

Guidance Notes

Applications for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire

Vehicle Licences

***Please read the following guidance notes carefully before
completing the relevant application form***

Effective from the 1st Jan 2024

1. General Information

These notes are intended to help when making applications for either Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicle Licences. The Council has agreed a Taxi Licensing Policy and these notes set out the main points contained within that policy. These notes are not intended to be an interpretation of the law relating to the issue of driver's licences and reference should be made to the applicable legislation as required.

2. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles

Hackney Carriage vehicles are permitted to park on the designated ranks and can ply for hire in the street. Vehicles and drivers are also subject to Hackney Carriage By-laws. Private hire vehicles differ from Hackney Carriages in as much that they are not permitted to ply for hire in the street or wait on taxi ranks. All private hire fares must be pre-booked through a licensed operator.

3. The Application Process

Applications may be posted to the Town Hall but must be received by the licensing team a **minimum of 7** working days before the licence is required. Applications will also be accepted electronically with scanned copies of all the required supporting documents. Electronic applications should be sent to Licensing@n-somerset.gov.uk.

Applications received with less than 7 working days notice may not be processed by the time the licence is needed.

Applicants should complete a vehicle licence application form for either a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle and send it to the Licensing Office with the following:

- Vehicle Registration Document (V5) *Please note the name of the vehicle keeper must be the same as the applicant.*
- Receipt for vehicle purchase/credit or leasing agreement.
- Certificate of Vehicle Insurance which must cover "hire and reward" (minimum of 30 days duration).
- A valid MOT Certificate – undertaken within 1 month of application. *Please note our policy requires an MOT certificate for all vehicles regardless of age.*
- Confirmation of a compliance testing appointment at the Council nominated garage.
- The licence fee – see **Appendix 1** for the current fees.
- Basic DBS disclosure check – ***see below**.

*If an individual holds a valid Taxi or Private Hire driver licence with North Somerset Council and the DBS twice-yearly checks are up to date and acceptable then no additional check will need to be provided when applying for a vehicle licence.

Applicants are reminded that a person who knowingly or recklessly makes a false statement or omits any relevant information is guilty of an offence and could face a fine of up to £400.

Once all the documents have been checked and accepted, confirmation will be sent to the garage ready for an inspection of the vehicle. **The licence application form and licence fee must be received prior to the vehicle compliance test being carried out.**

Once the vehicle has been inspected, the garage will send us confirmation of pass or fail.

If your vehicle passes, we will issue the vehicle licence, plates and associated documentation. These will usually be posted out as soon as possible, or you can arrange to collect them at the Town Hall.

If your vehicle fails the vehicle compliance inspection, you will be given a list of faults. An additional compliance re-test inspection fee will need to be paid to the Licensing Office before a further confirmation will be sent to the garage for re-inspection of the vehicle. Vehicle compliance inspection fees are shown at **Appendix 1**.

Vehicles being renewed should continue to display old plates until new ones arrive but brand new licences cannot be used until the first set of plates is received and attached.

The vehicle licence plates must be permanently attached to the front near side and rear offside of a private hire vehicle or the rear offside of a Hackney Carriage Vehicle. If this is not possible you must discuss this with the Licensing office before attaching them differently.

A fare card must be placed inside a hackney carriage in such a place as to be easily seen by occupants of the vehicle.

Failure to arrange an inspection **before the renewal date of the licence** could result in a new licence being refused.

Once an application is in progress, the vehicle must be presented for inspection at the Council's nominated garage within **1 month** of making the application.

If you present the vehicle licence application beyond the expiry date of a current licence, the FULL fee is payable unless extenuating reasons can be given.

4. Vehicle Specification

All vehicles being licensed for the first time must meet the Council's Vehicle Specification Policy which is shown at **Appendix 2** of these notes.

The policy includes the following:

- The vehicle must have a minimum passenger carrying capacity of 4 persons.
- All saloons, estates or purpose-built taxi vehicles shall have at least 4 side-opening doors
- Minibuses, transits and people carrier type vehicles shall have at least 3 doors not including any tailgate or rear doors.

We strongly recommend that applicants read the vehicle specification prior to purchasing, or entering into an agreement to purchase a vehicle. Contact should also be made with the Licensing Office prior to the purchase of a vehicle to ensure that it meets the vehicle specification.

5. Vehicle Age Policy

The Council will not licence vehicles for the first time that are over **5** years of age, except for vintage or specialist-built vehicles.

The date of first registration in the vehicle registration document will be used to determine the age of a vehicle and its suitability for licensing.

The Council does not have a maximum age for the licensing of vehicles but **a vehicle older than 8 years of age shall only be licensed for six months.**

Every following 6 months the licence will need to be fully renewed including testing which will consist of a full MOT test and a vehicle compliance check at the Council's nominated testing facility.

6. Vehicles subject to accident insurance claims

Vehicles that fall into category **S** insurance losses will not be licensed.

Vehicles that fall into category **N** will be considered for licensing.

The Council may require additional documentation to show how the vehicle was damaged and repaired to help make its decision.

7. Limousines, chauffeur driven and contract vehicles

Since 2008 these vehicles need to be licensed unless they are being provided on a non-profit making basis. The Council is not able to licence vehicles that are constructed to carry more than 8 passengers. In certain cases, we are able to issue dispensations from the requirement for the vehicle to display licence plates. The dispensation will be based on a written case submitted by the licensee. If a dispensation is given, the licence plates will have to be carried in the vehicle.

8. Vehicle Compliance Inspections

Prior to a vehicle being licensed it needs to be inspected at a garage approved by the Council. Appointments for vehicle inspections should be made directly with the Council's nominated garage (Advance Motoring Services, Knightcott Industrial Estate, Weston-super-Mare, BS29 6JN) and will include cosmetic checks and non MOT items.

Please telephone them on 01934 824551/ 824396. The date and time of the booked appointment should be added to your application form.

The garage will issue a Vehicle Compliance Certificate which will be returned to the licensing office by the garage. Once we have received a pass notification from the garage we will then be able to licence a vehicle.

A copy of the vehicle compliance inspection specification can be found on the Council's website at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/licensing. This document explains all aspects of the vehicle examination that will be carried out and should be read by the applicant before the vehicle is inspected.

9. Taximeters

A Hackney Carriage vehicle needs to be fitted with a taximeter which has been type approved by the London Public Carriage Office. All meters must be of the calendar-

controlled type. The meter must be calibrated to the Council agreed fares currently in force by a recognised meter installer.

A taximeter is not required in a Private Hire vehicle. If a Hackney Carriage is carrying out Private Hire work for an Operator the taximeter must be switched on and fares charged at the current agreed tariff. A lesser fee only may be charged than that shown on the meter.

10. Hackney Carriage Roof Signs

An approved roof sign bearing the word 'TAXI' only must be displayed on Hackney Carriages. The roof sign must be connected to the vehicle's electrics and be capable of illumination in the hours of darkness. The taxi sign should not be illuminated when carrying passengers i.e. the vehicle is not for hire.

11. Vehicle Markings

All licensed vehicles need to comply with the following requirements:

1. Hackney Carriages can display the words "taxi" on the roof sign and front doors
2. Private Hire Vehicles **cannot use** any wording that implies that the vehicle is a hackney carriage **e.g. the words taxi or cabs**. A private hire vehicle must display on the front driver and front passenger door the name and contact details of the company operating the vehicle.
3. For vehicle advertising, compliance is required with the advertising policy shown at **Appendix 3**.

12. Data Protection – Privacy notice

North Somerset Council is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office for the purposes of processing personal data. We commission the following organisations that deliver some services on behalf of North Somerset Council but only in relation to the administration of the statutory duties detailed below:

Advanced Motoring Services, Unit 6, Knightcott Industrial Estate, Banwell, Westonsuper-Mare, Somerset, BS29 6JN Tel: 01934 824551 or 01934 824396

The information you provide will be held and used in accordance with the requirements of UK and European data protection law. The information will form part of your Environmental Protection and Licensing Account and will be kept for six years from creation, or expiry date of license.

Unless otherwise agreed with you, we will only collect the minimum personal data required to deliver the service, which includes name/address/contact details along with any financial information you provide relating to services requiring payment.

We will not use your personal information in a way that may cause you unwarranted nuisance. Failure to provide the information could result in your service request not being processed and in certain circumstances could constitute an offence.

The information provided may be shared with the police, other local authorities, fire brigade, NHS partners including the Ambulance Service, other agencies and governing bodies who have demonstrated that they have a lawful and legitimate interest in the information, for the purposes of investigations into criminal activity. At no point is your data shared or processed outside of the UK.

We may lawfully disclose information to public sector agencies to prevent or detect fraud or other crime, or to support the national fraud initiatives and protect public funds under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. Under the conditions of the Digital Economy Act 2017, we may also share personal data provided to us with other public authorities as defined in the Act, for the purposes of fraud or crime detection or prevention, to recover monies owed to us, to improve public service delivery, or for statistical research.

We do not share the information with other organisations for commercial purposes.

You have the right to see the personal data we process about you, as well as the right of objection, rectification, restriction and erasure in some circumstances. For details of how to make such a request, please visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sar

If you have any questions or concerns about the way we process your personal data, our Data Protection Officer can be contacted at DPO@n-somerset.gov.uk

13. Change of Address

If you change address whilst in possession of a vehicle licence you must notify the Licensing Office of your new address within 7 days.

Failure to notify a change of address is a breach of the licence and could result in formal action being taken against a licensee.

14. Contact Information

If you require any more information or assistance in applying for a licence, please contact the Licensing Team as follows:

North Somerset Council
Town Hall
Walliscote Grove Road
Weston-super-Mare
BS23 1UJ



01934 426 800

Email: licensing@n-somerset.gov.uk

Appendix 1

FEEES for April 2024 to March 2025

Service	Fee
Hackney Carriage First Grant (incl. of plates and test)	£230
Hackney Carriage Renewal (incl. of plates and test)	£169
Private Hire Vehicle First Grant (incl. of plates and test)	£240
Private Hire Vehicle Renewal (incl. of plates and test)	£179
Transfer of Ownership	£50
Vehicle Compliance re-test fee	£25
Non returnable application deposit fee(first grant and renewals)	£85

Vehicle Licence fees quick calculation table

Licence Type	First Grant Cost	Renewal Cost
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	£230 (Inclusive of licence fee, and plates)	£169 (Inclusive of licence fee, and plates)
Private Hire Vehicle (Annual Fee)	£240 (Inclusive of licence fee, and ext/int plates)	£179 (Inclusive of licence fee and ext/int plates)

VEHICLE SPECIFICATION POLICY

1. Introduction

A vehicle must meet the following standards to be considered for licensing either as a Hackney Carriage or a Private Hire Vehicle. These standards define the type of vehicle that is suitable for licensing. A more detailed specification regarding equipment, maintenance, documentation, markings and other requirements is contained in the Council's Vehicle Inspection Manual.

Before embarking on the purchase of a vehicle for use as a Private Hire Vehicle or Hackney Carriage you should check that it meets this specification. If the vehicle does not meet the specification you are advised to discuss the areas of difference with a Licensing Officer before making the purchase.

2. Vehicle approval and certification

1. The Licensed vehicle must comply in all respects with:
 - (a) Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986
 - (b) The requirements of the Motor Vehicle (Type Approval) Regulations 1980;
 - (c) Motor Vehicle (Type Approval) (Great Britain) Regulations 1984
2. In addition, the licensed vehicle must comply in all respects with British and European vehicle regulations and be "type approved" to the requirements of the M1 or M1 (low volume) category of the European Whole Type Approval Directive 70/156/EEC, as amended.
3. Imported vehicles that cannot meet the requirements of 2 above will need to have been approved under the British Single Vehicle Approval Scheme (SVA) and have the required documentation.
4. If the vehicle has been converted to run on liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) then a certificate issued by a member of the LPG Association will be required by the Licensing Authority to confirm satisfactory installation, examination and testing of the vehicle has been carried out in accordance with the LPG Associations Code of Practice.

3. Vehicle specification

5. A vehicle must be less than **5** years of age (taken from the date of the first registration in the Vehicle Registration Document) at the date of the first application for licence in respect of that vehicle.
6. The maximum age for accepting a vehicle for first time licensing by the Council may be extended for vintage or specialist built vehicles. The vehicle shall though be in good condition and capable of passing the Council's Certificate of Competency vehicle test.
7. The vehicle must have a passenger seating capacity of not less than 4 persons as determined by the method of assessing vehicle capacity described in section 3 below.
8. For each passenger carried in the licensed vehicle there shall be available a properly fitted and maintained seat belt.
9. All saloons, estates or purpose built taxi vehicles shall have at least 4 side-opening doors, which may be opened from the inside and the outside. Minibuses, transits and people carrier type vehicles shall have at least 3 doors not including any tailgate or rear doors.

10. Highly tinted and blacked out windows will only be permitted where they are factory fitted. The vehicle must be able to comply with the relevant standards contained within the vehicle testing manual.
11. The vehicle must be right hand drive, but left hand drive will be permitted where the vehicle is only exclusively manufactured as a left hand drive vehicle e.g. imported limousines.

4. Vehicle dimensions and seating capacity

4.1 Vehicles licensed to carry up to 4 passengers (saloons, estates)

12. Operators should bear in mind that the manufacturers claimed seating capacity may not always be the same as the Council's licensed seating capacity scheme as detailed below.
13. **Height:** From the top of the seat cushions to the roof at the lowest part (inside) must not be less than 865 mm (34 inches approx.)
14. **Knee Space:** **Front Seat** - there must be not less than 750 mm (29 ½ inches approx.) unobstructed space between the leading edge of the dash board and the back of the seat being measured.
Rear seats - there must be not less than 750 mm (29 ½ inches approx.) unobstructed space between the front surface of all rear seat backs and the back of the seat in front, measured with the front seat located as specified above.
15. **Seat Depth:** fixed passenger seats (measured from the back of the seat to the front edge of the seat cushion) must be no less than 406 mm (16 inches approx.)
16. **Seat Width:** fixed passenger seats (measured along the front edge of the seat) must allow at least 406 mm (16 inches approx.) per person.

4.2 Vehicles licensed to carry between 5 and 8 passengers

17. **Height:** From the top of the seat cushions to the roof at the lowest part (inside) must not be less than 865 mm (34 inches approx.)
18. **Knee Space: Front Seat** - there must be not less than 750 mm (29 ½ inches approx.) unobstructed space between the leading edge of the dash board and the back of the seat being measured.
19. **Rear/middle seats** - there must be not less than 650 mm (25 ½ inches approx.) unobstructed space between the front surface of seat backs and the back of the seat in front, measured with the front seat located as specified above.
20. **Seat Depth:** fixed passenger seats (measured from the back of the seat to the front edge of the seat cushion) must be no less than 406 mm (16 inches approx.)
21. **Seat Width:** fixed passenger seats (measured along the front edge of the seat) must allow at least 406 mm (16 inches approx.) per person.
22. **Facing seats:** the distance between the seat backs measured in a horizontal plane along the top surface of the seating cushion must be not less than 1300 mm (51 inches approx.). The distance between the front edges of the seat cushions must be not less than 425 mm (16 ¾ inches approx.).

5. DISABILITY ACCESS

23. In the case of all hackney vehicles, which are built or adapted for disabled passengers, the design of the vehicle should ensure that any wheelchair is loaded from the side or rear of the vehicle.
24. Where a vehicle is utilised for the carriage of passengers in a wheelchair, the following conditions shall apply:
- (a) Access to and exit from the wheelchair position must not be obstructed in any manner at any time except by wheelchair loading apparatus.
 - (b) Wheelchair internal anchorage must be of the manufacturer's design and construction and secured in such a position as not to obstruct any emergency exit.
 - (c) A suitable restraint must be available for the occupant of a wheelchair.
 - (d) Access ramps or lifts to the vehicle must be securely fixed prior to use, and be able to support the wheelchair, occupant and helper.
 - (e) Ramps and lifts must be securely stored in the vehicle before it may move off.
25. Any equipment fitted to the vehicle for the purpose of lifting a wheelchair into the vehicle must comply with the requirements of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (S.I. 1998/2307). Any such equipment must be maintained in good working order, tested at the required intervals and be available for use at all times.
26. In accordance with S167 of the Equality Act 2010 the Council will publish a list of wheelchair accessible vehicles. Vehicle proprietors should be aware that the make, model and capacity will be listed on the public website, together with Operator details where possible.

The Council on an individual basis, prior to licensing, will assess the overall suitability of a vehicle for the carriage of disabled passengers. Applicants therefore should discuss the purchase of a vehicle adapted to carry disabled passengers with the Council, prior to purchase.

6. TRAILERS

26. Trailers may only be used with the prior approval of the Authority and subject to the following requirements:
- (a) Trailers can only be used in connection with private hire bookings and cannot be used for plying for hire on a rank;
 - (b) The trailer must at all times comply with all requirements of Road Traffic legislation in particular those as laid down in the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986;
 - (c) The vehicle insurance must include cover for towing a trailer;
 - (d) Trailers must not be left unattended anywhere on the highway;
 - (e) The speed restrictions applicable to trailers must be observed at all times;
 - (f) A suitable lid or other approved means of enclosure shall be fitted to secure and cover the contents of the trailer whenever in use.

Licensed Vehicle Advertising Policy

1. Subject to the approval of the Council, the following advertising is allowed on a licensed vehicle:-
 - 1.1 Details of the name, address, telephone number and company logo (or any combination thereof) of the proprietor of the licensed vehicle may be displayed on a bonnet, front door, rear facing door, hatch or boot of the vehicle. Words, numbers and graphics used in connection with this requirement shall comply with the specification in paragraph 2 below.
 - 1.2 An advertisement affixed to the rear doors only of the vehicle and not to exceed 600mm x 450 mm (24 inches x 18 inches approx.)
 - 1.3 Full vehicle advertising is permitted on licensed vehicles provided that it forms part of a full vehicle livery scheme advertising a single product, service or company.
2. All words, numbers and graphics placed on the vehicle in relation to the vehicle proprietors details shall comply with the following specification:-
 - 2.1 No words, letters or graphics may be displayed on the front or rear windows of the vehicle.
 - 2.2 Only one set of details of the vehicle's proprietor may be displayed per location on the vehicle. Location on the vehicle is defined as the front, side (left and right) and rear of the vehicle.
 - 2.3 Lettering should not be more than 6 inches high unless a dispensation has been granted by the Council based on a proven need from the applicant.
 - 2.4 Graphics may be displayed on the outside of the vehicle as follows:-
 - a) On bonnets, front or rear facing doors, hatch or boot, maximum size to be not greater than 150 mm high by 150 mm wide (6 inches by 6 inches approx.)
 - b) On front passenger doors and sides of the vehicle, no size restriction.
3. No reflective materials shall be used in the lettering or graphics of any advertising placed on the vehicle
4. The content of any advertising on the vehicle shall be legal, decent and truthful.