

**REPORT TO: LICENSING COMMITTEE - 11TH NOVEMBER 2003**

**REPORT ON: TAXI LICENCES**

**REPORT BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (SUPPORT SERVICES)**

**REPORT NO: 773-2003**

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To consider the Committee's policy on the limitation on numbers of Taxi Licences in the City of Dundee.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The following options are available to the Committee:-

### **Option 1 - Fix a New Limit Based on 2002 Survey**

Any new limit would require to be based upon up-to-date information. Halcrow advise that a "mini-survey" three or four times annually would cost c. £1,500. If the Council carry out the exercise internally, the estimated cost is cheaper, but may not be sufficiently independent and reliable enough to withstand challenge. In any event, such an update is merely a snapshot and may also be challengeable as not reflecting the overall picture of demand. To maintain a limit would not address the problem of the black market in taxi plates identified earlier in the report. It would also offer no encouragement for operators to provide additional accessible vehicles. Ultimately the aims of the Disability Discrimination Act are to achieve 100% accessibility for all. Another issue to consider is that, by October, 2004, the Council will require to comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act relating to access to goods, facilities and services which state that disabled people should not be treated less favourably and this may be wide enough to cover local authority policies on accessibility generally. If a local authority policy on taxi provision makes it more difficult for disabled people to access its services, this may be open to challenge.

### **Option 2 - No Limit**

The main advantage of this option is that it would remove the incentive to hire plates on the black market. This would, in turn, free the Cabs Enforcement Officers to concentrate on enforcing other licence conditions. There would be no survey costs to be absorbed by the trade. Past experience would suggest a short-term increase in the number of taxis available to the public as existing Private Hire Operators convert to taxis, followed by a reduction as the market finds its own level. Any existing licence holders could obtain new replacement licences in company or partnership names since there would be no need for a waiting list. Also, if a number of individuals are able to form a partnership to obtain a licence, they may more easily afford new and better vehicles. More fundamentally, it would return control to the Licensing Committee to determine who is allowed to operate a taxi in the City. The principal disadvantage of simply removing the limit is that any additional taxis would be of variable quality, with no incentive to increase the provision of accessible vehicles. There may be increased pressure on rank space with more vehicles on the road.

### **Option 3 - Fix a New Limit Based Upon the 2002 Survey and Instruct a Survey into Demand for Accessible Vehicles**

There would be difficulties in assessing the demand for accessible vehicles given the probable level of suppressed demand caused by the low number of such vehicles at the moment. The current level of provision of accessible vehicles is described by disabled people as "poor". Also, any such survey would itself require updating in the same manner as the general survey. If a survey were limited to demand for vehicles accessible to disabled people, it could be seen as discriminatory in itself and fall foul of the Council's obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act referred to in Option 1 above. Any such policy would not be consistent with the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act since it would place a limit on the number of

accessible vehicles and this would be a barrier to the ultimate aim of the Disability Discrimination Act of accessibility to all. Another issue which would result from the adoption of this option is that it would perpetuate the existence of the black market.

#### **Option 4 - Impose Strict Quality Controls on Age and Type of Vehicle to be Licensed**

This would allow the Committee to impose a condition requiring all new or replacement vehicles to be accessible. This would place the City's taxi fleet in a position whereby the aims and aspirations of the Disability Discrimination Act would be more easily achieved. There is no evidence to indicate a lack of unmet demand for such vehicles. The 2002 Survey was largely based on interviews with able-bodied persons. However, the views of those groups who represent disabled persons is that the provision of such vehicles in the City at the moment is poor. Both RADAR and SATA, which are national organisations, are urging local authorities to introduce such policies rather than waiting for implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Additionally, the Department of Transport have stated:-

"We know that some authorities have been holding back on any local initiative in this area in anticipation of national regulations. We would urge them not to do so. As and when any national requirements are introduced there will be a sufficient lead-time for any necessary changes to be made. In the meantime licensing authorities may be able to make significant improvements in the availability of taxis to disabled people in their area."

At the moment, there are only around 9 of the total limit of 507 taxis which are accessible. By contrast, in Aberdeen where all new vehicles must be accessible, there are 161 such vehicles in a taxi fleet of 850. In the event that such a policy is adopted, consideration may also have to be given to the introduction of an age limit at some point in the future and after further consultation with interested parties to secure transition to an accessible taxi fleet within a reasonable time. A policy of this nature would avoid the problems identified in Option 2 ie a flood of applications involving poor quality vehicles and in effect would achieve a limit on numbers of taxis based on quality of vehicle. This option would also have the same advantages as Option 2, especially the removal of incentive to hire plates on the black market.

This option is therefore recommended for approval.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND ON POLICY TO LIMIT NUMBERS**

3.1 The Committee have the power to limit the number of taxis by virtue of Section 10(3) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 which states *inter alia* that the Committee "may refuse taxi licences if, but only if, they are satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of taxis in their area which is unmet".

3.2 Over the past 20 years since the introduction of the above Act there have been periods when the Committee have limited the numbers and there have been other periods where no limit has been set and the market left to determine the number of taxis in operation. The historical position was fully explained in Report No 432-2001 which was approved by the Committee on 28th June 2001. A copy of this report was previously circulated.

### **4.0 CURRENT POSITION**

4.1 On 29th June 2000 the Committee approved a report following a survey by Halcrow Fox Ltd and resolved that the number of taxis operating in the City be fixed at 507 and that should the number fall below this figure then the first applicants on the waiting list would be invited to apply for licences. This decision was reaffirmed in June 2001. According to Halcrow, the result of the 2000 survey (which was based on data collected in late 1999) had a "shelf life" of three years and this age of report had been successfully defended by them in the courts. The Committee, with the agreement of the taxi trade, therefore agreed to commission a new survey in 2002 and this was also carried out by Halcrow.

- 4.2 The Scottish Development Department's Circular 38/1985 stated that the intention reflected by Section 10(3) was that licensing authorities should not be able to impose arbitrary limits on the number of taxis licensed by them but, on the other hand, should not be powerless to impose any limits at all. It goes on to say that in any appeal against refusal to grant a licence under Section 10(3) as amended, it will be for the licensing authority to convince the Court that they had reasonable grounds for being satisfied that there is no significant unmet demand for taxis in the area in question.
- 4.3 It is in this context that the Halcrow Group were commissioned in September 2002 by Dundee City Council to undertake a review of taxi licensing issues in Dundee and update previous work undertaken in 1999 (then as Halcrow Fox). This survey entitled Issue 01 Draft Final Report was received on 23rd December 2002 and a copy of the survey and Executive summary were previously circulated. Thereafter, a meeting was convened with relevant officers of the Council to discuss the report in its draft form.
- 4.4 As normal practice with draft reports clarification was sought on a variety of different issues to ensure accuracy and in this regard specific clarification was sought on the following:-
- Terminology used in Sections;
  - Some of the statistical information;
  - The effect of an increase in "phone bookings";
  - The effect of increase in Private Hire Cars;
  - Demand for Accessible (Wheelchair) Vehicles;
  - The effect on rank spaces of having no limit on the number of taxis (this being one of the options identified by the Consultants.)
- 4.5 Following receipt of the Sheriff Court decision (referred to in paragraph 5 below) which impacted on the current policy of limiting the number of taxis additional information was sought including how the survey could be updated to allow demand to be assessed at the point when any new application is to be considered.
- 4.6 The foregoing issues were largely resolved but there remains some doubt as regards three particular issues namely:-
- Firstly, whether the demand for wheelchair accessible vehicles has been assessed;
  - Secondly, whether the increase in the number of phone bookings reflects an increase in demand for taxis or if this was as a result of the increased number of Private Hire Licences; and
  - Thirdly, the method of evaluating demand prior to considering any new applications for taxis (in practice on a monthly basis).
- 4.7 It was the view of the consultees that this paragraph accurately summarises the current position.
- 5.0 DUNDEE TAXI CAB COMPANY LIMITED APPEAL**
- 5.1 On 5th September 2002, the Dundee Taxi Cab Co Ltd applied for 71 Taxi Licences, 9 of which were for wheelchair accessible vehicles. They were not on the waiting list and the number of licences at that time was 507. The Committee relied on the survey published in June 2000 to come to the view that there was no significant unmet demand for taxis in the City and refused all 71 applications. This decision was appealed to the Sheriff Court.
- 5.2 On 11th March, 2003, the appeal hearing was held before Sheriff Davidson and on 20th May, 2003 the Sheriff issued his judgement, a copy was previously circulated.

- 5.3 The Sheriff upheld the appeal and granted all 71 licences. He took the view that the 2000 survey, albeit only two years old, was historic and could not be used to come to the view that there was no significant unmet demand for taxis in September 2002. He further observed that information on unmet demand for taxis should be updated on each occasion the Committee meet to consider applications for taxi licences although he did not comment on the practicalities of this. This was why Halcrow were asked for their opinion as to how to update the information prior to the Committee meeting each month. In coming to his view the Sheriff relied on a Court of Session case (Coyle -v- Glasgow City Council). Since the Court of Session is a higher court than the Sheriff Court the Sheriff was bound to follow its decision.
- 5.4 Having considered the Sheriff's decision, the Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) decided not to appeal the decision to the Court of Session. The Dundee Taxi Association, who were a party to the appeal to the Sheriff, have appealed further to the Court of Session and the appeal has been fixed for May 2004. The Sheriff's decision to grant the licences has not taken effect due to the appeal so the 71 licences have not been issued.
- 5.5 A number of issues have arisen as a result of the Sheriff's decision, for instance, how practical is it to update the information on the level of demand for taxis in order that the Committee has this material before it each time it considers an application? The 1999 and 2002 surveys were carried out over a period of some three months. This is perhaps the most fundamental issue since, unless the Committee has the material before it to enable it to assess whether there is significant unmet demand, it would be obliged to grant applications (assuming there are no other grounds for refusal, eg previous convictions of the applicant, etc). Halcrow advise that the cost of carrying out a "mini-survey" would be c. £1,500 and at least three such surveys would likely be required every year, in addition to a "full" survey every two years. If the updates were carried out by the Council's Planning and Transportation Department, the estimated cost is at least £1,000 per update. However, if the updates are undertaken by the Council, this would not provide the independence and consistency of analysis which would be provided by continuing the appointment of Halcrow as an independent consultant for both the update and full survey.
- 5.6 The Sheriff was also critical of the Committee for what he saw as its failure to take into consideration the proposal by the Dundee Taxi Cab Co Ltd to provide 9 wheelchair accessible vehicles. It is understood that other licensing authorities who operate limits on the number of taxis allow an exception for such vehicles, e.g. Aberdeen. The effect of the Sheriff's decision is that a licensing authority must have a good reason as to why a policy on numbers should not be set aside when an applicant proposes to provide such vehicles. Neither the previous nor the current surveys contain any analysis of the level of demand for vehicles with wheelchair access. This is expanded upon in Paragraph 9.0 below. If there is no such evidence before the Committee when considering an application for these vehicles, there will likely be no grounds to refuse such applications on the basis of there being no significant unmet demand. The practices of other authorities in relation to wheelchair accessible vehicles are also outlined in Paragraph 9.0 below.
- 5.7 If the appeal is unsuccessful and the 71 licences are eventually issued, this will mean that the overall number of taxis in the city will be far in excess of the June 2000 survey figure of 507. Should the Committee maintain a policy similar to that adopted in June 2000, it would likely be many years before those on the waiting list would be able to obtain a licence. No-one on the waiting list had obtained a licence from its inception in 1992 until as recently as September 2001, when the number of taxi licences in force fell below 507 for the first time.
- 5.8 The Dundee Taxi Association suggested that the Committee should instruct such updates as are necessary to provide evidence of demand and thus enable it to refuse applications when the level of demand is reached.

## **6.0 THE BLACK MARKET IN TAXI PLATES**

- 6.1 A taxi licence is required to operate a vehicle as a taxi. This is commonly called a Taxi Operator's Licence or a Taxi Plate. Operating a taxi includes providing a suitable vehicle, keeping it in a roadworthy condition, arranging insurance and annual tests and otherwise managing the vehicle. A Taxi Driver's Licence is required to drive a taxi.

- 6.2 All applicants for taxi licences and Taxi Driver's Licences are subjected to checks by Tayside Police to establish their suitability to hold the licence. This allows the Committee to have all necessary facts before them when deciding the application.
- 6.3 The Act does not allow the transfer of taxi licences and accordingly there is an incentive for people who are not at the top of the waiting list or who otherwise may be refused a licence (due for instance to previous convictions) to attempt to obtain a taxi licence by "hiring" the plate, thereby "jumping the queue" of those on the waiting list and avoiding any scrutiny whatsoever by either the police or the Committee.
- 6.4 Participation in this unlawful activity is attractive to some existing taxi licence holders whose taxi plate has become a valuable marketable commodity as a direct result of the limit on the number of taxi licences imposed by the Committee and the trades apparent policy of charging the maximum fares allowable as minimum fares. This occurs where the taxi licence holder decides for whatever reason not to operate the taxi themselves and rather than surrender it continues to make money by "hiring" the plate on the black market.
- 6.5 Allegations of "plate hiring" are commonplace. All such allegations are passed to Tayside Police for investigation and depending on the circumstances the Inland Revenue and the Department for Work and Pensions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that upwards of 200 plates are currently being hired, the going rate being up to £2,500 per annum. In a number of cases it is the taxi licence holder's driver who is hiring the plate. The number of such allegations has increased significantly over the past few months and the Cabs Enforcement Officer has carried out numerous investigations which, in some instances, have resulted in the taxi licence holder admitting that the plate was being hired and subsequently surrendering their licence. Whilst the Committee have imposed a limit of 507 taxi licences, there are currently only 493 operating, largely due to the surrender of licences referred to above. It appears that by imposing a limit on the number of taxis the Committee itself may be creating the black market.
- 6.6 The facts of two cases of drivers "hiring" operators' plates have recently been reported to the Licensing Committee at suspension hearings against the drivers involved. Tayside Police are continuing with investigations and it is envisaged that further reports may be submitted to the Licensing Committee in due course. In the two cases presented to the Licensing Committee the Insurance was in the name of the licence holder but the taxis were actually being operated by the drivers. The Insurance Companies were unaware of this and it is unclear if they would actually pay out on a claim if they became aware of the unlawful activity which was taking place.
- 6.7 The amount of time spent by the Cabs Enforcement Officer and other officers of the Licensing Authority in investigating complaints of plate hiring brought about by the limit on numbers reduces the amount of time available to enforce all other licence conditions which could have a detrimental effect on the safety and quality of the taxi service provided. It also reduces the time available to enforce taxi drivers' licence conditions such as the no smoking rule and the dress code. The Cabs Enforcement Officer's time is not being used in a way which achieves best value.
- 6.8 The role of the Licensing Authority is to regulate the provision of taxis with a view to ensuring the best service possible to the travelling public. In practice what appears to be happening is that in a number of cases the Licensing Committee has lost control over who is effectively operating the licence and as such taxi licence holders themselves are regulating who is admitted to the trade.
- 6.9 When the limit was abolished in 1986 the number of taxi licences rose to about 800 and gradually fell thereafter. During this period there were no known allegations of hired plates.
- 6.10 Tayside Police estimated that, based upon information received by them, the number of hired plates is nearer to 250. They claimed that any time they followed a particular line of enquiry, those involved in this unlawful activity would move to block it and the taxi trade in general did not provide assistance in pursuing these allegations. The Police consider that upwards of 400 individuals are involved and are of the view that the most cost effective way to deter the activity would be to remove the fixed limit as this would have a significant impact together with updating the conditions imposed on the holders of taxi licences. The Dundee Taxi Association have accepted that this practice has been going on, although they question the extent of it.

They, however, suggested that the best way to tackle it was not to remove the limit, but to employ more Cabs Enforcement Officers.

- 6.11 The responses of the consultees as summarised in the previous paragraphs demonstrate an acceptance that this unlawful activity is taking place. The clear indication is that the existence of the limit creates the market, as is the case with any commodity where supply is restricted. It also reinforces the comments contained in Paragraph 6.8 above to the effect that in a number of cases the trade are controlling entry to the taxi business and the public interest is not therefore being served.

## **7.0 QUALITY OF VEHICLES - AGE, CONDITION AND CLEANLINESS**

- 7.1 As well as the suitability of the individual, other factors such as quality and cleanliness of vehicles and ensuring that taxis are accessible to all members of the public irrespective of disability must also be taken into account by the Committee. The number of hearings due to defective vehicles held prior to the introduction of the new testing regime and the lack of wheelchair accessible taxis indicate that these desirable aims are not being met at present. The Committee's role is to ensure that vehicles are maintained to a high standard and are kept in a clean condition and the conditions attached to licences reflects this (a copy of these conditions was previously circulated).

- 7.2 As regards the age of vehicles, after discussion with the taxi trade and as a direct result of suspension hearings following complaints by the Plant and Vehicle officer regarding test failures, some vehicles being in such a dangerous condition that they had to be towed off the test bed, the Committee agreed in June 2001 to implement an age based testing regime as follows:-

Vehicles up to five years old	1 test per year
Vehicles five to eight year old	2 tests per year
Vehicles over eight years old	3 tests per year

- 7.3 The new regime has been successful in that taxi licence holders have had to assess the age and type of vehicle used and this is reflected in the quality of the fleet as many have opted for new or newer vehicles.

- 7.4 It has also meant that licence holders using older vehicles have had to ensure that proper maintenance regimes are in place.

- 7.5 The proposal at that time was that all taxis would be tested twice a year, which is the position in some other Authorities but it was agreed that as an interim measure the arrangement in 7.2 be adopted.

- 7.6 Whilst the condition of the fleet generally has improved, the Plant and Vehicle Officer has indicated that the condition of some vehicles which are just coming out of warranty is causing concern.

- 7.7 This could be addressed by amending the age conditions as undernoted:-

Vehicles up to three years old	1 test per year
Vehicles three to five years old	2 tests per year
Vehicles over five years old	3 tests per year

(in the case of vehicles over five years old this would also be subject to the vehicles meeting the amended taxi specifications referred to at 7.8 and 7.9 below).

- 7.8 The main concerns of the Committee should be safety, ease of access and comfort for passengers and, to improve on all of these, the specification for vehicles proposed for taxis could be increased to permit only those vehicles which have more headroom, legroom, wider doors etc., to be licensed as taxis.

- 7.9 This could be achieved in a reasonable timescale by requiring the new specification to be met when any replacement vehicles are placed on service or when the existing vehicle reached five years old, whichever was the sooner.

- 7.10 Alternatively, consideration could be given to tests based on annual mileage rather than the age of the vehicle and with replacement vehicles being required when a certain mileage is reached.
- 7.11 Figures provided by the Cabs Enforcement Officer showed that of 27 vehicles examined recently, 11 were in such poor condition that they were immediately removed from service. These vehicles were not taken off service simply because they failed the specified standards required of taxis, but rather they were not even considered fit to be used as private vehicles. This would tend to support the views expressed by the Plant and Vehicle Officer at paragraph 7.6 above.
- 7.12 It was considered that the age of vehicles and frequency of testing be the subject of early consultation with the trade so that appropriate measures may be proposed to deal with this issue.

## **8.0 PRESCRIBED CLASSES OF VEHICLES AS TAXIS (BLACK CABS)**

- 8.1 Edinburgh and Glasgow only allow the traditional "London style" black taxi to be licensed. In theory, this is an option open to any authority, although Scottish Ministers have the power under Section 20(2) of the 1982 Act to issue regulations prescribing different requirements if they are of the opinion that licensing authorities are too onerous in their requirements. This is intended as a reserve power only to be used if the authorities are imposing unnecessarily expensive vehicle types on the trade in their area resulting in increased costs for the trade and taxi users. The Scottish Office issued guidance in 1986 (which remains unchanged) to the effect that it would use this power in the case of local authorities requiring London type cabs in areas outside major city centres in circumstances where it could be shown that this type of vehicle was not justified.
- 8.2 The Dundee Taxi Cab Co. Ltd. proposed that only TXII cabs be licensed. Unlike the old style "black cab", the TXII is a purpose built taxi with a number of built-in features to assist people with mobility problems. These include a wheelchair ramp; swivel seats; adaptations for the partially-sighted, etc. Whilst it was the view of some of those present from groups representing people with disabilities that the old style "black cab" was not suitable for everybody, the Dundee Taxi Cab Co. Ltd. stressed the additional facilities provided by the TXII which is described by the manufacturer as being "accessible to all". The Dundee Taxi Association did not wish to see only one type of vehicle prescribed and pointed out that there are a range of vehicles which would be suitable, eg. some vehicles can carry two wheelchairs, whereas the TXII only carries one.

## **9.0 ACCESSIBLE TAXIS**

- 9.1 From the 2001 census it has been determined that from a population of 145,663, 22.31% of the residents of Dundee (32,497) has a limiting long term illness. Of these people 10,800 are in receipt of Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disability Allowance or Disability Living Allowance. Receipt of these benefits indicates that personal mobility is a real problem. It should also be noted that as age increases individual's personal mobility decreases. Dundee has 29,718 people over state retirement age. This equates to just over 20% of the population.

Of the current "limit" of 507 taxis 9 are considered fully accessible. This is less than 2% of the "taxi fleet".

- 9.2 Part of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 will make it mandatory for taxis to be accessible to people with disabilities. Although the Act was passed 8 years ago, these provisions are not yet in force. This will require Regulations to be made by Scottish Ministers. It was anticipated that such regulations would be introduced in or about March 2001, but they are still awaited and there is no indication as to when they might be issued.
- 9.3 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has many parts not yet implemented however this Council in conjunction with the voluntary sector is adopting the vision statement of the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland which states that their vision "is of a Scotland where anyone with a mobility problem, due to physical, mental or sensory impairment can go when and where everyone else can and have information and opportunities to do so". Any future policies of the Council should have this as part of its deliberation process.

- 9.4 The Halcrow survey findings as regards accessible taxis appear to have been based upon interviewing able bodied users of taxis whose perception is that there is sufficient provision of these taxis. This was collated from the detailed survey work undertaken over a two month period involving rank observation and user interview. What is apparent in the Halcrow report dated December 2002 is that the authors have applied a formula to the data and come up with a number of taxis which in their opinion would satisfy demand from general users. What was not addressed well are the disabled groups comments on the lack of accessible vehicles (reference to the comments from the Dundee Access Group, DATAG and the Visually Impaired Ladies Club) which they also sought and are contained in the report's appendices. All representatives from the disabled groups were critical of the survey's failure to address the needs and aspirations of people whose mobility is impaired.
- 9.5 At the moment, there is nothing to prevent individual licensing authorities introducing policies for the types of vehicle which they are prepared to allow to be operated as licensed taxis. Indeed, the Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA) and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR) have encouraged all licensing authorities not to wait for implementation of the Act but to formulate local vehicle accessibility policies, e.g. in cases where a limit on numbers is in force, additional taxi licences could be granted where an accessible vehicle is to be placed on service (copy letters previously circulated). This is the policy currently operated by Aberdeen City Council. Other authorities, some of which do not have a limit on numbers, have imposed a requirement that all new vehicles brought into service must be accessible, e.g. West Lothian, North Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire. In the case of the two last-mentioned authorities, this is coupled with an age-limit on existing vehicles to ensure that, at some point, all vehicles will be accessible. There are a number of other authorities who operate age-limits but do not specifically require new vehicles to be accessible, e.g. Shetland Islands Council and Perth & Kinross.
- 9.6 All of the consultees accepted that there were an inadequate number of accessible vehicles and that this must be addressed. There is unmet demand for this type of vehicle and considerable "suppressed demand", ie people who choose not to travel by taxi because of the lack of accessible vehicles. The groups representing people with disabilities were of the view that there were insufficient accessible vehicles in Dundee. Some considered that at least 50 per cent of the taxi fleet should be accessible, whilst others felt that all taxis should be accessible. The Dundee Taxi Association, on the other hand, suggested that the Committee should undertake a fresh survey into the demand for accessible vehicles and then place a limit on the number of licences granted for this type of vehicle. The Dundee Taxi Cab Co. Ltd. stated that the Committee had an opportunity to ensure equal access for everyone and there should be no limit on the number of accessible vehicles. The disabled groups wished to be able to call up and book a taxi when they required one, be that early in the morning for a hospital appointment or later in the day for social purposes. It was also important to be able to obtain a taxi for the return journey. Cost issues were also raised. The disabled groups mentioned that the fares were too high, whereas the trade pointed to the costs of obtaining and operating accessible vehicles. The disabled groups indicated in addition that there was a lack of disability awareness on the part of some drivers.
- 9.7 2003 is the European Year of Disabled People (EYDP). One of the objectives of the EYDP in Scotland is to draw attention to the normality of disabled people and disabled people's lives, while highlighting the social barriers they confront and ways to overcome them. If the Committee were minded to introduce any of the types of policy outlined in Paragraph 9.5 above, this might be an appropriate time to do so.

**10.0 Name Patricia McIlquham**

**Depute Chief Executive (Support Services)**

**Date: 4th November 2003**