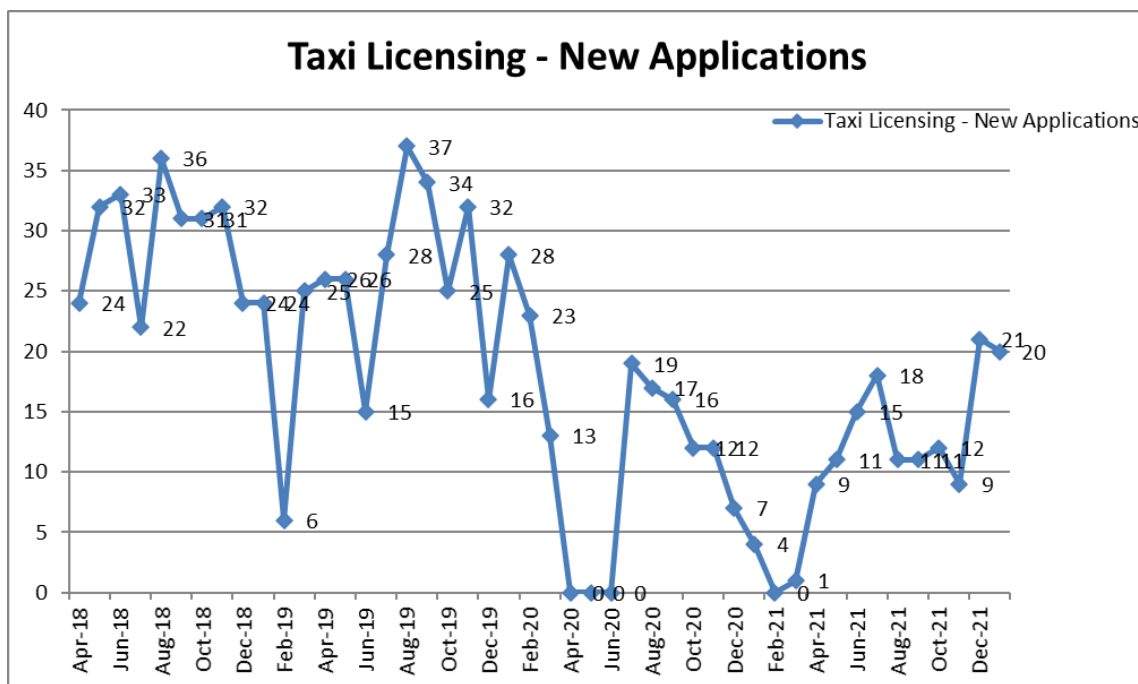
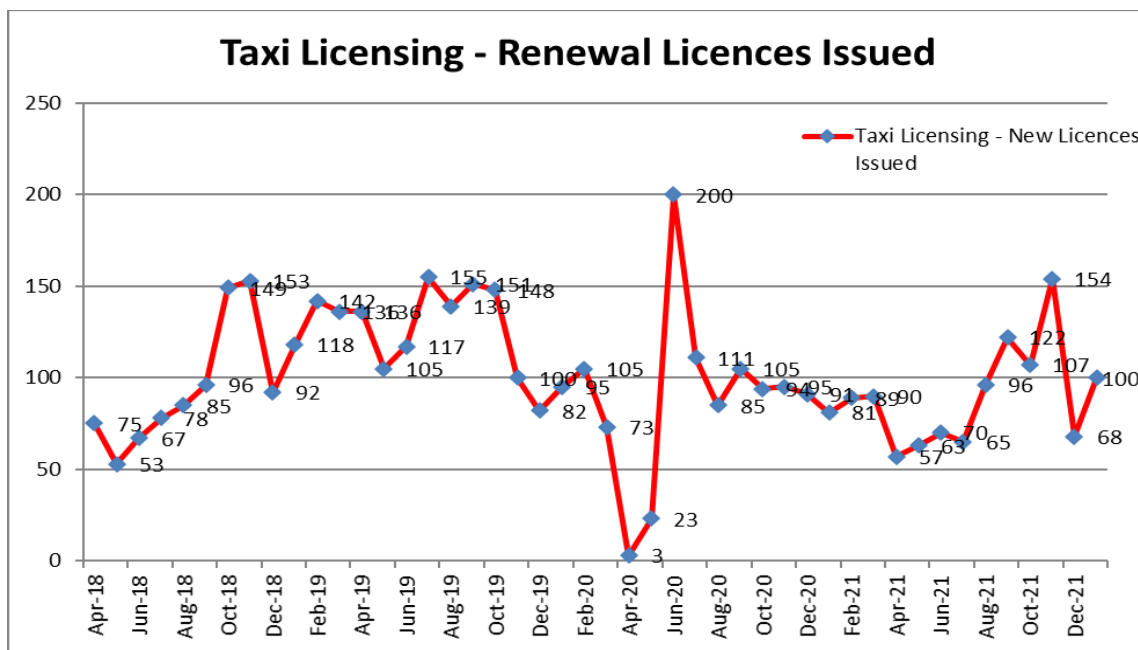


Taxi Licensing update for Licensing Committee – January 2022

1.0 Licensed Drivers

Driver and vehicle numbers have stabilised over the last two months following both showing month on month declines over the previous 16 months. Drivers are reporting higher levels of business now the economy is beginning to recover. The fall in drivers and vehicles is being seen at a national level as drivers move into the more stable delivery industry.

New driver and vehicle applications have fallen since the start of the pandemic however the team are starting to see a recovery in numbers of new applicants. The team processed 20 new licence applications and 100 renewals during January 2022. The number of new licence applications is the highest since February 2020 before the pandemic began. It should be noted that the reducing number of licence applicants and holders will reduce the Council's income from taxi licensing in the short term, however the team do expect this to bounce back as part of the wider economic recovery.



The chart below shows the total number of licences produced each month. Driver licences are issued for one or three years, most drivers opt for a three year licence. 2019 saw a large number of drivers renew and is behind the increased numbers for 2019. 2020 numbers were below those seen historically, however numbers have climbed steadily during 2021 and given the 3 year cycle are expected to be high during 2022. The number of new applications is around half of the average historic number, it is hoped new applications will increase as business picks up and the economy recovers.

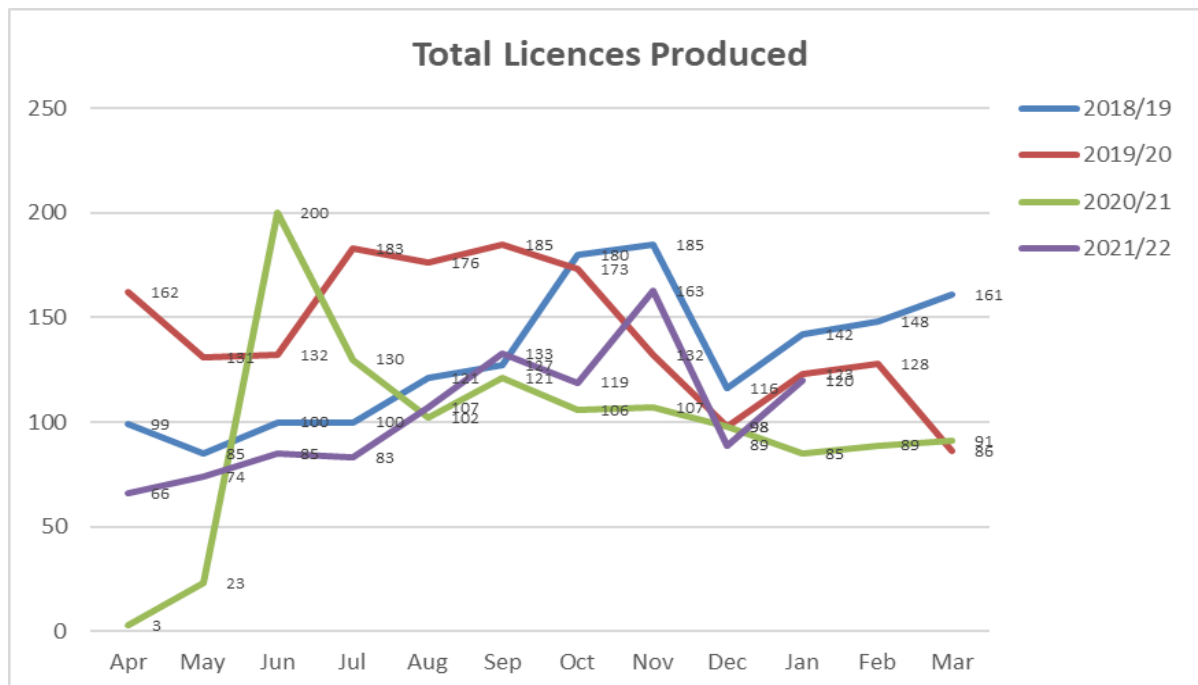


Figure 2 below shows the total number of licensed hackney carriage drivers in Wiltshire and their location.

The total number of licensed hackney carriage drivers at the end of January 2022 was 698, a decrease of 3 on the previous month however December 2021 did see the first rise in driver numbers for 15 months. 145 were licensed in the North area, 82 in the East, 283 in the South and 188 in the West.

Coronavirus and lockdown restrictions have seen a reduction in hackney carriage drivers of 162 over the period March 2020 to January 2022, representing a fall of 19%, this appears to be in line with the national average, however hackney carriage driver numbers had been falling for sixteen consecutive months prior to December 2021.

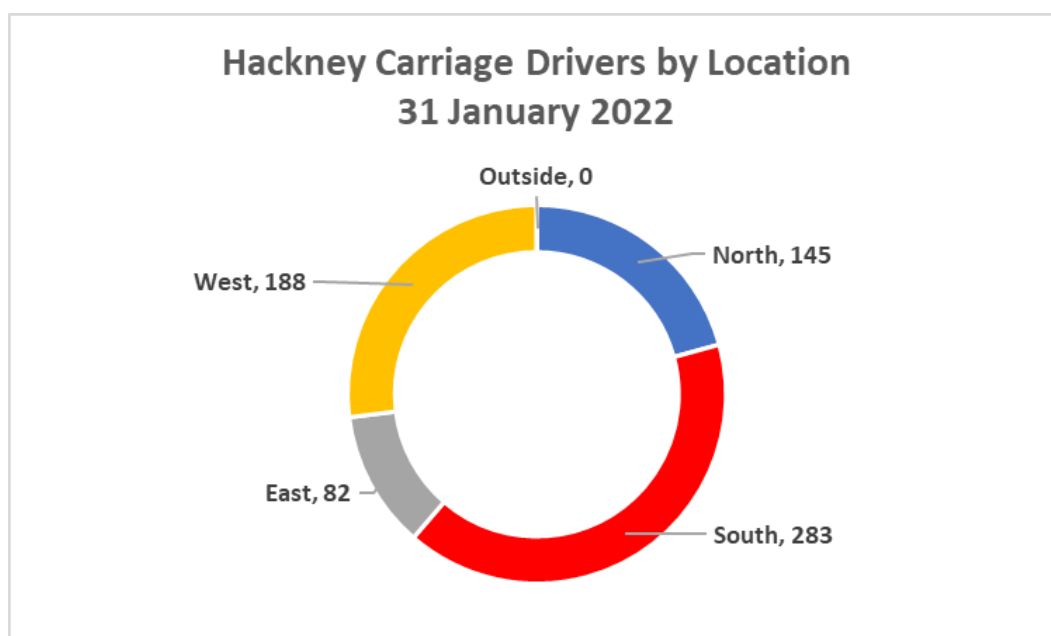


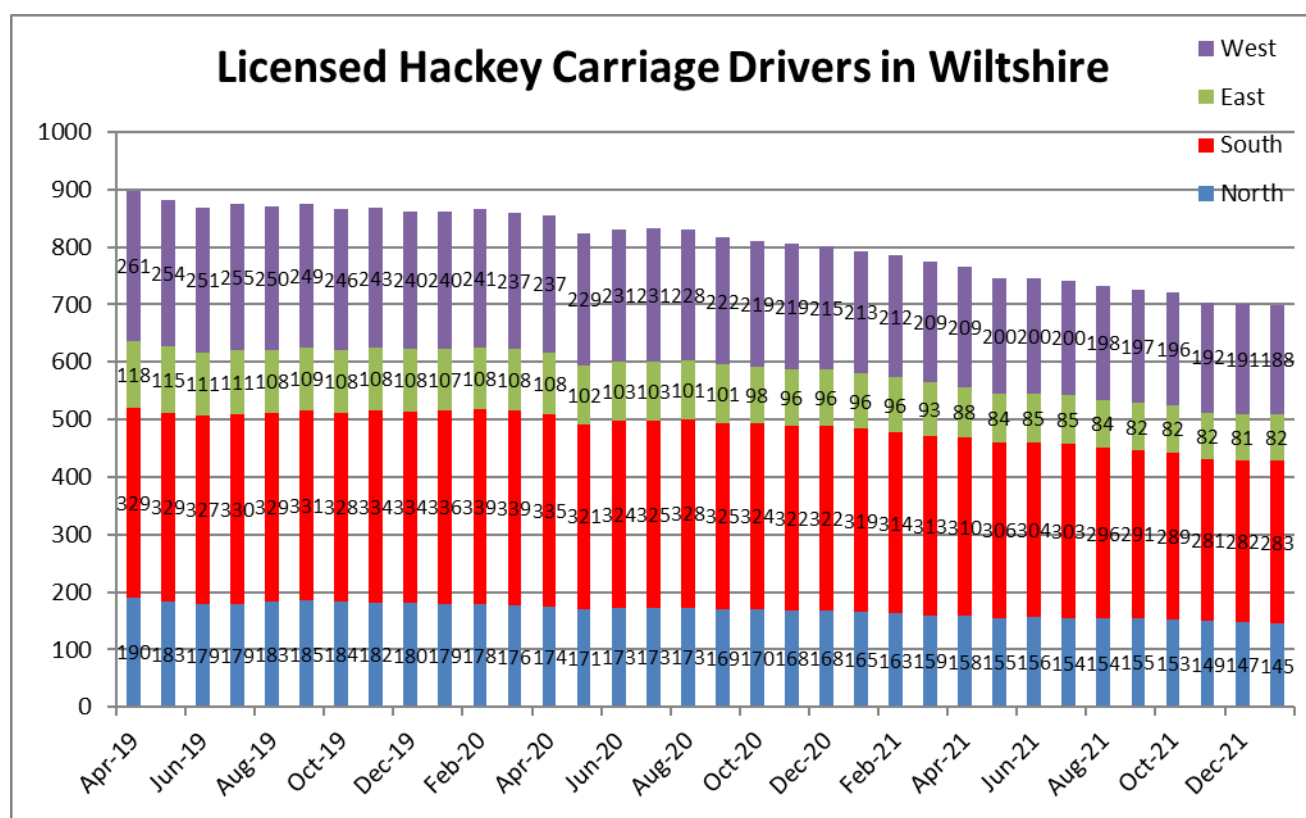
Fig.2

The graph below shows the monthly variation in hackney carriage driver numbers during 2019/20 and 2021/22. During January 2022 numbers fell by 3, numbers in the North fell by 2, the South and East rose by 1 and the West fell by 3 when compared to the previous month.

Since April 2019 Hackney Carriage driver numbers have fallen in all areas, down 73 in the West, 45 in the North, 36 in the East and 46 in the South. The West is clearly the worst affected area.

The falls in hackney carriage driver numbers in each area since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 are as follows.

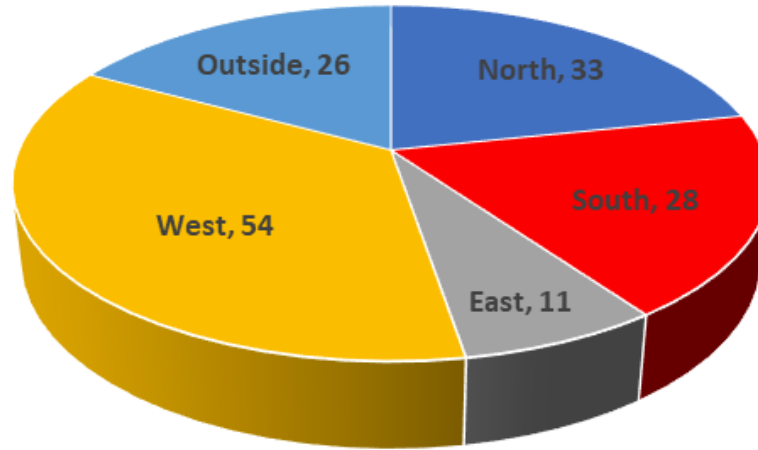
- North – 31 or 18%
- South – 56 or 17%
- East – 26 or 26%
- West – 49 or 21%



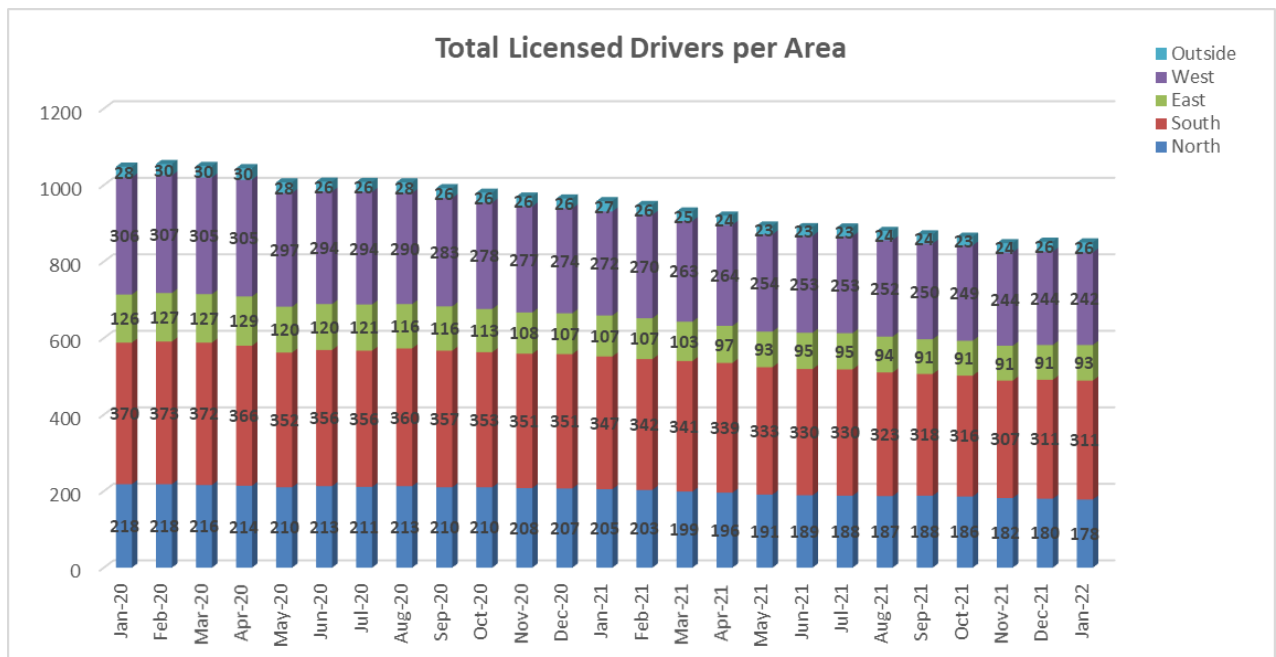
The team also license private hire only drivers, these totalled 152 as at the end of January 2022, an increase of 1 over the month, bringing the total number of drivers licensed to 850, a decrease of 2 over the month.

Private Hire drivers are not restricted by zone and can take bookings for anywhere in the Country. It is interesting to note that we have more private hire drivers living outside of the county than in the east of the county and in similar numbers with the South area. For information the area in which the private hire drivers are registered is as follows;

Private Hire Drivers by Location 31 January 2022



The graph below shows total driver numbers since January 2020.



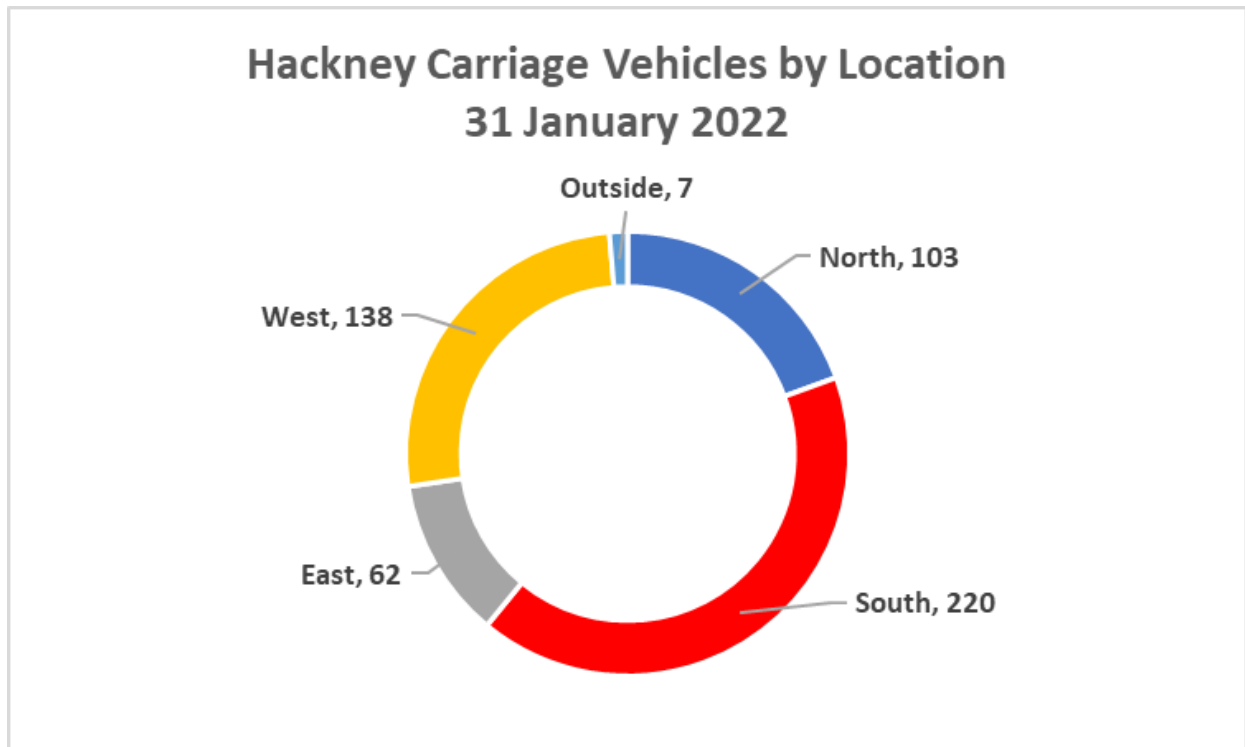
Since April 2019 the number of hackney carriage drivers has fallen by 200 and the number of private hire drivers has fallen by 26, an overall fall of 226 drivers or 21%. However 200, a large percentage of the reduction of 226 drivers has occurred since the first national lockdown in March 2020 as a result of Covid-19.

2.0 Licensed Vehicles

At the end of January 2022 the taxi licensing team licensed a total of 745 vehicles, down 1 on the previous month. The impact of lockdown and the Covid restrictions has taken effect and vehicle numbers had dropped for 8 consecutive months prior to May 2021, it was hoped numbers would stabilise after restrictions were lifted but this has taken longer than expected

although the team feel numbers have stabilised over the last two months. The vehicle split is as follows, 530 hackney carriage vehicles and 215, private hire vehicles, hackney carriage numbers fell by 2 and private hire vehicle numbers rose by 1 over the month when compared to the previous month. Of the 745 vehicles licensed 13.9% or 104 vehicles are wheelchair accessible. It should be noted that 31% of licensed private hire vehicles are wheelchair accessible compared to 7% of hackney carriage vehicles, this reflects the type of work each type of vehicle undertakes.

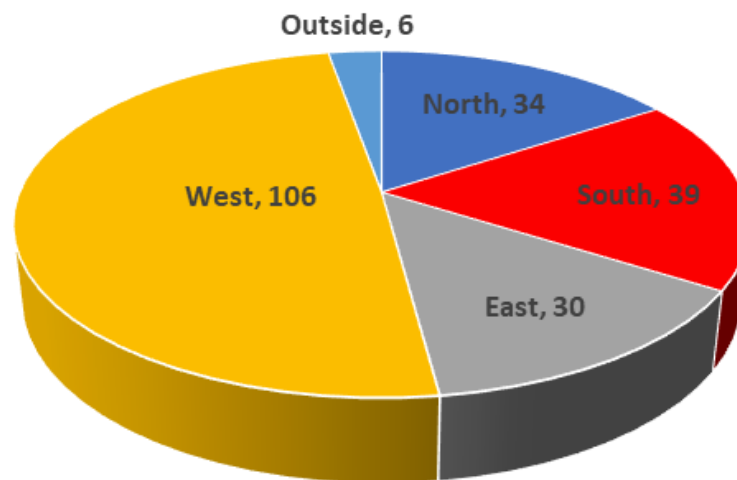
The chart below shows the location split of all hackney carriage vehicles.



The team also license private hire only vehicles, as advised above these totalled 215 as at the end of January 2022.

Private Hire drivers are not restricted by zone and can take bookings for anywhere in the Country if they wish. For information the area in which the private hire vehicles are registered is as follows;

Private Hire Vehicles by Location 31 January 2022



Between March 2020 and January 2022 the number of licensed vehicles, hackney carriages and private hire vehicles decreased by 186 or 20% since the first Coronavirus lockdown was announced, this is in line with national trends.

3.0 Enforcement actions

The team continue to proactively enforce the Council's policies in relation to taxi licensing, ensuring we have a visible presence on the rank, this has seen more enforcement and more penalty points and formal notices issued. The team issued penalty points to on 24 occasions during March 2021, the highest monthly total ever recorded. The enforcement officers also undertook drive by inspections and rank visits within our towns to identify potential issues.

Penalty points were issued on 17 occasions during January 2022 for the following reasons;

11 – Drivers badge not visible

1 – internal, plate not displayed, obstructing an officer, failure to notify the council of a motoring conviction, driving in a pedestrian area in contravention of TRO, dirty vehicle, unable to see number plate and 1 for leaving a vehicle unattended on a rank.

The Council operates an internal penalty points scheme under which a driver will be suspended if they reach 12 points in a rolling 12 month period.

The graph below shows a trend of increased enforcement as the team effectively manage our driver database.

The Team suspended six drivers and revoked one during January 2022.

The team also completed 32 DBS checks during January 2022

Summary

A new schedule of fares and tariffs for hackney carriages was implemented on 04 January 2022.

The team are taking an active role in the Taxi Provision Working Group and working with colleagues in Passenger Transport Unit to try and address the reducing numbers of drivers and vehicles licenced in Wiltshire.

A recruitment open day is planned which will allow operators, Taxi Licensing and Passenger Transport to encourage driver recruitment in the County. The events can only proceed when the Council's Covid-19 policies in relation to attendance at our offices is updated.

The Group are also working on a Communications plan to encourage more individuals to consider taxi driving as a career choice.

The Coronavirus pandemic has hit the taxi industry very hard and all local authorities have seen reducing driver numbers. The team believe numbers are stabilising and are working with our colleagues in Passenger Transport Unit on initiatives to encourage recruitment of new drivers in Wiltshire.