
**UPDATE ON ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS IN RELATION TO
PROPOSALS FOR THE CREATION / AMENDMENT OF STANDS FOR
HACKNEY CARRIAGES**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor N Nazir
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Simon Wilkes – Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report has been produced to provide Members of the Licensing Committee with an update on the work being undertaken to engage stakeholders regarding the possibility of creating new stands for hackney carriages at Redditch Railway Station and the Alexandra Hospital and also the possibility of making alterations to the current stand for hackney carriages at Unicorn Hill and creating a stand for hackney carriages in Bates Hill.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee note the content of the report.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs associated with the ongoing engagement with stakeholders has been met from existing budgets held by Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 Section 63 (1) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 states that, a district council may from time to time appoint stands for hackney carriages for the whole or any part of a day in any highway in the district which is maintainable at the public expense and, with the consent of the owner, on any land in the district which does not form part of a highway so maintainable and may from time to time vary the number of hackney carriages permitted to be at each stand.

- 3.3 Section 63 (2) states that before appointing any stand for hackney carriages or varying the number of hackney carriages to be at each stand in exercise of the powers of this section, a district council shall give notice to the chief officer of police for the police area in which the stand is situated and shall also give public notice of the proposal by advertisement in at least one local newspaper circulating in the district and shall take into consideration any objections or representations in respect of such proposal which may be made to them in writing within twenty-eight days of the first publication of such notice.
- 3.4 Section 63 (4) states that nothing in this section shall empower a district council to appoint any such stand—
- (a) so as unreasonably to prevent access to any premises;
 - (b) so as to impede the use of any points authorised to be used in connection with a local service within the meaning of the Transport Act 1985 or PSV operator's licence granted under the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981, as points for the taking up or setting down of passengers, or in such a position as to interfere unreasonably with access to any station or depot of any passenger road transport operators, except with the consent of those operators;
 - (c) on any highway except with the consent of the highway authority;

and in deciding the position of stands a district council shall have regard to the position of any bus stops for the time being in use.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.5 On 27th January 2020 the Licensing Committee considered a report in relation to reviewing the current provision of Hackney Carriage Stands in the Borough.

3.6 Following consideration of the report, Members resolved that :

Officers engage with the relevant stakeholders to explore the possibility of the following:-

- a. *The creation of a new hackney carriage stand at Redditch Railway Station.*
- b. *The creation of a new hackney carriage stand at the Alexandra Hospital, Redditch.*
- c. *Making alterations to the current hackney carriage stand located at Unicorn Hill and creating a new hackney carriage stand in Bates Hill.*

3.7 Officers have previously provided verbal and written updates to Members on progress with these actions at meetings of the Licensing Committee that have taken place subsequently. This report aims to provide Members with updates on the latest position.

Redditch Railway Station

3.8 The Principal Licensing Officer recently met at Redditch Railway Station with representatives from West Midlands Trains and Saba Parking to discuss whether space could be made available at the station for hackney carriages licensed by Redditch Borough Council to stand and ply for hire.

3.9 The outcome of these discussions was that West Midlands Trains were willing to convert a small number of parking spaces near to the entrance of the station into bays that could only be used by hackney carriages licensed by Redditch Borough Council so that they could stand and ply for hire.

3.10 However it was also made clear that, in common with similar arrangements at railway stations controlled elsewhere by West Midlands Trains, this would be operated on the basis that those hackney carriage proprietors wishing to use these bays must obtain and pay for a permit to do so from West Midlands Trains.

3.11 An indicative cost provided by West Midlands Trains for a permit to use any bays made available to hackney carriages at Redditch Railway Station would be £565 per year, which works out at around £11 per week. This is in line with the charges made for similar permits at other train stations under the control of West Midlands Trains.

- 3.12 It was agreed that the Principal Licensing Officer would consult the licensed hackney carriage trade in Redditch to see if there would be any appetite for using dedicated bays at the station given the likely costs of doing so. If there was sufficient interest, then West Midlands Trains have suggested work to create the bays could take place later this year.
- 3.13 The Principal Licensing Officer has therefore liaised with Redditch Taxi Association representatives and also arranged for an online survey to be created and sent to those who hold licences issued by the Council authorising them to drive hackney carriages to gather their views. The results of this survey will determine whether this proposal moves forwards to the next stage.

Alexandra Hospital

- 3.14 Despite repeated attempts to engage relevant staff at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust to seek their views about the potential of creating a stand for hackney carriages at the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch no reply or acknowledgment has been received.
- 3.15 Therefore officers believe that there is currently no appetite to create a stand for hackney carriages at the Alexandra Hospital.

Unicorn Hill / Bates Hill

- 3.16 Any proposal to make alterations to the existing stand for hackney carriages at Unicorn Hill or to create a new stand for hackney carriages at Bates Hill would require close liaison with the Highway Authority (Worcestershire County Council) as the Highway Authority would need to make the required adjustments to the relevant Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs).
- 3.17 The Council is also required to consult with the relevant Chief Officer of Police before the creation, variation or revocation of a hackney carriage stand.

3.18 On 16th November 2021, a stakeholder meeting was arranged by the Principal Licensing Officer. This meeting was attended by:

- Principal Licensing Officer – Worcestershire Regulatory Services
- Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services – Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils
- Strategic Programme Manager – Strategic Initiatives and Developments – Worcestershire County Council
- Traffic Management Advisor – West Mercia Police
- Representatives from North Worcestershire Problem Solving Hub – West Mercia Police
- Redditch Safer Neighbourhood Team Sergeant – West Mercia Police

3.19 Unfortunately nobody from the Highways Engineering Team was available to attend the meeting.

3.20 Those present discussed the current situation and a number of potential options in relation to the existing hackney carriage stand on Unicorn Hill. These options are summarised in the table below:

Option 1	Make no changes to the current taxi rank
Option 2	Reduce the size of the current taxi rank and give over any space vacated to time-limited parking bays for use by shoppers etc.
Option 3	Keep the taxi rank at its current size but make amendments so that it only operates as a taxi rank in the evening (for example between 7pm and 7am) with the spaces being converted to time-limited parking bays for the rest of the time.
Option 4	Keep part of the current taxi rank as a “full-time” taxi rank (for example 3 – 4 spaces) with the remaining vacated space then becoming a part-time rank in the evening and available for time-limited parking during the rest of the day (as per Option 3).
Option 5	Remove the taxi rank altogether and give over all of the vacated space to time-limited parking bays for use by shoppers etc.

- 3.21 During the discussion the following points were raised by various stakeholders:
- That the Unicorn Hill taxi rank is rarely used to its full capacity during “daytime” hours
 - That Option 1 would not meet the concerns of businesses in the area and could impact on the viability of these businesses.
 - West Mercia Police would not be supportive of Option 5 as the Unicorn Hill taxi rank plays an important role in dispersal of those who have frequented the town’s night-time economy.
 - That moving the rank to Bates Hill during the NTE would free up road space on Unicorn Hill and that would lead to an increase in vehicle speeds through that area, increasing the risk to pedestrians, many of who will be under the influence of alcohol.
 - That the views of the Highways Engineering Team would need to be sought on any proposed changes to the taxi rank in Unicorn Hill.
- 3.22 Following this stakeholder meeting, the Principal Licensing Officer arranged a site meeting to take place in January 2022 with the Senior Highways Engineer for Redditch. This meeting was also due to be attended by representatives from West Mercia Police including the Traffic Management Advisor.
- 3.23 The Principal Licensing Officer was then approached by representatives from North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWeDR) who wanted to discuss a project being funded through the Towns Fund Programme with a view to making public realm improvements in Redditch Town Centre including in Unicorn Hill. This project has potential to impact on the current TROs and hackney carriage stand.
- 3.24 The invitation to the site meeting in January 2022 was therefore broadened to include those working on the public realm improvements project so that the wider implications could be considered in the context of the ongoing discussions about hackney carriage stands in the area.

- 3.25 The site meeting took place on 24th January 2022 and was attended by:
- Principal Licensing Officer – Worcestershire Regulatory Services
 - Senior Highways Engineer – Worcestershire County Council
 - Regeneration and Implementation Officer – NWeDR
 - Project Manager, Economy and Infrastructure Major Projects – Worcestershire County Council / Jacobs
 - Representatives from Redditch Safer Neighbourhood Team – West Mercia Police
- 3.26 West Mercia Police’s Traffic Management Advisor was unable to make the meeting but had held a prior site meeting with the Senior Highways Engineer to discuss the matter.
- 3.27 Those present discussed the context of the meeting and the Principal Licensing Officer explained that he had been asked to consult with relevant stakeholders the possibility of making alterations to the current stand for hackney carriages at Unicorn Hill and creating a stand for hackney carriages in Bates Hill.
- 3.28 Those involved in the public realm improvements project explained the scope of the project and that things were at an early stage. A costed concept design and Business Case due to be produced by the end of June 2022 and if the proposals are approved, works would be likely to commence in 2024.
- 3.29 The options summarised in the table at paragraph 3.20 were also discussed by the stakeholders present.
- 3.30 The following points were made during the discussions:
- There is no realistic chance of the junction between Hewell Road and the bottom of Bates Hill being reopened for use by hackney carriages to access Bates Hill.
 - It was theoretically possible to pursue any of the options listed in the table at paragraph 3.20.
 - The majority of stakeholders present expressed a preference for pursuing option 4.
 - Making any changes to the TROs would require the County Council to undertake a lengthy consultation process that could take up to twelve months to complete.

- It would seem to make sense for any changes to the hackney carriage stand in Unicorn Hill to be made to coincide with any wider public realm improvement works in the area

3.31 Given the wider public realm improvements envisaged for this part of the Town Centre, officers believe that it would not be worthwhile pursuing any changes to the existing hackney carriage stand at the present time.

3.32 Instead officers believe that any changes that the Licensing Committee would like to see made to the hackney carriage stand in Unicorn Hill should be pursued as part with the wider public realm improvement works planned for the area.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 None

5. APPENDICES

5.1 None

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