



Brighton & Hove Cab Trade View

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DEVOLUTION AND QUESTIONS

A different one this time - a question that I have sent to two Brighton & Hove councillors regarding Devolution and how this will affect the B&H taxi/PH trade now that there has been an official announcement by the government on what is going to happen here.

Background: Brighton & Hove became a Unitary Authority in 1997. The worst-case scenario under Devolution was the possibility that the council could have been swallowed up into a new 'Sussex' authority with a single taxi/PH licence. However, what the council wanted was to remain a Unitary Authority and land-grab three smaller neighbouring areas from Lewes DC, which is to the east of Brighton.

So, I think that is a partial relief at the moment. However, we still have the prospect of a new Sussex Mayor, which Brighton and Hove will fall under. As it seems that such Mayors will have control over transportation, I am still holding my breath about the future of the BH taxi/PH trade until I get assurance in writing. So, the following letter details what I have asked and I intend to publish the reply in the October edition of **PHTM**:

Councillor Bella Sankey

Councillor Trevor Muten

Brighton & Hove Taxi/PH Licensing

Dear Councillor Bella Sankey and Councillor Trevor Muten

Devolution and the Brighton & Hove Taxi/Private Hire Trade

I have previously corresponded on the unknown major changes that Devolution will bring, not only to the local Brighton & Hove taxi/private hire trade but also the trade on a national scale.

Trevor, you will recall I asked various questions at the Brighton & Hove taxi/PH trade meetings that you

attended last year. Indeed, I was very straightforward with you about the possible consequences that Devolution would have for us.

However, you were not in a position to provide any answers at that point. You will also recall that my questioning made it very clear to all present that, at the time, the local trade was effectively in limbo with the prospect of being wiped out should any plans involved encompassing other licensing areas.

However, it has now been officially announced that the new Brighton & Hove devolved area will be taking over Saltdean, Peacehaven and Telscombe, that are currently in the area controlled by Lewes District Council. This means that Brighton & Hove will remain as a Unitary Authority albeit increased in size. So, on this basis I feel slightly relieved for the local licensed taxis/ph trade here. Nonetheless, there are still questions that need to be addressed.

New Sussex Mayor

Importantly, we now also have to consider that major changes may be made that will still affect the local trade here with the prospect of having a Sussex Mayor who will 'rule' over Brighton & Hove in 2028.

With that election now having been delayed, it is fortunate that we will be having you Bella (being Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council) serve as chair of the interim authority ahead of the future mayoral vote.

One responsibility of the new Sussex Mayor will be transportation and we do not know if the local Brighton & Hove taxi/PH sector will fall under this.

It is imperative, even at this early stage, that all of the Brighton & Hove licensed drivers, proprietors and operators should be given absolute assurances that the local Brighton & Hove taxi/PH trade will continue to function in exactly the same way as it does now.

This means that assurances must be given to the local trade that the new Sussex Mayor will not be decreeing that there will be a Sussex taxi/PHV licence encompassing the whole of Sussex incorporating Brighton & Hove.

Whilst I consider that this is probably not going to be the case, and that taxi/PH licences to drive and operate hackney carriages and private hire vehicles will remain



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exclusively within the Brighton & Hove Unitary Authority...we need to know where we stand.

We also need full assurance that this includes the Brighton & Hove taxi/PH Licensing department that exclusively deals with taxis/PH drivers, vehicles and operators where we in the trade here have a very good, strong and close relationship. This is unlike most other areas where taxi/PH licensing is thrown in with the licensing of sex shops, poodle parlours and ice cream van vendors..... and everything else that needs to be licensed.

I must make it very clear that the Brighton & Hove taxi/PH trade has effectively been punished for a number of years by being flooded with 'out-of-town drivers' from Portsmouth, Southampton, Chichester. Lewes, Fareham, Havant, New Forest and Mid-Sussex, all encouraged under Uber to predominantly work here, that Brighton & Hove Licensing has absolutely no control over. Many of whom break their own respective licensing conditions and even illegally use our taxi ranks. Very recent examples of this can be provided.

As a consequence of this, the Brighton & Hove taxi/PH trade has dwindled in numbers.

This is due to drivers retiring or giving up their licences, because they have just... 'given up'. There are now fewer applicants to join the local trade here as they are unable to meet our local conditions of licensing and so seek licences in lower condition requirement areas. There are even drivers who actually live here who seek licences elsewhere to predominantly work here.

Number of Licensed Vehicles – Hackney Carriages & Private Hire Vehicles

- In 2015 the total number was 1,022*
- As of April 2026, this number has reduced to 940*

Number of Dual Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Driver Licences & Standalone Private Hire Licences

- In 2015 the total number was 1,789*
- As of April 2026, the total number was 1,051*

This massive 41% drop in driver licences emphasises the jolting reality of where we are today. This also affects the sustainability of the taxi/PH licensing

department with the massive drop in fees. The irony

is that fees paid by 'out-of-town' drivers to their respective licensing authorities should be paid here.

**Figures taken from the government taxi/PH stats as of April 2026, published August 2026.*

Lewes DC Operators

Currently, Saltdean, Peacehaven and Telscombe are all controlled by Lewes DC and no doubt there are Lewes licensed operators being sole traders or as cab companies with registered offices based in those three areas.

As Brighton & Hove council is preparing to take over those areas which will then no longer be under the control of Lewes DC, what will happen to those operators/cab companies that run Lewes licensed taxis/PH vehicles currently registered in those areas? Will they be forced to cease trading as they will no longer fall under Lewes DC Licensing? In fact, it is understood that Lewes DC will no longer exist as such under Devolution.

It is presumed that you now know more than you did when I first asked these questions last year, so ultimately, we need to know the following:

- 1: Will Brighton & Hove retain the full licensing powers for the city's hackney carriage/private hire licensing of drivers, vehicles and operators post Devolution and when the new Sussex Mayor is put in place.**
- 2: What will happen to those operators/cab companies currently licensed by Lewes DC that are registered in Saltdean, Peacehaven and Telscombe?**

Our next trade forum meeting is on 26 August 2026 so, if possible, it would be beneficial to have a reply by then.

The above will also be published in my monthly column in the September edition of the national trade magazine, Private Hire & Taxi Monthly. I would then like to be able to publish your reply in the October edition.

Andrew Peters

BHTCA

Reply from Cllr Trevor Muten

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your email and for setting out your concerns and questions so clearly. We recognise that devolution, local government reorganisation, and the creation of a Sussex Mayoral Combined Authority raise important questions for the licensed taxi and private hire trade, and we appreciate your continued engagement on these matters.

Firstly, I want to reassure you that Brighton & Hove City Council highly values the role that licensed taxi and private hire drivers, vehicle proprietors and operators play in the city's transport network. The trade provides an essential public service and forms an important part of how residents and visitors move around the city.

As you recognise, many aspects of devolution are still being developed nationally and regionally. While information continues to emerge, there are still currently a number of areas where detailed arrangements have not yet been fully determined. We therefore want to be careful not to provide assurances on matters that have not yet been decided.

However, there are some points we can clarify.

Brighton & Hove will continue to exist as a local authority. Devolution does not remove the council's role in serving local communities and businesses, and we remain committed to working closely with the licensed trade through existing engagement arrangements, including the Trade Forum.

In relation to taxi and private hire licensing functions, there are currently no proposals that Brighton & Hove's licensing responsibilities will be transferred into a Sussex-wide licensing regime. At present, the council continues to discharge its statutory licensing duties and there has been no indication that a Sussex Mayor would assume responsibility for local taxi and private hire licensing arrangements. Should any proposals emerge in the future that could affect the trade, we would ensure that they are communicated and discussed at the earliest opportunity.

You also raise wider concerns regarding out-of-area licensed vehicles operating within Brighton & Hove. We recognise that this remains a significant issue for many locally licensed drivers and operators. While these concerns are not directly linked to devolution, the government continues to consider wider reforms to the national taxi and private hire licensing framework. The establishment of a Mayoral Combined Authority may provide opportunities for greater local influence over transport matters than is currently available through central government, although the detail of these arrangements is still being developed.

Regarding the inclusion of Saltdean, Peacehaven and Telscombe within Brighton & Hove's administrative boundary, detailed transitional arrangements are still being worked through as part of the wider local government reorganisation process. As a result, we are not yet in a position to provide definitive answers regarding existing Lewes District Council licensed operators or businesses based within those areas. These matters will need to be considered as part of the transition arrangements, and we will provide information once there is greater certainty.

We appreciate the statistics you have shared regarding the reduction in licensed drivers and vehicles and understand the challenges facing the industry. These issues reinforce the importance of maintaining dialogue with the trade as the devolution process progresses.

We remain committed to keeping the trade informed as further information becomes available and will continue to use the Trade Forum as a key mechanism for engagement and discussion. We recognise the uncertainty that change can create and are keen to ensure that the trade has opportunities to raise concerns and contribute to discussions as plans develop.

Thank you again for your continued commitment to the trade and for taking the time to raise these important questions. We look forward to continuing the conversation at the Trade Forum on 26th August.

Kind regards,
Trevor

ClIr Trevor Muten
Cabinet member for Transport and City Infrastructure
Labour Councillor for Goldsmid Ward
Brighton and Hove City Council