

PRESS RELEASE

from **THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TAXI USERS (NATU)***

Today the Transport Select Committee has published its report “**Taxis and private hire vehicles: the road to reform**” in which the case is clearly made for parliamentary legislation in the current Parliament to overhaul the rules and legislation, much of which goes back to 1847.

NATU is delighted that many of the Committee’s recommendations show a way to achieve better quality provision of taxis for users.

More liaison with taxi users

NATU strongly welcomes this: there is an urgent need to listen more to users, particularly vulnerable groups such as the disabled and those on lower incomes who are heavily reliant on taxis and PHVs. The establishment of NATU will also bring the views of users to the table at a national level. Related to this is one of the report’s most important recommendations – namely that taxis and PHVs should feature more prominently in local transport plans (LTPs) and that Government should issue guidance to local authorities to help ensure this. Currently many LTPs ignore the role of taxis especially in providing the missing link to and between other methods of public transport. This means, for instance, that ranks are frequently in the wrong place and unsigned, and that information on taxis and PHVs is absent from local authority web sites.

The impossibility of maintaining the current distinction between Hackneys and PHVs

Another helpful recommendation is to combine the legislation on taxis (hackneys which can be hailed) and private hire vehicles (PHVs – which need to be booked in advance) into one Act. However, NATU disagrees that the current distinction between hackneys and PHVs should be maintained within the legislation since the widespread use of mobile phones means that users can simply phone the number on the side of the PHV from the street. This is why users are so confused or even unaware of the distinction.

New boundaries

NATU also supports the idea of creating larger licensing districts which will simplify the process, reduce costs and fit the reality of the growth of conurbations and suburbs.

Improve the quality of taxi services

NATU welcomes the recommendation that the background of drivers should be carefully vetted and loopholes eliminated. This would avoid the current situation where in some areas drivers with criminal records, including sexual assault, are able to obtain a licence. Another essential recommendation is to develop national standards to improve the quality of taxis and their maintenance. However, it is disappointing that no specific mention has been made of the need to improve standards of driver and operator training, currently often non-existent, of a low standard, or easy to manipulate.

Conclusion – bring taxis into the 21st Century

In conclusion, the Committee has been bold in grasping the nettle, challenging vested interests and raising much-needed policy changes. There is still much detail to debate but overall NATU will be urging the Government to introduce new legislation to bring taxi travel into the 21st Century.

**NATU (www.taxiuser.com) is a newly formed consumer organisation dedicated to improving the quality of taxis as an essential (but frequently ignored) element of the public transport mix. NATU gave oral and written evidence to the Transport Committee*

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