

Scottish Government submission of 19 January 2023

PE1960/C: Formally recognise private hire cars and taxis as modes of public transport

Thank you for your letter of 9 December 2022 to Transport Scotland advising that the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee considered petition [PE1960](#) at its [meeting](#) on 7 December 2022.

At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government to request an update 'on the work of the Short Life Working Group' (SLWG), and further information on any action being taken to improve the engagement between the taxi and private hire industry and planning and licensing authorities. Committee Members are also seeking information on the membership of the SLWG, specifically who in the group represents the private hire and taxi trade. The Committee has also requested that the Scottish Government consider the scope to widen the membership of this group to ensure greater representation from those in the private hire and taxi trade whose livelihoods and businesses are affected by its decisions.

As the SLWG that the Committee refers to is led and managed by the Scottish Government Justice Directorate, I have been asked to reply.

It may be helpful to clarify at the outset that the SLWG is not considering issues relating to the recognition, or otherwise, of private hire vehicles and taxis as being modes of public transport. This is because the SLWG was established for a narrow but important purpose in early 2022 to review and update the [Scottish Government Taxi and Private Hire Car Licensing: Best Practice for Licensing Authorities](#) document.

The guidance document sets out to offer best practice advice to licensing authorities (i.e. Scotland's 32 Local Authorities) on a range of issues relating to the licensing of taxis, private hire cars and their drivers.

The SLWG was tasked with reviewing the guidance document to ensure the material is up to date, fit for purpose, acts as a useful tool for both licensing authorities and taxi and private hire car operators, and can support a consistent approach where appropriate.

The Committee will wish to be aware that the SLWG has now concluded its work, and Scottish Government officials are now in the process of finalising the updated guidance document. We hope to publish the updated guidance in early 2023.

I note that the Committee is seeking information on the membership of the SLWG, specifically who in the group represents the private hire and taxi trade.

Membership of the SLWG consisted of representatives from the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, various local licensing authorities, taxi and private hire car trade representatives and UNITE the Union. Those members of the group who represented the private hire and taxi trade were:

- Kevin Woodburn, K Woodburn Consultants Ltd.
- Edward Grice, Scottish Private Hire Association.
- John Paul Duffy, Scottish Private Hire Association.
- Robert McLean, Glasgow Taxis.
- Representative from 'UNITE The Union'.

The SLWG has helped to facilitate direct engagement between those members of the taxi and private hire industry on the group and licensing authorities. In addition, Scottish Government officials have on-going and helpful engagement with the Society of Local Authority Lawyers & Administrators in Scotland (SOLAR), with Scottish Government officials' regular attendees at the SOLAR Quarterly Working Group meetings, which last met on 16 December 2022.

Officials from the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland also attended a recent Civic Licensing Summit hosted by Glasgow City Council. The work undertaken by the SLWG was discussed at that Summit on 2 December 2022.

While not directly relevant to the petition you are considering, I hope nonetheless that this information about the SLWG is helpful to the Committee.