



# **DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE**

## **Consultation on Taxi Accessibility for Disabled Customers**

**30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**Summary of Responses Received  
April 2021**



**Isle of Man  
Government**

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## **Background**

Consultation on the Equality Bill in 2014 confirmed that the majority of people on the Isle of Man support making transport as accessible as possible for disabled people. The aim of accessible transport is one that is supported by the Department.

The Road Traffic Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 contains provisions that will enable the Department to make Regulations that will create an obligation to carry disabled passengers on designated wheelchair accessible taxis, and accessibility dogs on all taxis subject to exemptions.

## **Consultation**

The Department of Infrastructure consultation regarding the introduction of Private & Ply for Hire Taxi Accessibility Regulations ran for 10 weeks, starting on 30 November 2020, and ending on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021. A total of 59 responses were received to the consultation.

Of the responses received:

- 7 were from wheelchair users;
- 18 were from taxi drivers and taxi operators;
- 2 were from people with assistance dogs;
- 11 were from friends and family of wheelchair users or people with assistance dogs;
- 4 were representing organisations: Crossroads Care, Manx Blind Welfare Association, the Stroke Association and Hospice.
- 17 respondees did not belong to any of these groups.

The responses received suggest that wheelchair and assistance dog users would be generally supportive of the current proposals for the regulations.

The online consultation identified a very clear need to consult further with the taxi industry, in particular regarding:

- the carriage of assistance dogs;
- training.

## **Wheelchair & Assistance Dog Users, Friends and Family and Representative Organisations**

Of those respondents who use a wheelchair, have assistance dogs, and their friends and family and organisations that represent them, the majority were in favour of the most of the proposals made.

One clear exception to this proved to be regarding the issue of exemptions, where a strong view was expressed that drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis should be capable of providing assistance.

Of the unintended consequences of the Regulations, there were clear themes regarding training, together with the potential to inadvertently create a reduction in the number of taxis providing a wheelchair accessible service, due to the increase in obligations and potential fines.

The majority of this group of respondents reported that taxis should be required to carry assistance dogs. The majority of this group of respondents also supported the provision of an exemption on medical grounds, with an allergy to dogs being cited as a primary reason for the provision of an exemption certificate, although fear of dogs was also cited as a reason for an exemption. There was general support for taxi drivers and operators who refused to carry an assistance dog to be charged a fine, and to carry an assistance dog where a booking has been accepted.

Other issues raised by this group as part of the consultation were a lack of accessible taxis, that the costs are prohibitive, that funding should be available to enable a taxi driver/operator to clean vehicle after carrying an assistance dog, and that the list of wheelchair accessible taxis is not maintained and current.

### **Taxi Drivers and Operators**

This group of respondees agreed that drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis should transport passengers whilst in a wheelchair, not make an additional charge for the carriage of a wheelchair, and transport the wheelchair if the passenger wished to travel in the passenger seat. They were also supportive of the proposal to give mobility assistance as is reasonably required to enable a wheelchair user to get into or out of the vehicle.

Whilst there was a general consent that drivers should be exempt from physically assisting users on the basis of medical grounds, a minority of respondees (5), were of the view that drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis should be capable of offering physical assistance to wheelchair users.

Other reasons cited for exemption of carriage of wheelchair users was:

- the weight of the wheelchair;
- intoxicification or bad experience of passenger by driver or other drivers;
- handling luggage during the Covid emergency (or other occasions of a similar nature).

Regarding failure of drivers who have not been granted an exemption from providing physical assistance to wheelchair users being subject to a prosecution or a fine, 7 respondees were in favour of this proposal, 7 were against, and 4 expressed no view.

Unintentional consequences of the Regulations identified included risk of injury to driver; training issues, including monitoring and supporting training; and the risk of having a licence revoked.

8 respondees were in favour of the requirement for all taxis to carry an assistance dog, with 10 against. There was strong support for the issuing of exemption certificates for this obligation, with only 3 respondees being against exemption certificate on medical grounds. 9 respondees were in favour of issuing exemption certificates on other grounds, including allergies (of drivers and other passengers) and fear of dogs. Another issue raised in this question included dogs shedding hair, particularly when the next passenger may be travelling to an important meeting/night out. It was reported that taxis are a private investment, and that carriage of assistance dogs should be the decision of the operator.

Views regarding an additional charge for the carriage of an assistance dog were split, with 10 agreeing that no additional charge should be made, 7 disagreeing, and 1 respondent having no view. Liability for a fine for failure to carry an assistance dog was only supported by 5 of the respondents, was not supported by 11 respondents, whilst 2 respondents had no view. 10 of the respondents were of the view that an assistance dog should be carried where a booking had been accepted. 3 respondents had no view, and 5 respondents were of the view that drivers shouldn't be required to carry an assistance dog even where the booking had been accepted.

9 respondents agreed that exemption notices should be displayed, 8 were of the opinion that it should be up to the driver, and one respondent expressed no view.

There was general support for the maintenance of a list of wheelchair accessible vehicles, with 14 respondents in support of this, 2 respondents against, and 2 who expressed no view.

Regarding accessibility of the Island's transport for disabled people, additional comments were as follows:

Perhaps 1 in 10 new licences should be wheelchair accessible taxis; request for further and detailed consultation with the Government regarding proposed new regulations, in accordance with the Road Transport Act 2001; requirements should be made clear at the time of booking; drivers should be able to refuse a journey if on arrival at pick up, they face a situation which they were not advised about in advance.

### **Written submissions**

5 written submissions to the consultation were received, which raised the following issues:

wheelchair accessible vehicles are only really an option via private hire taxis; the obligations should be placed on the taxi operators; availability of wheelchair accessible taxis at the airport; provision of training; pre-advising of need to transport an assistance dog on making a booking; low usage of wheelchair accessible vehicles; need to consult with taxi drivers, and availability of electronic taxi booking.