



03 August 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: **Consulting on Greater Manchester Clean Air Zone & Minimum Licensing Standards during Covid-19**

The Coronavirus has had and is still having a massive and devastating impact on the taxi trade up and down the country, including across Greater Manchester.

The repercussions for everyone have been unprecedented and with the whole UK on lockdown for over 10 weeks, the self-employed have suffered financial implications like never before with taxi passenger numbers almost vanishing.

With all shops, hair and beauty salons and most work places forced to close with staff furloughed or working from home, transport hubs closed and services massively reduced, and people advised not to go out; daytime work for the taxi trade was almost non-existent.

The closure of all nurseries, schools, colleges, universities, adult education, and day care centres severely affected those drivers who rely on contract work.

Sports events forced to cancel and bars, clubs, pubs and restaurants all having to shut meant no night or weekend work for the drivers.

Holidays and flights were all cancelled with an increasing number of travel restrictions causing airlines to ground planes, meant that drivers working the airport and those who rely on the tourist trade had no income.

Footfall in the shops and on the highstreets disappeared as shops closed and people stayed at home or self-isolated, following the government's social distancing advise.

By far the biggest users of taxis are the elderly, disabled, vulnerable and those with children; all the groups told to self-isolate and stay at home.

As more and more people had to work from home or self-isolate, as education institutions and public buildings closed, as shops, bars, pubs, clubs and restaurants closed, as sporting and social gatherings were cancelled – people stopped using taxis.

With taxi drivers coming into close and regular contact with the public, placing drivers at high risk of infection meaning; many made the decision not to work to protect themselves and their families.

Garages and MOT stations closed meaning cab owners were unable to get their vehicles repaired, and fleet owners had their cabs returned meaning many cabs were left parked up as driver were unable to make a living.

No passengers mean no fares, no fares mean no money, and no money meant taxi drivers and small businesses struggled or failed to survive. Passenger numbers are still down and nowhere near pre-Covid levels, with drivers struggling to make £40 working a 12-hour shift.

Many drivers have mortgages or rent to pay as well as already expensive taxi finance and insurance payments to make on top of that, and whilst mortgage and finance companies were sympathetic in

offering payment holidays, other bills still had to be paid and the payment holidays will still have to be paid back, with interest.

No business or financial institution in the world could have predicted what has happened and this crisis, unfortunately, has been the nail in the coffin for some drivers, with most of those who have survived now living day to day, with massive debts as a result.

Five months since the pandemic started, and with a local lockdown reinstated and Covid-19 still relentless in its devastating impact on our city region, the GM taxi industry is in a fight for survival.

The added pressures and financial impact of moving forward with CAZ and MLS at this moment in time will be devastating for taxi drivers, some of whom have had no income for months. To go ahead with these plans now would force thousands of hard-working, self-employed individuals out of work, with the costs involved simply unaffordable under current circumstances.

Families will be forced into financial hardship; homes will be lost, unemployment and mental health issues will increase, putting further pressure on our already overstretched benefits and social care systems.

The consequences will be disastrous for all self-employed and small taxi businesses across Greater Manchester, unless the right decision is made now; to delay the consultation on CAZ and MLS until a time when the full impact of Covid-19 on the trade can be assessed.

Yours faithfully,

Greater Manchester Taxi Trade Coalition

- Unite the Union Manchester
- Unite the Union Salford
- GMB Manchester
- Manchester TODA
- Manchester Hackney Association
- Tameside TODA
- Stockport TODA
- Oldham TODA
- Association of Trafford Taxi Drivers
- Rochdale Taxi Trade Group
- Airport Taxi Association
- The Hackney Drivers Association of Wigan
- The Hackney Drivers Association of Bolton
- The Hackney Drivers Association of Bury
- RMT Union Wigan