
**Mark H Durkan MLA
Minister of the Environment
Goodwood House, 44 - 58 May Street,
Town Parks, Belfast BT1 4NN**

**Lord Morrow MLA
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont**

AQW 43100/11-15

Lord Morrow MLA has asked:

To ask the Minister of the Environment whether a letter has been, or will be, sent to all taxi drivers to inform them that Single Tier is not being introduced; and if so, whether he will provide a copy or place the letter in the Assembly Library.

ANSWER

Following the decision by the Assembly to annul the Taxi Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, my Department issued a press release regarding the annulment. The Taxi Reform website was also updated.

My Department has written to all taxi drivers advising them of the outcome of the debate, updating them as regards plans to implement the Act and reiterating the restrictions and conditions that currently apply to existing taxi licences. The letter has been made available on the Taxi Reform website with hard copies issued by post to all taxi drivers.

A copy of the letter has been provided to the Committee and a further copy will be placed in the Assembly Library.

Signed:

Mark Durkan

Mark H Durkan MLA

Date:

01/04/15



Department of the Environment
Road Safety & Vehicle Regulation Division
G33 Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Town Parks
BELFAST
BT2 8GB

Email: taxisact@doeni.gov.uk

Date: 23 March 2015

Dear Sir / Madam

THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW TAXI LICENSING REGIME UNDER THE TAXIS ACT

The Department continues to work to implement the various elements of the Taxis Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. This includes the introduction of:

- Operator Licensing – **COMPLETE**;
- Taxi Driving Test & periodic training – **COMPLETE**;
- A new taxi licence regime – **ONGOING**;
- An updated specification for wheelchair accessible taxis – **ONGOING**; and
- A maximum fare and mandatory taximeters – **ONGOING**.

In December 2014, we made legislation to update the taxi licensing regime (defining classes of taxis, arrangements for the display of plates, and vehicle specifications). The legislation was subject to approval by the NI Assembly and, on 2 February 2015, the Assembly voted to annul the regulations (that is, the Assembly decided that they should not apply).

During the debate, speakers from all parties indicated that their main concern was taxi licensing arrangements in Belfast. They noted the need to reach agreement on the licensing regulations as soon as possible, to provide certainty for the taxi industry and your customers. The Minister committed to play his part in this process.¹

The regulations which the Assembly annulled defined different classes of taxi (saloon, wheelchair accessible, special occasional and taxibus). These classes need to be put into legislation before we can make regulations on metering and wheelchair accessible taxi specifications. The Department hopes, therefore, to work quickly to make new regulations on taxi licensing.

¹ <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-doe/news-doe-040215-taxi-reform-remains.htm>

In the meantime, it is important that I emphasise that your current licence conditions remain in place and will continue to be enforced. The conditions of your licence are set out on your licence. In particular, I remind all drivers that, in Belfast, only licensed Belfast Public Hire taxis are permitted to stand and ply for hire in designated taxi ranks or be hailed in the street.

Updates on progress on the remaining elements of the Act, including any changes to the timetable, will be provided on our website <http://www.doeni.gov.uk/taxi-reform.htm>. Our current thinking is that the following regulations will come into force at the end of **September 2015**:

- revised **Taxi Licensing Regulations**;
- **Taxi Accessibility Regulations**; and
- **Taximeter and Maximum Fare regulations**.

The exact timetable, however, will be dependent on agreeing the details of the new regulations.

We also intend to consult in the coming months on a range of revised and new Fixed Penalty notices related to taxi offences.

On all these issues, further information will be available on the Department's website as it becomes available.

I trust this update has been useful.

Yours sincerely



Iain Greenway
Director of the Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division