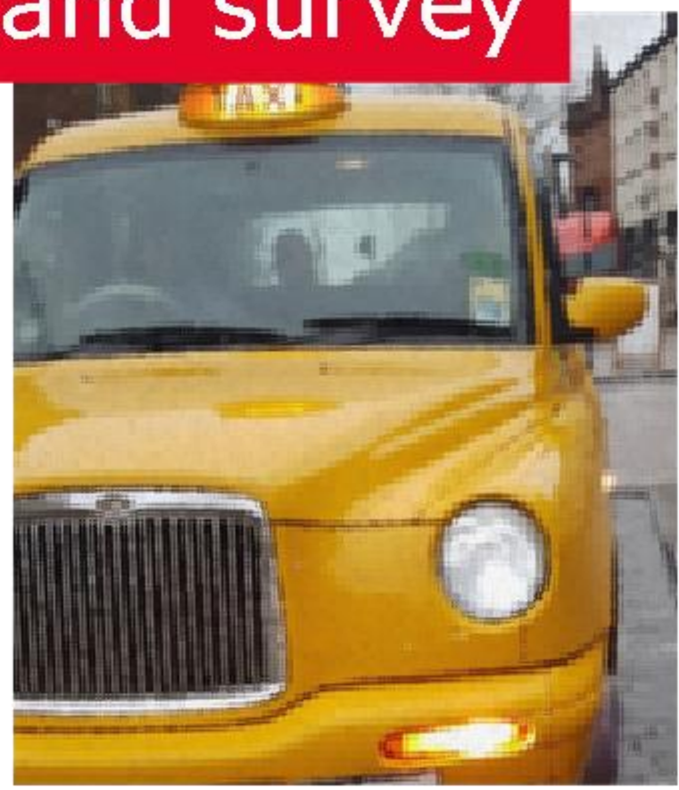
Unmet demand survey



Blackburn with Darwen Council
May 2017

Executive Summary

This Hackney carriage unmet demand survey has been undertaken on behalf of Blackburn with Darwen Council following the guidance of the April 2010 DfT Best Practice Guidance document, and all relevant case history in regard to unmet demand. This Executive Summary provides a potted version of the Report and the evidence base allowing councillors to review the current policy limiting vehicle numbers.

Our 2016 survey began with appointment in mid-November 2016. An inception meeting and visit in late November allowed the on-street interviews and rank observations to occur during late November 2016, with some final pedestrian interviews in mid-January 2017. Trade consultation was during January with key stakeholder consultation throughout December, January and February. The Report was reviewed by the Council and will be presented to committee in June 2017.

Blackburn with Darwen (BwD) is a unitary authority formerly part of Lancashire County. As a unitary, all licensing, highway, transport and planning powers are united within the authority. There has been significant investment in the central area infrastructure just recently completed before our survey was undertaken.

Hackney carriage policy restricts the number of vehicles on issue, but has seen additional plates introduced, although these did take a while to enter the fleet. The fleet must also be fully wheel chair accessible (WAV) although the number of styles of vehicle allowed are wide. Recent private hire vehicle number growth has been low, a symptom and key pointer to the overall lack of pressure of demand for licensed vehicles in the area at the present time.

The current survey found high levels of private car abuse of ranks as well as high levels of private hire activity near ranks, although many ranks are hard to abuse by design. This has recently been enforced by bus and hackney carriage only camera enforced access points. Current demand is higher on Saturdays but night demand remains suppressed. Even with the revisions, there remain a good number of active daytime ranks most of which tend to have similar levels of demand. The top two ranks remain Church Street and the station, although their relative order of importance has swopped round since the last survey. Our estimates suggest growth of demand of around 12% since the last survey.

This was supported by the street interviewees telling us that a higher level had used licensed vehicles in the last three months, although overall quoted levels of usage had reduced in terms of frequency quoted. Estimated monthly usage per person for licensed vehicles is 3.2, but that for hackney carriages is 0.5, about similar to the level who say they use ranks in Blackburn.

A moderate level of people could not remember seeing hackney carriages, but a much higher level could not remember using one. Private hire competition appeared to be at a high level, but this was countered by strong loyalty of people to companies. Rank knowledge focused on the station rank, but also demonstrated people thought booking offices were ranks. There were no real issues with the service provided, but also nothing that would encourage people to make more use of hackney carriages. Latent demand was low at 5.5%. Peoples' ability to differentiate hackney carriage from private hire appears to have worsened whilst expectation of the service appears to have increased, particularly in Darwen.

Key stakeholders focused on private hire use but many also knew accurately about ranks and thought their customers did use them.

Trade response to the consultation was only indicative. The quoted average hours worked seemed low.

Unmet demand was identified, mainly at Church Street, but this was far from being significant, albeit increased from the last survey. This fits the increased patronage of ranks observed.

There seems to be an increased level of awareness of licensed vehicles, an increased expectation of service levels, but also a need for the hackney carriage trade to take more advantage of their present opportunities. There is opportunity for further marketing and information about the service being provided but the onus is on the trade to translate this to more usage of their product.

The possibility exists that the current policy restricting vehicle numbers can be retained, at the present level, and defended if needed. Some watching of how the new arrangements in Railway Road and the Bus Station develop is worthwhile together with building on the present best example of rank markings with further education of the public.

Contents

1 General introduction and background

Blackburn with Darwen Council is responsible for the licensing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles operating within the Council area and is the licensing authority for this complete area. It retains a limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicles licensed. There is no legal means by which either private hire vehicle numbers, private hire or hackney carriage driver numbers, or the number of private hire operators can be limited. DfT sources suggest this limit has been in place since at least 1994. Prior to this survey, previous tests of the validity of the limit and its level were undertaken in 2013 and 2005.

This review of current policy is based on the Best Practice Guidance produced by the Department for Transport in April 2010 (BPG). It seeks to provide information to the licensing authority to meet section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 "that the grant of a hackney carriage vehicle licence may be refused..if, but only if, the licensing authority is satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of hackney carriages within its local area, which is unmet." This terminology is typically shortened to "no SUD".

Current hackney carriage, private hire and operator licensing is undertaken within the legal frameworks set by the Town Polices Clause Act 1847. This has been amended by various following legislation including the Transport Act 1985, Section 16 in regard to hackney carriage vehicle limits, and by the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 with reference to private hire vehicles and operations. Many of the aspects of these laws have been tested and refined by other more recent legislation and more importantly through case law. Beyond legislation, the experience of the person in the street tends to see both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles both as 'taxis' – a term we will try for the sake of clarity to use only in its generic sense within the report. We will use the term 'licensed vehicles' to refer to both hackney carriage and private hire.

The legislation around licensed vehicles and drivers has been the subject of many attempts at review. The limiting of hackney carriage vehicle numbers has been a particular concern as it is often considered to be a restrictive practice and against natural economic trends. The three most recent reviews were by the Office of Fair Trading in 2003, through the production of the BPG in 2010, and the Law Commission review which published its results in 2014. None of these resulted in any material change to the legislation involved in licensing.

The upshot of all these reviews in respect of the principal subject of this survey is that local authorities retain the right to restrict the number of hackney carriage vehicle licenses. The Law Commission conclusion included retention of the power to limit hackney carriage vehicle numbers but utilizing a public interest test determined by the Secretary of State. It also suggested the three- year horizon also be used for rank reviews and accessibility reviews.

After introduction of the 1985 Transport Act, Leeds University Institute for Transport Studies developed a tool by which unmet demand could be evaluated and a determination made if this was significant or not. The tool was taken forward and developed as more studies were undertaken. Over time this 'index of significance of unmet demand' (ISUD) became accepted as an industry standard tool to be used for this purpose. Some revisions have been made following the few but specific court cases where various parties have challenged the policy of retaining a limit. Some of the application has differed between Scottish and English authorities due to some court cases in Scotland taking interpretation of the duty of the licensing authority further than is usual in England and Wales.

The DfT asked in writing in 2004 for all licensing authorities with quantity restrictions to review them, publish their justification by March 2005, and then review at least every three years since then. In due course, this led to a summary of the government guidance which was last updated in England and Wales in 2010 (but more recently in Scotland).

The BPG in 2010 also provided additional suggestions of how these surveys should be undertaken, albeit in general but fairly extensive terms. A key encouragement within the BPG is that "an interval of three years is commonly regarded as the maximum reasonable period between surveys". BPG suggests key points in consideration are passenger waiting times at ranks, for street hailings and telephone bookings, latent and peaked demand, wide consultation and publication of "all the evidence gathered".

The most recent changes in legislation regarding licensed vehicles have been enactment of the parts of the Equality Act related to guidance dogs (sections 168 to 171, enacted in October 2010), and the two clauses of the Deregulation Act which were successful in proceeding, relating to length of period each license covers and to allowing operators to transfer work across borders (enacted in October 2015).

In November 2016, the DfT undertook a consultation regarding enacting Sections 167 and 165 of the Equality Act. These allow for all vehicles capable of carrying a wheel chair to be placed on a list by the local council (section

167). Any driver using a vehicle on this list then has a duty under section 165 to:

- Carry the passenger while in the wheel chair
- Not make any additional charge for doing so
- If the passenger chooses to sit in a passenger seat to carry the wheel chair
- To take such steps as are necessary to ensure that the passenger is carried in safety and reasonable comfort
- To give the passenger such mobility assistance as is reasonably required

This enaction is expected early in 2017. There remains no confirmation of any timetable for instigating either the remainder of the Equality Act or the Law Commission recommendations.

In respect to case law impinging on unmet demand, the two most recent cases were in 1987 and 2002. The first case (R v Great Yarmouth) concluded authorities must consider the view of significant unmet demand as a whole, not condescending to detailed consideration of the position in every limited area, i.e. to consider significance of unmet demand over the area as a whole.

R v Castle Point considered the issue of latent, or preferably termed, suppressed demand consideration. This clarified that this element relates only to the element which is measurable. Measurable suppressed demand includes inappropriately met demand (taken by private hire vehicles in situations legally hackney carriage opportunities) or those forced to use less satisfactory methods to get home (principally walking, i.e. those observed to walk away from rank locations).

In general, the determination of conclusions about significance of unmet demand must take into account the practicability of improving the standard of service through the increase of supply of vehicles. It is also important to have consistent treatment of authorities as well as for the same authority over time.

In conclusion, the present legislation in England and Wales sees public fare-paying passenger carrying vehicles firstly split by passenger capacity. All vehicles able to carry nine or more passengers are dealt with under national public service vehicle licensing. Local licensing authorities only have jurisdiction over vehicles carrying eight or less passengers.

These are split between hackney carriages which are alone able to wait at ranks or pick up people in the streets without a booking, and private hire who can only be used with a booking made through an operator, and who otherwise see passengers not insured for their journey.

2 Local background and context

Key dates for this Hackney carriage unmet demand survey for Blackburn with Darwen Council are:

- appointed CTS Traffic and Transportation on 14th November 2016
- in accordance with our proposal of July 2016
- as confirmed during the inception meeting for the survey held on 21st November 2016
- this survey was carried out between 21st November 2016 and March 2017
- On street pedestrian survey work and the video rank observations occurred in November 2016 (with some street interviews mid January 2017)
- Licensed vehicle driver opinions and operating practices were identified from an all-driver survey using a questionnaire issued after the rank surveys and returned within January 2017
- Key stakeholders were consulted throughout the period of the survey
- A draft of this Final Report was reviewed by the client during March 2017
- and reported to the appropriate Council committee during June 2017.

Blackburn with Darwen Council is a unitary authority formerly part of the County of Lancashire. The authority has a current population of 148,600 using the 2016 estimates currently available from the 2011 census. This is only very marginally greater than the level identified for 2013 for the last survey (148,000).

In terms of background council policy, Blackburn with Darwen Council is a unitary authority with all planning, transport, highway and licensing powers fully within the Council responsibility. The third Local Transport Plan for the area was adopted in 2011, and remains essentially the same as that when the previous survey was undertaken. The only direct mention of 'taxis' remains the consideration of innovative transport schemes such as taxi-share and other demand responsive services, as well as need to improve links to other forms of transport, which hackney carriage and private hire often end up doing by default of there being no other way such links can be met.

The overarching aims of the LTP remain tackling of carbon emission issues in a period of relative austerity. There are accident issues, and need to provide older people with accessible and reliable public transport. The area has a polarized age structure and a high level of ethnic diversity. Effective transport is recognized as supporting a sustainable, social, economic and environmental future. However, as bus operators seek to reduce marginal services, access particularly to those with mobility impairments worsens.

Since the last survey, and only very recently, the road revisions near the new market and Post Office area, together with those in front of Blackburn station have been completed. This is detailed further below in the section regarding rank provision. Further, with final installation of all the proposed new bus lanes related to the Pennine Reach developments, from October 2016, the council has begun enforcing the bus lanes in the borough using active CCTV methods. The bus lanes generally allow hackney carriages access, with the vehicle registrations added to the white list used to avoid issue of Penalty Charge Notices. However, design of the lanes means it is not technically feasible to allow hackney carriages access to some sites where separate signals and detection are in operation. This is principally because detection is done via inductive loops set to detect buses, rather than by the former use of transponders or tags.

For the record, for the Blackburn with Darwen council area bus only lanes, not allowing use by hackney carriages are:

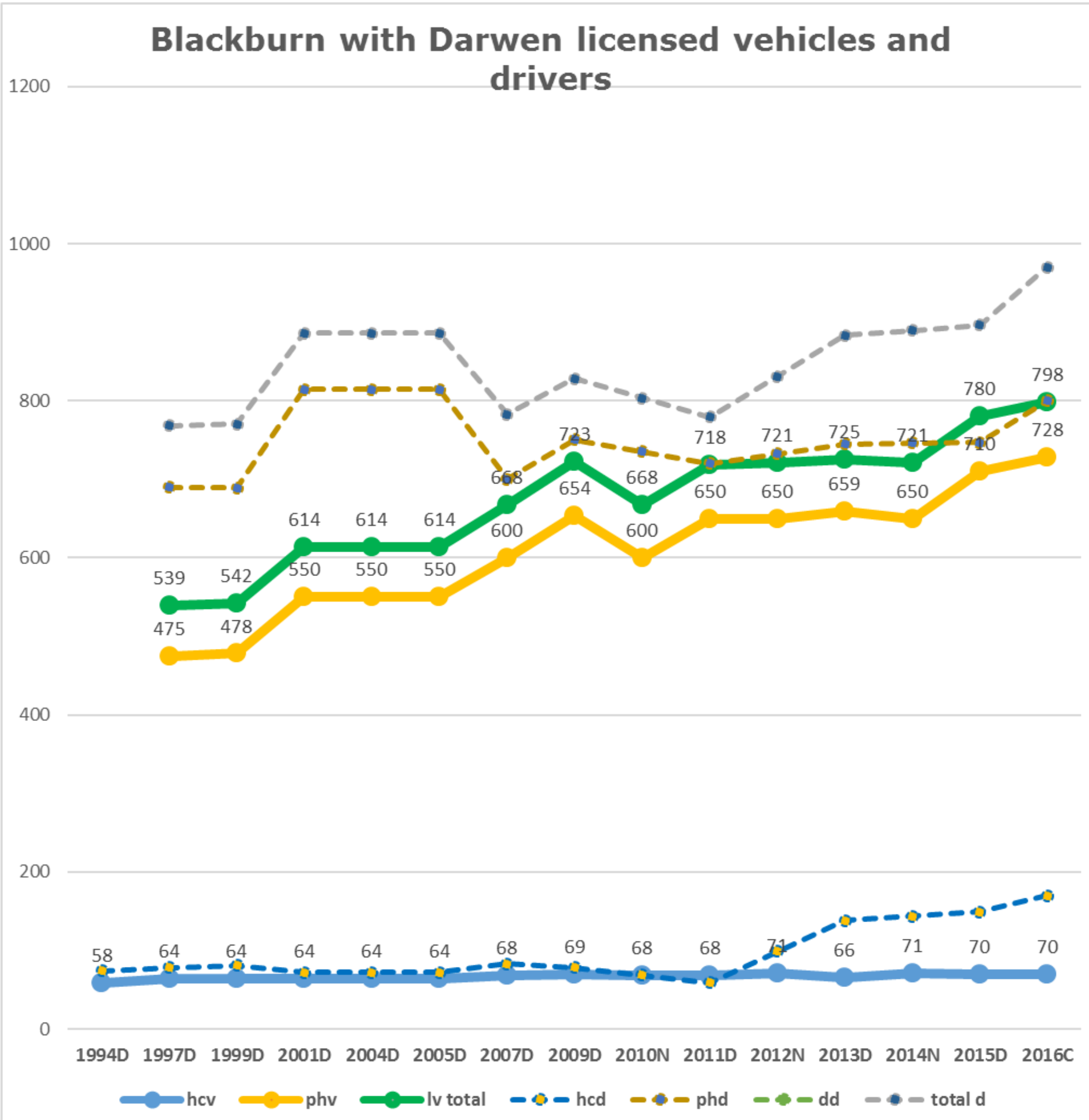
- Green Street Darwen
- Bolton Road Ewood
- Bolton Road Ewood right turn into bus only area
- St Pauls Street Blackburn
- Branch Road, Darwen
- Bolton Road, Darwen
- Copy Nook, Blackburn

Hackney carriage drivers have been provided with maps and explanation of these restrictions, and reminded that they remain with significant other access points not available to private cars or private hire, particularly the route across the front of Blackburn station, very close to the rank there.

All licensing authorities have full powers over licensing the vehicles, drivers and operators serving people within their area. Blackburn with Darwen Council has chosen to utilize its power to limit hackney carriage vehicle numbers, and as far as we are aware has done so since at least 1994. During the period to date, we are aware of one issue of some ten plates after a survey of June 2005 (which did not include any measure of actual rank demand at that time). However, the additional plates took a long time to be taken up, with some returned to the Council after issue.

The Council has long held a mandatory policy, although the types of vehicle allowed has widened over time. When the extra plates were issued, the standard was Metropolitan conditions of fitness. More recently, with trade consultation, the allowed vehicle types have expanded.

By drawing together published statistics from both the Department for Transport (D) and the National Private Hire Association (N), supplemented by private information from the licensing authority records (C), recent trends in vehicle, driver and operator numbers can be observed. The detailed numbers supporting the picture below are provided in Appendix 1. Due to the comparative size, the operator figures are shown in the second picture.

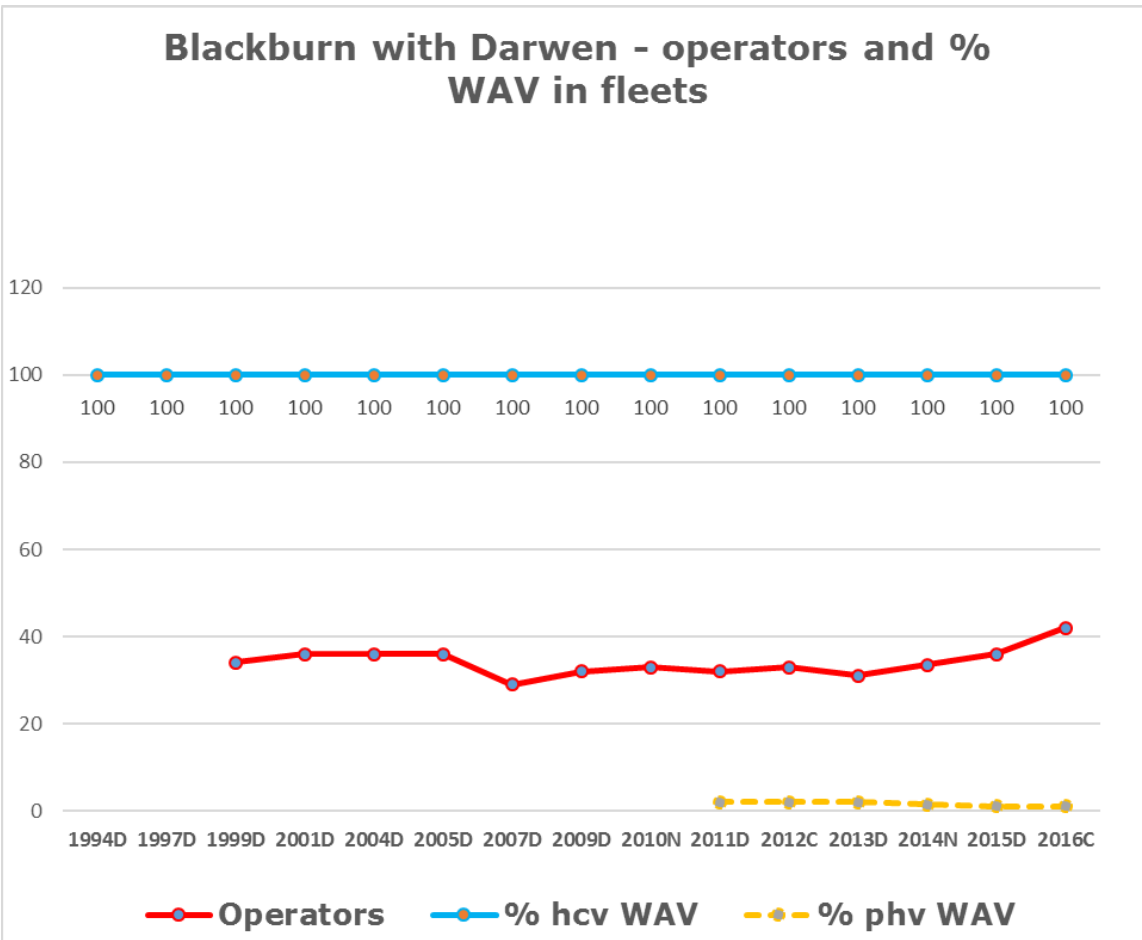


Licensing Statistics from 1994 to date

The hackney carriage vehicle limit has increased 21% from 1994 to date, with the main growth period seeing 11% growth occurring over about six years. Between 1997 and 2016, private hire growth has been 53%, although the current level of vehicles is now only 11% more than in 2009.

Driver growth has generally been a lot less high, although again the current private hire level is about 11% higher than in 2009, and only 16% higher than at the start of present formal records. A major change since the last survey has been a high growth in the number of hackney carriage drivers – some 23% from 2013 to date.

Information is also available from these sources to show how the level of wheel chair accessible vehicles (WAV) has varied. It must be noted that in most cases the values for the private hire side tend to be much more approximate than those on the hackney carriage side, as there is no option to mandate for private hire being wheel chair accessible. In some areas, to strengthen the ability of the public to differentiate between the two parts of the licensed vehicle trade, licensing authorities might not allow any WAV in the private hire fleet at all. Blackburn does have a fully wheel chair accessible hackney fleet, which tends to suppress development on the private hire side, although there is a small wheel chair accessible private hire element as shown below.



Operator numbers and levels of WAV provision in the fleet

The level of wheel chair vehicles on the private hire side has never been high, but has recently also reduced marginally. However, there is often no such complement of vehicles in a fleet which has a fully wheel chair accessible hackney carriage element.

There has been a notable 35% growth in the number of private hire companies in the area since the last survey. This has been a steady growth to the current level, another fact which tends to be against the present national norm of companies tending to merge.

Blackburn with Darwen Council undertakes regular review of its policy to limit hackney carriage vehicle numbers in line with the BPG. The previous surveys were in 2013 and 2005.

We were advised at inception that there are now two hackney carriage radio circuits, but many more hackney carriages are now allied to private hire company circuits than were during the course of the previous survey. There is an impression that the two trades in the area are now much less distinct than they were. Disabled customers are also building relationships with specific drivers via sharing of their telephone numbers. There are out of town vehicles operating as private hire, although they tend to remove their roof signs when working as such to avoid issues.

3 Patent demand measurement (rank surveys)

As already recorded in Chapter 2, control of provision of on-street ranks in Blackburn with Darwen Council is within the authority. However, highway provision in the Borough is undertaken by an agreement with a private company who undertake most of the contract on behalf of the Council. Since the last survey, this contract has delivered major public realm changes on the main axis from near the Station in Blackburn through to the new bus station. The change has been so striking that the town centre has just (December 2016) been identified as the Great British High Street town centre of the year, topping 26 other finalists.

Appendix 2 provides a list of ranks in Blackburn with Darwen Council at the time of this current survey.

Our methodology involves a current review both in advance of submitting our proposal to undertake this Hackney carriage unmet demand survey and at the study inception meeting, together with site visits where considered necessary. This provides a valid and appropriate sample of rank coverage which is important to feed the numeric evaluation of the level of unmet demand, and its significance (see discussion in Chapter 7). The detailed specification of the hours included in the sample is provided in Appendix 3.

During the course of inception, we were made aware of the revised rank arrangements following completion of the new central bus station. The former James Street and Ainsworth Street ranks had been replaced by a purpose-built rank very near to an exit from the Mall shopping centre, and at the northern end of the new bus station. A new rank had been added on Railway Road just before its junction with Church Street, and near to the Market exit. The Church Street spaces remain since the new rank is not directly visible from the market exit, but the section of shops near the new Railway Road rank have also been revitalized. This rank is also directly visible from the railway station, although the rank there remains very active. The former traffic lights at the end of Church Street have now been removed with the road revisions there.

Further, we were advised that night life in Darwen has seen a very strong resurgence, leading to the establishment of an active night rank there.

The club which provided demand for the St Peter Street rank had closed and was now up for sale. We understand this will reopen in May 2017. Northgate rank remains well marked and is understood to be used when there are events on nearby. The policy of having clear signage at ranks, also listing where other ranks are, continues. The rank tour before and after inception found vehicles and hirings at the Station, Railway Road, Bus Station, Church Street and Debenhams ranks, and vehicles at the High Street rank.

Our proposed rank observation sample was modified to take account of the above changes. The final proposed survey structure is shown in Appendix 3. Detailed results of the survey are provided in Appendix 4, with an outline of these provided below. Some 110 hours of rank activity were summarized.

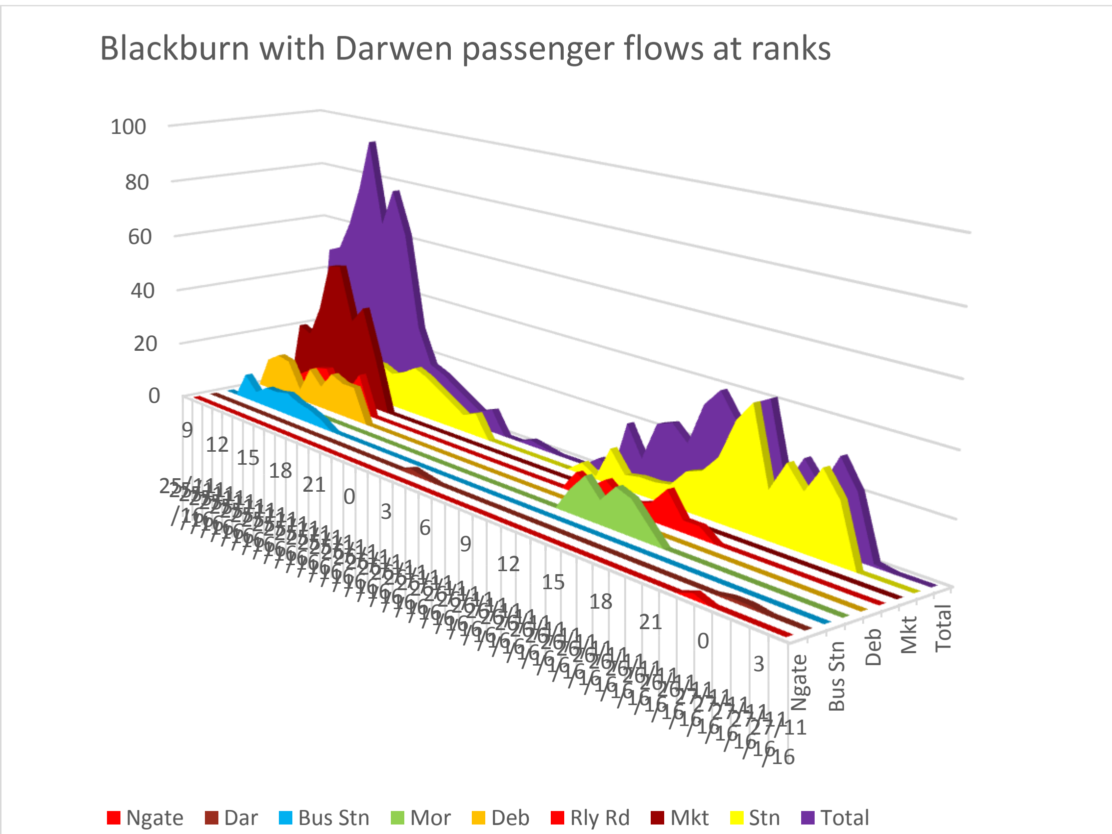
Overall rank activity

During the course of our observations, some 1,864 different vehicle movements were observed at or near ranks in the area. Of these, 2% were goods vehicles and a further 2% were emergency vehicles. 14% were private cars, 24% private hire and the remaining 58% hackney carriages.

The worst abuse of the ranks by private cars was at the Debenham's rank followed by that at Railway Road. In terms of private hire abuse, this was highest at the Darwen rank, followed by Debenham's.

Overall picture of usage

An overview of usage of the ranks as seen by our observations is provided by the graph below.



The graph shows generally more demand on a Saturday, but that Friday demonstrates a mid-day peak in demand around 14:00 which dominates the overall pattern of flow. This is fed almost totally by demand from the market location. However, most of the ranks are active during the daytime, with many showing similar levels of demand in the graph.

Total estimated weekly demand

In order to set the view obtained above in an overall context, daily flows were reviewed and weekly averages estimated from the observed values. These were also compared to values estimated in 2013. It must be noted that the previous surveys were undertaken in mid-April whilst the current ones were at the end of November. However, we believe both periods should provide similar levels of demand. The table below provides estimated weekly demand with the busiest overall rank shown at the top of the table as at 2016 estimates.

Rank	2016		2013	
	Passengers	%	Passengers	%
Market	1403	32	994	25
Station	1183	27	1121	28
Debenham's	667	15	424	11
Morrison's	443	10	865	22
Railway Road	384	9	Not existing	
Bus Station	323	7	Not existing	
Ainsworth St	Replaced by above		472	12
St Peter's St	Club closed		76	1
Darwen	18	0.0	Not existing	
Northgate	10	0.0	Not in use, road works	
TOTAL	4431		3952	
Growth	+12%			

The table above shows that Blackburn continues to be a place where hackney carriage demand is spread between several different ranks. In the present survey, the market rank is dominant, closely followed by the railway station rank, which is on council land. This is a change from the previous survey, although the two do have similar levels of usage overall.

The new Railway Road rank appears to have shared the volume formerly for Morrison's, with these two ranks together now having about the same level of demand as the one rank in the previous survey. This means the Morrison's rank per se is now fourth, with the Debenhams rank seeing some increased share this time. The bus station rank has effectively replaced Ainsworth Street, although appearing to have lost some of its market share. It is understood that this rank is growing in use as people get used to the new arrangements of the bus station.

The St Peter's Street location is no longer used, although there was a small amount of use observed for Northgate, whilst the new rank in Darwen does see some usage, but appears from other information to mainly be a location where people meet booked private hire vehicles.

Details of individual rank operation

This section provides a narrative regarding each separate rank to give a flavor of the individual rank operations in the area. Ranks are listed in descending order of current usage from our 2016 surveys.

Church Street, Market

This location was put in place when the new market hall was opened. It allows two spaces. This section of Church Street is effectively a cul-de-sac and exit and entry are from Railway Road. There is a large amount of other vehicle parking nearby, and on our site visit some of this was being used by private hire waiting to be called to bookings.

The rank was observed on Friday 25th November 2016, from 10:00 through to 18:00. During this period 255 passengers left in 174 vehicles, a moderate occupancy of 1.5 per vehicle. Only three vehicles left empty – 2 % of those arriving.

This rank saw the largest number of passengers having to wait for a vehicle to arrive, some 62, with three waits of 11 minutes being recorded in the 12:00 and 15:00 hours. Apart from the 11:00 and 17:00 hours every hour saw passengers waiting, with two hours having average passenger delays over a minute. The average passenger delay over the whole day of observations was 48 seconds.

Vehicle waits were low, often between one and three minutes, although there were longer waits up to seven minutes at times. Some vehicles did wait up to 15 minutes in the quieter hours. Passenger flows ranged from 19 to 49, the highest flows seen at any rank in the area.

Given the observations at Railway Road, and the limited capacity here, some of the delay to passengers will be waiting for vehicles to feed through to the limited spaces here from Railway Road. This does not, however, account for the longer delays in full.

Blackburn Station rank

This rank remains located just to the right of the main exit from Blackburn station. Although partly shared with a vehicular access route, and a hackney carriage office, the area is effectively a separate space allowing nine hackney carriages to wait. The rank is council land and there is no requirement for any supplementary permit or fee for its use.

Between the last survey and recently, works to the front of the station, and development to the rear, led to establishment of another exit to the station and a rank located in that car park. We understand this location is now no longer used given the return of the frontage of the station. Further, there are tighter restrictions on vehicle access along the front of the station which should reduce options for abuse of the rank itself.

This rank was observed on Friday 25th November 2016 from 09:00 to 01:00 and then again from 07:00 on Saturday 26th November 2016 until 03:00 the following morning.

Friday observations

On the Friday, 166 passengers left the rank in 129 vehicles, a low occupancy of 1.3 persons per vehicle. A further 49, or 28% of those arriving, left this location without passengers.

During the course of our observations, 10 people had to wait for a vehicle to arrive. The longest observed wait, however, was just four minutes, with the average waiting time for passengers overall being eight seconds. Waits were in the 13:00, 14:00 and 15:00 hours with the worst cases being in the first of these hours, when the average passenger wait shared between the relatively low level of five passengers being nearly two minutes.

Passenger flows were not high, ranging from 10 to 21 in most hours, with lower flows from 22:00 onwards and in the three hours from 11:00 onwards, with those two periods seeing flows between three and eight in an hour. The highest flow of 21 was in the 17:00 hour.

Vehicles tended to wait for fares between two and 25 minutes, though vehicles waiting longer when arriving after 22:00. During most of the day the longest observed waits were generally no more than half an hour, but early waits and those after 22:00 could be 40 minutes, or in the last three hours, over an hour. This matches the overall low levels of demand, even though this is the second busiest rank overall.

Saturday observations

On the Saturday, some 274 passengers left the rank using 158 vehicles, a moderate occupancy of 1.7 per vehicle, and high for a station rank. Again a similar number, 47, left without passengers, some 23% of those arriving.

During this day, seven passengers arrived when no vehicle was available for immediate hire. People waited in the 13:00, 18:00 and 19:00 hours, with the longest wait being nine minutes. Just one of these hours saw an average wait time of over a minute shared over all passengers, and the average passenger delay for this location was just seven seconds.

Passenger volumes in each hour were between 11 and 26, though there were odd hours with lower flows, and flows in the midnight hour were just three passengers, after which the area became quiet. Flows were five or below in the hours of 09:00, 08:00 and 07:00. The peak was the 19:00 hour.

Vehicle waits were three to 19 minutes in most hours for fares, but these times extended after the 19:00 hour, with some vehicle waits up to an hour recorded then. Otherwise, maximum waits were rarely more than half an hour.

Summary

This rank is related to rail services and is not used outside rail operating hours, although these tend to be between 07:00 and the midnight hour. Flows are generally steady through the whole period, but not high overall.

Higher Church Street, Debenhams

This rank has space in a lay-by for four vehicles. It is near to the exits from Debenhams and not far from the Church Street rank, although road layouts mean the two ranks are not linked by road. This rank is located on the gyratory road system around the town centre. The rank was observed on Friday 25th November 2016.

During the observations, 101 passengers left the rank in 65 vehicles, a moderate occupancy of 1.6 per vehicle. Nearly a quarter of vehicles left without passengers. Just one person arrived when no vehicle was available, but the average passenger delay was just one second given that they only had to wait a minute.

Passenger flows were low, between four and 14 in any hour, with low points in the 13:00 and 15:00 hours. Vehicle waits were between two and 14 minutes for fares, although one vehicle was observed to wait some 26 minutes.

High Street (Morrison's)

This rank has space for four vehicles and is near to the exit from the supermarket. It is also sited allowing the front vehicle to see both the Railway station and the new Railway Road ranks, so it can act as a feeder location for both these sites. The street has very little other traffic. The main car access to the supermarket is taken from another direction. It is located to be able to feed both the main station and the Railway Road ranks.

The rank was observed only on Saturday 26th November 2016 from 12:00 to 18:00. During this period two passengers arrived and had to wait for a vehicle to arrive, but only for a minute. The average passenger delay for the rank was therefore just three seconds.

Overall passenger flows were low, ranging from six up to a peak of 14. The total number using the rank during our observations was 62, leaving in 39 vehicles, a moderate occupancy of 1.6 per vehicle. About a quarter, 12 vehicles, left empty. Vehicles tended to wait for customers between two and eleven minutes.

Railway Road, Blackburn

This rank has been introduced very recently. It is on the Market side of Railway Road facing the Market and away from the railway station. The rank is visible from both High Street and the Railway station ranks, although we were advised that vehicles waiting here cannot be directly seen from the exit to the Market, although the shops adjacent to the rank are now quite active.

This rank was observed on Friday 25th November from 10:00 until 21:00, and again on the Saturday from 10:00 but ending earlier at 20:00.

Friday observations

During the Friday 70 passengers left the rank in 51 vehicles, a low occupancy of 1.4 per vehicle. A high number of 104 vehicles left the rank without passengers, some two thirds of those arriving. During the course of observations two passengers arrived when no vehicle was available, but they only had to wait a minute. The average passenger delay was just two seconds over the whole day.

Flows varied more widely, between 11 and 30, with lower flows in the 15:00 and 18:00 hours (after which the rank was not used by vehicles or passengers). The peak was 30 at 14:00.

Typical vehicle waits were low, one to three minutes, with the longest waits being no more than 13 minutes.

Saturday observations

The Saturday passenger flows totaled 53 leaving in 38 vehicles, a low occupancy of 1.4 per vehicle. An even higher volume left empty, some 119 vehicles, or over three quarters of those arriving. No passenger ever arrived to find no vehicle available for hire on this day. Vehicle waits tended to be longer than the Friday, but still low, some four to 14 minutes, with longest waits observed of no more than 22 minutes.

Passenger flows were between 18 and 24, apart from the 17:00 hour with 12, and the 18:00 hour with one person, after which again the rank saw no passengers nor vehicles.

Summary

This rank is moderately used when active, but also appears to be feeding the Market rank with vehicles, demonstrated by the high empty vehicle departures. It is only used in shopping hours.

Bus Station

After the last survey, the bus station and area around it was closed and demolished. As part of the new bus station, a purpose-built rank was put in place to the north of the bus stands, and adjacent to a present access from the Mall shopping centre. It is understood that even since our surveys, use of this location is increasing as people get used to the new bus station layout and location.

The rank was observed only on Friday 25th November 2016. During this day, 49 people left the rank in 38 vehicles, a low occupancy of just 1.3 per vehicle. Just five vehicles, 12% of those arriving, left empty.

Four passengers arrived when there were no vehicles available for immediate hire, with the longest wait some seven minutes. Over the whole observation set, the average passenger delay was just under half a minute.

Vehicles tended to wait between three and 19 minutes for fares, with some vehicles observed to wait up to 27 minutes before leaving. Overall flow levels were low, with between one and nine passengers in each hour, but more generally around six or seven people.

Darwen Market Street

There have been ranks in Darwen in the past, which saw very little use. With resurgence in night lift there, we were advised that a small rank had been established, and was used in Market Street. This was observed on both Friday and Saturday nights, from 22:00 to 05:00 in both cases.

The early hours of Saturday morning saw three people leave in three hackney carriages (03:00 and 04:00 hours). The early hours of Sunday saw two people leave in two vehicles, in the midnight and 01:00 hours. In all cases, vehicles had waited for passengers and it is not clear therefore if they were bookings or not.

Our observations noted more private hire vehicles servicing this area.

Northgate night rank

This location is well-marked and clearly signed as a night only rank. It is near several night venues, but we were advised it was mainly used to service events at nearby locations. A check was made for events and it was identified that the rank should be active during our proposed survey.

This rank was observed on the Saturday night from 21:00 through to 03:00. In that period, it was serviced by several vehicles but only saw two passengers leaving in one vehicle. All other vehicles waited and left empty.

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4 General public views

It is very important that the views of people within the area are obtained about the service provided by hackney carriage and private hire. A key element which these surveys seek to discover is specifically if people have given up waiting for hackney carriages at ranks (the most readily available measure of latent demand). However, the opportunity is also taken with these surveys to identify the overall usage and views of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles within the study area, and to give chance for people to identify current issues and factors which may encourage them to use licensed vehicles more.

Such surveys can also be key in identifying variation of demand for licensed vehicles across an area, particularly if there are significant areas of potential demand without ranks, albeit in the context that many areas do not have places apart from their central area with sufficient demand to justify hackney carriages waiting at ranks.

These surveys tend to be undertaken during the daytime period when more people are available, and when survey staff safety can be guaranteed. Further, interviews with groups of people or with those affected by alcohol consumption may not necessarily provide accurate responses, despite the potential value in speaking with people more likely to use hackney carriages at times of higher demand and then more likely unmet demand. Where possible, extension of interviews to the early evening may capture some of this group, as well as some studies where careful choice of night samples can be undertaken.

Our basic methodology requires a sample size of at least 200 to ensure stable responses. Trained and experienced interviewers are also important as this ensures respondents are guided through the questions carefully and consistently. A minimum sample of 50 interviews is generally possible by a trained interviewer in a day meaning that sample sizes are best incremented by 50, usually if there is targeting of a specific area or group (eg of students, or a sub-centre), although conclusions from these separate samples can only be indicative taken alone.

It is normal practice to compare the resulting gender and age structure to the latest available local and national census proportions to identify if the sample has become biased in any way.

More recently, general public views have been enlisted from the use of council citizens' panels although the issue with these is that return numbers cannot be guaranteed. The other issue is that the structure of the sample responding cannot be guaranteed either, and it is also true that those on the panel have chosen to be there such that they may tend to be people willing to have stronger opinions than the general public randomly approached.

Finally, some recent surveys have placed an electronic copy of the questionnaire on their web site to allow interested persons to respond, although again there needs to be an element of care with such results as people choosing to take part may have a vested interest.

For this survey, 99 people responded from within Blackburn and 100 from within Darwen. Of these, 68% said they had used a licensed vehicle in the last three months, higher than both the previous two survey levels. A higher level, 75% said this in Blackburn and a lower 61% in Darwen. Appendix 5 provides detailed results for each question.

People told us how often they used a licensed vehicle. The highest proportion, 38% said less than once a month followed by 36% saying a few times a month. However, 9% said almost daily and 10% once a week. Using these responses to estimate average monthly trips by licensed vehicle suggests 3.5 per person for Blackburn, 2.9 for Darwen and 3.2 for the authority average. These values are lower than in the last survey, where values were higher, 4.9 on average. Comparing this to those giving frequencies for use of purely hackney carriages, the values fall to 0.5, 0.4 and 0.5 respectively. This is around a 14% proportion and very similar to the proportion saying they used a rank in the Blackburn sample. However, those in Darwen said much higher proportions for use of ranks, 36%, possibly linked to use from the station in Blackburn.

Across the whole area, 40% said they telephoned a company, 21% used mobile or smart phone and 5% used freephones. 10% said they hailed – quite high and also consistent between both locations (12% Blackburn, 9% Darwen). 13% said ranks in Blackburn (similar to last time), but 36% in Darwen (much higher).

When asked about hackney carriage usage, 10% of the response overall was that people could not remember seeing a hackney carriage. This was highest in Darwen (14%) and lowest in Blackburn (5%). Over the area a further 58% said they could not remember when they last used a hackney carriage, with this being the case for two thirds of those responding in Blackburn.

Those phoning told us the companies they used. There were 24 different companies named. 13 companies obtained 2% or more mentions. The top company gained 22% and was mentioned in both locations. The next highest obtained 13%, but was only mentioned in Blackburn. The next three companies, with 9%, 7% and 7% were principally in Darwen. This suggests a high level of competition in the area, with perhaps more dominant companies in Darwen than in Blackburn. However, overall the total number of mentions was not much more than one per person, suggesting people may tend to have their own specific company they tend to use.

People told us about ranks they were aware of. 16 different names were given, some of which were colloquial rather than naming a specific location. In Darwen, 65% of respondents said they were aware of the station rank in Darwen. Across the area, this averaged 35%. The same level responded regarding the station in Blackburn from that sample, but this averaged out at just 30%. The next largest mention across the area was Morrison’s Blackburn, obtaining 7% of mentions. The overall impression however, is that many are naming private hire offices rather than ranks particularly in Darwen.

There were just 11 responses suggesting new rank locations, very low. The largest level of response was for a rank in Blackburn bus station, which already exists. Many others asked for them at supermarkets or at other locations where there were already ranks.

There was a similar low response about issues people had with the hackney carriage service, with the largest (but not significant) proportion saying the main issue was delay getting a vehicle. This was a more serious issue in Darwen than Blackburn. The second largest issue was rank provision, again more important in Darwen than Blackburn.

When asked the matters that might make people use hackney carriages more, as is usual there were more responses, though again not really high numbers. The top two answers, both with 31% of responses, were more hackney carriages to phone for or more available at ranks. Again, in both cases the higher values were in Darwen. The next highest response, equal in both areas, was better vehicles (15%), and then better located ranks (12%, but a higher 19% for the Blackburn sample).

People were asked about need for wheel chair accessible vehicles and use of vehicles at ranks. A relatively high level said either they or others they were aware of needed WAV (14%). Most was for people they knew needed WAV, with an equal split between needing a full WAV and a vehicle adapted in some other way.

When asked about choice of vehicles from ranks, 89% said they would take the first vehicle, 9% a saloon and just 2% a WAV.

The latent demand test found that 9% said they had given up waiting for a vehicle, with a higher proportion in Blackburn (11%). However, when reviewed, of the 18 responses overall, two said from home and five said from locations where there were no ranks, suggesting the real level of giving up for hackney carriages at ranks is in fact 5.5%.

This is relatively low, but the responses do suggest strong confusion what is a hackney carriage and that many feel ‘taxis’ are private hire vehicles despite our having explained the difference. The level is also higher than three years ago.

In general, comparing the results now from last time, there seems to be much higher expectations of the licensed vehicle service now than three years ago, and much more so in Darwen than in Blackburn. It seems there are more active licensed vehicles in Darwen now, but that this has raised expectation levels more than they have been able to respond.

The sample said that 73% of them had regular access to a car, and 94% lived in the area. Less men answered than in the current local population (42% compared to 50% in the latest census estimates). In terms of age structure of our sample, the lowest age group saw exactly the correct proportion compared to the census. However, the middle group was over represented (53% compared to 43%) with the older group correspondingly under-represented.

5 Key stakeholder consultation

The following key stakeholders were contacted in line with the recommendations of the BPG:

- Supermarkets
- Hotels
- Pubwatch / individual pubs / night clubs
- Other entertainment venues
- Restaurants
- Hospitals
- Police
- Disability representatives
- Rail operators
- Other council contacts within all relevant local councils

Comments received have been aggregated below to provide an overall appreciation of the situation at the time of this survey. In some cases there are very specific comments from one stakeholder but we have tried to maintain their confidentiality as far as is possible. The comments provided in the remainder of this Chapter are the views of those consulted, and not that of the authors of this report.

Our information was obtained by telephone, email, letter or face to face meeting as appropriate. The list contacted includes those suggested by the Council, those drawn from previous similar surveys, and from general internet trawls for information. Our target stakeholders are as far as possible drawn from across the entire licensing area to ensure the review covers the full area and not just specific parts or areas.

For the sake of clarity, we cover key stakeholders from the public side separately to those from the licensed vehicle trade element, whose views are summarized separately in the following Chapter.

Where the statistical analyses in Chapter 2 demonstrate low levels of wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) provision, an increased emphasis will be given to the issue in terms of the focus of stakeholders but also in specific efforts to contact disabled users and their representatives.

Appendix 6 provides a list of those consulted and confirmation of response, or otherwise.

Supermarkets

Five supermarkets were contacted. Four said their customers did use licensed vehicles. All four said that they had free phones which their customers made use of. Three, including one in Darwen, were aware of nearby ranks that customers could use. Two said they had not received any complaints about the service provided. However, two said that other customers complained about the congestion caused by licensed vehicles picking up their customers in the store car parks.

Hotels

Five hotels were contacted. Three said their customers used licensed vehicles whilst another said they did 'sometimes'. One said customers would usually use their own phones, two said there was a mix of people contacting themselves whilst others asked reception to phone for them, whilst the fourth said that reception usually made phone calls for customers. Two were not aware of ranks, another knew of ranks on Darwen Street, whilst another said they always phone one particular company for their customers. None had received complaints about the service, and one took time to confirm that the vehicles they phoned for usually provided a good service.

Public houses

Six pubs were contacted. Four said their customers did use licensed vehicles. One said they had a free phone, and also found their customers used the rank across the road from them. Two said customers phone for vehicles themselves, whilst the other would phone, but also said customers often phoned. Just one was aware of the Darwen Street rank, and none had received any complaints about the service provided.

Night clubs

Attempts to contact three night venues received no response. It was found that one had closed, another did not have a traceable contact number, and the third did not answer any emails or calls during the time available for this study.

Other entertainment venues

Though other entertainment venues were contacted, none provided any response during the course of the survey.

Restaurants

Of the five restaurants contacted, four said their customers did use licensed vehicles. One said customers obtained vehicles for themselves whilst the three others would phone if asked, but said customers often made a call. Three were not aware of any ranks, whilst one said there was one nearby. None had ever had any complaints about the service.

Other consultees

The former disability organization active in the area was no longer active, although the person who had mainly been involved provided us several other suggestions and contacts including:

- Older Peoples' Forum
- CVS
- Shopmobility

No issues were raised about the service provided by any of the above organisations, by the local Police or by the local hospital.

Rail and other transport operators

The Northern Rail representative was not aware of any issues at any of the stations in the area.

Other Council contacts

A representative from the transport services section of the Council said there were enough vehicles available to service contracts they required.

The input from the local transport plan officer is included in Chapter 2.

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6 Trade stakeholder views

The BPG encourages all studies to include 'all those involved in the trade'. There are a number of different ways felt to be valid in meeting this requirement, partly dependent on what the licensing authority feel is reasonable and possible given the specifics of those involved in the trade in their area.

The most direct and least costly route is to obtain comment from trade representatives. This can be undertaken by email, phone call or face to face meeting by the consultant undertaking the study. In some cases, to ensure validity of the work being undertaken, it may be best for the consultation to occur after the main work has been undertaken. This avoids anyone being able to claim that the survey work was influenced by any change in behavior.

Most current studies tend to issue a letter and questionnaire to all hackney carriage and private hire owners, drivers and operators. This is best issued by the council on behalf of the independent consultant. Usual return is now using an on-line form of the questionnaire, with the option of postal return still being provided, albeit in some cases without use of a freepost return. Returns can be encouraged by email or direct contact via representatives. Some authorities cover private hire by issuing the letter and questionnaire to operators seeking they pass them on when drivers book on or off, or via vehicle data head communications.

In all cases, we believe it is essential we document the method used clearly and measure response levels. The Council issues paper copies of the questionnaires at the end of December to all registered hackney carriage drivers and private hire operators. The response date was the end of January, with the council also offering to gather responses and return them to us directly. The Council also advertised the existence of the survey to all those attending the Trade Forum.

During the time available, there were seven responses, marginally less than the nine that responded to the previous survey. The results are therefore only indicative. All those that responded said they were hackney carriage drivers, and all were owner-drivers, with none of the vehicles ever driven by anyone else.

The working week was generally five days, though there was a response each for working six and seven days. The average hours worked were 40, with a maximum quoted of 45, which seems very low. It was also reduced from the previous survey where most worked six days with an average of 47 hours, closer to the more usual level of around 50 hours.

None of those responding operated on any kind of radio circuit or telephone booking system. Most said they service all ranks. The only named rank was Ainsworth Street, presumably the new bus station. The only issue named, by two people, was that of private cars abusing ranks.

One respondent focused on school contracts with the rest mainly servicing ranks. Only the person servicing schools said they felt the limit policy did not remain correct, the remaining 86% felt it remained appropriate. Most made comment that there were too many vehicles and little work at the ranks at the present time.

7 Evaluation of unmet demand and its significance

It is first important to define our specific view about what constitutes unmet demand. Our definition is when a person turns up at a hackney carriage rank and finds there is no vehicle there available for immediate hire. This normally leads to a queue of people building up, some of who may walk off (taken to be latent demand), whilst others will wait till a vehicle collects them. Later passengers may well arrive when there are vehicles there, but because of the queue will not obtain a vehicle immediately.

There are other instances where queues of passengers can be observed at hackney carriage ranks. This can occur when the level of demand is such that it takes longer for vehicles to move up to waiting passengers than passengers can board and move away. This often occurs at railway stations, but can also occur at other ranks where high levels of passenger arrivals occur. We do not consider this is unmet demand, but geometric delay and although we note this, it is not counted towards unmet demand being significant.

The industry standard index of the significance of unmet demand (ISUD) was initiated at the time of the introduction of section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act as a numeric and consistent way of evaluating unmet demand and its significance. The ISUD methodology was initially developed by a university and then adopted by one of the leading consultant groups undertaking the surveys made necessary to enable authorities to retain their limit on hackney carriage vehicle numbers. The index has been developed and deepened over time to take into account various court challenges. It has now become accepted as the industry standard test of if identified unmet demand is significant.

The index is a statistical guide derived to evaluate if observed unmet demand is in fact significant. However, its basis is that early tests using first principles identified based on a moderate sample suggested that the level of index of 80 was the cut-off above which the index was in fact significant, and that unmet demand therefore was such that action was needed in terms of additional issue of plates to reduce the demand below this level, or a complete change of policy if it was felt appropriate. This level has been accepted as part of the industry standard. However, the index is not a strict determinant and care is needed in providing the input samples as well as interpreting the result provided. However, the index has various components which can also be used to understand what is happening in the rank-based and overall licensed vehicle market.

ISUD draws from several different parts of the study data. Each separate component of the index is designed to capture a part of the operation of the demand for hackney carriages and reflect this numerically. Whilst the principal inputs are from the rank surveys, the measure of latent demand comes from the public on-street surveys, and any final decision about if identified unmet demand is significant, or in fact about the value of continuing the current policy of restricting vehicle numbers, must be taken fully in the context of a careful balance of all the evidence gathered during the survey process.

The present ISUD calculation has two components which both could be zero. In the case that either are zero, the overall index result is zero, which means they clearly demonstrate there is no unmet demand which is significant, even if other values are high.

The first component which can be zero is the proportion of daytime hours where people are observed to have to wait for a hackney carriage to arrive. The level of wait used is ANY average wait at all within any hour. The industry definition of these hours varies, the main index user counts from 10:00 to 18:00 (i.e. eight hours ending at 17:59). The present index is clear that unmet demand cannot be significant if there are no such hours. The only rider on this component is that the sample of hours collected must include a fair element of such hours, and that if the value is non-zero, review of the potential effect of a wider sample needs to be considered.

The other component which could be zero is the test identifying the proportion of passengers which are travelling in any hour when the average passenger wait in that hour is greater than one minute.

If both of these components are non-zero, then the remaining components of the index come into play. These are the peakiness factor, the seasonality factor, average passenger delay, and the latent demand factor.

Average passenger delay is the total amount of time waited by all passengers in the sample, divided by the total number of passengers observed who entered hackney carriages.

The seasonality factor allows for the undertaking of rank survey work in periods which are not typical, although guidance is that such periods should normally be avoided if possible particularly as the impact of seasons may not just be on the level of passenger demand, but may also impact on the level of supply. This is particularly true in regard to if surveys are undertaken when schools are active or not.

Periods when schools are not active can lead to more hackney carriage vehicles being available whilst they are not required for school contract work. Such periods can also reduce hackney carriage demand with people away on holiday from the area. Generally, use of hackney carriages is higher in December in the run-up to Christmas, but much lower in January, February and the parts of July and August when more people are likely to be on holiday. The factor tends to range from 0.8 for December to 1.2 for January / February.

There can be special cases where summer demand needs to be covered, although high peaks for tourist traffic use of hackney carriages tend not to be so dominant at the current time, apart from in a few key tourist authorities.

The peakiness factor is generally either 1 (level demand generally) or 0.5 (demand has a high peak at one point during the week). This is used to allow for the difficulty of any transport system being able to meet high levels of peaking. It is rarely possible or practicable for example for any public transport system, or any road capacity, to be provided to cover a few hours a week.

The latent demand factor was added following a court case. It comes from asking people in the on-street questionnaires if they have ever given up waiting for a hackney carriage at a rank in any part of the area. This factor generally only affects the level of the index as it only ranges from 1.0 (no-one has given up) to 2.0 (everyone says they have). It is also important to check that people are quoting legitimate hackney carriage rank waits as some, despite careful questioning, quote giving up waiting at home, which must be for a private hire vehicle (even if in hackney carriage guise as there are few private homes with taxi ranks outside).

The ISUD index is the result of multiplying each of the components together and benchmarking this against the cut-off value of 80. Changes in the individual components of the index can also be illustrative. For example, the growth of daytime hour queueing can be an earlier sign of unmet demand developing than might be apparent from the proportion of people experiencing a queue particularly as the former element is based on any wait and not just that averaging over a minute. The change to a peaky demand profile can tend towards reducing the potential for unmet demand to be significant.

Finally, any ISUD value must be interpreted in the light of the sample used to feed it, as well as completely in the context of all other information gathered. Generally, the guide of the index will tend not to be overturned in regard to significant unmet demand being identified, but this cannot be assumed to be the case – the index is a guide and a part of the evidence.

The table below shows the estimated values for each component of the index of significance of unmet demand for both this current survey and that from 2013.

ISUD component	2016 value	2013 value
Average passenger delay (APD)(minutes)	0.283	0.01
% of off peak hours with any queue	33.33	6.9
% of passengers in hours with APD over a minute	7.62	0
Seasonality factor	1	1
Peak factor	0.5	1
Latent demand factor	1.055	1.01
ISUD value	37.96	0

The table demonstrates that the current value of the estimate of significance of unmet demand in the Blackburn with Darwen licensing area is less than the cut-off value of 80 typically used to identify the unmet demand observed is significant. The main element in the current calculation is the level of off peak hours with any queue. This can often arise when hackney carriages are tending to service lower level demand by working on private hire circuits, although we do not believe this is the case in Blackburn with Darwen at this time. The main area where there is unmet demand is the Markets rank.

We believe there are several potential reasons why this high level has been observed. The first is that the rank was very busy for some reason on this Friday. The market does not have a specific day, being open Monday to Saturday. The issue may also arise as the new arrangement encourages vehicles to wait in Railway Road to feed into the two spaces, which occurs via the revised junction arrangement. This means fast successive passenger arrivals can quickly take the two available vehicles who may not immediately be able to feed round from the other rank. The other possible explanation may be less vehicles being available during the post lunch period on the Friday due to personal commitments from a high proportion of trade members during that time.

Comparison of the values for 2016 to those observed in 2013 show that most of the components have tended towards unmet demand becoming significant, apart from the peak value which has switched to their being a sharp peak observed (albeit at a very unusual time on the Friday). Of particular note is the fact there are now observed queues with the average passenger delay over a minute in some hours. This value was zero in 2013, which set the whole index to zero, a very rare occurrence.

However, overall, we do not believe that there is any evidence of unmet demand in the area being significant at this time, although the issues above do need to be considered by the council and trade to try to avoid potential for unmet demand to become significant by the time of the next survey.

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8 Summary, synthesis and study conclusions

This Hackney carriage unmet demand survey on behalf of Blackburn with Darwen Council has been undertaken following the guidance of the BPG and other recent case history regarding unmet demand and its significance. This Chapter first draws together a summary from each of the above chapters, then provides a brief synthesis of how the information ties together, followed by study conclusions. Specific recommendations follow in Chapter 9 as guidance to the committee based on our national understanding and experience of the options available.

Study timetable

Our study for Blackburn with Darwen (BwD) is the latest in a regular series of tests of the level of unmet demand and its significance. The study occurred between November 2016 and March 2017. Most on-street work was during December 2016, with driver consultation during January 2017 and key stakeholder consultation through the period up to the conclusion of this Report.

Background

BwD is a unitary authority formerly part of Lancashire with a slowly growing population currently at 148,600. The authority controls transport, planning and highways and the latest LTP has some reference to licensed vehicles, but mainly in terms of their being links to other transport or more demand responsive than other available transport. Mention is made of continually reducing bus services given the reduction of subsidy.

Recent redevelopment has provided a completely new layout including a rank in the area of the Post Office and bus station. Hackney carriages benefit from some, but not all, the bus priorities in the area which are now actively enforced, including across the front of Blackburn station. Those locations not available to hackney carriages are due to technical and not policy reasons. There is also a new rank on Railway Street providing nearby much needed feeder space to Church Street.

Hackney policy saw ten plates issued around 2005 which took a long time to enter the active fleet. The fleet also must be fully wheel chair accessible although the range of vehicles allowed has widened over time.

The vehicle fleet has increased 21% on the hackney carriage side since statistics were first collected formally by DfT in 1994. Since 1997 private hire growth has been 53%, though the level has only risen 11% since 2009, a significant slowing of the market and a key pointer to the lack of pressure from demand for licensed vehicles overall.

Driver growth has also been around 11% since 2009, though there appears to have been a recent growth in those on the hackney carriage side. The most marked growth in the industry has been in the number of private hire operators registered, which has seen over a third more than at the time of the last survey.

This survey follows previous ones in 2013 and 2005 providing the DfT encouraged regular review of the impact of the limited number of hackney carriages.

Rank activity

Current rank activity has to be set in the light of significant change since the last survey, some of which is still 'settling in'. New ranks exist on Railway Road and at the bus station, with significant investment in the local infrastructure providing better pedestrian linkage and stronger enforcement of public transport priority, including for hackney carriages. The changes to the town centre resulted in the centre being named Great British High Street town centre of the year 2016. Night life has seen resurgence in Darwen resulting in some use of hackney carriage services there. This was counter to the closure of the main central club in Blackburn, although this will reopen post the completion of this report.

A similar level of rank observations were undertaken to the previous survey, modified for the changes made. Activity at or near ranks was 58% for hackney carriage vehicles, 14% private cars and 24% private hire. Worst abuse by cars was at the Debenham's location followed by the new Railway Road, by private hire was at the Darwen rank and then at Debenham's rank. Many ranks, however, were not abused because of high levels of self-enforcement from design.

Demand is higher on Saturdays than Friday, but sees little night demand with the peak being mid-day Friday mainly at Church Street, arising from the market. In a similar manner to the previous survey, there are a good number of active daytime ranks many of which have similar levels of demand.

In the current survey, the Market rank (Church Street) took nearly a third of estimated passengers, closely followed by the station rank; a reverse to that observed in 2013 although not to any significant degree. Four other ranks are used, with almost similar usage between them. The overall estimated weekly demand appears to have increased by around 12%.

In this survey, the Church Street rank saw people having to wait for vehicles to arrive in most hours. Whilst some of this arose from waiting for vehicles to feed round from Railway Road to the small capacity rank here, some arose from the peaky nature of demand which is difficult to service effectively.

Public views

199 people were interviewed in the streets of the area, shared almost equally between the two main centres. A higher level said they had used licensed vehicles in the last three months (68%) than in 2013. However, overall usage was lower at 3.2 trips per person per month, higher in Blackburn. The hackney carriage level is 0.5 trips, or 14% (similar to the 13% saying they used ranks in Blackburn).

In Darwen 14% said they could not remember seeing a hackney carriage while the level was lower in Blackburn (5%). The level who could not remember their last use of a hackney carriage was much higher (58%) across the area and even higher in Blackburn (two thirds).

There was evidence of a high level of private hire competition, though responses also suggested people had their own company they used, rather than switching between companies.

People mainly only knew the station rank – but quite a few said there was a rank at Darwen station. Many appeared to be naming private hire offices as ranks. There was little interest in new rank locations.

There were no real issues with the service, but nor were there any matters that would significantly increase hackney carriage usage, with a focus on them being more obvious.

The corrected hackney carriage latent demand level was low at 5.5%. Some of the stated latent demand was for private hire (which was removed from our estimate).

Overall the differentiation in the area between hackney carriage and private hire has worsened since the last survey. Expectation of the service seems to have increased, mainly in Darwen.

Key stakeholder views

The overall key stakeholder view of the service was neutral, with very few issues raised. Whilst many used private hire for their customers, there was also good usage of ranks known about.

Trade views

An indicative trade response was received, similar to the previous survey. Average hours worked seemed low, closer to a usual working week than the typical 50 hours.

The test of unmet demand significance

There is unmet demand, but its level is not significant on the cut-off level test applied as industry standard. However, the indices have increased from the previous survey with the focus being on the Church Street (Market) rank. However, the conclusion remains that there is no significant unmet demand.

Synthesis

There seems to be an increased level of awareness of licensed vehicles across the area, although the main increased usage appears to be from private hire activity. Despite some very obvious new ranks, and currently well-signed long standing ranks, and a fully WAV hackney carriage fleet, people seemed to have grown in their confusion about the differentiation between the two forms of licensed vehicle. Where usage of vehicles has increased most, expectation from them appears to have increased more. The overall background with increased highway enforcement and the new infrastructure is much better for hackney carriages, but this needs action from the trade to take more advantage of their opportunities.

Whilst hackney carriage usage at ranks has bucked the national average with a 12% increase we believe the overall level of usage of vehicles has probably increased even more on the private hire side (evidenced by the growth in operator numbers, suggesting people feel able to compete, although this appears to be mainly new companies taking existing drivers). People in the area, however, are generally not that bothered about licensed vehicles but are content with what they receive.

Conclusions

The overall evidence is of marginally increased usage of licensed vehicles albeit perhaps less frequently. There is no evidence that the limited number of hackney carriage vehicles is having any negative impact on public interest. Nor is the observed unmet demand anywhere near the level it could be construed to be significant, meaning the option of retaining the limit, and at its current level, is a valid one.

There does appear to be some need to consider how people could be better aware of the difference between hackney carriage and private hire. There appear to be opportunities for the hackney carriage trade to take even more of the demand than at present, though the need to be active, particularly at night, in Darwen remains.

Although there is need to see better service at Church Street, there do not seem to be any easy ways to achieve this as the feeder system is better than it was in 2013 with Railway Road, and with removal of the traffic lights at the revised junction. The complex need of roadspace users near the Market needs review, but the principal conclusion of that would probably be removal of all vehicular traffic from that section of road, which would not be preferable for the hackney carriage trade. However, settling down of the redevelopments around the Bus Station may mean that people could be transferring to using the new bus station rank, which may relieve this pressure. Also, people may get used to not having to wait at Church Street if they walk a short distance to Railway Road.

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9 Recommendations

On the basis of the evidence gathered in this Hackney carriage unmet demand survey for Blackburn with Darwen Council, our key conclusion is that there is no evidence of any unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages either patent or latent which is significant at this point in time in the Blackburn with Darwen Council licensing area. The committee is therefore able to retain the current limit policy, with the number of vehicles at the same level, and defend this if necessary.

It may be prudent to keep an eye on how demand develops between the Railway Road, Church Street and new bus station ranks with the settling down of this new development.

Consideration could be given to better educating the public the difference between hackney carriage and private hire, ranks and booking offices, to take advantage of the good present publicity of ranks and the relatively distinct hackney carriage fleet (being all WAV and mostly black).

Appendix 1 – Industry statistics

Blackburn with Darwen

No information from DfT when limit began but at least 1994

	hcv	phv	lv total	hcd	phd	total d		Operators	% hcv WAV	% phv WAV
1994D	58			74			**1994D**		100	
1997D	64	475	539	78	690	768	**1997D**		100	
1999D	64	478	542	81	689	770	**1999D**	34	100	
2001D	64	550	614	72	814	886	**2001D**	36	100	
2004D	64	550	614	72	814	886	**2004D**	36	100	
2005D	64	550	614	72	814	886	**2005D**	36	100	
2007D	68	600	668	83	700	783	**2007D**	29	100	
2009D	69	654	723	78	750	828	**2009D**	32	100	
2010N	68	600	668	69	*735*	*804*	**2010N**	33	100	
2011D	68	650	718	59	720	779	**2011D**	32	100	2
2012N	71	650	721	99	*733*	831	**2012C**	33	100	*2*
2013D	66	659	725	138	745	883	**2013D**	31	100	2
2014N	71	650	721	*144*	*746*	890	**2014N**	*34*	100	*2*
2015D	70	710	780	149	747	896	**2015D**	36	100	1
2016C	70	728	798	170	800	970	**2016C**	42	100	1

Appendix 2 – List of ranks

Rank / operating hours	Spaces	Comments
24-hour ranks		
Boulevard (Railway Station)	9	Hackney radio company has office nearby, area partly shared with private parking
High Street, Morrisons	4	Close to exit from supermarket, but also serves as feeder to railway station rank
Railway Road	4	New rank located at Church Street end of road, feeds Church Street
Bus Station	4	New rank replacing former Ainsworth and James Street locations within new bus station
Astley Gate (Debenham's)	4	
Church Street	2	Rrank agreed to serve new market hall
Night ranks		
St Peter's Street	4	Club closed at time of survey, expected to reopen
Northgate	3	
Informal rank locations		
None identified		
Private rank location		
None		
Out of town locations		
Market Street, Darwen		
Proposed new ranks		
Night-time – Parliament Street, Darwen 21:00 to 04:00		

Appendix 3 – Rank observation hours covered

See separate document

Appendix 4 – Detailed results from rank observations

See separate document

Appendix 5 – Detailed on street interview results

See separate document

Appendix 6 – Key stakeholders and responses

Chapter	Stakeholder Group / Person	Views returned?
5	**Supermarkets**	
	Asda, Grimshaw Retail Park	N
	Morrisons, Railway Road	Y
	Tesco, Queen Street	Y
	Sainsbury's, Darwen	Y
	Asda, Darwen	Y
5	**Hotels**	
	Hill View Hotel	Y
	Premier Inn, Blackburn Central	N
	Astley Bank Hotel	Y
	Fernhurst Lodge	Y
	Blakewater Hotel	Y
5	**Hospitals**	
	Royal Blackburn Hospital	N
5	**Restaurants / Café**	
	Thira	Y
	Mr Fus Cantonese, Darwen	N
	Mangiamo, Darwen	Y
	Oyster and Otter	Y
	Roomali	Y

5	**Public houses**	
	The Postal Order	Y
	The Golden Cup, Darwen	Y
	Molloy's	Y
	Willows	Y
	Uncle Jacks, Darwen	N
	Old Mother Redcap	N
5	**Night venues**	
	Jazzy Key	Closed
	Level One, Darwen	N
	Moist	Number not recognised
5	**Disability representatives**	
	No responses	
5	**County Education and Social Services / Public Transport / Rail Operators**	
	No responses	
5	**Police**	
	No responses	
5	**Entertainment venues**	
	Thwaites Empire Theatre	N

	King Georges' Hall	N
6	**Hackney carriage / private hire trade**	
	Questionnaire	Y