



Department for

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**From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure  
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Taxi Industry

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## **Open letter to the taxi industry of Northern Ireland**

In just a few short weeks, life as we know it has changed dramatically – not just here in Northern Ireland but right across the world. Everyone, whatever their business or occupation, is now beginning to feel the full effects of the spread of this virus throughout society.

For the taxi industry and its thousands of drivers, I understand that this is a really worrying time for you and that you are being hit very hard by the scale of this public health and economic crisis.

I wanted to write an open letter to you all today to set out the work that I am doing to help you in my capacity as Infrastructure Minister and also the work I am doing with other Ministers across our Government.

Right now, my officials are working hard to put new legislation in place so that within coming days I can grant an extension to the PSV testing period; this will be one less thing for you to worry about as you continue to work.

I can also assure you that my officials are working hard to find solutions to licensing and other regulation related challenges arising from this crisis. We are here to support you as much as we can.

While my responsibility for taxis only extends to the regulation of the industry, I am very aware of the increasing financial hardships this crisis is creating; with my Executive colleagues I pushed hard to secure the self-employed financial package announced by the British Government last week. While it's not perfect, it will go some way to helping self-employed people, like those within the taxi industry, to help put food on the table and pay bills. With Executive colleagues, I will continue to press for more assistance.

I also know that social distancing is a real worry and a challenge for those taxi drivers continuing to provide a service to the public. That is why I have been engaging with the Minister for Economy. The Department for Economy as the responsible department on this issue has assured me that guidance on social distancing, which will help you and your passengers keep safe, is being prepared as quickly as possible.

With the numbers of taxi journeys greatly reducing, there is also now a real opportunity for taxi drivers to explore how they can play their part in taking the pressure off our vital services by helping the most vulnerable in our communities. To look at, for example, opportunities for delivering food and vital supplies or to get patients to essential appointments. To help progress this, I have raised this with Executive colleagues to examine how taxis can be re-purposed to support the emergency efforts. I am pleased to tell you that my officials are already working together with the Department for Communities and, through them, local government to explore how this can be done. The Department for Communities will lead on this.

I know this is a difficult time for you, but in dealing with the impact of Covid-19 we are facing these challenges together. I want to assure you that I am doing, and will continue to do, everything within my power and remit as Infrastructure Minister to help you through this crisis and I will continue to work with Executive colleagues to do as much as we can together to help you for as long as this crisis lasts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Mallon', written in a cursive style.

**NICHOLA MALLON MLA**  
**Minister for Infrastructure**