

Background

I feel it only correct to establish that this is the situation within Herefordshire. What can work well in one area may not be suitable for another.

Pedi-cabs have been licensed within Herefordshire since 2007 and we have 2 licensed Hackney Carriage Pedi-cabs. They have an established route and hailing/pick up points, but they usually ride around the agreed areas until they are hailed. They usually operate at night and can use the pedestrian areas within Hereford City as part of their route. They rely on payment for advertising and donations for journeys rather than fixed fares. They are equipped to take 3 passengers and are not designed to take disabled passengers or assistance dogs.

9. What was the process followed at Hereford for Licensing Rickshaws?

Initial discussions were held with the potential applicant and a business plan was presented to the Licensing Team.

Difficulties were discussed and different options were raised.

The applicant amended his business plan to take account of issues raised during the initial discussions.

It was made clear that no further work would be done until an application form and fee were received and that as the application was outside of our standard conditions, that any application would have to be considered at Regulatory Committee.

Once the application was received draft conditions, and testing standard were researched and prepared for consideration by the Regulatory Committee. Safety standards were also researched. Consultation was undertaken and Road Traffic Orders were assessed to see if any amendments were needed.

A report was presented to Committee Members and the applicant was invited to represent his case at the hearing.

10. Were all political groups in agreement with you Council taking the decision to license Rickshaws?

The Regulatory Committee is made up of Members from different Political groups. However, Herefordshire has a Conservative Majority. This was not felt to be a Political decision. The decision was unanimous to licence the Ped-cabs.

11. What were the main issues and how were they overcome?

- a) If the vehicle can be licensed as a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire. Legislation confirmed that Pedicabs fell within the definition of a Hackney, but not Private Hire, unless they operated by only operating with pre-bookings bookings. Therefore, the hackney option was put forward as the preferred option of the applicant.
- b) Vehicle not being suitable to have a meter fitted. Herefordshire have Byelaws which require all Hackney to have a meter fitted. The applicant decided to operate without a meter and not make an official charge. It was hoped that fees would be paid for advertising on the vehicle and that passengers would donate money for what they felt the service was worth.
- c) A route was agreed so that passengers could be refused if they wanted to go outside of the agreed area.
- d) Road Traffic Orders were amended so that the pedi-cabs could ride through the pedestrian areas. This was time restricted and limited to licensed pedal powered Hackney Carriages.
- e) Existing taxi trade members not supportive of the pedi-cabs because they felt they were taking their trade. The taxi trade were given the opportunity to raise their concerns and in many instances, reassurances were given regarding some of the issues identified.
- f) Shortage of Rank spaces. Pedi-cabs had to share the existing rank spaces which are very limited. Areas were identified in locations as pedi-cab pick up points/hailing points, which are off the road and do not require specific traffic orders, and are not on the established ranks.
- g) Safety of pedi-cabs. This was always a concern as they are essentially pedal cycles which offer little protection from other traffic. It was accepted that risk could be minimised by robust testing and conditions imposed on these vehicles. The fixed route and most of the journey being through a pedestrianised area was established to facilitate this limit on risk. It was also accepted that risk could never be removed and that licensing was a means of improving safety for this type of vehicle.
- h) What standard to apply to drivers. The Licensing Authority decided that the standards applied would be the same as for a dual driver, including, medical, CRB, full DVLA licence, and knowledge test, right to work, code of good conduct (if required). It was decided that the risk to the passengers were the same in the Pedi-cab as in a convention motorised Hackney Carriage.

12. What is the Hereford's experience since the Pedi-cabs have been in operation?

Whilst there were initial problems, the Pedi-cab service has proved a valuable asset to Hereford Cities night time economy. The taxi trade have found that the Pedi-cabs do the short journeys which they do not like to pick up. All our Pedi-cabs are not motorised so cannot undertake long journeys. Passengers enjoy the vehicles and many females with uncomfortable shoes or when it is raining particularly like the service. The only problem has been that on one occasion four passengers were seen on the vehicle, which is only able to carry three. The rider was interviewed and had stated that they had forced their way onto the vehicle and refused to leave. The rider received penalty points and a warning. No further breaches have been notified to us.

No accidents have been reported to date.

The company who run the Pedi-cabs also operate a Pedi-Cargo company which collect recycling and deliver post and parcels within Hereford Town. They are very visible and popular within the local community, and are seen as a positive attribute to the City.

I understand that in other areas they have not enjoyed such a good relationship with Pedi-cabs, but within our County they have been a great success.