

Appendix 1

Steve Cox
Principle Licensing Officer
Torbay Council

Please reply to: Richard Brown
Parking Operations Officer
Torbay Council
P O Box 422
Torquay, TQ2 5WU

My ref: RB/DW/Taxi

Your ref:

Telephone: 01803 207674

Fax: 01803 614302

E-mail: Richard.brown@torbay.gov.uk

Website: www.torbay.gov.uk

Date: 28 January 2010

Dear Steve

Illegal Parking by Taxis in Torbay

For the past three years we have seen escalating problems with taxis parking illegally in Torbay. In particular in Torquay in Union Street, GPO Roundabout and within the Harbour side area during the evenings.

We have received a high volume of complaints over the years in particular from Stagecoach where taxis park in bus stops preventing buses alighting passengers safely, from bus users and members of the public who feel taxis are permitted to park illegally and not suffer the consequences. In general the illegal parking on double yellow lines, bus stops etc are causing congestion in busy town centre areas and road safety issues.

The problems we experience in enforcing the illegal parking is that the drivers are present with their taxis at all times and when we approach them in regard to enforcing the illegal parking they simply drive off to avoid enforcement. Our legal procedures dictate presently that the Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) has to be physically attached to the vehicle or handed to the driver and the taxis know this procedure well and will exit the location to avoid the issue of the PCN. This is very frustrating but we are putting in new plans under new legislation to ensure that the PCN is issued immediately and then it does not have to be affixed to the vehicle or handed to the driver and will be posted to the registered keeper, this we feel will improve enforcement in these circumstances.

We have undertaken increased patrols to deal with the taxi parking problem and even had enforcement staff working to Midnight on quite a few weekends on Torquay Harbour side but alas no PCNs were issued as taxis kept driving round in circles to get on the ranks to avoid the issue of a PCN. Our staff in trying to enforce these vehicle have also been the subject of threats and abuse by a number of drivers.

The problems appear to be much worse during the recent economic climate because there are too many taxis chasing too few fares and therefore the ranks in particular in Torquay are overflowing with taxis. We would greatly appreciate any assistance you could provide us in holding the relevant taxis to account when seen to be parking illegally or abuse our staff, perhaps through the Committee route and suspend licences.

Your assistance in this matter would be most appreciated.

Schools and services for children and young people • social care and housing • recycling, waste disposal and clean streets • community safety • roads and transportation • town planning • tourism, harbours and economic regeneration
• consumer protection and licensing • leisure, museums, libraries and arts

If you require this in a different format or language, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Richard Brown
Parking Operations Officer

Steve Cox
Principal Safety and Licensing Officer
Torbay Council, Roebuck House
Abbey Road, Torquay
TQ2 5EJ

PC 864 Moorhouse
NET/PACT TEAM
Torquay Police Station
South Street

04/02/2010

08452 777444

RE: Taxi Drivers on the Harbour Side

Dear Steve,

The intention of this letter is to clarify events of the last 9 months on The Strand involving Taxi Drivers and the issues being caused by them.

Over the last 9 months several problems have been caused and despite our joint efforts (and this includes Police, Council and NCP) the problems have continued and got worse. As you are aware a lot of work has gone in over this issue over the past few months (Inc the Night Time Economy Team) along with yourself and colleagues of yours from the council.

The main issues are with Hackney Carriage drivers. These primarily are constantly parking on the Debenhams side of The Strand, on the roundabout around the clocktower and parking on the exit of the roundabout where they are queuing to get on the bus stop on the harbour side of The Strand. The parking on the roundabout has already caused an accident in the latter part of last year involving a single decker bus which I am aware you know about. However there have been several incidents which have not been reported which have been very near misses. One was on Saturday night as I was issuing a ticket to a Taxi Driver who was parked causing an obstruction, when a double decker number 12 came around the roundabout and was confronted with a stationary taxi stopped in the same place. He slammed on his brakes and skidded on the wet ground missing the Taxi by cm. I am sure there will have been upset passengers, not to mention the driver. The taxi then sped off and unfortunately I did not see who it was.

With reference to parking on the Debenhams side of The Strand, the issue with this is there is nowhere for the buses to pull in causing them to have to block the road to set down passengers and then the passengers having to walk through parked cars to get to the safety of the pavement, which is completely unacceptable. After midnight when the busses stop, the problem is that there is nowhere for other taxis and members of the public to drop off or pick up, often drunk people again, causing the issues just described. Keeping that side of The Strand clear is also important just because often people who are drunk stagger into the road and the extra space can stop serious accidents. The fear is that a fatal RTC is only a matter of time away unless action is taken now.

I have also noticed that the number of Taxis on The Strand is increasing. I am not sure why, maybe more are just choosing to come to Torquay but there is definitely an increase. At one point over the weekend we had a line (parked every and anywhere they could) and I counted 41 Hackney Carriages, which I fear at the time was more than the number of people on The Strand. Also I have serious concerns about the rumours of de-regulation and the issues that it will bring. I spoke to a taxi driver who worked in Swansea when they did it and he said it was carnage, to the point it was reverted after 3 months. I would like to speak to you about this in more detail.

As you are aware I arranged with the drivers in consultation with you that they can use the first part of the bus stop from 21:00hrs in a bid to show that give and take is the best way to proceed.

However since that has been imposed our problem with drivers parking on the roundabout and blocking the exit has only started at 21:00hrs instead of 00:00hrs. Therefore as it was arranged that it would stay whilst it was used sensibly I recommend that this be removed with immediate effect. This is to ensure the continued safety of pedestrians and road users alike. I will have no issue with explaining to the drivers why that privilege has been removed.

I know that the council face difficulties as we do in dealing with this issue, but I must stress that something must be done. I know that space is limited and that there are too many Taxi's using Torquay at the moment. In response to this I have had an idea which involves closing the Vaughn Parade Taxi rank and utilising other currently unused space which will increase the number of Taxis able to fit on a rank. I promise that it is not as crazy as it sounds however it will be easier to discuss with you in person.

I look forward to your reply and please do not hesitate to contact me via email should you need to do so. Also I have emailed you reference meeting up with you in Paignton.

Yours Sincerely,

PC 864 Anthony Moorhouse
P.A.C.T Traffic SPOC
Torbay P.A.C.T Team / Night-Time Economy Team
Devon BCU
TEL : - 41520 / 41424
EMAIL TORBAY P.A.C.T DIRECT

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BRIEFING PAPER

TAXI PARKING STRAND, TORQUAY

Since July 2006 the local Bus Company has encountered numerous complaints from drivers stating that they have been experiencing problems mainly on Friday and Saturday evenings with Taxi's taking over the bus bays on the Strand. When this problem occurs the buses cannot get in close to the kerb to load or unload passengers this causes an issue with passengers having to alight in the middle of the road. Also, those with disabilities who find it difficult to get off the bus because it is not adjacent to the kerb cannot alight at their stop.

On one occasion a bus driver noted a number of taxis causing problems on a particular night and one Taxi driver was particularly offensive to him.

Torbay Council has regular meetings with the bus companies and this issue is constantly being raised. Whilst signing and Traffic Orders are in place to prevent vehicles from waiting in the bus bays the problem has continued and bus drivers are becoming very despondent because no one seems to be addressing the issue.

The operation Managers for Stagecoach Bus Company have previously sent in a number of reports over the years completed by their drivers highlighting the taxi drivers causing the offences. These have been passed on to our Licensing Department requesting action be taken against the drivers.

The Licensing Department have informed Highways that many taxi drivers have been spoken with and reminded that it is an offence to park/wait within the Bus Bays however they do not have the power to take away a Drivers Licence and this is a matter for the Licensing Committee.

This is a very frustrating situation for the Council, as the Public Transport Team work to encourage and promote the use of Public Transport throughout the area. This in turn reduces congestion and carbon emissions and ensures buses can access the stops promoting the use for disabled and those with restricted mobility. However if the Bus Companies cannot access their specific bus bays for loading and unloading this discourages customers from using this form of transport.

The Taxi Parking issue has been ongoing for nearly four years since it was originally brought to the Council's attention.

Lesley Dransfield
Public Transport Officer

27th January 2010



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TQ2 7AN

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Lesley Dransfield
Highways & Engineering
4th Floor Roebuck House
Abbey Road
Torquay
TQ2 5TF

28th January 2010

Dear Lesley,

I write to confirm the ongoing problems with taxis parking at the Strand bus stops.

This issue has been ongoing for the full duration of my time in post as Operations Manager since September 2007. However, I am aware that the previous manager raised this problem as early as 2006.

The main concern from my perspective is one of safety. If my vehicles cannot properly access their designated stopping places they are forced to disembark passengers in the middle of the road. This not only blocks the road for other road users but puts my passengers at risk.

Being unable to pull into the curb at a bus stop increases the potential of passengers falling on to or out of the bus and sustaining physical injuries. It also adds the risk of cyclists colliding with passengers on the nearside of the vehicle, which is a hazard that would otherwise not have been present.

I might add that the vast majority of my passengers are over the age of 60 and therefore many struggle with mobility issues. The step height from the bus to the curb is much lower than that directly onto the road; this in itself can cause physical injury and pain to some passengers.

The act of a taxi simply blocking a bus stop can therefore cause untold damage and is a deterrent to my passengers using my services in future.

We work in partnership with Torbay Council and hope to reach a resolution to this issue as soon as possible.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Christina Ratcliffe
Operations Manager -Torbay
Stagecoach South West

Mr Richard McAllister
Operations Manager Torbay
Stagecoach Devon
Regent Close
Shiphay
Torquay
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Date: 09 February 2007

Dear Richard

Operational Issues – Stagecoach Routes

I am writing to update you regarding various issues you have raised concerning Stagecoach operations throughout Torbay and would ask you to pass the following information onto your staff.

Please note the following progress, which has been made to date:

6. Taxis Parking on the Strand Bus Stops

Following our regular meeting it would appear this matter has not been resolved. Agreed action - The Road Safety Officer along with yourself carried out a site visit on Saturday evening to understand the problems first hand of what the drivers are experiencing. The Road Safety Officer to bring this matter to the attention of the Devon & Cornwall Police at her regular meeting with Officers. Geoff Coleman to liase closely with Licensing to establish a way forward.

Mr Richard McAllister
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E-mail: Lesley.Dransfield@torbay.gov.uk
Website: www.torbay.gov.uk
Date: 04 July 2006

Dear Richard

Operational Issues – Stagecoach Routes

I am writing to update you regarding various issues you have raised concerning Stagecoach operations throughout Torbay and would ask you to pass the following information onto your staff.

Please note the following progress, which has been made to date:

5. Taxis Parking on the Strand Bus Stops

The drivers report regarding taxis parking the entire length of the bus lanes during the late shifts on Saturday nights has been passed onto my colleague Geoff Coleman to deal with at his request.
