



CHEL TENHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

TRADE TIMES

For hackney carriage and private hire drivers.

A message to the trade

From Councillor Victoria Atherstone, Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, and Councillor Simon Wheeler, Chair of Licensing Committee:

We'd like to extend a sincere thank you for your service to Cheltenham residents and businesses this year. We'd like to assure you that the Council remains committed to supporting the trade and we hope that you can see this through the policy work that we have delivered this year. May we also take this opportunity to wish you and your families a safe and happy festive period, and success in the year ahead.



Taxi Trade Association ballot for new chair

We have been contacted to host a ballot box in the reception area of the Municipal Offices from 14 - 28 January 2026. This will enable you to place your vote for the new chair of the taxi trade association. Ballot papers will be distributed amongst the trade, and the ballot will be independently organised. Please contact cheltenhamshackneys@gmail.com for details.

The ballot will close at 11:30am and the box will be taken to the Council Chamber. Members of the licensing team will open the box and count the papers. Anyone from the trade is welcome to attend. Licensing will confirm, by email, the newly elected chair.

Please be reminded that the taxi trade association is run independently. Licensing officers can attend meetings by request.

Christmas opening hours

Over the Christmas period there will be some changes to our normal opening hours:

Date	Opening hours
23rd December	09:00 - 17:00
24th December	10:00 - 14:00
25th December	Closed
26th December	Closed
27th December	Closed
28th December	Closed
29th December	09:00 - 17:00
30th December	09:00 - 17:00
31st December	10:00 - 17:00
1st January	Closed
2nd January	Closed

Normal hours will resume on Monday 5 January.

MOT fails

In recent weeks, we have identified a number of drivers who are attending MOT tests; having their vehicles failed for dangerous defects; and then continuing to drive both for personal and professional use.

If your vehicle fails its MOT due to a 'dangerous' fault you should not drive the vehicle under any circumstances. This includes driving home or to other garages for repair. If you need to move the vehicle, including to other garages to make repairs, you will need to arrange for a professional recovery vehicle or trailer to collect and deliver the vehicle.

Once repairs have been made, you can continue to drive the vehicle once you have had an MOT retest and receive a pass certificate.

If the vehicle fails due to a 'major' fault, you may still be able to drive the vehicle if you have a valid MOT certificate that is yet to expire. You should, however, arrange for repairs to be made, and have the vehicle retested, as soon as possible.

If your MOT has expired, and you have no MOT, you can only drive the vehicle to a garage for an MOT test, or for repairs to be made to the vehicle.

Regardless of the above, you should ensure your vehicle is roadworthy at all times.

Where drivers are being identified using vehicles that are not roadworthy, or not adhering to the results of an MOT test, enforcement action will be taken.

Did you know?

You can be fined up to £2,500, be banned from driving and get 3 penalty points for driving a vehicle that has failed its MOT because of a 'dangerous' problem.

Disabled bays

We continue to receive reports of hackney carriage vehicles using disabled bays as an overflow rank, particularly on Pittville Street.

Disabled bays must remain available for those who need them. You must not stop, wait, or rank in disabled bays at any time.

Drivers should be aware of a [new Traffic Regulation Order \(TRO\)](#) being made by Gloucestershire County Council at Pittville Street which will make the restrictions clearer, and mean contraventions can be more easily enforced against. Enforcement will be used for those parked in disabled bays when they should not be, but also vehicles that are not licensed hackney carriages parked on the rank.

Private hire vehicles should also avoid parking in disabled bays, including those outside The Ivy, where we regularly receive reports that private hire vehicles are occupying these spaces.

Failure to comply may result in enforcement action.

Safeguarding training in action

We have recently been contacted by a driver who informed us they have put their safeguarding training into practice and saved a life.

This article contains reference to suicide.

A driver picked up a female passenger who requested to go on a journey lasting a couple of hours. During the journey, the passenger started to speak with the driver. The driver became concerned about the passenger's state of mind and continued to speak with her until she eventually revealed that she intended to take her own life. They continued their conversation and the driver persuaded the passenger to phone a loved one before bringing them back to Cheltenham to a place of safety with the relative.

The driver wished to inform us of this to show the importance of safeguarding training and how this helps drivers understand what to do and say in challenging scenarios.

Well done to this driver for your compassion and prompt action in a passenger's time of need.

Successful prosecution of a private hire operator working without a licence

Cheltenham Borough Council has successfully prosecuted an operator for carrying out private hire bookings without the necessary private hire operator's licence.

On Monday 27 October 2025 Mr Victor Whitham of Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham, entered a guilty plea for the offence of operating a private hire vehicle without holding a private hire operator's licence.

An investigation came after the private hire operator's company, Spa-Tax Cheltenham, had their licence suspended for non-payment of their operator's fee in October 2024.

Following suspension of the licence, officers continued to monitor the company and found that Mr Whitham was continuing to dispatch Cheltenham licensed private hire vehicles without a licence to do so.

The magistrates' court awarded the maximum fine they could of £1000. He was also ordered to pay £400 victim surcharge and

£1706.40 in costs. The total amount required to pay is £3106.40.

The case was led by Cheltenham Borough Council's licensing enforcement officers and assisted by One Legal, a legal service shared by Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council, Stroud District Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council.

Councillor Victoria Atherstone, Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, said: "Cheltenham Borough Council is committed to ensuring the safety and legality of taxi and private hire services in our community.

"This successful prosecution sends a very clear message that we will not tolerate illegal activity in our town and will take decisive action to protect Cheltenham residents and our visitors.

"I would like to thank our Licensing team and One Legal for their diligent work in bringing this case to a successful conclusion."

Policy briefing

Following adoption of our new taxi and private hire policy, and changes to the emissions policy which were approved at full council in December, we want to remind drivers of some of the changes that may affect you in the forthcoming year:

- Euro 5 vehicles must be replaced on their 2026 renewal date. The only exception to the above is where the vehicle is a Euro 5 WAV, which may be licensed for not longer than 16 years from the date of registration. This applies equally to hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.
- All roof signs / top-lights must comply with the new size specifications from 1 January 2026. Any roof signs / top-lights that are not currently compliant must be replaced before the new year.
- From 1 April 2030, all new and replacement vehicle applications must be ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs) or electric vehicles (EV).
- From 1 April 2033, all renewal applications will also be ULEVs or EVs.

The emissions policy will be reviewed in 2028 so we can assess the market and infrastructure related to ULEVs and EVs. Our Councillors recognise the importance of the trade to the local community and your livelihoods and want to support this.

Please contact licensing@cheltenham.gov.uk if you have any questions or concerns.

Taxi fare review

We have received mixed views on whether a taxi fare review should be conducted or not.

Licensing will wait for the election of a new taxi trade association chair before any work is conducted. Please feed your views to the new chair.

Top-light illumination in designated waiting areas

During the November race meeting, several hackney carriage vehicles were observed in designated waiting areas without their top light illuminated.

Please remember that when waiting in a designated hackney carriage bay, your top light must be switched on to indicate availability.

This is a requirement of the taxi and private hire policy and helps maintain transparency for customers.

Non-compliance will be monitored and may lead to enforcement action.

EV MOTs at Ubico

Some drivers have recently expressed concerns that Ubico were not able to offer MOT tests for EVs.

Ubico have since confirmed that, following procurement of some new equipment, they are now able to offer testing of all EVs, including all models of Tesla.

Plate collections and expired plates

Where you have recently renewed your vehicle licence, please ensure you collect your new plate and display this on your vehicle once the renewed licence has begun.

If you do not collect your new plate, and the renewed licence has begun, you will be displaying an expired plate on the vehicle. This is contrary to the law, and the conditions on your vehicle licence.

We will be monitoring the collection of plates to ensure vehicles are displaying that which is correct.

Where non-compliance is identified, we will be issuing a strike.



Police briefing

We are working closely with Gloucestershire Constabulary to make sure drivers and their passengers are always safe when on the road. They have asked that we make sure drivers are aware of the law concerning seatbelts and lights so you, and your passengers, can be confident that you are doing the right thing.

Seatbelts do not need to be worn if you are:

- A hackney carriage driver who is looking for customers either by being hailed in the street or waiting at a rank
- A hackney carriage or private hire driver who is carrying passengers

Private hire vehicles include minicabs, chauffeur services or limousines.

Did you know?

You can be fined £500 if you do not wear a seatbelt when you are supposed to.

Did you know?

You can be fined £50 if you use your fog lights unless your visibility is reduced.

Fog lights should not be used unless your visibility is reduced to below 100 metres.

Fog lights should not be used to aid visibility in any other situation. They can be dazzling to other road users and therefore pose a risk to the safety of you and others.

Headlights must be used when visibility is seriously reduced, generally when you cannot see for more than 100 metres.

You may also use front or rear fog lights but you must switch them off when visibility improves.

Upcoming safeguarding and local knowledge test dates

We continue to add dates to both our safeguarding sessions and Local Knowledge Tests (LKTs). The following are available to book via [our online form](#):

Safeguarding Dates	Local Knowledge Test Dates
15 January 2026	13 January 2026
5 February 2026	4 February 2026
5 March 2026	4 March 2026
16 April 2026	1 April 2026

All sessions are held at the Municipal Offices. Safeguarding sessions are scheduled to begin at 10:30am with a duration of two and half hours. LKTs begin at 11:00am, and last for approximately one and a half hours.

Your Trade Times

The Trade Times is produced by Cheltenham Borough Council for drivers - this is your newsletter, and we want to know what you would like to see in the next edition.

Would you be keen to know more about the enforcement we are doing? Do you want to receive updates on legislation and court cases concerning the taxi and private hire trade? Are there questions that regularly get asked amongst the trade that it would be useful for the Council to answer for everyone to see?

If you have any suggestions about content you want to see in the next Trade Times, please let us know by contacting licensing@cheltenham.gov.uk.