



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Consultation - Proposed new, and extension to existing Public Hire Taxi Ranks
<b>Date:</b>	April 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3459
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Keith Sutherland, Planning & Transport Policy Manager ext 3578

### Relevant Background Information

Currently taxi regulations in Northern Ireland differentiate between Public and Private Hire Taxis. Public Hire Taxis are able to pick up a passenger in the street or from a formal taxi rank whilst Private Hire Vehicles are restricted to the collection and carriage of passengers who have pre-booked journeys.

There are different licensing systems in London, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, however, the requirement for Private Hire Taxis to operate on a pre-booking basis is broadly similar. A review of taxi regulations in Northern Ireland is currently under consideration and the proposals include:

- stronger enforcement powers to tackle illegal practices by taxis;
- bringing in operator licensing for taxi businesses;
- allowing all types of taxis to pick up on the street without the requirement for an advance booking.

Legislation required to introduce changes to the current governance arrangements has yet to be brought forward.

The Department for Regional Development (DRD) is currently considering the potential for the provision of new or extended taxi ranks and have requested comments from the Council. The proposed ranks would be for the use of Belfast Public Hire taxis only. The proposed changes to taxi legislation does not indicate any change to extended taxi ranks for use by standard Private Taxi Hire.

## Key Issues

The proposals by DRD Road Service for taxi ranks in Belfast, for use by Belfast Public Hire Taxi's, are outlined below in terms of new or extended provision. Maps outlining the proposed locations are attached in Appendix 1.

The proposed new ranks, which will operate at all times, are to be located at:

- Berry Street at Castle court
- Botanic Avenue at Railway Station
- Bridge Street from Iceland to the Northern Whig bar
- Elmwood Avenue at QUB Student Union
- Linenhall Street at Ten Square Hotel
- Murray Street at Jurys Hotel
- Smithfield North at Castle Court

The proposed news ranks which will operate from 7.00pm to 7.00am are located at:

- Botanic Avenue at Madison Hotel
- Donegall Square West at the Apartment Bar
- Donegall Street at the Kremlin nightclub
- Elmwood Avenue at the Parlour Bar
- Lisburn Road at the Chelsea (Marlborough Park)
- Lower Crescent at Scratch Bar
- Ormeau Ave at Katy Dalys Bar
- Ormeau Road at the Errigle Inn
- Tomb Street at Milk nightclub
- Union Street at the Rainbow Centre

The extension of existing ranks, which will operate at all times, is proposed at:

- Amelia Street from Bains Place to Brunswick Street

The extension of existing ranks, with limited operation between 7.00pm and 7.00am, is proposed at:

- Bradbury Place at Benedicts's Hotel
- Bradbury Place at Lavery's Bar
- Brunswick Street at Irene and Nan's
- Great Victoria Street opposite Glengall Street
- Malone Road at the Botanic Inn
- Malone Road at the Olde Eglantine Inn
- Waring Street opposite the Merchant Hotel

The extension and additional provision of ranks for public taxi hire in additional locations could enhance provision for customers across Belfast. It is recognised that taxis provide vital community support and are essential for the night time economy in Belfast. Consultation with the various Council Departments indicates that the proposals are unlikely to adversely impact on council operations such as licensed street trading locations and street cleansing. However, the Council would like to highlight that the concentration of public hire taxis on Donegall Square North causes traffic disruption and should be monitored and enforced.

**Recommendations**

The committee is requested to consider the content of the proposed report on the new public taxi rank locations and, if appropriate, agree a response in favour of the additional provision for Public Hire Taxi Ranks.

**Decision Tracking**

Further to agreement, that, if appropriate a response be submitted to Roads Service.

Timeline: May 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

**Key Abbreviations**

Department for Regional Development - DRD

**Documents Attached**

Appendix 1 – Maps indicating locations of proposed new and extended Public Hire Taxi ranks