

Chief Executives
Local licensing authorities

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Taxi Accessibility

I have received a number of enquiries about whether there is currently a Government target that all taxis in local authority areas should become wheelchair accessible over a 10 year period from 2010. This letter clarifies the position.

In 2003, the Government stated that it intended to set standards for wheelchair accessible taxis and to introduce regulations that would apply to mainly urban local authority areas (so-called 'Phase 1' authorities). As you may know, the regulation making powers relating to accessible vehicles are contained in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and do not apply to private hire vehicles.

Since then, however, the Department has received a number of representations making the case for a broader range of disabled people's needs to be met in any regulations, rather than restricting the requirements only to wheelchair users. We have been looking at how this could be achieved but it is a complex matter. As a result, regulations have not been made.

Ministers remain keen to make progress on taxi accessibility and therefore intend to develop a consultation package for summer 2008 to seek views on the way forward.

I hope that your authority will engage in this forthcoming consultation and I would welcome your comments at that time on the way that taxi accessibility

might best be achieved. To help us develop the consultation package, we intend to set up a small informal stakeholder group, including representatives from the Institute of Licensing and the National Association of Licensing and Enforcement Officers, as well from the taxi trade and disability groups.

I have also enclosed a copy of the report by the ECMT (European Conference of Ministers of Transport) Taxi Group, which contains information that you may find of interest. You will note that it advocates a mixed fleet of accessible taxis. This will certainly be one of the options on which we will be seeking your views during the consultation process.

In the meantime, accessible taxi policies remain a matter for individual local licensing authorities in line with previous guidance that has been issued by the Department.

I should be grateful if you would pass the second copy of this letter to the Council's Taxi Licensing Officer.

NIGEL DOTCHIN