

FOI Request (received 02 May 2019) - Reference: DFI/2019-0167

An up to date list of the 204 large Taxi and Private Hire Operators currently licensed to operate in Northern Ireland, including details for each operator of:

- 1) licensee name;
- 2) trading name;
- 3) license expiry date;
- 4) operating address, with post code;
- 5) landline telephone number for booking, or state if app-only/no landline; and
- 6) booking email address; and number of vehicles and drivers registered. (Follow up to DFI/2019-0140).

Response (issued 31 May 2019)

Thank you for your letter dated 02 May 2019 requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in relation to licensed Taxi Operators in Northern Ireland.

As indicated in my previous response, the time taken to provide this information would be a significant and time-consuming piece of work. The current computer system that manages taxi licensing information for operators, drivers and vehicles is at end of life and it requires an extremely clumsy (and largely manual) process to extract information from it. The DVA are well aware of the limitation of the current system around management information reporting and a new system is currently in development which is expected to go-live later in the year. It is anticipated that this will provide access to enhanced management information.

There is no reporting functionality built into the current system to allow us to run consolidated reports for the information requested. To retrieve the information requested, a member of staff would need to run a separate report for drivers and another one for vehicles, for each individual operator. When the reports are run, they need to be exported to excel and manually checked, in part to extract duplicates, before the information could be collated.

The way the system works, each time a taxi vehicle or taxi driver licence is issued, it creates a separate entry on the operator licence history. This will result in a duplication of vehicle or driver information where one licence has expired and another one issued during the period of the operator's licence, with the majority of large operator licences issued for a period of 5 years. In addition, each time a vehicle or driver is added or removed from an operator

licence, as part of the normal variation process, these will also create a separate entry on the licence history. As an indication, on average we process over 700 variations to operator licences every month.

In addition to the process outlined above, to retrieve the information regarding the operating centre for each operator, a member of staff would be required to access each operator's record and open the scanned documents to establish if the operator is working from commercial premises or from their home address, before manually collating the information and redacting the relevant information that could not be released. The business landline and business e-mail address is also held on these scanned images and would need to be transcribed manually.

The time taken to extract and collate the information requested for each operator will vary substantially depending on the size of the fleet and the period of the Taxi Operator's Licence. For the largest operators, i.e. those with a fleet size of over 600 vehicles and drivers, the time required to run the reports and collate the information would exceed 4 hours for each one. We have estimated an average processing time of between 45 minutes and 1 hour for the remaining large operators.

As previously advised under Freedom of Information legislation, if a substantial amount of work is involved in processing a request, a fee may be payable to us before we can retrieve and provide the information. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act states if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit. The estimated costs involved in sifting the information you requested would significantly exceed the statutory limit of £600. In addition, it would require the diversion of staff from their normal duties for an unacceptable period of time and this would have an adverse impact on service delivery. We have therefore decided that it would not be in the public interest to proceed further in relation to this request.