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|  | **Please reply to:** Gary O’Shea |
| Town Hall |
| Castle Circus |
| Torquay |
| TQ1 3DR |
| All holders of a Torbay Council Dual Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers’ Licence | **My ref:** |  |
| **Your ref**: |  |
| **Telephone:** |  |
| **Fax:** | 01803 208854 |
| **E-mail:** | taxirenewals@torbay.gov.uk |
| **Date**: | 16 August 2018 |

Dear Drivers

**Hackney Carriage Rank Torquay Harbourside (Short Rank)**

I write with regard to the above, following numerous complaints over recent months relating to obstructions being caused by Hackney Carriage vehicles when waiting to join the rank.

This letter concerns the drivers of Hackney carriages in Torquay, although is sent to all licensed drivers on the basis that a Torbay Council Dual Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers’ Licence permits the holder to drive either type of licensed vehicle.

The short rank on The Strand (adjacent to the harbour slip way and Vaughan’s Wine Bar, is established to take three vehicles at any one time. In addition, after midnight, the bus stop just behind the short rank, becomes an additional facility for Hackney Carriages to utilise, which is capable of accepting approximately 8 additional vehicles.

Over time, the practice has evolved whereby if the rank is full (night or day), drivers will queue behind the relevant rank whilst awaiting the vehicles in front to clear. This practice is increasingly leading to complaints and over the last few months has been observed by officers from the Licensing Authority in order to gauge the severity (or otherwise) of the situation.

From time to time over past years, this is a problem that the Licensing Authority has tried to address, with limited success. It is a problem however, that cannot be permitted to continue.

The three main issues are;

1. Queuing at the short rank during the day, which has led to obstruction of the bus stops, difficulty for other vehicles to pass and clearly gives rise to safety concerns.
2. Queuing at the temporary (bus stop) rank which often means that vehicles are parked on the clock tower roundabout. This causes major obstruction and prevents on occasions, other vehicles from safely navigating the roundabout or sometimes (as has been witnessed with some larger vehicles) prevents them from being able to get round it at all.
3. On occasions the ‘post-midnight’ bus stop area is used by vehicles prior to midnight. On one such occasion the queue back onto the roundabout actually prevented a bus from getting round and it was left once it did get through with nowhere to safely stop.

Having considered the matter at length (which has involved discussion with some of our partner agencies), there is an opinion that the problem will only be addressed by closing the short rank entirely and removing the rights to use the bus stop after midnight. This action would mean that all Hackney Carriage vehicles wishing to collect passengers from the harbour area would only be permitted to use Victoria Parade or Carey Parade. Customers would be directed to those two areas.

This is clearly a drastic move and certainly not a decision to be taken lightly. However, the Licensing Authority must consider the safety and wellbeing of all general public and other road users.

The purpose of this letter therefore, is to give advance notice as to measures that are being seriously considered, though a consultation exercise would be undertaken before any action is implemented. By advising you in advance, this provides opportunity for all drivers to consider the above and to take steps to ensure that these problems do not continue.

The Licensing Authority will work with holders of alcohol premises licences to advise customers that there are two other ranks available (Victoria and Carey Parades) and therefore, if one rank is full, drivers are strongly encouraged to use one of the others as an alternative to causing an obstruction.

Resolution of the problem is within the gift of all drivers by simply taking steps to use another rank and not to queue for a space. If the problem is resolved then any move to close the stated ranks may well be put on hold. However, if not, there will be no alternative but to continue a process to close these facilities.

Whilst we believe that the content of this letter is clear, any person wishing to clarify any point may do so, however, given current resources such questions will only be responded to if sent by email to taxirenewals@torbay.gov.uk, as there is no facility for fielding individual calls.

Yours faithfully

Gary O’Shea

Principal Officer

Licensing and Public Protection