these interviews. Whilst some questions followed through from the previous survey, most were tailored to meet the needs of the Best Practise guidance and a current determination if there is any unmet demand, patent or latent, in South Tyneside at this time. The Table below summarises the overall responses.

Question	Response	Results, %						
		Av	Cl	Bo	Wh	H	J	SS
Have you used a taxi in the last three months in the South Tyneside area?	Yes	59	90	94	96	41	45	51
How often do you use a taxi in South Tyneside?	More than once a week	21	29	28	12	18	28	19
	Once a week	21	13	43	18	14	15	22
	Once a fortnight	9	13	6	18	6	9	6
	Once a month	11	18	6	22	22	2	8
	Less than once a month	12	20	11	18	16	8	10
How do you normally get a taxi in South Tyneside?	Rarely or never	26	7	6	12	25	38	35
	At a taxi rank	3	8	0	2	2	0	4
	Hail in the street	1	4	0	0	0	0	1
	Telephone a taxi company	70	76	38	58	91	61	84
	Use a Freephone	15	4	28	8	5	32	12
	Mix of these	11	8	34	30	2	7	0
	Other	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
If you book a taxi in South Tyneside by phone, please tell us the three companies you phone most?	See description below							
Have you ever given up waiting for a taxi anywhere in South Tyneside?	Yes	9	20	19	17	0	4	3

		Av	Cl	Bo	Wh	H	J	SS
Please name all rank locations you are aware of in South Tyneside, and if you have recently used a hackney carriage from that location?	See description below							
For what purposes do you use taxis in South Tyneside?	Entertainment	38	44	22	36	35	38	44
	Shopping	32	34	50	21	33	38	26
	Hospital or doctors appointment	15	8	20	16	20	13	14
	To or from rail, bus or airport	9	6	8	13	3	10	11
	For work or business	5	6	0	10	8	1	5
	Other	1	1	0	4	0	0	0
At what time of day do you use taxis in South Tyneside?	0400-0900 Weekday	10	6	5	10	17	12	10
	0900-midday Weekday	22	29	23	37	27	24	16
	Midday-1600 Weekday	16	19	15	19	27	15	14
	1600-1900 Weekday	20	30	31	24	17	19	16
	1900-midnight Weekday	21	12	24	10	10	21	25
	Midnight-0400 Weekday	11	4	2	0	2	9	19
	0400-0900 Weekend	7	9	0	4	5	9	7
	0900-midday Weekend	13	0	14	10	25	17	14
	Midday-1600 Weekend	12	7	11	6	5	20	13
	1600-1900 Weekend	15	18	14	12	5	20	15
	1900-midnight Weekend	34	48	40	48	55	24	29
Midnight-0400 Weekend	19	18	21	20	5	10	22	

		Av	Cl	Bo	Wh	H	J	SS
Do you have any problem with getting a taxi in South Tyneside?	Never	84	69	72	75	100	81	88
	Sometimes	16	31	28	25	0	16	12
	Often	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
	Always	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
What would encourage you to use taxis or use them more often?	Cheaper fares	64	50	43	43	87	64	79
	Better vehicles	6	11	15	12	3	2	2
	More taxis I could phone for	17	20	25	34	0	14	11
	Better drivers	7	9	11	4	0	7	8
	More taxis I could hail or get at a rank	2	4	1	4	0	2	0
	Better located ranks	2	1	3	1	3	7	0
	Other	2	5	3	1	6	3	0
Do you consider that yourself, or someone in your household has a disability?	Yes	16	11	26	21	25	17	12
If yes, what sort of vehicle?	I need WAV	22	33	0	10	17	30	32
	Someone I know needs WAV	30	50	58	30	0	40	16
	I need other adapted vehicle, not WAV	25	0	17	50	50	30	16
	Someone I know needs another adaptation, not WAV	22	17	25	10	17	0	36
	Other	1	0	0	0	17	0	0
Do you have regular access to a car?	Yes	44	87	51	30	43	49	35
What do you think about hackney carriage fares in South Tyneside?	So expensive I don't use hackney carriages	20	0	0	0	0	28	35
	Expensive	44	62	77	53	43	20	36
	Reasonable	20	36	23	47	55	5	7
	Cheap	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	I have no idea what fares are like	17	2	0	0	3	47	22

How would you describe your employment status?	Professional or managerial	10	22	6	8	5	9	10
	Supervisory or clerical	22	20	6	10	28	18	29
	Skilled manual	15	18	9	15	23	24	11
	Unskilled manual	11	4	13	6	0	13	14
	Pensioner	28	24	28	46	38	25	24
	Long term unemployed	9	4	17	4	8	8	9
	Unable to work	6	7	21	10	0	5	3
Do you live in the area?	In South Shields	44	4	17	19	3	22	77
	In Jarrow or Hebburn	26	11	31	2	98	66	5
	In Boldon, Cleadon or Whitburn	19	81	31	75	0	4	2
	Outside South Tyneside	11	4	21	4	0	7	16
Gender (value in bracket from census, 2008 est of 2012)	Male	44 (49)	32	32	40	43	45	50
Age (value in brackets from census, 2008 est of 2012)	Under 30 (16-29)	23 (24)	10	20	16	15	20	32
	31-55 (30-59)	47 (47)	52	48	40	49	50	44
	60+	30 (29)	38	32	44	37	30	24

Some 59% of those interviewed had used a licensed vehicle in the South Tyneside Council area in the last three months, quite a high level of recent usage. Cleadon, Boldon and Whitburn responses were very high (quite unusual for such locations), whilst South Shields values were 51% and Hebburn/Jarrow lowest at 41% and 45% respectively.

74% of respondents told us how often they used a licensed vehicle across the area. We have assumed the remaining respondents do not use licensed vehicles and calculated the average level of licensed vehicle trips per month per person below. On average, there are 2.4 person trips by licensed vehicle per month based on these assumptions, a fairly low level.

Frequency	% of people	Assumed Trips per month	Total
More than once a week	21	10	210
One per week	21	4	84
Once a fortnight	9	2	18
One per month	11	1	11
Less than one per month	12	0.5	6
Rarely or never	26	0	0
			329
No response	26	0	
Trips per person per month			2.4

However, the individual tables below show a wide variation of licensed vehicle usage, with Boldon having the highest at 4.5 and Hebburn the lowest at 1.4. South Shields is closest to the average at 2.3. Jarrow and Whitburn have 2.4 and 2.6 respectively. Cleadon is also high at 3.6 trips per person per month. This is consistent with the overall recent usage information.

Cleadon			
Frequency	% of people	Assumed Trips per month	Total
More than once a week	29	10	290
One per week	13	4	52
Once a fortnight	13	2	26
One per month	18	1	18
Less than one per month	20	0.5	10
Rarely or never	7	0	0
			396
No response	10	0	
Trips per person per month			3.6
Boldon			
Frequency	% of people	Assumed Trips per month	Total
More than once a week	28	10	280
One per week	43	4	172
Once a fortnight	6	2	12
One per month	6	1	6
Less than one per month	11	0.5	5.5
Rarely or never	6	0	0
			475.5
No response	6	0	
Trips per person per month			4.5

Whitburn			
Frequency	% of people	Assumed Trips per month	Total
More than once a week	12	10	120
One per week	18	4	72
Once a fortnight	18	2	36
One per month	22	1	22
Less than one per month	18	0.5	9
Rarely or never	12	0	0
			259
No response	0	0	
Trips per person per month			2.6
Hebburn			
Frequency	% of people	Assumed Trips per month	Total
More than once a week	18	10	180
One per week	14	4	56
Once a fortnight	6	2	12
One per month	22	1	22
Less than one per month	16	0.5	8
Rarely or never	25	0	0
			278
No response	49	0	
Trips per person per month			1.4
Jarrow			
Frequency	% of people	Assumed Trips per month	Total
More than once a week	28	10	280
One per week	15	4	60
Once a fortnight	9	2	18
One per month	2	1	2
Less than one per month	8	0.5	4
Rarely or never	38	0	0
			364
No response	35	0	
Trips per person per month			2.4

South Shields			
Frequency	% of people	Assumed Trips per month	Total
More than once a week	19	10	190
One per week	22	4	88
Once a fortnight	6	2	12
One per month	8	1	8
Less than one per month	10	0.5	5
Rarely or never	35	0	0
			303
No response	25	0	
Trips per person per month			2.3

65% of people told us how they obtained licensed vehicles in the South Tyneside Council area. 70% obtained them by phone. A further 11% used mobile or smart phones and 15% free-phones, making a total of 96% obtaining licensed vehicles through booking methods. Just 3% obtained them by using a rank and 1% hailed them.

When looked at by area, phone calls are more dominant in areas other than South Shields, although Cleadon sees 8% rank and 4% hail, albeit from a smaller sample. Use of mobiles and smart phones is more prevalent in the less urban areas, with no use of this means recorded at all in South Shields, and much more in Boldon and Whitburn.

Some 341 different answers were given to the identification of the companies used. The smaller settlements tended to give the greatest amount of answers – in all three smaller settlements 44 or more people answered this question. In all three, at least 22 people, and in one case 36 people named three companies. 18 companies were named in Cleadon, 20 in Boldon and 14 in Whitburn.

Hebburn and Jarrow named less companies and less sets of information about numbers used, just 41 and 42 respectively even though the number of respondents was 100 in each place. Just 6 companies were named in Hebburn and 7 in Jarrow. Even South Shields only named 13 different companies.

Overall, there were 36 different companies named, of which just one was mentioned in all six areas and just three were mentioned in five areas. Given there are only ten public facing companies, many people are naming the constituent parts of merged fleets. There could be use of out of area vehicles in some of the border areas.

This suggests a very active private hire trade in South Tyneside, with more competition in the less urban areas. There appeared to be some dominance of single companies in Hebburn and Jarrow, which seemed to have overall reduced choice for customers; in South Shields there were two large and two medium companies from the frequency of mention of names.

57% of people responded to the question seeking if they had ever given up waiting for a vehicle in the area. 41% said they never tried to wait for a licensed vehicle. 50% said they never had given up waiting, but overall 9% had. For the whole area the latent demand factor would therefore be 1.09. However, this value was dominated by high responses for giving up in Cleadon, Boldon and Whitburn respondents, where there are no ranks. The response for South Shields is lower at 3%, with 48% responding there, although 81% of these had never tried waiting for a licensed vehicle. The latent demand factor to be used should therefore be 1.03, relatively low.

The overall high values for 'have never tried waiting for a taxi' tie in with the low rank usage and high private hire usage and further point to this area being dominated by private hire service.

People were asked to name all the rank locations they were aware of in the South Tyneside Council area and if they used the locations they named or not. 19% of people named locations, many named several. Cleadon, Boldon and Whitburn respondents had best knowledge. Key ranks mentioned were South Shields metro stop and Ocean Road. Mile End road was also mentioned. Those in Hebburn clearly had no idea of what ranks were, and named a private hire office. People in Jarrow mentioned the station there and a supermarket. For some reason, there was little response about naming ranks in the South Shields sample, where the Metro rank and McDonalds were mentioned.

Entertainment was the top use for licensed vehicle usage, with 38% overall saying this was their main purpose of usage. Shopping was second (32%). Only Boldon had these two in the reverse order of priority. Hospitals accounted for 15% of uses, links to bus / rail or airport 9% and work/business just 5%.

Respondents were asked to identify the times of day they used licensed vehicles in the area. For South Shields, even weekdays are dominated by the 1900 to midnight period (with a quarter of all demand in this period). For other areas, it is either 0900-midday or 1600-1900 that take between 22 and 27% of times stated.

Weekends are dominated in all areas by the period from 1900 to midnight, with values ranging from 24 to 55% of times used. For South Shields, the proportion is 29%, just higher than for weekdays.

These figures confirm that licensed vehicle demand in South Tyneside tends to be dominated by late night trips from entertainment, although there is a spread of usage at other times.

People were asked if they had problems getting licensed vehicles in South Tyneside. The overwhelming response was 'never' (84%). Sometimes was a high answer in Cleadon, Boldon and Whitburn (31, 28 and 25% respectively), but only one person of the whole sample said it was often a problem, and no-one said it always was. This suggests a very good availability of licensed vehicles in South Tyneside overall.

571 responses were provided about matters that might encourage more use of hackney carriages. As in most areas, a key response was that reduced price would encourage their use (64% overall). The next most important response was 'more hackney carriages I could phone for' (17%), with all other responses being 7% or less of the overall total of responses (many people gave multiple answers).

People were asked if they or anyone they knew had a disability needing either a wheel chair accessible licensed vehicle, or a vehicle adapted in some other way. 454 people (76%) responded to this question, with 84% of them saying they did not need any adaptation, or know anyone who did. The highest responses in terms of need were in Boldon, Whitburn and Hebburn.

The 16% needing adapted vehicles were evenly split between WAV and other style (52% WAV, 47% other), suggesting the current fleet is a good way of meeting potential needs of those with disabilities.

People were asked about hackney carriage fares. Across the whole sample, 72% responded. Of these, 44% felt fares were expensive, 20% said they were so expensive they did not use hackney carriages, and 20% felt them reasonable. None said they were cheap and 17% said they had no idea about what hackney carriage fares were like. These results were generally similar across each area – apart from that 22% of those responding in South Shields said they had no idea what fares were like, which could be overcome by advertisements at or near ranks.

44% of people had regular access to a car, although there was wide variation with Cleadon having the highest such access (87%) and Whitburn the lowest (30%). South Shields had much less access (35%).

Over the whole area, 28% were pensioners, 22% of those interviewed were supervisory or clerical, 15% were skilled manual, 11% were unskilled manual, 10% were professional or managerial, 9% were long term unemployed and 6% were unable to work. 81% had felt able to answer this question.

89% of people lived in the area, with 44% from South Shields, 26% from Jarrow or Hebburn and 19% from Cleadon, Boldon or Whitburn. The specific values for interviews in each area generally matched expectation, apart from a low local head count in Boldon.

Our gender sample saw under-representation of men (44% compared to 49%), whilst our age sample was incredibly close to the expected with no figure more than 1% different (although there was variation between areas).

Summary

In summary, the public attitudes undertaken across the South Tyneside Council area with 601 persons, show use of licensed vehicles to be moderately high in this area. Overall, 96% get licensed vehicles by various phone methods, although rank usage focusses on South Shields and there is the usual 1% of hailing. The fact that most people get licensed vehicles by phone is supported by the high number of companies referred to by all parts of the area. However, competition appears greatest in the suburban areas, with fewer companies named in Jarrow, Hebburn and South Shields than in the other areas. However, with 57% of hackney carriages on radio circuits, and all vehicles with meters, many people will travel in hackney carriages even if booked.

Information about times of usage shows the dominance of the night economy in South Shields demand (suburban area weekday demand focusses on commuting times), but across the area weekend demand is heavily focussed on the late evening periods. Main use is for entertainment, followed by shopping.

The bulk of those responding said they never had any problem getting licensed vehicles. No-one claimed to always have a problem, and just one person said 'often'.

Latent demand for hackney carriages is 1.03 for the hackney carriage based demand (though 1.07 over the whole area, which may relate more to delays in phone bookings arriving, although some outer areas do have good knowledge of the South Shields ranks).

People in the area tend to know the key ranks very well – although the response in South Shields to this question was very poor. Hebburn and Jarrow interviewees were those least knowledgeable about ranks and in one case the most popular "rank" was a private hire company office.

Despite high provision and usage of private hire vehicles, the second highest item that would increase use of hackney carriages is more that people could phone for – which seems contrary as most hackney carriages can already be phoned for. As usual, the main item that would increase use would be lower fares – unusual given the already low level of fares in the area, although this might relate more to the issue of apparently low fares being in reality high due to the high waiting time charge in this area.

A relatively high percentage – some 16% over the area – needed, or knew someone who needed an adapted vehicle. The sort of vehicle needed was almost evenly split between wheel chair accessible and other adapted styles. Car ownership was moderate at 44% although some suburban areas had very high car ownership. Our sample saw 89% local people with a good correspondence to the age profile, but an underrepresentation of men.

5. Stakeholder Consultation

The following key stakeholders were contacted in line with the DfT Best Practise Guidance 2010:

- Supermarkets
- Hotels
- Hospital
- Pubwatch / entertainment venues
- Disability representatives

Specific comments have been aggregated below to provide an overall appreciation of the current situation, although in some cases comments are specific to the needs of a particular stakeholder. It should be noted that the comments contained in this Chapter are the view of those consulted, and not that of the authors of this Report. **Appendix 2** provides further details of those consulted.

During the time of preparation of this report, it did not prove possible to obtain contact details for the following:

- Local education
- Education and social services
- Police
- Rail operators
- Other council contacts
- County council contacts

We do not consider this would reduce the robustness of this report as there has been no suggestion of any issues related to these stakeholders.

The licensed vehicle trade consultation is the subject of the following chapter.

Supermarkets

Six supermarkets were contacted. Two told us they had free phones to specific companies. One advised us we would have to visit to understand what provision was made and three others were not available during the preparation of the report.

Hotels

Three hotels were contacted. One advised us that they used the private hire company whose base was opposite their location. Two others did not reply within the time available. Further attempts will be made, and reported in an addendum if received before the Council presentation.

Hospital

The hospital advised us that those needing licensed vehicles were well provided for by a free phone to a private hire company.

Entertainment venues

Little response was obtained from entertainment venues during the time available for consultation, although this is not an unusual response. The one pub which did speak with us advised us that customers booked private hire vehicles who usually waited in their car park and responded to these bookings. Others did not respond to calls.

Disability Representative

Attempts were made to contact disabled representatives for South Tyneside. Unfortunately, the only group for which contact details were available had changed their phone number, or no longer existed. Further contacts were provided, at Blissability and Your Voice Counts. Neither were able to provide comment within the time available for completion of this report, but if further information is provided before this report is presented to committee, an Addendum will be provided.

Youth Parliament

The area has an active youth parliament. Contact was made late in the study with the organiser, who is keen to provide response. This will be provided as an addendum if received before the presentation to Council.

Transport, Education and Social Services

No contacts were obtained during the time available for producing this report.

Police / Parking Enforcement

No contacts were obtained during the time available for producing this report.

Rail Operators

National statistics are publicly available showing the total number of entries and exits at each rail station in the United Kingdom. These numbers are calculated using ticket barrier and ticket issue information from ticket sales. However, all rail provision in this area is under the aegis of Tyne and Wear Metro and the ten stops are not included in this national database. There is no national rail station in the area.

The train taxi guide was interrogated to identify licensed vehicle links from each station. South Shields is correctly identified as having a rank, and has four operators also listed. The same four operators are listed for use at Chichester, Tyne Dock and Bede all of whom are advised not having ranks. The rank at Chichester is not referenced.

Ranks or offices are also recorded present at Jarrow (seen from the train as an office) and East Boldon, each being given three operators to call if found necessary. The remaining stations of Felling, Hebburn, Bede and Simonside are all advised as having no ranks and given three operators to call (in all cases one is noted as having wheel chair accessible vehicles), all operators sets being different. The final Metro stop in the area, Brockley Whins, has no rank or office and just one operator to call.

Provision to metro stops therefore seems reasonable via the train taxi link, although the rank at Chichester should be referenced in this guide as it is certainly used by metro passengers. There is even a high level of availability of companies with wheel chair accessible vehicles advertised, which is unusual.

Summary

Most stakeholders suggested their customers principally used private hire vehicles. No issues were raised. As is typical, many consultees were not able to respond – although some are keen to respond but are currently unable to within the timescale for completing this report. Any responses received after finalisation of this Report will be provided before the Council presentation in an Addendum. None of these will change the key conclusions to the Report.

6. Licensed Vehicle Trade Consultation

Trade consultation

A letter was issued to all licensed drivers inviting them to complete a questionnaire about licensed vehicle operation in South Tyneside, or otherwise provide comment in various manners (in writing, by phone, by email, by return freepost). There was an error in the letter suggesting South Tyneside was currently without a limit on vehicles.

A total of 37 responses were received, all of which were completion of the questionnaire. 25 provided additional comments. Further analysis is provided below.

Overall, 92% owned their own vehicle with 3% not owning a vehicle, with 5% not responding to this question. No-one claimed to own more than one vehicle. The bulk of respondents, 89% owned and drove their own hackney carriage vehicle. One owner/driver phv responded. 8% said that someone else drove the vehicle they owned.

In terms of experience, the average years of vehicle ownership for those responding was 13 years, although this ranged from someone saying 5 months to others saying 45 years. A small number had worked on the private hire side and then on the hackney carriage vehicle side.

In terms of working week, there was a wide range of options chosen. The most frequent option was six days (32%) followed by five days (24%) and seven days (22%). 65% said there were days they worked longer, with 27% saying this occurred on Fridays and Saturdays. 22% said they worked longer on Saturday.

Average hours worked were 52, although this ranged from 12 to 80 hours. Interestingly, those working 80 hours claimed to have owned vehicles for 10, 16 and 36 years. The average hours worked were compared for those owning less than 10 years and those owning 10 years or more. The two responses were not significantly different, but the sample suggested those having owned longer worked longer on average (53 hours compared to 48 for the lower length of ownership group).

57% said their working patterns had changed over the last three years, with 19% saying they had not. 8% did not respond to this question. None gave further detail.

81% said they drove a saloon vehicle whilst 14% drove a wheel chair accessible vehicle. In terms of passengers having problems with vehicles, drivers suggested most did not (81%) with just 11% claiming passengers had problems using their vehicle. None provided any further explanation.

59% said they accepted private hire work whilst driving a hackney carriage. 32% did not. The average time that hackney carriage drivers spend undertaking private hire work was 50%. 18 told us companies they worked for. Five different companies were named, but no company was dominant.

Of the 37 respondents, 32 told us the ranks they used. Ten of these said they served all ranks, whilst many others said more than one rank, or gave a general area they served (central, town centre, the whole Borough). Just five drivers stated only one rank, three of whom said they just served Ocean Road. Those using ranks said that on average 49% of their time was spent waiting at ranks to be hired, although there were several who said up to 90% of their time was spent thus.

Comments made focussed on their not being enough work for the current fleet. Some said they survived on private hire work. One felt private hire numbers needed to be capped (which is legally impossible). Three asked for access to bus lanes. Just one suggested need for more ranks. Another said they only use ranks 30% of the time as few people went out now. One told us they only get a job an hour, and can sometimes wait two hours to get a fare from a rank.

No other contact was received from the trade.

7. Responses to DfT Best Practice Guidance 2010

Annex A of the Best Practice Guidance (BPG) provides a list of useful questions to help assess the issue of quantity controls of hackney carriage licences.

This chapter takes the form of a response to each question based on the evidence identified earlier in this report. BPG questions are shown in ***bold italic*** with responses following in normal type.

Have you considered the Government's view that quantity control should be removed unless a specific case that such controls benefit the consumer can be made?

Yes, this report is the independent input to this consideration on behalf of South Tyneside Council.

***Questions relating to the policy of controlling numbers:
Have you recently reviewed the need for your policy of quantity controls?***

Yes, this report forms a review of the need for the policy of quantity control of hackney carriages at this point in time in the Borough of South Tyneside Council area. Previous reviews of passenger satisfaction were undertaken from 1987 including recent work in 2004 and 2009, although these did not include rank observations. 12 additional plates were added in around 2006.

What form did the review of your policy of quantity controls take?

This current review follows the DfT Best Practise Guidance April 2010 in undertaking a full review of the current situation in regard to the policy towards hackney carriage vehicle limits. It includes:

- A review of the background policies of the Council
- A rank survey program to identify current demand and supply
- Public consultation with people in the streets of South Tyneside
- Stakeholder consultation with all groups recommended by the DfT Best Practise Guidance as far as people were available
- A detailed trade consultation using a questionnaire posted to all licensed drivers in the area
- Consideration of the relevant section of the Equality Act

Who was involved in the review?

This review was undertaken by an independent consultant and included direct discussion with the following respondents:

- Local supermarkets
- Hotels in the area
- The local hospital

Other stakeholders were contacted but did not respond during the time available.

What decision was reached about retaining or removing quantity controls?

The decision regarding quantity controls is the subject of the final chapter, but is also a matter for decision by the committee appointed to make such decisions on behalf of the Council.

Are you satisfied that your policy justifies restricting entry to the trade?

Please see the summary and conclusions section for guidance on conclusions from our review – ultimately this decision is for the local council to make.

Are you satisfied that quantity controls do not:

- ***Reduce the availability of taxis***
- ***Increase waiting times for consumers***
- ***Reduce choice and safety for consumers***

There remains high satisfaction with the licensed vehicle service in South Tyneside, and relatively high usage. However, 96% of demand is met by telephone bookings of various kinds, and 40% of hackney carriages also work for private hire companies. Latent demand across the area is moderate, at 1.07, but falls to 1.03 in the main area with hackney carriage ranks operating. No-one 'always' has problems getting licensed vehicles, and just one person regularly had an issue – most people never have an issue getting licensed vehicles. The operation of hackney carriages on private hire circuits tends to increase the availability of the fleet, with many waiting at ranks for radio calls, increasing the presence even at some out of centre locations.

What special circumstances justify retention of quantity controls?

This issue is ultimately for the Councillors to conclude. At the present time there are just 17% of hackney carriage vehicles servicing only ranks during the daytime, and a further 43% only serving ranks at evenings and the weekend. Were the limit to be removed it is highly likely that most vehicles would feel it necessary to join private hire companies so rank service could well fall. The authority might move towards the situation in Barrow-in-Furness where daytime ranks see very few vehicles waiting for customers, which would be a reduction in overall service.

How does your policy benefit consumers, particularly in remote rural areas?

The South Tyneside Council area has significant proportions of suburban and rural area, but none have sufficient trade to encourage ranks, and all tend to be served by private hire operations. In some areas, private hire booking offices are located near to main generators (eg Metro stops) and are treated similarly to ranks.

How does your policy benefit the trade?

Retention of a limit would retain some added value of having a hackney carriage vehicle licence which would allow some investment in the trade that would not be as likely with the introduction of further vehicles, although it would be strongly advisable that any removal of the limit must require new vehicles to be wheel chair accessible and of a high overall standard.

If you have a local accessibility policy, how does this fit with restricting taxi licences?

We are not aware of any local accessibility policy, and current evidence suggests the demand for wheel chair accessible vehicles is moderate in the area, with many disabled providing their own vehicles. There is more likelihood that further wheel chair accessible vehicles might be added were the limit to be retained and drivers encourage to invest in such vehicles, than either by a policy of new hackney carriages having to be wheel chair accessible, or by removal of the limit. Neither of these latter options could guarantee any extra wheel chair accessible vehicles at all, whilst the option of encouragement via the retention of the limit might produce some increase. However, it is also true that the number of wheel chair vehicles is the result of the 12 extra plates issued and it must also be noted that these took a long time to be put into service, such that the economic case for such vehicles is very light.

Questions relating to setting the number of taxi licences:

When did you last assess unmet demand?

Unmet demand has been regularly reviewed, with this study preceded by earlier ones in 2009 and 2004, which with the dates of survey work effectively provide a slightly more than three yearly review in accordance with the Best Practise Guidance.

How is your taxi limit assessed?

This survey uses industry standard techniques.

Have you considered latent demand, ie potential customers who would use taxis if more were available, but currently do not?

Yes, latent demand was considered by several methods, with the key method being through interviews with members of the public. The value for the area more dependent on hackney carriages is 1.03, relatively low.

Are you satisfied that your limit is set at the correct level?

This is a matter for decision by the Council committee based on evidence following in our summary.

How does the need for adequate taxi ranks affect your policy of quantity controls?

At the present time, there are adequate amounts of ranks in South Shields and its immediate hinterland. There are several unused ranks, although there is also a good spread of use of the ranks in place, including two in the suburban parts of South Shields and one at Chichester metro stop – a very good spread of service.

Questions relating to consultation and other public transport service provision:

When consulting, have you included all those working in the market, consumer and passenger (including disabled groups), groups which represent those passengers with special needs, local interest groups, eg hospitals or visitor attractions, the police, a wide range of transport stakeholders, eg rail/bus/coach providers and traffic managers?

See above, yes, all appropriate consultees have been taken into account.

Do you receive representations about taxi availability?

No

What is the level of service currently available to consumers including other public transport modes?

At the present time, much of the area is well served by the frequent light rail Metro services, plus several high frequency bus services. However, the suburban and rural nature of the area does mean many people have less other public transport services leaving them more dependent particularly on private hire vehicles.

8. The Equality Act 2010

Whilst several sections of the Equality Act (EA) affect licensed vehicle operations, the key provision relevant to this report is the requirement under section 161 that any authority with a limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences should issue licences to wheel chair accessible vehicles (WAV) until an agreed percentage of the fleet were such WAV style. The last guidance in regard to timescales for introduction of this regulation saw consultation occurring around this point in time – although nothing has yet been issued by the Department for Transport. South Tyneside Council currently has a limit and this section of the Act would apply if ever enacted.

The Equality Act is national legislation which cannot be amended by the council or its officers. However, a consultation is needed before it can be brought into play and enacted and there is currently no plan for this to occur. Current thought suggests that the required proportion of WAV style vehicles expected for the Council area might be of the order of 35%, although it is understood this might vary on a case by case basis. The Table below sets out the possible options for the Council based on the current level of 25 WAV and a proportion of 35%.

Option	Total number of vehicles	Number of wheel chair accessible vehicles (WAV)	Percentage of fleet that are WAV
Current	236	25	11%
EA requirement	236	83	35%
Meet EA by removing limit but no WAV stipulation	236 upwards	25 upwards (but could also lose vehicles)	11% or more
Meet EA by removing limit but with all new vehicles having to be WAV	236 upwards	25 upwards with each new vehicles adding to number	At least 11%- an extra 0.4% for each new vehicle added
Meet EA by retaining limit and 58 current vehicles converting	236	83	35%
Meet EA by granting plate to any WAV, with none of present converting under limited scenario.	324 (+37%)	113	35%

Potential responses to the Equality Act

The EA requirement is a compound requirement which means that the percentage of vehicles must be of the current total after any new plates are added. This compound growth means that, if no current vehicles convert, and the limit is retained, 88 extra WAV style hackney carriages would be needed, taking the limit to some 324 hackney carriage vehicles (increasing the fleet by 37%). Were the trade to agree to convert sufficient vehicles to WAV style to ensure that the EA requirements were met this would require 58 vehicles to convert, but would retain the current number of vehicles at 236.

At the present time, with no significant unmet demand, together with little demand for wheel chair accessible vehicles, there would seem to be a case for applying for an exemption from this part of the EA.

However, it is also true that retaining the limit by applying the quality standard that all new hackney carriages had to be wheel chair accessible would not guarantee any further vehicles would be added but would meet the stipulation of the EA. In the current context, we do not consider that many if any new vehicles would be added at this standard. There is evidence for this with the current gap between vehicles provided and the actual limit, and the length of time taken to bring in the additional vehicles of WAV style when the extra 12 plates were allowed.

However, it must be remembered there is currently no plan to implement this section of the Act – and consultation must occur before this occurred, suggesting some while before it could have any impact on any area.

9. Summary and conclusions

Policy Background

The Borough of South Tyneside Council has kept a regular review of its policies towards hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, including the issue of if a limit on hackney carriage vehicle numbers is appropriate. A limit was reported as introduced in 1986 in DfT statistics. The limit has seen regular review from an initial survey in 1987 through to more recent surveys in 2004 and 2009, and this survey undertaken in autumn 2012. The present limit is 236 vehicles.

Local transport policy is set in the third Local Transport Plan (covering 2011 to 2026), which applies across the Tyne and Wear area. Other background policies are currently being developed, with a significant amount of consultation occurring in 2013.

In 2012, only Gateshead amongst the Tyne and Wear authorities does not retain a limit on its hackney carriage fleet. North Tyneside reviewed its policy during mid-2012, and Sunderland (which has a zoning system as well) during 2011. Newcastle upon Tyne had a spell without a limit but chose to return it in the last few years. South Tyneside has a high level of provision of hackney carriages per thousand population, only exceeded in the area by Newcastle. Overall provision of licensed vehicles is mid-range, although the two authorities with higher private hire vehicle numbers (North Tyneside and Newcastle have specific reasons for such high numbers).

With the most recent plates issued being wheel chair accessible, and a requirement any new vehicle (including the single plate of the allocation still available at the time of our inception meeting), to be wheel chair accessible, attempts have been made to increase the low level of wheel chair accessible vehicles. However, this remains very low when compared to other Tyne and Wear authorities, albeit their levels of provision are very high compared to many other similar areas. It is a material fact that even the new and recent plate issues have taken some while to be added to the fleet, which is believed to be related to the high cost and low perceived gain of adding such vehicles to the fleet. The council shortlisting criteria also delays allocation (as discussed above).

Rank Survey results

Rank surveys were undertaken covering some 99 hours of rank operation. Observations covered all the currently marked ranks at times when they were expected to see hackney carriage vehicles and passengers, plus observations in the vicinity of the Riverside informal pick-up location. The focus of observations was on a Friday and Saturday in October, when it was considered there was the highest demand for hackney carriages.

Rank observations demonstrate that the bulk of the demand for hackney carriages is to serve the night life of the area although there is reasonable demand during the day time at Smithy Street and to a lesser extent Mile End Road. Low levels of passenger demand occur at East Street and Chichester, perhaps arising from some vehicles waiting at those locations for radio calls.

There is a clear progression of waiting vehicles from the ranks at Mile End Road through to East Street (main waiting area) to Smithy Street (which has limited ranking space available), despite the long distances between these locations.

Ocean Road has the busiest night demand, followed by Smithy Street and Mile End Road. Two non-central ranks see reasonable demand (County Hotel and The Nook), possibly as returning vehicles pause on their way back to the central area and gain custom as a result.

Of the 2,355 passengers observed in the survey, just 29 had to wait for hackney carriages to arrive (unmet demand) (1%). Averaged over all users, this is an average wait of just 21 seconds, not significant. The longest wait- by one person only – was six minutes at Chichester during the day time. No other waits exceeded five minutes and most were less than that.

Service at most ranks was good, with two locations seeing very good service, and others serviced which in many other areas would not see any vehicles waiting. There appears to be an active hackney carriage mentality within the trade even though 83% work on private hire circuits.

Our estimate of a typical week of demand suggests around 7,339 passengers, with 36% of these using Smithy Street, 32% Mile End Road and 15% Ocean Road. The lesser ranks see good proportions of the demand – County Hotel 9%, Chichester 5% and the Nook 1%.

The overall conclusion in regard to demand is there is **no significant unmet demand** for the service of hackney carriage vehicles in the South Tyneside area.

Public Consultation

A total of 601 persons were interviewed in the streets of South Tyneside during October 2012. Surveys were undertaken in the main town centre area and in the other centres including Jarrow, Hebburn, Cleadon, Boldon and Whitburn.

Use of licensed vehicles was found to be moderately high in this area, with 96% of all vehicles obtained by various phone methods. The highest level of competition by companies was in the smaller centres, with fewer companies quoted in the three larger areas (results of mergers). Rank usage focusses on South Shields with the usual level of hailing (1%).

Usage of licensed vehicles is dominated by late night demand at weekends, and commuter times during weekdays (apart from South Shields which even on weekdays is dominated by the late night market). Main use of licensed vehicles is entertainment purposes (as it was in the previous survey).

The bulk of those responding had no problem obtaining a licensed vehicle when they needed one. In South Shields latent demand as defined by people giving up waiting for hackney carriages is 1.03, though across the whole area the value is 1.07 but this may well be related to waiting for private hire vehicles (we are not aware of any issue with hackney carriages refusing to take passengers to the smaller urban areas).

People in the area know ranks well, although South Shields respondents failed to answer this question for some reason. The two medium sized urban areas, Jarrow and Hebburn, were the places people knew least about ranks, and in one of these the most popular "rank" was a private hire office.

Some suggestions were made for how people might make more use of hackney carriages. Other than wanting cheaper fares (a normal response around the country), the only other significant responses suggested people would like more hackney carriages to be available by phone – a strange response given the high number that are available on private hire circuits.

A relatively high proportion either needed, or knew someone who needed, an adapted vehicle. In terms of vehicle types, people were almost evenly split between wheel chair accessible types and other styles of adaptation.

The overall sample was very close to the age profile from the latest available information for 2012, although men were under-represented.

Stakeholder Consultation

Supermarkets had free-phones to specific companies. All felt they received a good service.

One hotel passed customers to a nearby private hire company via cards.

The hospital had a Freephone.

Rail services in the area are all light rail Metro services. The train-taxi web site is correct in its references apart from not mentioning the active rank at Chichester. Apart from the rank at South Shields, two other stations are suggested to have either booking offices or ranks, one of which we observed to be a booking office (Jarrow).

It did not prove possible to contact, or in some cases even obtain contact details, for several other consultees.

However, we do not consider this is a significant issue since the results of the public attitude work clearly demonstrate high satisfaction with the service provided and those stakeholders we contacted did not have any issues at all.

Trade Consultation

Around 6% of drivers responded to the questionnaire sent out with a letter to all licensed drivers in the area. Of the 37 responses, 25 added comments. None sought the opportunity for face to face or telephone discussions.

Most drivers own and drive their own vehicle. There appears to be little double shifting. There is a range of experience, although the average from our respondents is some 13 years, significant experience in the trade.

On average, drivers worked 52 hours over six days, although there were clearly part time drivers and those who worked up to 80 hours a week. From our sample, those with longer experience were those who worked longer hours on average, all three respondents saying they worked 80 hours had been in the trade 10, 16 and 36 years. 57% had changed working hours in the last three years.

Few drivers said passengers had any issues with accessing their vehicles, and the bulk of respondents were those driving saloon vehicles. Most said they served all ranks, although some said they focussed on Ocean Road. On average, those serving ranks waited for fares for some 49% of the time working, although others said waiting time was up to 90% of working time.

Many claimed to survive only on private hire work supplementing the rank work.

Equality Act

The Equality Act is already on the statute books. There is a requirement that any authority with a limit on its number of hackney carriages should ensure no new entrant is refused entry if they are offering a wheel chair accessible vehicle if a given proportion of vehicles has not been achieved. At the present time, the level of WAV required in a fixed fleet has not been determined, and there is still no confirmed date for the consultation required to allow this to move forward. The recent Law Commission Review may reduce any desire by Government to spend time resolving this Act. There is no way set out in legislation that any Council can require a particular level of WAV within the private hire fleet.

At the present time, there is no way that any authority without a limit on hackney carriage vehicle numbers can encourage an increase in the number of WAV style hackney carriages, apart perhaps from the introduction of a mandatory order requiring all vehicles to be wheel chair accessible (which would most likely be opposed by those seeking the spirit of the EA since current thinking is a mixed fleet is generally better for those with a range of disabilities).

If a limit on vehicle licence numbers is retained and section 161 is enacted, and the proportion is 35%, South Tyneside would either need to apply for an exemption (for which we believe there is evidence to support), encourage 58 of the present fleet to convert, or issue wheel chair accessible licences to 88 extra vehicles. In our technical opinion, the current level of wheel chair accessible vehicles is sufficient for demand and there is no need for more to be added to the fleet.

Best Practice Guidance

A review of the questions posed in the BGP was undertaken and is presented in an earlier Chapter

Conclusion

At the present time, there is no evidence of significant unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages in the South Tyneside Council area. On this basis, a limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicles can be retained. There is no given number of plates that need to be issued as there is no significant unmet demand to be reduced to zero.

It is clear that most people in the South Tyneside area enjoy a high level of service from the licensed vehicle fleet, and that the remaining rank provision adds significantly to the service that would otherwise be provided by private hire. There is a healthy level of usage by vehicles and passengers of several ranks not in the main centre, and of night only ranks near entertainment venues. This requires a clear hackney carriage presence to maintain this good service.

The hackney carriage / rank trade is providing an important service both to the night economy of the area and to life not only in the main central area, but also to the smaller settlements beyond the influence of the Metro.

The present balance between hackney carriage and private hire, which partly is determined by the current retention of the limit on vehicle numbers, is benefitting the public and there is no reason for any changes to be made that might harm this balanced situation.

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10. Recommendations

Limits on the number of hackney carriage vehicles

At the present time in the Borough of South Tyneside Council area the Licensing Committee has a number of options:

- (1) It could re-affirm the current policies and make no other changes
- (2) It could retain the current limit on vehicle numbers and take other actions to encourage and develop the current good service to ranks
- (3) It could remove the limit on hackney carriage vehicles and make no other change
- (4) It could remove the limit and attempt to restrict the negative impacts of this change by requiring further quality improvements to the hackney carriage fleet (all new vehicles are already required to be wheel chair accessible).

Our technical recommendation at this time for South Tyneside would be option 2. This would encourage public benefit from the retention of the current limited vehicle policy which might not occur with Option 1.

Were Option 3 to be chosen, it is likely the independent hackney carriages would reduce even further and focus would move away from service being provided to such a wide range of ranks. With the wheel chair accessible stipulation on new vehicles (which is proving a significant restraint to even adding the final plate back within the current limit), large influx of plates is perhaps unlikely. Otherwise, more central rank spaces would be needed which would be hard to provide.

Option 4 would be hard to implement since the current entry rules for hackney carriages are quite strict – although any removal of the limit must consider how to ensure standards remain high and would need to consider this aspect as recommended by the Law Commission.

Technically, we would suggest the trade and public be consulted to ensure the revision to the Ocean Road rank has had positive effects as this is an important night rank.

A further demand survey would be required within three years – although by this time the result of the Law Commission review will be known and may require council consideration if there is a significant change in respect of vehicle limits or other provisions that may affect supply of vehicles to meet demand.

Were consideration given to more regular review and setting of service indicators (eg proportion of people waiting for vehicles to arrive) it might prove possible to keep the survey results 'current' and obviate any further large demand review.

Other Elements of the Action Plan

Borough of South Tyneside Council (licensing) should consider providing information boards at ranks to advise customers of sample fares.

The licensing section needs to work with highways representatives to remove the unused ranks and ensure the present ranks are protected and continue to be well-marked and advertised. If possible, access more directly between Mile End Road and East Street should be provided for hackney carriages.

The revised rank arrangements at Ocean Road must be tested to ensure they either maintain or improve the service provided at this location, which is a very important night demand location.

Service to the County Hotel and The Nook ranks, as well as to Chichester all day and night, must be encouraged as this is providing a service that many other authorities do not enjoy.

Hackney carriage trade representatives and all drivers need to ensure they work with all appropriate parties to take full advantage of any business opportunities that present themselves.

The hackney carriage trade needs to prepare its response to the Equality Act if any consultation is announced to ensure that sufficient vehicles would transfer to wheel chair accessible were the section of this Act applied requiring such levels of hackney carriage vehicles. If the limit on vehicle numbers is retained, the only reasonable response from the trade must be transfer of sufficient vehicles to meet the nationally imposed legal requirement – the Council is very unlikely to be able to have any influence on this, if enacted, although it may be worth considering an exemption based on the information contained in this Report. However, we do consider that there are currently sufficient such vehicles so the Equality Act would be adding unnecessarily to the fleet.

Appendix 1 Rank Observation Details

South Tyneside, Mile End Road Rank, Saturday 13th October 2012, 1200 – 0400

Hour	No of vehicle arrivals	Total passenger departures	Total loaded vehicle departures	Empty vehicle departures	Total Vehicle departures	Average vehicle waiting times (hh:mm:ss)	Average vehicle waiting times (for a fare, hh:mm:ss)	Maximum vehicle waiting time for a fare (hh:mmins)	Average passenger waiting time in an hour (m:ss)	Average passenger waiting time, those waiting only (mins)	Number of people waiting 1-5 mins	Number of people waiting 6-10 mins	Number waiting 11 mins or more	Maximum passenger wait time (mins)
11	1	0	0	0	0	0:04:00	0:04:00	0:04:00						
12	11	4	1	10	11	0:05:44	0	0						
13	20	1	1	20	21	0:10:00	0:04:00	0:04:00						
14	13	0	0	11	11	0:12:37	0	0						
15	5	0	0	7	7	0:17:24	0	0						
16	5	0	0	5	5	0:05:48	0	0						
17	6	7	2	3	5	0:12:10	0:14:00	0:22:00						
18	4	2	1	4	5	0:07:45	0:16:00	0:16:00						
19	6	2	1	3	4	0:10:30	0:10:00	0:10:00						No passenger waits
20	12	5	2	10	12	0:08:15	0:18:40	0:31:00						
21	22	6	3	16	19	0:11:35	0:28:51	0:47:00						
22	34	45	19	17	36	0:09:42	0:13:41	0:22:00						
23	47	73	35	15	50	0:05:11	0:05:49	0:14:00						
00	49	65	35	15	50	0:05:59	0:07:12	0:12:00						
01	65	79	48	9	57	0:03:18	0:03:28	0:11:00						
02	69	113	65	4	69	0:03:29	0:03:32	0:10:00						
03	70	125	64	13	77	0:03:52	0:04:15	0:11:00						
TOTALS	439	527	277	162	439	n/a	n/a	n/a						

South Tyneside, Smithy Street Rank, Friday 12th October 2012, 1000 – 0400

Hour	No of vehicle arrivals	Total passenger departures	Total loaded vehicle departures	Empty vehicle departures	Total Vehicle departures	Average vehicle waiting times (hh:mm:ss)	Average vehicle waiting times (for a fare, hh:mm:ss)	Maximum vehicle waiting time for a fare (hh:mm:ss)	Average passenger waiting time in an hour (mins)	Average passenger waiting time, those waiting only (mins)	Number of people waiting 1-5 mins	Number of people waiting 6-10 mins	Number waiting 11 mins or more	Maximum passenger wait time (mins)
09	3	0	0	0	0	0:04:40	0:04:00	0:06:00						
10	10	7	6	4	10	0:16:24	0:23:00	0:33:00			No passenger waits			
11	14	16	15	0	15	0:08:09	0:08:09	0:24:00						
12	19	26	17	3	20	0:06:22	0:07:30	0:23:00	0:23	5	2	0	0	5
13	13	10	9	2	11	0:12:18	0:14:16	0:22:00						
14	18	24	19	0	19	0:05:57	0:05:57	0:10:00						
15	14	13	13	0	13	0:11:26	0:11:26	0:30:00						
16	15	28	14	1	15	0:09:08	0:09:26	0:17:00						
17	15	23	16	1	17	0:06:08	0:06:17	0:20:00						
18	19	18	14	2	16	0:15:03	0:16:28	0:24:00						
19	8	9	8	1	9	0:40:22	0:46:00	0:57:00						
20	19	19	15	1	16	0:27:28	0:28:00	0:46:00			No passenger waits			
21	13	15	9	1	10	0:29:18	0:31:30	0:49:00						
22	13	20	12	2	14	0:33:23	0:43:13	0:59:00						
23	14	37	20	2	22	0:11:47	0:11:47	0:34:00						
00	42	57	31	4	35	0:06:39	0:07:13	0:16:00						
01	27	49	30	0	30	0:10:40	0:10:40	0:20:00						
02	16	31	17	0	17	0:21:11	0:21:11	0:35:00						
03	10	13	7	6	13	0:04:24	0:03:45	0:10:00	0:09	1	2	0	0	1
TOTALS	302	415	272	30	302	n/a	n/a	n/a	0:02	3	4	0	0	5

South Tyneside, Smithy Street Rank, Saturday 13th October 2012, 1000 – 0400

Hour	No of vehicle arrivals	Total passenger departures	Total loaded vehicle departures	Empty vehicle departures	Total Vehicle departures	Average vehicle waiting times (hh:mm:ss)	Average vehicle waiting times (for a fare, hh:mm:ss)	Maximum vehicle waiting time for a fare (hh:mm:ss)	Average passenger waiting time in an hour (mins)	Average passenger waiting time, those waiting only (mins)	Number of people waiting 1-5 mins	Number of people waiting 6-10 mins	Number waiting 11 mins or more	Maximum passenger wait time (mins)
09	2	0	0	0	0	0:22:30	0:22:30	0:34:00						
10	6	8	4	1	5	0:22:10	0:26:12	0:36:00						
11	11	10	7	4	11	0:15:11	0:22:51	0:31:00						
12	12	15	11	2	13	0:08:30	0:09:54	0:23:00						
13	15	25	15	0	15	0:08:20	0:08:20	0:18:00						
14	13	15	10	2	12	0:14:42	0:16:11	0:36:00						
15	12	17	12	0	12	1:24:40	1:31:05	0:15:33						
16	14	22	13	1	14	0:09:04	0:09:37	0:22:00						
17	8	11	7	2	9	0:21:22	0:21:00	0:32:00			No passenger waits			
18	15	15	10	0	10	0:23:48	0:23:48	0:42:00						
19	19	29	19	0	19	0:24:32	0:24:32	0:52:00						
20	13	12	7	4	11	0:22:32	0:28:45	0:39:00						
21	12	17	11	3	14	0:37:05	0:43:47	0:58:00						
22	24	32	19	8	27	0:10:37	0:14:49	0:23:00						
23	31	44	30	5	35	0:09:06	0:10:28	0:20:00						
00	52	80	44	2	46	0:04:33	0:04:37	0:11:00						
01	51	85	54	2	56	0:03:25	0:03:24	0:09:00	0:10	1:33	9	0	0	2
02	47	91	43	0	43	0:05:55	0:05:39	0:17:00	0:33	3:51	13	0	0	5
03	20	29	17	8	25	0:17:33	0:21:09	0:31:00			No passenger waits			
TOTALS	377	557	333	44	377	n/a	n/a	n/a	0:07	2:55	22	0	0	5

South Tyneside, East Street Rank, Friday 12th October 2012, 1100 – 2100

Hour	No of vehicle arrivals	Total passenger departures	Total loaded vehicle departures	Empty vehicle departures	Total Vehicle departures	Average vehicle waiting times (hh:mm:ss)	Average vehicle waiting times (for a fare, hh:mm:ss)	Maximum vehicle waiting time for a fare (hh:mm:ss)	Average passenger waiting time in an hour (mins)	Average passenger waiting time, those waiting only (mins)	Number of people waiting 1-5 mins	Number of people waiting 6-10 mins	Number waiting 11 mins or more	Maximum passenger wait time (mins)
10	5	0	0	0	0	0:10:36	0:07:00	0:07:00						
11	17	4	3	14	17	0:11:39	0:12:40	0:25:00						
12	23	8	6	17	23	0:11:44	0:13:43	0:20:00						
13	13	5	3	10	13	0:20:09	0:22:40	0:25:00						
14	22	3	3	20	23	0:10:05	0:14:40	0:18:00						
15	16	5	4	11	15	0:14:52	0:08:00	0:14:00						
16	15	1	1	16	17	0:13:20	0:13:00	0:13:00						
17	5	1	1	7	8	0:06:24	0:08:00	0:08:00						
18	0	0	0	0	0	0:00:00	0:00:00	0:00:00						
19	1	1	1	0	1	0:00:00	0:00:00	0:00:00						
20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						
TOTALS	117	28	22	95	117	n/a	n/a	n/a						

No passenger waits

South Tyneside, Ocean Road Rank, Friday 12th October 2012, 2000 – 0500

Hour	No of vehicle arrivals	Total passenger departures	Total loaded vehicle departures	Empty vehicle departures	Total Vehicle departures	Average vehicle waiting times (hh:mm:ss)	Average vehicle waiting times (for a fare, hh:mm:ss)	Maximum vehicle waiting time for a fare (hh:mm:ss)	Average passenger waiting time in an hour (mins)	Average passenger waiting time, those waiting only (mins)	Number of people waiting 1-5 mins	Number of people waiting 6-10 mins	Number waiting 11 mins or more	Maximum passenger wait time (mins)
20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						
21	12	0	0	0	0	0:15:05	0:19:38	0:38:00						
22	22	24	14	14	28	0:14:03	0:18:24	0:39:00						
23	43	63	35	14	49	0:06:56	0:07:48	0:17:00						
00	65	77	47	7	54	0:07:31	0:07:52	0:26:00	No passenger waits					
01	47	72	42	5	47	0:10:50	0:11:23	0:24:00						
02	45	72	40	3	43	0:12:01	0:12:30	0:28:00						
03	71	136	72	4	76	0:05:13	0:05:24	0:10:00						
04	53	123	54	7	61	0:03:46	0:03:57	0:09:00	0:01	1	2	0	0	1
TOTALS	358	567	304	54	358	n/a	n/a	n/a	0:00	1	2	0	0	1

South Tyneside, County Hotel Rank, Friday 12th October 2012, 1800 – 0000

Hour	No of vehicle arrivals	Total passenger departures	Total loaded vehicle departures	Empty vehicle departures	Total Vehicle departures	Average vehicle waiting times (hh:mm:ss)	Average vehicle waiting times (for a fare, hh:mm:ss)	Maximum vehicle waiting time for a fare (hh:mm:ss)	Average passenger waiting time in an hour (mins)	Average passenger waiting time, those waiting only (mins)	Number of people waiting 1-5 mins	Number of people waiting 6-10 mins	Number waiting 11 mins or more	Maximum passenger wait time (mins)
18	8	0	0	6	6	0:07:07	0:21:30	0:26:00						
19	11	20	6	5	11	0:20:44	0:24:30	0:36:00						
20	32	34	16	13	29	0:13:32	0:15:51	0:27:00						
21	31	59	25	5	30	0:14:56	0:16:21	0:32:00						
22	14	26	12	5	17	0:17:51	0:18:07	0:36:00						
23	19	34	15	7	22	0:04:28	0:05:20	0:13:00						
TOTALS	115	173	74	41	115	n/a	n/a	n/a						

No passenger waits

South Tyneside, Chichester Rank, Friday 12th October 2012, 1400 – 0000

Hour	No of vehicle arrivals	Total passenger departures	Total loaded vehicle departures	Empty vehicle departures	Total Vehicle departures	Average vehicle waiting times (hh:mm:ss)	Average vehicle waiting times (for a fare, hh:mm:ss)	Maximum vehicle waiting time for a fare (hh:mm:ss)	Average passenger waiting time in an hour (mins)	Average passenger waiting time, those waiting only (mins)	Number of people waiting 1-5 mins	Number of people waiting 6-10 mins	Number waiting 11 mins or more	Maximum passenger wait time (mins)
13	2	0	0	0	0	0:16:30	0:24:00	0:24:00		No passenger waits				
14	2	3	2	2	4	0:00:30	0:01:00	0:01:00	2	6	0	1	0	6
15	6	2	2	2	4	0:02:50	0:02:40	0:04:00						
16	7	6	4	3	7	0:15:17	0:11:20	0:19:00						
17	9	2	1	7	8	0:21:40	0:26:20	0:35:00						
18	10	10	4	7	11	0:09:18	0:12:00	0:21:00						
19	8	10	8	2	10	0:15:15	0:14:09	0:27:00		No passenger waits				
20	16	8	8	4	12	0:09:30	0:09:55	0:30:00						
21	10	14	8	4	12	0:09:48	0:11:51	0:19:00						
22	12	11	5	8	13	0:08:15	0:10:15	0:23:00						
23	11	7	6	6	12	0:04:05	0:05:24	0:09:00						
TOTALS	93	73	48	45	93	n/a	n/a	n/a	0:05	6	0	1	0	6

South Tyneside, The Nook Shopping Centre Rank, Saturday 13th October 2012, 1800 – 0000

Hour	No of vehicle arrivals	Total passenger departures	Total loaded vehicle departures	Empty vehicle departures	Total Vehicle departures	Average vehicle waiting times (mins)	Average vehicle waiting times (for a fare, mins)	Maximum vehicle waiting time for a fare (mins)	Average passenger waiting time in an hour (mins)	Average passenger waiting time, those waiting only (mins)	Number of people waiting 1-5 mins	Number of people waiting 6-10 mins	Number waiting 11 mins or more	Maximum passenger wait time (mins)
18	7	0	0	0	0	0:10:09	0:12:20	0:19:00						
19	7	4	4	9	13	0:12:26	0:28:30	0:44:00						
20	11	6	4	8	12	0:07:00	0:07:40	0:09:00						
21	4	0	0	3	3	0:17:45	0:00:00	0:00:00						
22	4	0	0	5	5	0:06:00	0:00:00	0:00:00						
23	2	1	1	1	2	0:02:30	0:00:00	0:00:00						
TOTALS	35	11	9	26	35	n/a	n/a	n/a						

No passenger waits

South Tyneside, Riverside informal rank, Saturday 13th October 2012, 1800 – 0000

Hour	No of vehicle arrivals	Total passenger departures	Total loaded vehicle departures	Empty vehicle departures	Total Vehicle departures	Average vehicle waiting times (hh:mm:ss)	Average vehicle waiting times (for a fare, hh:mm:ss)	Maximum vehicle waiting time for a fare (hh:mm:ss)	Average passenger waiting time in an hour (mins)	Average passenger waiting time, those waiting only (mins)	Number of people waiting 1-5 mins	Number of people waiting 6-10 mins	Number waiting 11 mins or more	Maximum passenger wait time (mins)
18	3	0	0	3	3	0:00:40	0	0						
19	6	1	1	4	5	0:01:30	0	0						
20	4	0	0	5	5	0:00:30	0	0						
21	7	0	0	6	6	0:04:26	0	0						
22	9	0	0	10	10	0:02:40	0	0						
23	9	3	2	7	9	0:02:07	0:02:30	0:05:00						
TOTALS	38	4	3	35	38	n/a	n/a	n/a						

No passenger waits

Appendix 2 Stakeholder Feedback Diary

Ch ap ter	Stakeholder Group / Person	Views returned?
5	Supermarkets	
	Lidl, Laygate, South Shields	Y
	Morrison, Jarrow	Y
	Sainsbury's Buchester Street	N
	Asda, Coronation Street	N
	Asda, Boldon	N
	Asda, Hebburn	Unable to respond
5	Hotels	
	Sir William Fox, Westoe	Y
	Quality Hotel, Boldon	N
	Premier Inn, Port of Tyne	N
5	Hospitals	
	South Tyneside District	Y
5	Disability representatives	
	South Tyneside Central Organisation on Disabilities	Appears to have closed
	Blissability (Nick Roberts)	(awaited)
	Your Voice Counts (Carole Watson)	(awaited)
5	Youth Parliament	
	Contact made	(awaited)
5	County Education and Social Services / Public Transport / Rail Operators	
	None identified	N
5	Police	
	Unable to contact	N
5	Entertainment venues	
	Sand Dancer	Y
	Roxannes	Phone number not responding
	Vogue	N
	Yates	N
	Wouldhave Bar	N
	Life of Riley	N
	Ship and Royal	N
	The Rattler	N
	Sundial	N
6	Hackney carriage / private hire trade	
	Questionnaire	Y