



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Taxis: 2021 Programme

Priorities for 2021

1: Supporting the taxi trade's recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic

- To continue to demonstrate to policymakers the need for support for the taxi trade as it seeks to survive and recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

2: Ensuring taxi and PHV regulation is fit for purpose

- To secure updated taxi and PHV regulation through primary legislation for the benefit of passengers and drivers across the country.
- To build on the statutory guidance recently issued by Government to ensure the highest possible standards are maintained by all local authorities, holding the Government to account for its promise to closely scrutinise local authorities' practices and procedures.

3: Securing the future of the taxi trade

- To continue to promote the zero-emissions capable (ZEC) taxi and demonstrate the trade's commitment to reducing harmful emissions, while working to ensure that calls on the trade to modernise are balanced against its ability to survive, especially in the context of the damage done to the trade by the covid-19 pandemic.
- To hold the Government to account on its promised investment in electric vehicles and electric vehicle charging.
- To explore ways in which the trade can adapt and develop in the future.

Programme of activity for 2021

Many of the APPG's intended activities for 2020 were postponed by the onset of the covid-19 pandemic, and the inability to hold in-person meetings on the parliamentary estate. At present, the Parliamentary authorities have advised that all APPG meetings should be virtual until May 2021. The following programme of work is laid out in the hope that in-person meetings will once again be possible later in 2021, with virtual meetings to be used in the event that this is not a reality.

Supporting the taxi trade's recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has been devastating for the taxi trade both in London and across the country. With passenger numbers having collapsed, taxi drivers are either working significantly reduced hours and have significantly reduced earnings, or else have left the trade completely. Many drivers who leased a ZEC taxi, and in so doing demonstrated a significant commitment to the future of the trade and improving air quality, have found themselves unable to meet their repayment schedules.

The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS), introduced by HM Treasury to support self-employed workers during the crisis has proved helpful for some drivers, but many, especially those new to the trade, have lacked financial support. Many APPG

members have called the Treasury's attention to the financial difficulties faced by taxi drivers, especially those that have leased a ZEC taxi, and called for greater support for the industry.

As such, the Secretariat proposes that the Group:

- Considers commissioning polling, combined with data from APPG sponsors, to highlight the challenge facing the taxi trade, with a view to crafting a report on the impact of Covid, which would make recommendations on securing the long-term future of the trade.
- Continues to make the case in Parliament for specific support for the taxi and PHV trade in England, so long as covid-19 restrictions persist, and the trade continues to suffer a significant loss of income.
- Follow up on the APPG's meeting with Baroness Vere in October 2020, where some of these issues were raised.

Taxi and PHV regulation

The Government has not yet brought forward legislation to implement the recommendations of the report of the Task and Finish Group on Taxi and Private Hire Licensing. The Department for Transport has recently issued new statutory guidance, and at a meeting with the APPG on 13 October 2020, Baroness Vere confirmed that the Department for Transport is determined to ensure that licensing authorities cooperate with the new standards, and it will not hesitate to enforce the standards should licensing authorities fall short. Baroness Vere also confirmed that the Government intends to bring forward best practice guidance and will be consulting on it in the near future.

However, the APPG on Taxis believe that the only way to ensure compliance with the high standards that are needed to protect passengers and drivers is through primary legislation. With the new legislative session due to begin in the spring, the APPG on Taxis will continue to make the case for primary legislation to be brought forward at the earliest opportunity.

As such, the Secretariat proposes that the Group:

- Maintains and builds upon the relationship with Baroness Vere, by following up on the October 2020 meeting.
- Writes to the Secretary of State for Transport to request that the Government takes up taxi and PHV licensing reform as a key issue in the new session of Parliament.
- Identifies opportunities – both within the media and in Parliament – for high-profile members of the APPG to call on Government to bring forward primary legislation on the full set of recommendations put forward by the Task and Finish Group.
- Writes a response to the consultation on best practice guidance, highlighting the need for primary legislation.

Future of the taxi trade

Over the past several years, the APPG has successfully raised the profile of the ZEC taxi in Parliament and demonstrated the trade's commitment to improving air quality. This work included the joint event held in conjunction with the APPG on Electric Vehicles in February 2020, attended by representatives of the trade, industry groups, members of both Houses of Parliament and elected representatives from London councils and the London Assembly. In

2021, the APPG should build on this work, and seek the possibility of holding an evidence session of the Transport Select Committee to explore the challenges that the trade continues to face.

Simultaneously, the APPG has worked in 2020 to highlight the pressures placed by the Mayor of London and TfL on the trade to cut its emissions without adequate rapid charging infrastructure in place in London to support the take up of the ZEC cab. It will be a priority for the APPG to maintain this work and amplify its voice on these issues. The falling numbers of taxi drivers is also a priority area for consideration, and as such it is vital to identify opportunities for the trade to become more widely accessible.

Moreover, in addition to financial burdens, taxi drivers in London have faced increased road restrictions, with the Mayor of London's Streetspace plan making driving a taxi in London a more challenging proposition. Additionally, the state of the taxi trade and the measures designed to support the taxi trade vary widely, even across England. With mayoral elections approaching, 2021 represents a good opportunity to engage with city leaders to discuss their plans for taxis as part of integrated transport networks, and explore ways in which schemes planned by combined authorities might have lessons for the future of the trade across the country as a whole.

All discussions about the future of the taxi trade must be had within the context of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the trade, acknowledging that the very survival of the taxi trade has been put at much greater risk by the pandemic. The need, therefore, for an active and dedicated group of MPs, committed to supporting the trade during its most challenging time, is greater than ever before.

As such, the Secretariat proposes that the Group:

- Asks the Transport Select Committee to hold a one-off evidence session on the future of the taxi trade.
- Continues to engage with City Hall, TfL and London MPs to highlight the challenges of road access in the capital.
- Seeks to hold a meeting with the new TfL Commissioner, Andy Byford, to discuss his plans for supporting the taxi trade as an integral part of London's transport network.
- Utilises the 2021 metro mayoral elections as an opportunity to engage with representatives outside London, inviting, for example, representatives from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to talk about their plan for taxis as part of an integrated transport network for the area.
- Considers the possibility of further collaboration with the APPG on Electric Vehicles.
- Organises a visit later in the year for APPG Members and Transport Committee Members to the LEVC factory in Coventry. This would be to showcase the ZEC cab and to discuss the need for more rapid charging infrastructure and would happen alongside continued advocacy for the issue in Parliament.
- When social distancing restrictions allow, restarts the programme of inviting parliamentarians to drive the ZEC cab with the aim of publicising positive experiences, the issue of electric charging infrastructure and the difficulties that the trade have faced in maintaining access to key roads in London despite its vital role as a disability accessible door-to-door service and commitment to tackling congestion and air pollution.

Other events

- Summer drinks reception – this would require specific sponsorship.