



Fit for Purpose – Fit for Telford

Conditions of Fitness Review 2011

Telford & Wrekin operates ‘Conditions of Fitness’ which ensure that the Borough is serviced by a fleet of accessible, user friendly, purpose-built taxis.

These licensing conditions guarantee that any passenger can recognise and access a taxi that they know is safe and reliable. Your Conditions mandate that licensed taxis are readily identifiable to the public and ensure a clear distinction from private hire vehicles providing peace of mind.

The Conditions require every vehicle to perform a 25ft U-turn for reasons of safety and convenience. Telford drivers use the 25ft turning circle every day enabling them to make safe and quick U-turns to best meet consumers’ needs.

Alongside this, the Conditions ensure that vehicles in operation provide the highest levels of access to disabled members of the community. The TX series can provide access to 95% of disabled people in the UK. Some converted van-style taxi manufacturers have claimed you will get greater choice by weakening these Conditions. This is not true because they could meet the Conditions if they wished as proved by One80 (Mercedes Vito Conversion specialist). Instead you would get a poorer service that would not meet the public’s needs.

Retaining Civic Pride



The purpose of the current conditions is to ensure that the council is serviced by a professional Hackney Carriage fleet that reflects the high standards that the council wishes to promote across the area. It is often the most visible service the council provides impacting on the impressions

of both residents and visitors about the council. A recognisable, smart and professional licensed taxi service is a real benefit to a borough.

If the council moves away from their present conditions, this will allow converted vehicles to be taxis – lowering standards and putting public safety at risk. As many of these vehicles are operated by private hire companies the distinction between licensed and un-licensed will be lost. This could be the reality in ranks across the borough. This would endanger the public and reflect badly on the council.



The Conditions of Fitness ensure that taxis meet the latest disability legislation and are supported by disability groups.

“The CoF (London Conditions of Fitness) were reviewed at some length between 2003 and 2005. The conclusion was drawn that they confer tangible and significant benefits on the travelling public, including disabled people as a group.”

London Taxi Accessibility Wheelchair User Research – Transport for London, 28 May 2010

TFL’s conclusion, based on extensive independent evidence, includes:

“...Based on the above analysis there would be no cost savings to drivers and passengers... For taxi users the introduction of greater competition into the market would be likely to have no impact on fares... even using assumptions that are most generous to AVs [alternative vehicles], the reduction in fares would rise to about 12p (or 1%) after 20 years...”

“The current London Taxis (specifically the LT1 TXII) can generally be considered to offer the best all-round performance when considering all dimensions (with no specific weighting applied to any one feature).”

Roy Ellis, Head of the PCO, said: “After a comprehensive review, it was found that the tight turning circle produced tangible significant benefits to the travelling public, and that these outweighed the advantages of removing it.”

“Overall, during this review, both passengers and drivers preferred the existing London Taxi.”



The tight turning circle allows London Taxi drivers to manoeuvre in congested traffic or do a U-turn (as opposed to a 3-point turn) on most Telford streets. Its retention will ensure that passengers, in particular the elderly, disabled, carers with buggies, and people encumbered with luggage, will continue to have the benefits of:

- drivers picking them up safely if they are on the opposite side of the road;
- easy turning to go in the opposite direction once passengers are on board;
- safe and convenient drop-off for passengers where the destination is on the other side of the road.

“It was a mistake to weaken the Conditions of Fitness in Bristol. The decision to allow in converted vans to operate as taxis has undermined the quality of the City’s public transport system.”

Councillor Murphy, Bristol City

What the Spinal Injuries Association (SIA) says...

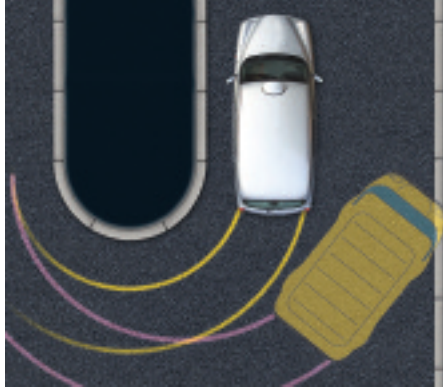
In a comparative study between the disability features of a converted van-style taxi and the TX models, the SIA concluded:

- The TX ramp is more stable and secure than the converted taxi
- High force is needed to open the door of the E7. Wheelchair users with limited hand movement had difficulty in opening the door
- The door height and width are also greater in the TX series, making wheelchair access better
- The door mechanism is much simpler, more natural and lighter to operate in the TX series
- The TX has two useful features fitted as standard; a swivel seat to assist entry for ambulant disabled, and an induction loop for those with hearing impairments

Consumer Benefits Of Existing Conditions

Turning Circle

The TX series has a 25ft turning circle, the Peugeot E7 has a 40ft turning circle. Telford drivers use the 25ft turning circle every hour of every day to make safe and quick U-turns rather than 3-point turns, which are unsafe and cause congestion.



Fully Accessible

The London Taxi is the only taxi with a swivel seat for use by the elderly or those with limited mobility, fitted as standard. The adjustable seat-belt straps mean it also caters for children and younger people.



Ramp Angle

The ramp height and length in the TX series are lower and shorter than van-style taxis. For example, the Peugeot E7 has a 19 degree ramp angle (without an even longer extension) compared to a 16 degree angle in the TX series – this makes it easier and safer to push wheelchairs into a purpose-built taxi.



Ramp Length

The TX series achieves a safe and practical ramp angle and does not protrude beyond the door onto the pavement when in use. This is safer for the customer and pedestrians. To achieve the same effect, van-style taxis have to have longer ramps, therefore either obstructing pedestrians on the pavement or traffic if the driver is forced to load a wheelchair passenger directly from the road surface.



Van Style Taxi

Higher door opening

The TX series has a much higher door opening than the van-style taxis, which is a real benefit for wheelchair users specifically. Also, the headroom in the TX model is much greater than in van-style taxis.



TX Series

Fit For Purpose

The handle on van-style taxis is awkward to reach, particularly for elderly and infirm passengers. Sliding doors are also dangerous as oncoming traffic has no indication that passengers are alighting from the vehicle. For this reason, the New York Taxi Commission banned sliding doors. The step height is also very high; for example, the E7 step height is 510mm compared to just 380mm on the TX.



Supporting British Industry

Established in 1919, the London Taxi Company is Britain's largest UK owned automotive manufacturer and is universally recognised for creating the famous 'black cab', now an international icon.



Environmental Issues

Our current manual vehicle emits 211g CO₂ per km. This is the same tax band or lower as many van-style taxis. For example, the Peugeot E7 has CO₂ emissions only 13g per km lower at 198g CO₂ per km.

In real terms there is no difference between the vehicles' environmental efficiency and we will continue to strive to reduce the carbon emissions from our vehicle.



HEAD OFFICE:
The London Taxi Company
Holyhead Road
Coventry
CV5 8JJ
England

t: +44 (0)24 7657 2000
e: enquiries@london-taxis.co.uk



www.london-taxis.co.uk