

Valerie Shawcross CBE
Deputy Mayor for Transport
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

Dear Cllr Gowrley,

Cross-border hiring of taxis and private hire vehicles

I am writing to you to raise the issue of cross-border hiring of taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs). Instances of cross-border hiring are growing rapidly across the country. This brings with it associated problems for local licensing authorities but it is a national problem that needs a national solution.

As you may be aware, currently there are no restrictions on where private hire journeys and pre-booked taxi journeys start or finish. As long as the vehicle, driver and operator are licensed by the same licensing authority, and the booking is accepted within this authority, private hire vehicles may operate in any part of the country. In other words, a private hire operator licensed in London can allocate a booking to a private hire driver and vehicle also licensed by Transport for London (TfL) to anywhere in England and Wales. Irrespective of where the journey begins or ends, or where the driver is at the time, this form of cross-border hiring is entirely legal.

It seems inconceivable that Government intended taxi and private hire licensees to obtain licences from a local authority with the intention of working 100 per cent of the time outside that local authority. However, it is clear that there are a significant number of London licensed private hire vehicles that appear to be working solely in areas outside of the capital. The map I have included with this letter shows the hotspot areas across the country where large numbers of London licensed private hire drivers live. TfL has published this map, along with partial postcode data of the home addresses of all taxi and private hire drivers licensed in London on their website (<https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/taxis-and-private-hire/licensing/licensing-information>) and I urge you to check the data to see what the scale of the issue is in your area.

I have been contacted from across the country by people concerned about vehicles and drivers licensed in London operating in their local area. Technology is enabling this activity on a national scale and this is becoming commonplace around the country.

The problem with this arrangement is that it undermines local licensing regimes. You may be aware of the measures we are putting in place in London to tighten private hire regulations to ensure improved safety and customer service. We are also investing to strengthen enforcement activity within the capital. These efforts – and any regulations you feel are necessary within your local area – will be futile if operators can move to other licensing authorities to avoid these controls. Without changes to cross-border hiring,

Appendix A

compliance officers do not have the powers to deal with licensees from other licensing authorities. In other words, you would not have the necessary powers to tackle issues with drivers or vehicles operating in your area if they are licensed in London.

I hope you agree with me that we need an urgent change in the law so that all taxi and private hire journeys should either start or end in the area for which the vehicle, driver and operator are licensed. We are convinced that this needs to be addressed in primary legislation. This would allow flexibility for private hire operators to fulfil passenger requests to make bookings from outside, or to go outside, the area for which they are licensed, provided the passenger destination or origin is within the licensing area. However, it will put an end to vehicles licensed in one area permanently operating within another licensing area, which allows applicants to shop around to take advantage of the most favourable local licensing and enforcement standards.

I would appreciate any support that you could offer to enact this change. I would be grateful if you would consider writing to John Hayes MP, Minister of State with responsibility for taxi policy, setting out the scale of the problems in your constituency.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Valerie Shawcross'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Valerie' written in a larger, more prominent script than the surname 'Shawcross'.

Valerie Shawcross CBE

Deputy Mayor for Transport, London