

Exeter Taxi Licence Consultation 2014

Telephone Survey & Focus Groups

Summary Report

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Prepared
by: **Marketing Means**

For: 
Exeter City Council



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Executive Summary

This report sets out the findings of several pieces of research commissioned by Exeter City Council as part of its Taxi Licensing Consultation during 2014:

- i. a telephone survey run by Marketing Means of a random sample of 500 members of the general public in Exeter;
- ii. an online survey using the same questions as the telephone survey but run by Exeter City Council and open for all to contribute their views (535 did so);
- iii. three focus groups held by Marketing Means in Exeter with invited groups of hackney carriage drivers, private hire drivers, and older people/ representatives of groups for people with disabilities.

In this report, we primarily set out the results of items i and iii above, while also providing a brief summary of the results of item ii, the Council's online survey, given the more self-selecting nature of its sample.

Within this executive summary, we set out the main results of the telephone survey, highlight some comparisons with the online survey results, and insert key findings from the focus groups at relevant points.

- The telephone survey deliberately set out to interview a number of residents of every ward in the city in proportion to each ward's population, and 500 people were interviewed by Marketing Means' fieldwork team. The survey results were weighted to reflect the age/gender profile of the general population of adults in Exeter.
 - Just over 2% of the telephone survey respondents and 4% of online survey respondents worked as either drivers or support staff in the taxi industry, while the remainder were simply members of the public.
- In the telephone survey, nearly three-quarters (74%) of those interviewed stated that they currently use taxis in Exeter. *This was lower than the corresponding figure of 96% (i.e. near-universal taxi usage) in the online survey.*
 - Most of those in the telephone survey who did not use taxis claimed to use other modes of transport instead (74%), with smaller proportions specifically stating that they took a bus, used a car or walked everywhere. Only 13% cited cost as a reason for not using taxis.
- Among taxi-users in the telephone survey, just over half (54%) used private hire cars only, while 6% used hackney carriages only. The other 40% used both types of taxi. *In the online survey, reliance on hackney carriages only was much higher, at 41%.*
 - Those in the telephone survey who used private hire vehicles only were most likely to state that this preference was due to convenience (71%), though a significant minority (28%) also agreed that they feel safer through booking in advance.
 - The telephone survey script briefly described the difference between hackney carriages and private hire cars. Some participants in the older persons' focus group felt it unlikely that many members of the general public would have much idea of the difference.
- Most (62%) of the hackney carriage users in the telephone survey used the service a few times a year but less than once a month, while 30% used the service at least once a month but less than once a week. *Frequency of hackney use was much higher in the online survey sample.*
- Most (56%) of the hackney carriage users in the telephone survey usually waited no more than 5 minutes for a hackney carriage, though 20% claimed that they usually waited longer than 10 minutes.

- In the telephone survey, most hackney carriage users (55%) claimed not to use the service on weekdays, with the remainder divided fairly evenly between daytime, early evening and late night usage. Only 14% of hackney users, however, did not use the service at weekends. There was a clear peak in weekend late night usage, when 66% of hackney users stated that they 'usually' make a journey.
 - Not covered in the telephone survey was Sunday usage specifically. Some in the older persons' focus group felt this to be lacking, especially on a day when fewer buses were available.
- Most hackney carriage users in the telephone survey (73%) rated their satisfaction with the service as either 5/5 (very satisfied) or 4/5, though only 27% gave the top rating of 5/5.
- Eight out of 10 hackney carriage users in the telephone survey gave a high rating for their feeling of safety when using the service, with 55% giving the top rating of 5/5 (very safe). The few who had concerns over safety stated that these related mainly to drivers.
- The principal suggestions for improving hackney carriages given by hackney carriage users in the telephone survey were to lower fares (mentioned by 51%), and raise standards for drivers (22%). Just over one in 10 (11%) suggested increasing the number of hackney carriages, while 14% requested reduced waiting times at the ranks.
- Asked further about fares, telephone survey respondents were evenly split in their opinions over whether hackney carriage fares were reasonable, as many agreeing as disagreeing, though a clear majority rated private hire fares as reasonable.
- The older persons' focus group participants felt that creating more ranks in the city centre would be useful in bringing hackney carriages closer to potential customers, and in raising the profile of the service. Participants also requested a better service at the hospital.
 - In the hackney carriage drivers' focus group, the limited space on existing ranks, due in part to drivers' long waiting times for a fare, was also given as a reason that no more plates should be issued.
- In both the hackney carriage and private hire drivers' focus groups, several participants expressed their view that multiple hackney plate ownership and the ability to transfer plates has led to the system being abused and is not fair on drivers trying to enter the hackney trade.
- The possibility of the Council issuing more hackney carriage plates or lifting restrictions on the number of plates was well known to those in the hackney carriage drivers group, but was discussed in the other groups too. The key points conveyed by participants were:
 - Hackney carriage drivers felt that there was little or no evidence of public demand to justify more plates being issued and the dilution of their market that this would bring;
 - Hackney carriage drivers felt that issuing more plates would fail to recognise the investment they had made in buying and running their own vehicles;
 - Hackney carriage drivers were frustrated that the Council were again considering removing the quantity restriction on plates and would strongly oppose it;
 - The older persons' group slightly favoured more hackney carriages, though creating more ranks could have addressed much of the need that they identified;
 - Both private hire and hackney carriage drivers generally felt that there were enough taxis and drivers on the road already, and some private hire drivers felt that private-hire drivers were better-placed to pick up extra demand anyway;

- Some drivers expressed the view that private hire companies and hackney carriage drivers could sometimes meet demand best by working together, but it was not clear how or whether this could really be achieved;
- Private hire drivers and some hackney carriage drivers felt that that potential new drivers of hackney carriages could make a better living through private hire driving if they could accept working for someone else.
- Reactions of drivers in the focus groups to the potential requirement for any new hackney plates to go to low emission or electric cars were cool:
 - Some drivers felt that circumstances meant that there would no net decrease in emissions;
 - A discount would be needed to encourage any further transfer to lower emissions;
 - No viable electric options, for longer-distance fares, were currently available;
 - Participants in the older persons' group thought, nonetheless, that an electric/ low emission option would be nice to have but likely to place a burden on drivers.
- A clear majority of hackney users in the telephone survey (85%) stated that they supported the idea of in-cab CCTV. *Support for CCTV was much lower (32%) in the online survey.* Views of focus group participants were very mixed:
 - The older persons' focus group saw no need for in-cab CCTV;
 - Hackney carriage drivers tended to think that CCTV would be an expensive solution to an infrequent problem, and that some passengers might have privacy concerns;
 - Personal safety for both drivers and passengers was seen by some drivers as making CCTV worth considering and possibly investing in;
 - Some drivers, mainly in the private hire sector, felt that CCTV could benefit passengers by reducing the likelihood of their being over-charged by unscrupulous drivers or by those with limited knowledge of the best routes.
- A clear majority of hackney users in the telephone survey (85%) also stated that they supported the idea of a distinctive colour scheme for Exeter's hackney carriages. *The results of the online survey were very different, 66% against the new livery.* Focus group participants felt that the change might be a nice thing to do, but could also be impractical:
 - Most in the older persons' group felt that changing the livery could be costly, while drivers felt that improving driver standards was a more important issue;
 - Some liked the idea of hackney carriages becoming more distinctive and easier to recognise as a class, but others felt that a standard livery could make it harder to identify any cabs against which complaints were made.
- Wheelchair accessibility was discussed in each group, with some good and bad points identified in regard to current provision and any future requirement placed on new hackney carriages:
 - Some in the older persons' group questioned how the term should be defined, given the great variation in wheelchair type and size;
 - Some private hire drivers and older people questioned whether the demand was really there for more such cars to be needed;
 - Cost was seen as the major obstacle to providing a better service for wheelchair users. Some drivers felt that higher-cost, higher-spec vehicles than Doblos should be required, though this was also seen by one driver as a way of ensuring that hackney drivers enter the trade with the right motives;

- Hackney carriage drivers were critical that the efforts they had made to offer widespread wheelchair access were not being matched by the private hire sector, especially given that some passengers would be deterred from taking a vehicle if it was wheelchair-accessible due to its lack of comfort and accessibility.
- An improved level of knowledge and quality for new hackney carriage drivers was broadly seen as a good idea by drivers:
 - Hackney carriage drivers wanted to know more about any such proposals, feeling that the quality of the existing hackney driver pool was not a cause for concern:
 - In the private hire drivers' group, the concept was raised of new drivers being trained through the private hire system to develop their standards before allowing the driver to move into hackney carriage driving, if the driver wished.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and objectives

- As part of its consultation with the public, trade and other stakeholders to consider whether to remove the policy of taxi restriction in a managed way, Exeter City Council commissioned Marketing Means to conduct two surveys:
 - **Telephone survey** – Quantitative research among the general public, i.e. the residential population of Exeter;
 - **Focus groups** – Qualitative research with specific groups, including stakeholders and interested parties, to discuss in greater depth the issues around the de-restriction proposals.

1.2 Method – telephone survey

Marketing Means conducted the telephone survey from its call centre in Ashburton, Devon:

- Exeter City Council supplied the questionnaire to be used in the telephone interviews, which is included at Appendix 1 of this report.
- Marketing Means completed 500 interviews between 5th November and 22nd November 2014. Interviews lasted 5 minutes on average, and were much shorter if a respondent did not use hackney carriages, given the focus of numerous questions on hackney carriage use only.
- The sample of telephone numbers included landline numbers and mobile numbers linked to specific postcodes across the city, selected at random but to be representative of the spread of population across all 18 wards within Exeter City Council's boundaries.
- At the end of fieldwork, the response rate derived by comparing completed interviews against refusals by those contacted to participate was 40%.
- The fieldwork team set quota targets by age and gender to reflect the different proportions of each group within the population. To correct any imbalance in the final data, the profile of respondents in the final dataset was weighted to the profile of the Exeter population aged 18+ recorded in the 2011 Census. The impact of this weighting is shown in Appendix 2.

1.3 Method – focus groups

Marketing Means conducted three focus groups during November and December 2014:

- One group included hackney carriage drivers only, while another group included private hire drivers. Both groups with drivers were held at Exeter City Council's Civic Centre building. A third group included older members of the general public aged 65+ (some recruited from Marketing Means' telephone survey stage of this project) and representatives of disability-focused charities in Exeter. This final group was hosted at Age UK's Exeter premises.
- Each group lasted for between 60 and 90 minutes.
- Each group discussion and depth interview was moderated by Marketing Means' research director, independent of the City Council.
- The discussions were digitally audio-recorded and later transcribed to allow the subsequent analysis presented in this report.
- The discussion topics varied slightly between the groups but were based on the discussion guide included for reference at Appendix 3.

1.4 Method – online survey (conducted by Exeter City Council)

The online counterpart to the telephone survey was carried out by Exeter City Council. The survey was the same as the phone survey, although there was additional visual material for the question on a city-wide livery.

The quantitative section of this report is primarily based on data from the phone survey, which was gathered from a random selection of people and is matched to the demographic profile of Exeter's population.

In contrast, the online survey was open to any member of the public and promoted by Exeter City Council through social media and in the local press. Members of the taxi trade were also encouraged to take part. This means that the online sample was 'self-selecting' rather than drawn at random, and the results are therefore discussed only briefly at Section 3 of this report.

1.5 Arrangement of this report

After the Executive Summary and this Introduction, we provide a commentary on the research results, based around the use of charts, summary tables and direct quotes to set out the key findings.

At the end of the report, we provide Appendices.

The full cross-tabulations of results have been provided in a separate Excel spreadsheet volume.

1.6 Author and publication

Marketing Means produced this report in December 2014. Any press release or publication of the findings of this survey requires the approval of the author/ Marketing Means. Approval would only be refused if it were felt that the intended use would be inaccurate and/or a misrepresentation.

1.7 About reading this report

Telephone survey results

'Valid' responses

In most cases, and unless otherwise stated, the results are given as a percentage of the total overall valid responses, with occasional blank responses excluded so as not to skew the findings.

Rounding

The percentage figures quoted in most of the charts and tables in the report have been rounded either up or down to the nearest whole number value. In some cases, these rounded values do not total exactly 100%.

Focus group results

- The commentary includes many direct quotes taken from the transcripts of the focus group discussions. These quotes are shown in quotation marks and italics, and included in boxes shaded green.
- For these quotes, the symbol "/" is used to indicate one speaker taking over from another, while preserving the conversational context in which comments were made.
- All comments shown are those of the group participants only, rather than any by the moderator.
- No comments are attributed to individuals but the description of the relevant group is always noted after each comment.

2. Telephone survey - Research results

2.1 Sample characteristics

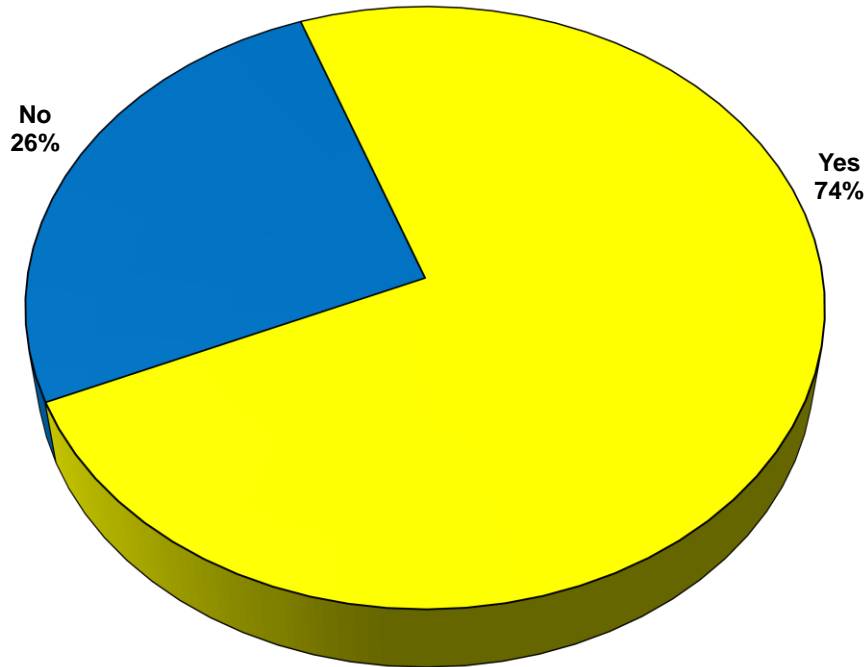
This initial section sets out the characteristics of the sample of 500 residents of Exeter who took part in the survey, to confirm the profile of the group of people who took part. The sample was weighted by age and gender to the profile of residents of Exeter in the 2011 Census. This process aims to make the profile representative of the population, and to correct any unintended biases. The effects of weighting on the profile are shown in Appendix 2.

| SUB-GROUP TYPE | % of 500 respondents (weighted) |
|---|---------------------------------|
| GENDER: | |
| Male | 48% |
| Female | 52% |
| AGE: | |
| Under 35 | 37% |
| 35-44 | 14% |
| 45-54 | 16% |
| 55-64 | 13% |
| 65+ | 19% |
| DISABILITY: | |
| Disability or long-term limiting condition | 14% |
| No disability or long-term limiting condition | 86% |
| ETHNICITY: | |
| White – British | 85% |
| White – other | 8% |
| Other | 7% |
| RESPONDENT STATUS: | |
| Member of the public | 98% |
| Taxi driver with a hackney licence | 1% |
| Taxi driver – no hackney licence | <1% |
| Employed in the taxi trade, not as a driver | 1% |

- In addition to the representative profiles by age and gender, one in seven of the sample (14%) stated that they had some type of disability or long-term limiting condition.
- The 'White-British' ethnic group made up 85% of the total sample, with the remainder split evenly between 'White – Other' and 'Other' ethnic groups.
- The vast majority (98%) of the sample, which was selected through random sampling of residential and mobile phone numbers, identified themselves as members of the public. Just 2% were involved in the taxi trade, as drivers or as other employees.

2.2 Use of taxis in Exeter

Q1. Do you use taxis in Exeter?

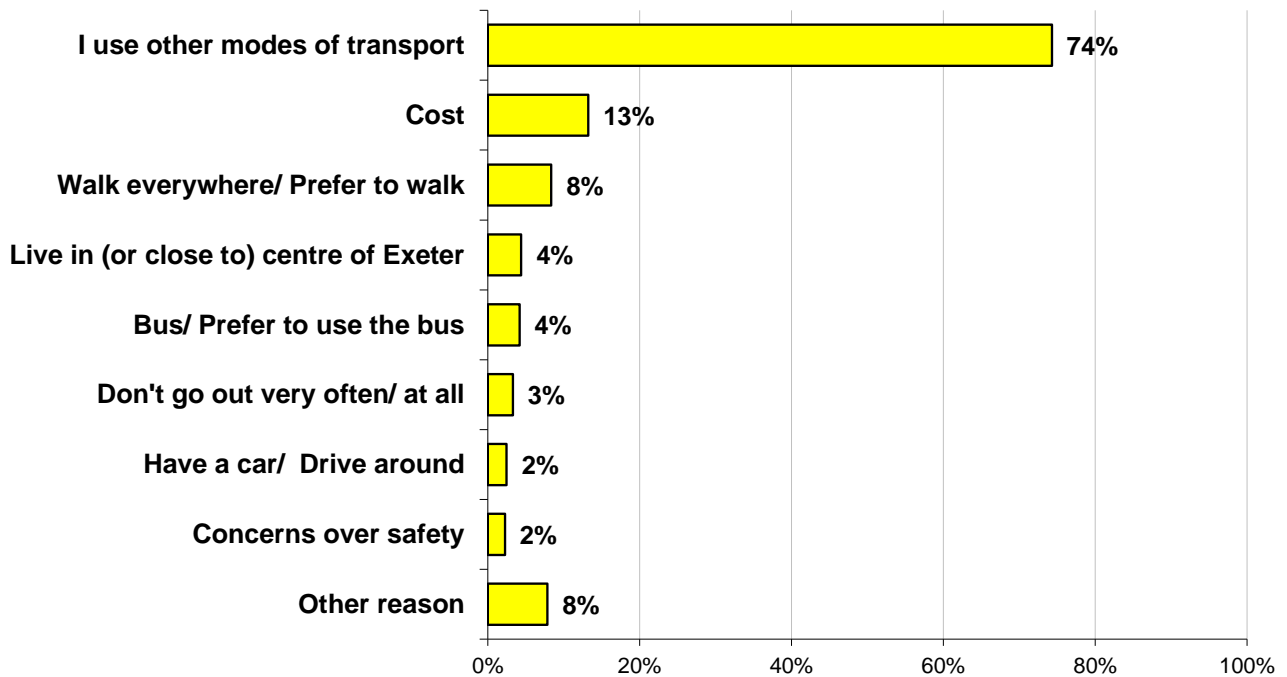


Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All respondents (500)

- Nearly three-quarters of the sample (74%) stated that they use taxis in Exeter.
 - Younger age groups were slightly more likely than older age groups to use taxis, ranging from 80% of 25-34s down to 67% of those aged 65+.
 - There were no differences by either gender or by disability status in the proportion using taxis in Exeter.

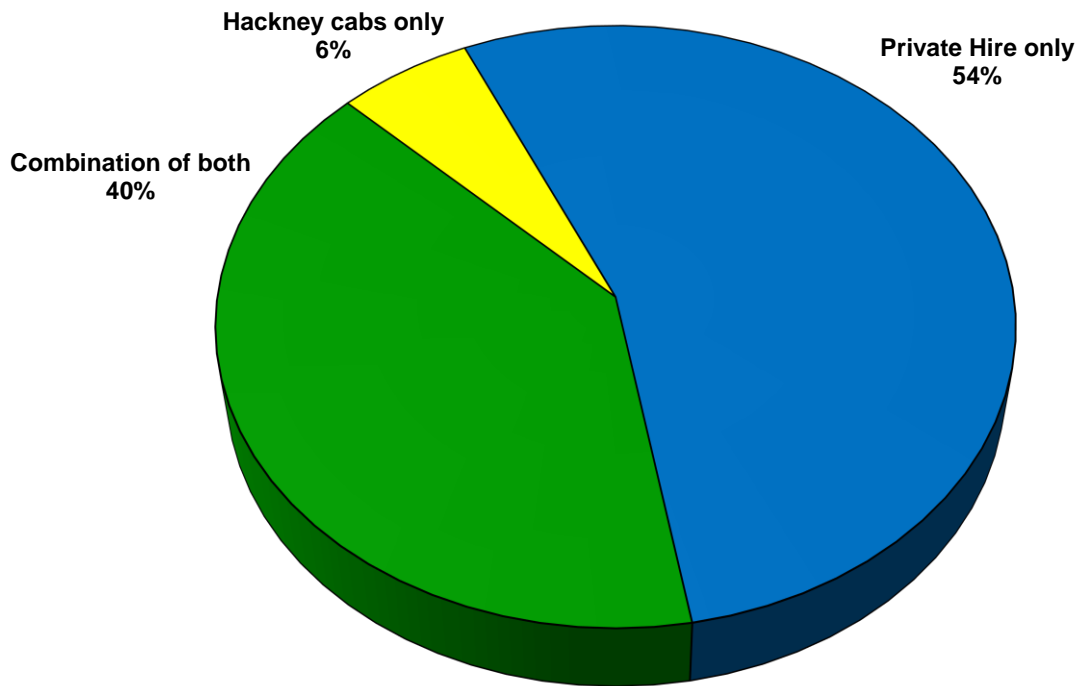
Q1a. Please could you tell me why you don't use taxis in Exeter?



Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who do not use taxis in Exeter (135)

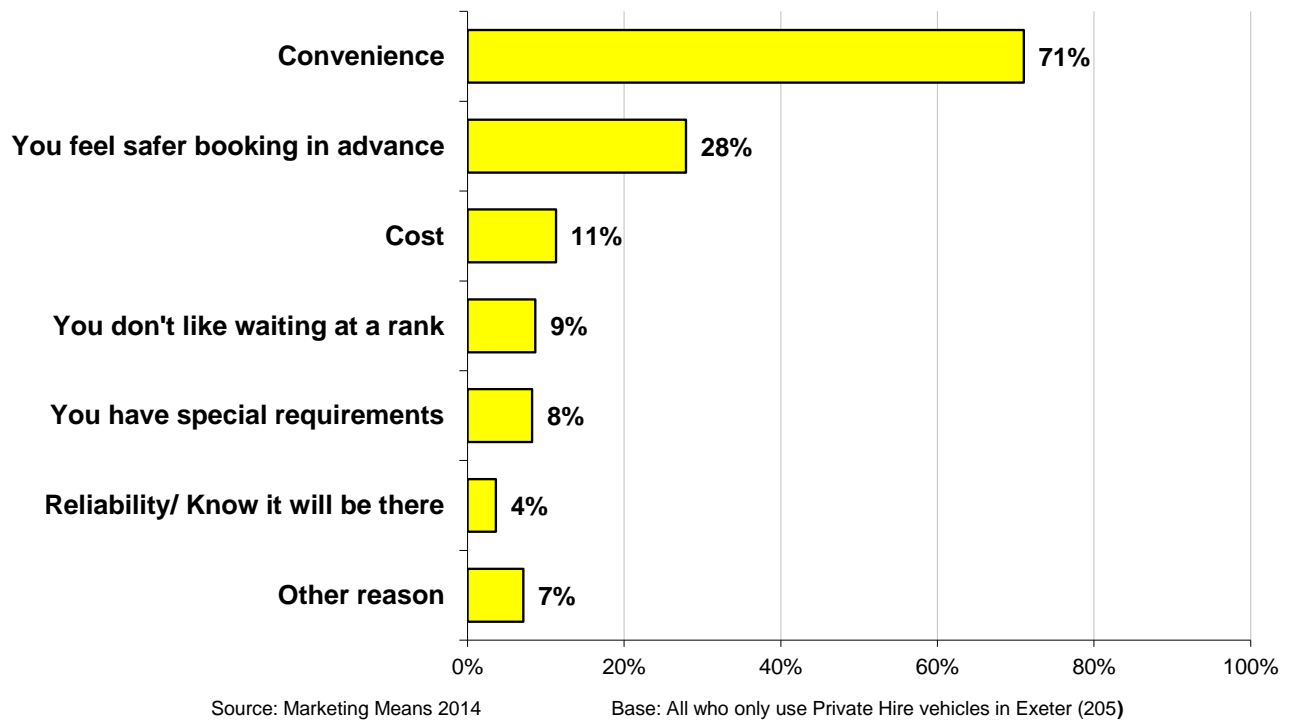
- For most of the people who stated that they did not use taxis in Exeter, the most likely reason to be given (by 74%) was simply that they use other modes of transport. A further 4% stated specifically that they used the bus, and 2% that they have a car and drive wherever they need.
- 8% specifically stated that they prefer to walk, while a further 4% lived so close to the centre of Exeter that they never needed a taxi.
- Only 13% of those who didn't use taxis stated that the main reason for this was cost.

Q2. What kind of taxis do you use?

Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use taxis in Exeter (365)

- Among the three-quarters of respondents who did use taxis, a slight majority (54%) stated that they used only private hire cars, while just 6% used only hackney carriages. The remainder used both types of vehicle.
 - Older respondents were the most likely age group to use private hire cars only, the proportion rising from 42% among 16-34s to 70% of those aged 65+. There were no significant differences by age in the proportion using hackney carriages only, but younger age groups were significantly more likely than older groups to use a combination of both types, 49% among 16-34s but falling to 25% among those aged 65+.
 - 57% of women vs 49% of men used private hire cars only, though this difference is not quite statistically significant.
 - People with some type of disability were significantly more likely than those with no disability to use private hire cars only (76% vs 50% respectively). None of those with any type of disability used hackney carriages only.

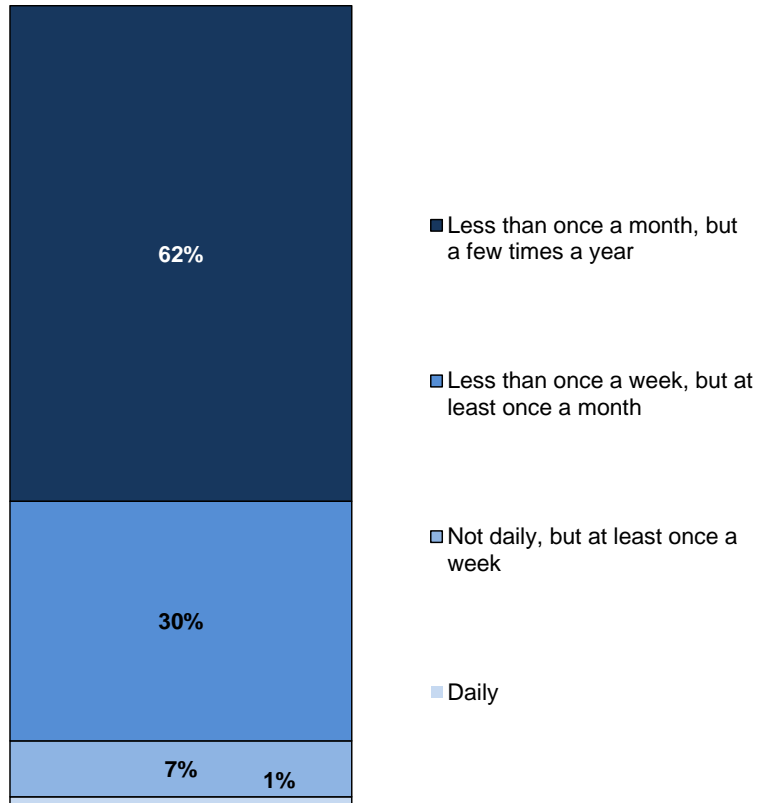
Q2a. Please could you tell me why you only use Private Hire vehicles?

- When respondents who used private hire vehicles only were asked why this was so, by far the most likely reason to be given was simply convenience, with nearly three-quarters (71%) agreeing that this was the case.
 - Convenience was given as the reason by a higher proportion of older people than younger people, but the difference was not statistically significant given the low base totals.
- Feeling safer booking in advance was the reason given by 28% of those preferring to use private hire cars only.
 - The youngest age group, 16-34s, were significantly more likely to give the safety of advance booking as a reason than were those aged 65+ (42% vs 10% respectively).
- A dislike of waiting at a taxi rank was mentioned by 9%, though there were no significant differences between age groups or by gender.

2.3 Use of hackney carriages in Exeter

Most of the remaining questions in the survey were asked only of those 160 respondents who used hackney carriages in Exeter, regardless of whether or not they also used private hire cars.

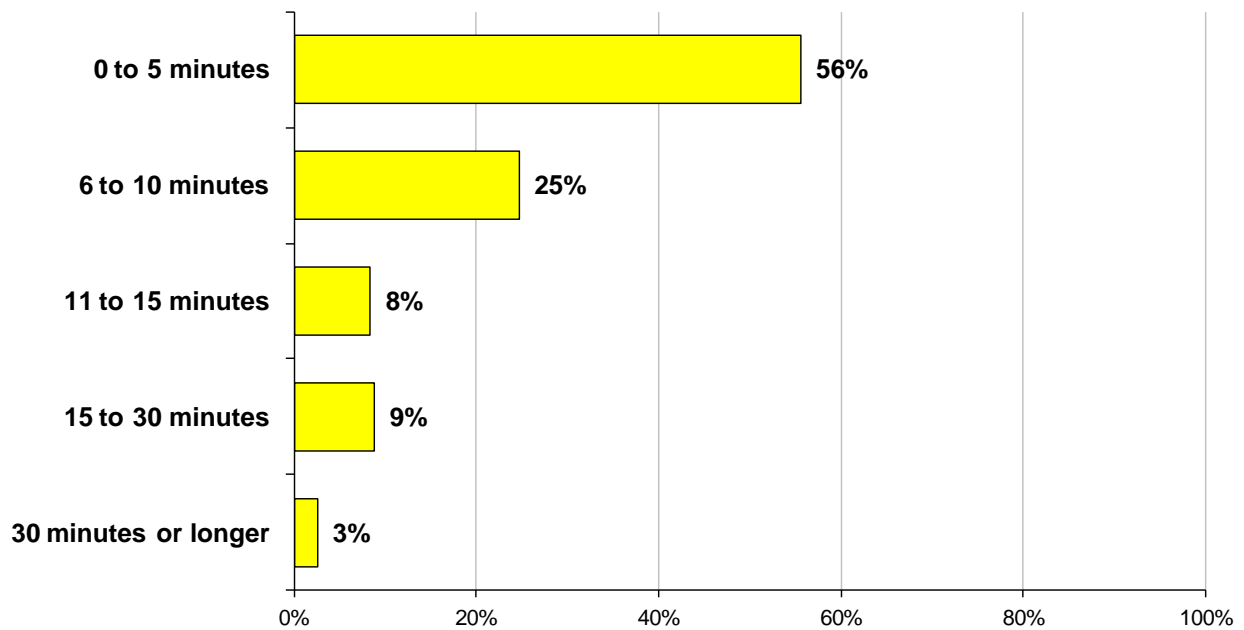
Q3. How often do you use Hackney Carriages in Exeter?



Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use hackney cabs (160)

- Among hackney carriage users in the sample, nearly two-thirds (62%) use them less often than once a month, with most of the remainder (30%) using hackney carriages less than once a week but at least once a month.
 - There were no significant differences between different sub-groups.

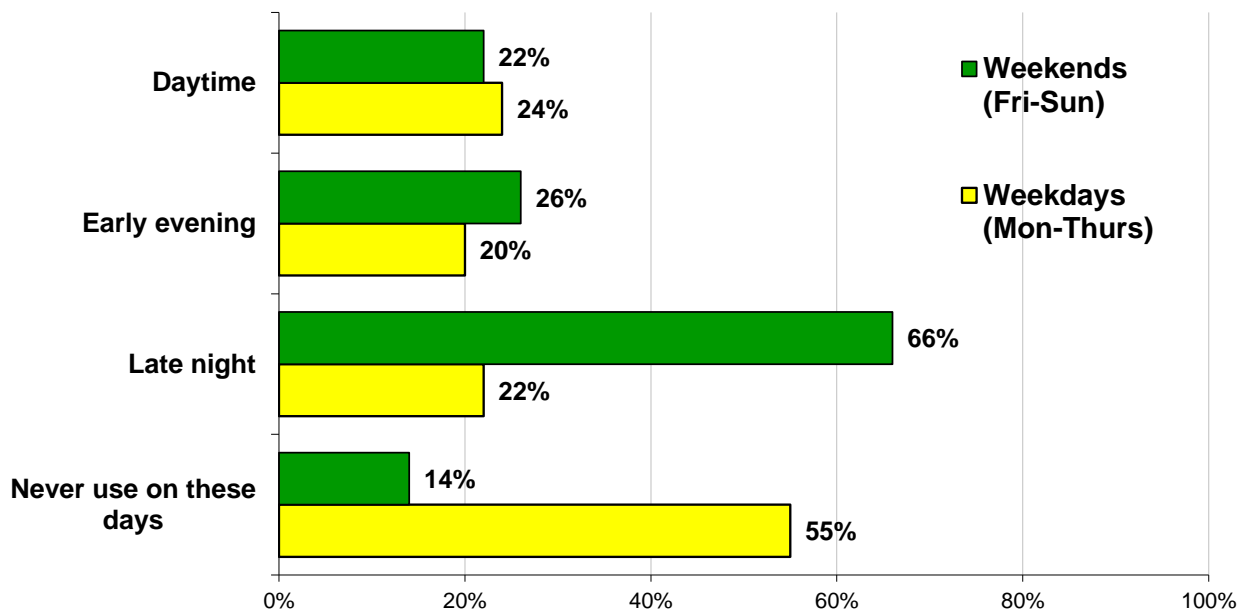
Q4. How long do you usually wait for a hackney carriage?

Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use hackney cabs in Exeter (160)

- Most hackney carriage users (56%) typically wait for no more than 5 minutes for a cab, although one in four (25%) reported waiting for 6 to 10 minutes on average, and 20% wait for longer than 10 minutes.
 - There were no significant differences between different sub-groups.

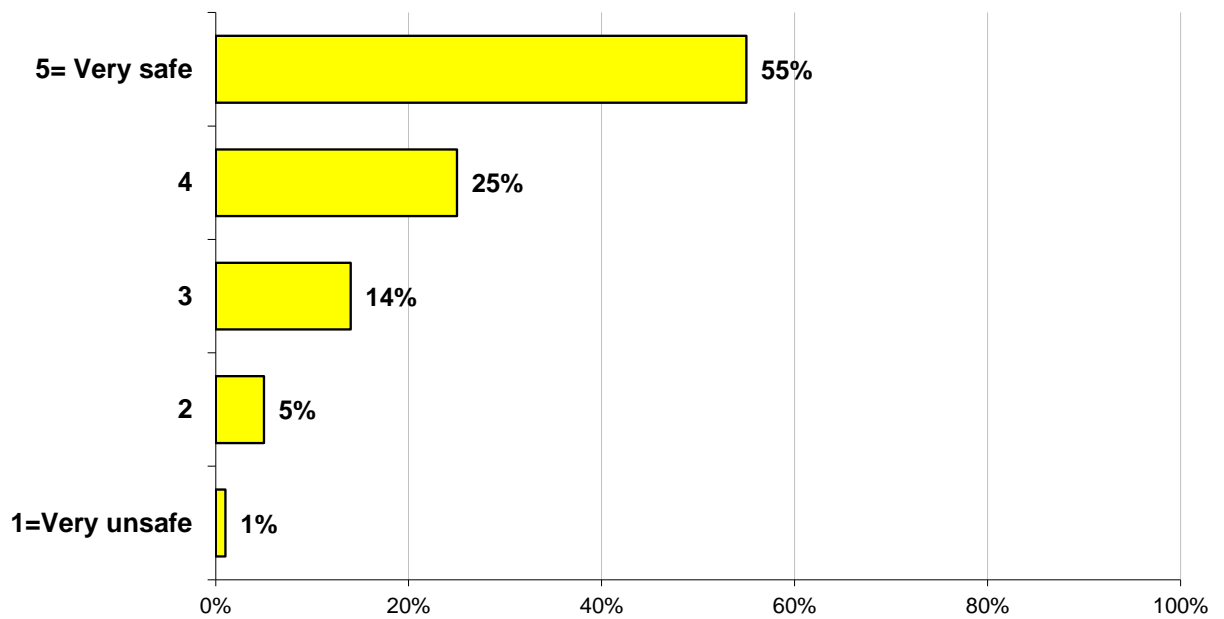
Q5. When do you usually use Hackney Carriages on ...?



Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use hackney cabs in Exeter (160)

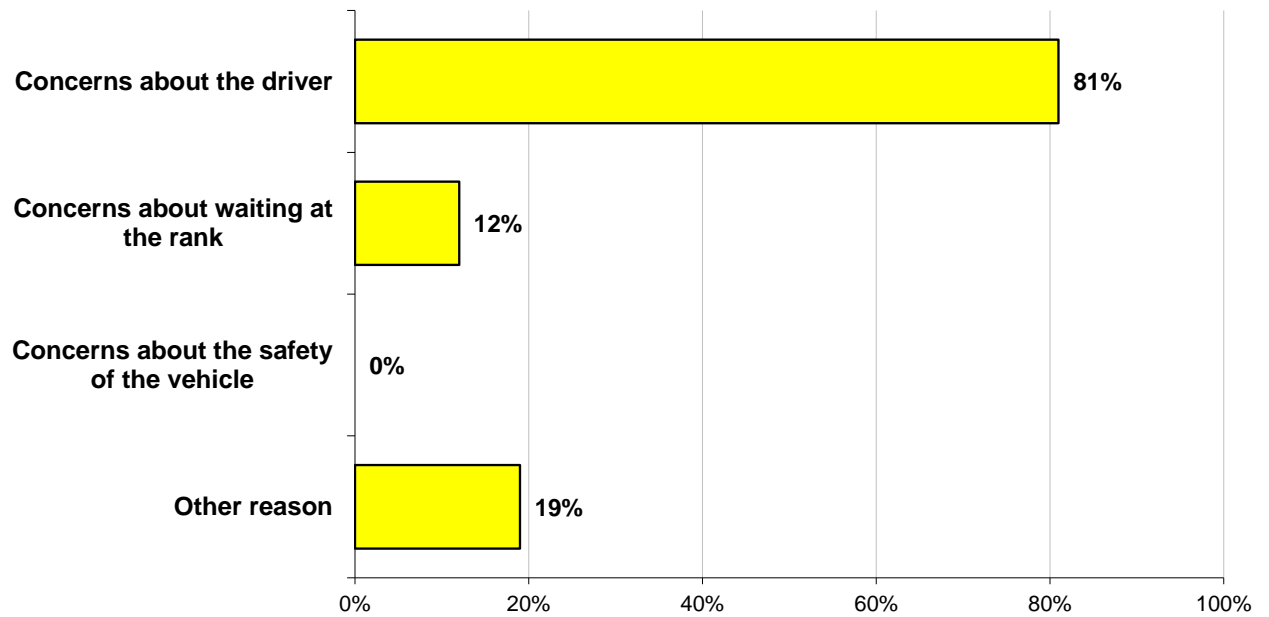
- N.B. In the chart above, the bars showing use of hackney carriages at weekends and weekdays each add to more than 100% as respondents were able to select more than one time of day or night.
- For weekdays, Monday to Thursday, shown in yellow, usage was divided fairly evenly between daytime, early evening and late night, with just over 20% using hackney carriages at each of those times. Nonetheless, most hackney carriage users (55%) did not use hackney carriages on these weekdays.
 - Although base sizes are small, some significant differences between age groups were clear. While only 5% of 16-24s used hackney carriages in the daytime, this increased with age, reaching 60% among those aged 65+.
 - The difference was less significant for evenings and late nights, but younger people were somewhat more likely not to use hackney carriages at all on weekdays, the figure dropping from 76% of 16-24s to 20% among those aged 65+.
- For weekends, Friday through to Sunday, only 14% of hackney users claimed never to use a hackney carriage on those particular days. There was, however, a clear peak in late night usage, when hackneys were used by 66% of those people who ever use them at all.
 - The proportion never using a hackney carriage at weekends was lowest at 5% among 16-34s but reached 24% among those aged 65+.
 - Conversely, the proportion using a hackney carriage late at night at weekends reached 100% among 16-24s, but was only 32% among those aged 65+.
 - There were no other significant sub-group differences.

Q6. How safe do you feel when using Hackney Carriages?

Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use hackney cabs in Exeter (160)

- The majority of respondents (80%) felt very or fairly safe when using a hackney carriage, and most (55%) gave the top score of 5=Very safe. Less than 10% rated their feeling of safety as low, giving a score of either 1 or 2 out of 5
 - The highest rating of 5/5 was most likely to be given by older respondents (68% of the over-65s, vs only 36% of 16-24s) and males (64% vs only 46% of women).
 - Younger respondents were slightly more likely than older respondents to give the midpoint score of 3/5 (24% of 16-24s vs 8% of over-65s), as were females (20%, vs 9% of males).

Q6a. Please could you tell me why you don't feel safe using Hackney Carriages?

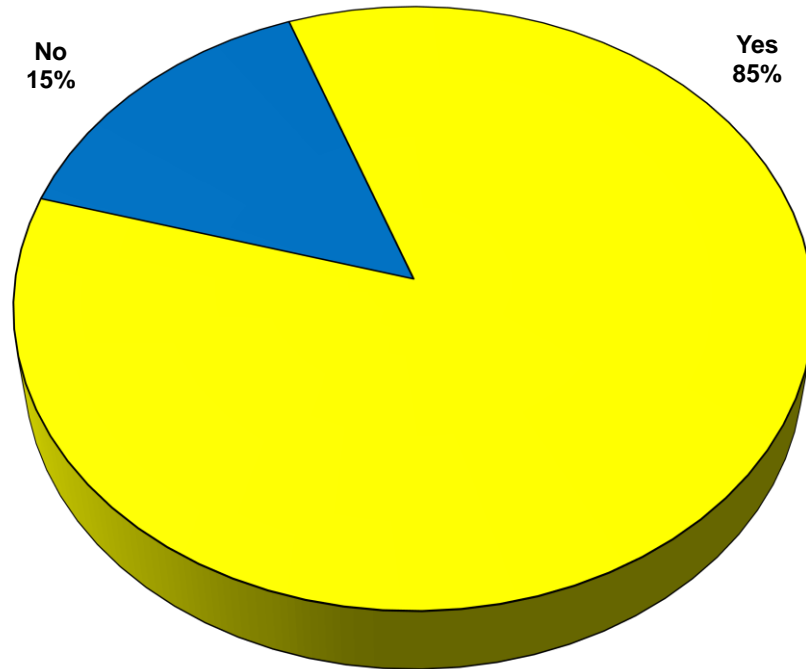
Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use hackney cabs in Exeter (10)

- Only 10 respondents rated their safety as low as 1/5 or 2/5, so only these people were asked why they felt unsafe.
- The main type of reason given was a concern about the driver, though a few mentioned having to wait at the taxi rank.

2.4 Opinions of potential changes to hackney carriages in Exeter

Q7. Would you support the idea of introducing a distinctive colour scheme for Exeter's Hackney Carriages?

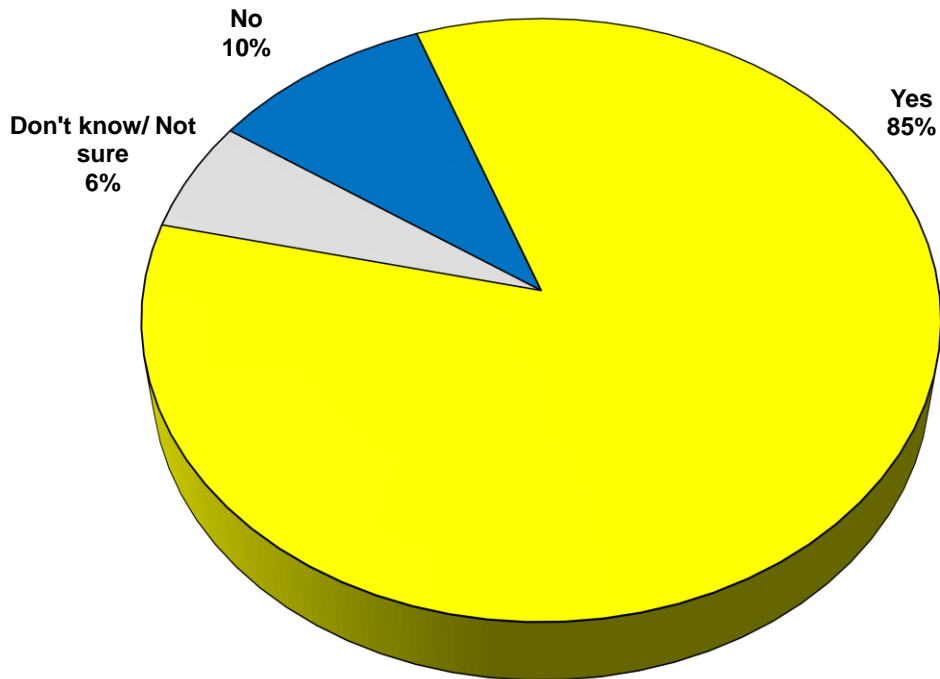


Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use hackney cabs in Exeter (160)

- A large majority of hackney carriage users (85%) supported the idea of a distinctive colour scheme being introduced for Exeter's hackney carriages.
 - There were no significant differences between sub-groups, though the proportion agreeing with the proposed change reached 96% among 16-24s and 35-44s.

Q8. The Council could require that in-cab CCTV is fitted to protect occupants. Do you think this is a good idea?

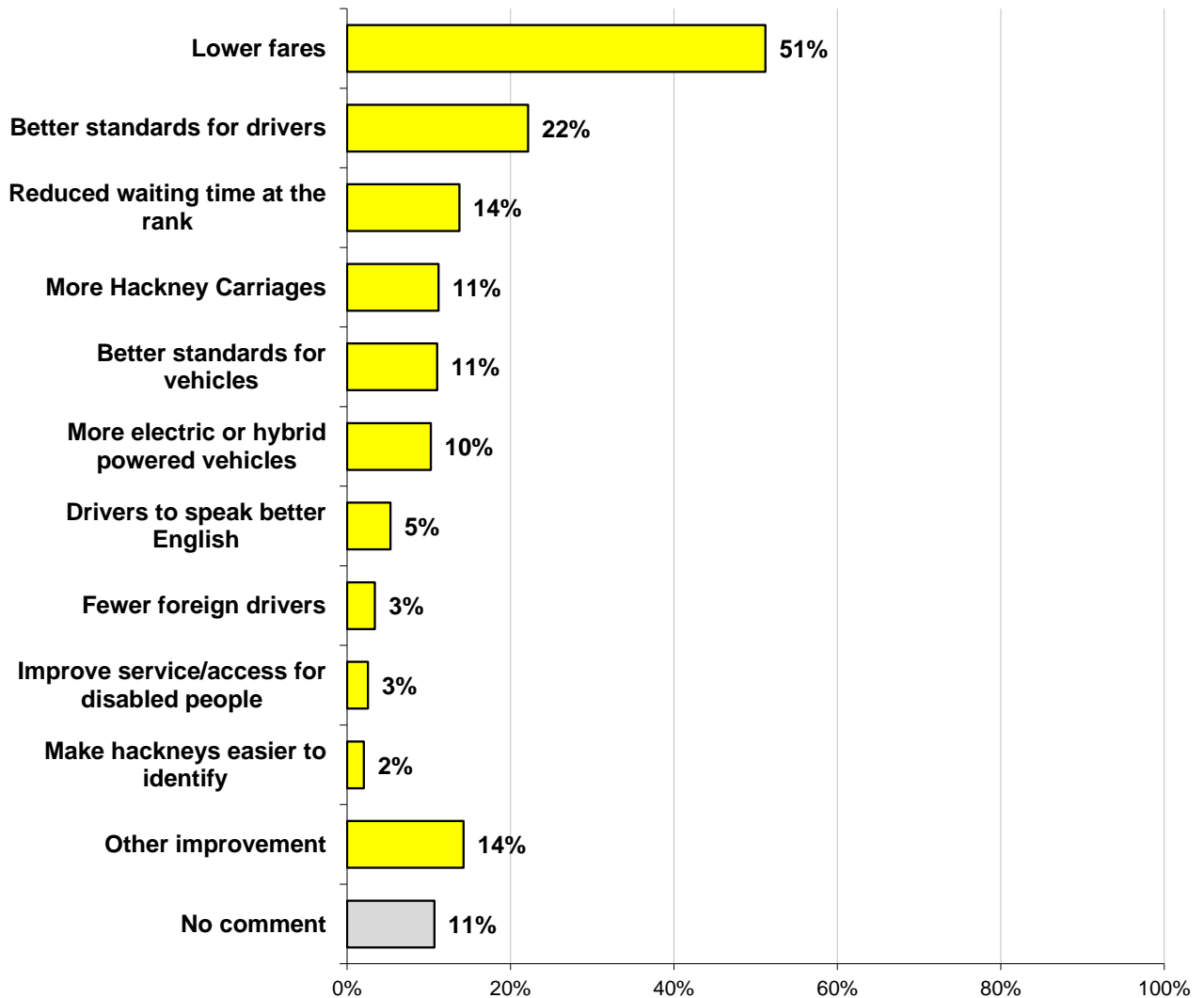


Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use hackney cabs in Exeter (160)

- A large majority of hackney carriage users (85%) also agreed that fitting CCTV in cabs would be a good idea. Only 10% disagreed.
 - Again, there were no significant differences by subgroup though the youngest age groups seemed marginally more likely to agree that CCTV should be installed.

Q9. How do you think that hackney carriages in Exeter could be improved?



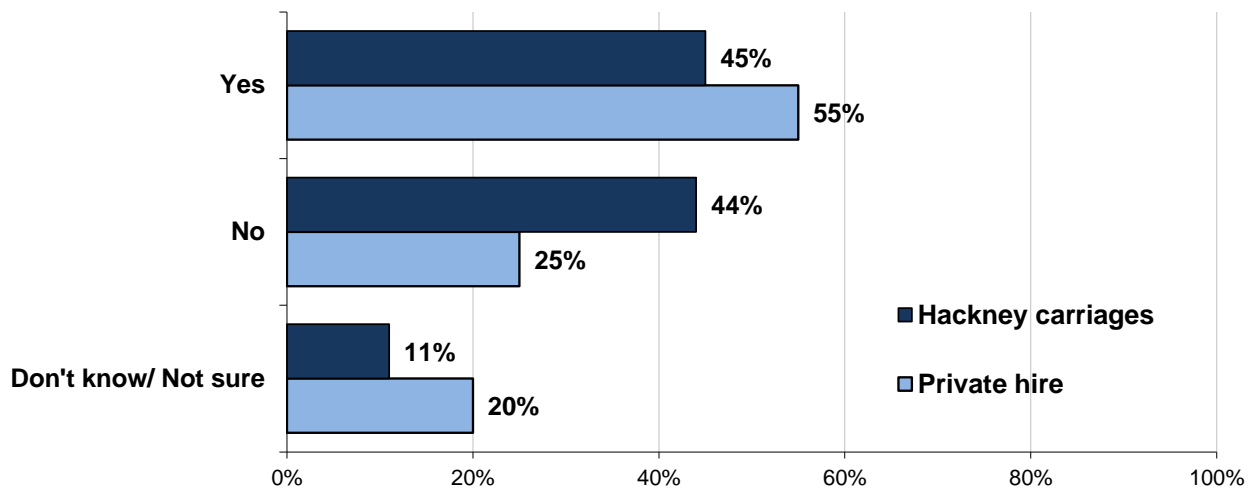
Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use hackney cabs in Exeter (160)

- All hackney carriage users were asked to state in what way hackney carriages in Exeter could be improved.
- The most likely single improvement to be suggested was simply lower fares, given by just over half (51%) of the hackney carriage users.
 - This was the most likely response to be given by each age-group, and there were no other significant differences between sub-groups.
- Better standards were requested by a significant proportion, for drivers by 22% and for vehicles by 11%.
- Reduced waiting times at the rank were requested by 14%, though only 11% made the direct suggestion that more hackney carriages should be available.
- Electric- or hybrid-powered vehicles, to reduce emissions, were suggested by 10% of respondents.
- 11% of respondents made no suggestions; this was highest at 32% among those aged 65+.

2.5 Opinions of the taxi service in Exeter

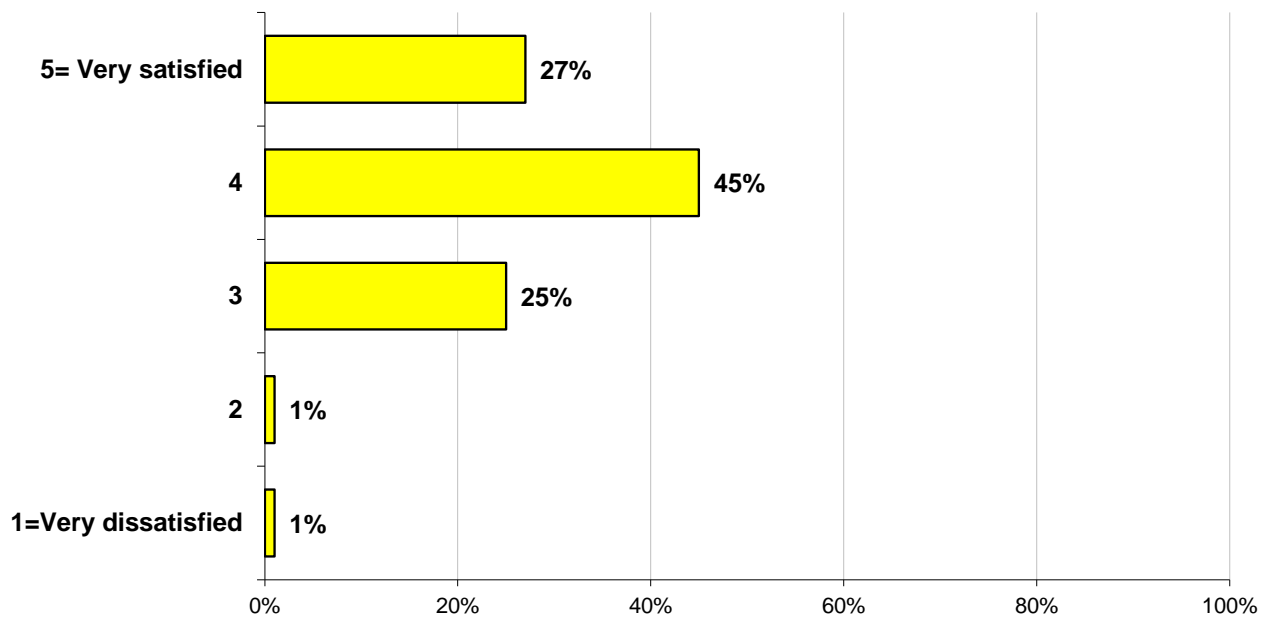
Q10a_b. Do you think taxi fares for ... in Exeter are reasonable?



Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use hackney cabs in Exeter (160)

- Having already seen that the most likely way that hackney carriage users suggested that the service could be improved was to lower the fares, it is not surprising to see the mixed opinions in the chart above.
- Focusing on the dark blue bars representing hackney carriages, opinion over whether hackney fares are reasonable was evenly split between 45% feeling that they are and 44% feeling that they are not.
 - There were no significant differences between subgroups, though 16-24s seemed marginally the most likely group to feel that hackney fares are not reasonable (70% answering 'No' to the question).
- Among these hackney carriage users, opinions of private hire fares (the light blue bars) were more positive than was the case for hackney fares. A small majority (55%) felt that private hire fares are fair, more than twice as many as disagreed (25%). One in five respondents (20%) could not comment, though this was highest at 43% among the small proportion claiming to use hackney carriages only.
 - There were no significant differences between sub-groups, though again 16-24s seemed marginally the most likely group to feel that private hire fares are not reasonable (50% answering 'No' to the question).

Q11. How satisfied are you with the service overall?

Source: Marketing Means 2014

Base: All who use hackney cabs in Exeter (160)

- The majority of respondents (73%) stated that they were very or fairly satisfied with the taxi service in Exeter. Just over a quarter (27%) gave the top score of 5=Very satisfied, while nearly half (45%) rated the service as 4/5 overall.
 - The highest rating of 5/5 was most likely to be given by older respondents (48% of the over-65s, vs only 11% of 16-24s) but there were no other significant differences between sub-groups
- Only 2%, three respondents in total, rated their satisfaction as low, either 1 or 2 out of 5. Reasons that they gave included the driver's (lack of) knowledge of the area, their manner, the cost of the service, and waiting times at the rank.

3. Online survey – Comments on the research results

There were some obvious differences between the results of the phone survey and the online version. These differences are most likely explained by the different data-gathering methods used, as noted in the Introduction.

- Taxi use by online respondents was much higher than the phone survey (96% vs 74%).
- The proportion of users relying solely on Private Hire vehicles was much lower in the online survey (14% vs 54%).
- The proportion of users relying solely on Hackneys was much higher in the online survey (41% vs 6%).
- Frequency of hackney use was vastly higher in the online (63% daily/weekly vs 8%).
- Respondents to the online survey were opposed to the introduction of a city-wide colour scheme (66% opposed vs 15% opposed on phone survey).
- Respondents to the online survey were less positive about the introduction of CCTV (85% in favour on phone survey vs 32% online).

Results from the online survey are included in the Appendix to this report setting out detailed cross-tabulations of the survey data, provided as a separate volume.

4. Focus Groups – Commentary on Results

The discussion within each of the three focus groups began by looking at general opinions of the taxi service in Exeter at present, including any problems with the current service, before moving on to reactions to the notion of increasing the number of hackney carriage licenses in the city. The discussions also included sections that focused more specifically on potential changes to the requirements for hackney carriage vehicles and/or drivers in the city.

4.1 Perceptions of the difference between hackney and private hire cars

One notable point arising from the discussions was the lack of public knowledge of the difference between private hire cars and hackney carriages.

- The comments below highlight the difficulty that older people felt exists in recognising hackney carriages from private hire cars. This is returned to later in the discussion of a new livery for hackney carriages.

"I don't think I can distinguish between them. All good cars tend to be clean and comfy." (Older persons' group)

"If you go out on the street and ask the average Joe Public walking up the street, 'What's a hackney carriage and what's a private hire car?', they haven't got a clue. / They wouldn't know. / They're just looking for a taxi to get home. Obviously the easy way of doing it is to have London taxis and everybody would see it." (Older persons' group)

"Hackney carriages initially need to be more blatant, they need to be able to pick them out in the crowd. / And perhaps from the council's point of view publicise it. Put it in the Express and Echo or on the news that the cars with the yellow lights on the roof you can stop in the middle of the street. Not the private hire cars. 'Cause I'm sure most people out on the street don't know the difference." (Older persons' group)

"To ask any people in the High Street, generally, where do I get a taxi and what do they look like anyway, so I could identify them. I doubt whether eight people out of 10 would know." (Older persons' group)

- Another comment in the older persons' focus group highlighted the benefit of being able to flag hackney carriages down:

"A big point would be if it's going to be a Hackney Carriage that you could hail at the side of the road. Firstly it relieves the situation of taxi ranks 'cause you can stop it anywhere. And secondly you could identify it in the first place." (Older persons' group)

- Some hackney carriage drivers agreed that the public struggle to tell the difference:

"We do have a hackney sign. / I don't think a lot of customers fully understand the difference between what is a hackney and private hire is, hence the reason some people get into a hackney when it should be booked as private hire and vice versa. / But on Saturday nights they just want a car to take them home." (Hackney carriage driver)

- Another comment from the older people's groups also related to the lack of difference in pricing.

"One of the things that used to distinguish Hackney or taxis from private hire was the cost. Private hire was much cheaper, I don't think there's much to choose now. / Not a lot in it. / No, I don't think so. / In fact sometimes I'm very pleasantly surprised by how low a Hackney Carriage fare is. So that does seem to have sorted itself out over the years. / Yeah, the market forces have meant the hackney carriage man has had to bring his prices down in real terms." (Older persons' group)

4.2 Weaknesses of the current taxi service in Exeter

Outside of any discussion of the number of hackney plates issued in Exeter, both drivers and older people identified several ways in which the current taxi service in Exeter was not meeting the needs of the public and/or could be improved.

- Some of the discussion in the older persons' group focused in the difficulty of finding hackney carriages but this was viewed initially not so much as an issue of too few hackney carriages, but of **insufficient signage to be able to find the ranks**:

"If you didn't know and you were a stranger to the town or foreign, and an awful lot of people come to visit their children and we've got a multicultural lot, but taxis are universally known the world over, you know, even in Greece or wherever you are. There's not enough signs to say Taxi Rank. I have especially been looking around since I saw that red thing in the newspaper and I can't say that there's anywhere where it says, even down at the bus station there isn't anywhere that says Taxis this way. Now at stations, railway stations there's always a sign which says Taxi this way but that's the station." (Older persons' group)

- This discussion developed to a request that **Exeter should introduce more taxi ranks**, and this recurred throughout the course of the older persons' group focus group, although some recognised that there could be practical difficulties:

"I don't think there's enough. When you want a taxi and you think, I've got to go all the way to John Lewis's. There isn't enough stands around and there isn't enough even at John Lewis." (Older persons' group)

"In the whole of the city centre there isn't any easy accessible place where there would be taxis. / Castle Street ? / The bus station for instance, if there were some there that would be most helpful I'm sure for a lot of people." (Older persons' group)

"I think a good place to have a stand, not sure how it could be organised, but there is space there, but it's been designated oddly, at the bottom of Castle Street down from the library. That's in the middle, you can come out of Debenhams, you've come out of Dingles, you come out of the shoe shop, you've got all your bags and they would be there. / There would have to be a bit of reorganisation! / Shops wouldn't like the idea of there not being any footfall going past their shops." (Older persons' group)

"I know it's all being re-done but there's a whole chunk of area there where there isn't anything. It's just a wide road that you can't park there, it's just delivering to the shops and things. But there's place and room there for a taxi. If you're in the bus station you would have to go all the way up to, carry all your luggage up to John Lewis's. I know there's a short connection kind of tunnel going through but even so." (Older persons' group)

"There should be more Hackney Carriages to cover, you know, it's a big city, (general agreement) but not just more with the same amount of stands. / No, not at all. / It's not reasonable to expect the public to be just at a taxi rank, the taxi rank should be where the people are." (Older persons' group)

- One of the comments made by a hackney carriage driver highlighted the limitation of the current ranks:

"Exeter city geographically, its layout is different than any other city in the country because we can't use High Street. We've got John Lewis, we've got Chevalier and we've got St David's, we haven't got anything else. If we pick up a customer from John Lewis going to Whipton, coming back is longer than going up, so it's the driver who's losing money." (Hackney carriage driver)

- A private hire driver made a similar point:

"I'm not in favour of deregulation but sometimes I wonder if the Council knows just how dependent the city is on the hackneys and the private hire to supply the standard of secondary transport that this city has and needs. Hackneys are not allowed to roam the streets touting for business, they have to go to ranks, and there are not sufficient ranks in Exeter. Because I've worked on them and I know how often I was moved by the police because I was causing an obstruction." (Private hire driver)

- Older people also suggested that there **needs to be a better taxi service at the hospital:**

"If people have to wait, well, they're used to waiting in the waiting room so what's another hour or two at the end of the day if they know there is a vehicle which can charge a fair price to take you home? But (when we had to wait) we were told there was nothing, none of these taxis were going to be available for the rest of Sunday." (Older persons' group)

"Is it not possible that for the taxi services, either Hackney or private hire, there can be some system where you can, if you're waiting at a place like a hospital or in the middle of nowhere that you can just lift the phone up and it is direct to them? And they always had one in Plymouth. / Derriford Hospital have got one. You just pick it up, there's a café there so you just sit in the café and ring your taxi and wait. / So are those wheelchair taxis that you can dial? / Well, I presume, but you would ask. / The buttons on the phone, if I remember rightly, relate to companies so if you want Capital Taxis you press button 1 and things like that. So obviously if you got that one and they said we're sorry we haven't got that but Fred Bloggs taxis have then you press the one for that, I presume. / 'Cause every taxi rank in London has a call, if there's no taxis there you can just pick up the phone and shout." (Older persons' group)

- Another weakness flagged within the older persons' discussion group was the **poor taxi service on Sundays**, in this case relating to a specific hospital journey :

"When we were making our trip to Exeter Hospital in an emergency and we ring one of the few numbers that my son, a wheelchair user, has in his mobile phone. We had to wait an hour and a half for it to come. And he tried other numbers and there was nobody who was going to be any quicker. This was a Sunday morning. / In that circumstance when your son required A&E and access is really, really difficult for him obviously wouldn't that have been an appropriate time to send for an ambulance? / My son's eye was infected and we had to go A&E on the Sunday morning. That wasn't really a case there of calling for an ambulance I don't think, I don't know. It never crossed my mind. An hour and a half we were told so we waited on the pavement for an hour and a half. Really I suppose we could have gone into a café or somewhere but then you don't want to see it arrive in the place prescribed and disappear because we weren't standing there. So we stood on the pavement, well I mean my son was sitting down in a wheelchair and I was standing up. But it did come. Took us to the hospital. And we tried to get him to come back for us in a couple of hours or three hours and he said, 'No, no,' he couldn't, he was busy." (Older persons' group)

"In the old days there was also a car service. 24 hours a day, every day. So you could guarantee getting a car of some sort. / The first thing I was put onto NSL, they are the people to whom business has been farmed out from the NHS. Well, they're based in Honiton, they were very unpleasant and they told me that if they had to come to Exeter, which they wouldn't do on a Sunday anyway, it would cost me a minimum of £50. And they were not in any way going to be helpful. But I've heard a lot of criticism about them on the television." (Older persons' group)

- Further discussion within the older persons' group expanded to cover the **poor service at weekends** more generally:

"I think there should be a better service at weekends and particularly because on a Sunday there are fewer buses so actually they ought to see that there ought to be better business there. / There is a market there." (Older persons' group)

"The MS therapy centre up near Tesco at the other end of town, when their minibus packs up it's not being replaced. So for people to get to the MS therapy centre, two thirds of whom will be in wheelchairs, they will have to get there somehow. Some of them have got mobility vehicles and things like that but there'll be a need for taxis without doubt. Fingers crossed the minibus doesn't pack up for a while. That goes out every day and picks up people to go in for a therapy. / And the Freedom Wheels are very good and that's run by volunteers. / That's good. / Excellent. / You can only book it from ten to twelve weekdays so you do your booking and then volunteers drive it / During the week the majority of people would be able to plan their journeys. The problem comes when you're out-of-hours either of an evening or on a Sunday, it just disappears." (Older persons' group)

- In the focus groups with drivers, there was some discussion of weekend coverage, especially for dealing with the **late-night surge in demand**, but most did not see this as a need for more hackney carriages:

"When the (marshall) scheme first started two years ago we were shifting on a Saturday night 1,040 people. Now we are shifting 600 people and dramatically it's gone down. The reason it's gone down (is) because there's too many taxis out there. So it used to be that two years ago, customers were waiting for taxis. Now it's the other way round, because taxis are waiting for customers, even on a Saturday night." (Hackney carriage driver)

"I drive mainly Friday and Saturday nights and sometimes a Sunday night, those are the peak times of the week, I reckon it's only people queuing 4% at a time; most of the time you cannot get onto a rank. Any business that has queues for 4% of time would be chuffed to bits so why change that?" (Hackney carriage driver)

"The only time there's a high demand for hackneys is at 2 o'clock in the morning Saturday night, isn't it, and then people are waiting ten minutes longer than they should be, but the rest of the week they're sat around doing nothing." (Private hire driver)

- A more hackney-specific topic that emerged several times during the focus groups with drivers was that **multiple ownership, or even non-driver ownership, of hackney plates does not seem fair**:

"The thing is, the hackney carriage, somebody has like four taxis, three taxis, two taxis, and they're renting the taxis and some people like me, we don't have any taxis. I'm driving for two years just paying the rent for the owner because some owners have two, three, four taxis. Everybody should have just one taxi allowed, not more than one, because it's not fair with the others. / Technically they're not supposed to. People buy the plates but the silly thing to my mind is, you pay up to £60,000 for a hackney plate and sit around, you can get a green private hire plate for nothing and last month we did over 78,000 jobs and turned work away. Why spend £60,000 on a plate when you can work probably more consistently with a plate that's free? There's no sense in it." (Private hire driver)

"(In the past) it was made clear when you got the plate that you got it because you wanted to drive. / And if you didn't want it you surrendered it, there was no value, and then the next person in the queue could have the plate. So you couldn't sell them on. / That was what it used to be years ago but it's not now." (Private hire driver)

"There's a technicality, it's not really the plate that's sold, you have to sell the car to get the plate, and I think that really the Council should look at it. It is not fair to the newcomers to the trade. Everybody should have a fair chance." (Private hire driver)

"When my owner finishes with his car, he could turn round and say, 'I'm handing it back to the Council,' and then the Council should have a waiting list of people that are there. And it should all be done on merits, how long they've been driving private hire for, etc., etc., how long they've been on the waiting list, how long they've lived in the city, all this sort of thing, and then turn round, get granted a plate from the one that's been returned back. / The Council used to have a waiting list because I was on it, for about three years and I never got a plate, I had to buy one." (Hackney carriage driver)

- Some of the drivers also commented that **plates should not be saleable and transferable:**

"I think what the Council would like to see is the monetary value of the plate disappear because then if that happened the rents would come down. If I could go up tomorrow and get a plate then why would I bother renting one at £400 odd a week? If they do that, if it'd bring the value down... if they made the plates non-transferable so that when an owner's finished with it bring back in the waiting system it would also bring down the cost of the rent. It's just an idea that one of my... Because I think that's the main reason the Council... when they see them changing hands for £70,000 plus. / That's why they don't want it, because they want the plate value there. If you go to any owner and say, 'If we made your plate non-transferable and when your family's finished it you hand it back, you're retired,' then that's it." (Private hire driver)

"It's a bit unfair to the new people coming into the hackneys that it's so hard for them to get a plate because they're competing with existing owners who own several. / It'd be nice if the plates were non-transferable." (Private hire driver)

"Why there should be a difference between his private hire car and me driving a hackney car, there shouldn't be. Why is his plate not worth £70,000? You know? Because at the end of the day these plates were originally issued out the same way as a private hire plate, it was free, so they shouldn't have that value on it." (Hackney carriage driver)

"Exeter City Council used to have the criteria for plates that people bought one, people sold one, people being issued one, won't get a licence, so we had a proper list of people, waiting. There's a committee decision on that, that criteria is still there but they don't use the criteria. But recently what they've been doing, they're issuing plates under 'circumstances', they call it. Those plates they issued, they change hands, and those guys, they're no longer within the trade. I blame Council for this because they should ask the trade, ask us and say, 'Who is this person? How do you know him? Where does he come from? What's his intention?' Then we could guide the Council about a person and then it's up to them to issue the plate. Last plate they issued, Exeter City Council gave him the plate, six months later he changed ownership - now he's a doorman!" (Hackney carriage driver)

- Most private hire drivers felt that **private hire driving is preferable to hackney carriage driving:**

"I certainly worked much longer hours on the hackneys when I was there than I did on the private hire, and we wouldn't allow the drivers to work the hours that the hackney drivers have to work the hours to earn the money. Having an experience of both, I can tell you the private hire is better than the hackneys, except that you don't have your independence." (Private hire driver)

"From a driver's point of view, if he wants to come into the hackney trade he will find it a struggle. He would be better off going to a private hire circuit, if he can, because you are looking at probably £400 a week rent if you want to take the car on full-time. And finding a car available to rent, which of course,

because you're limited with the 66 plates, there aren't that many left now to rent. So all that does then is push the rent up even higher because the next driver's, 'Well I'll pay £450 for it because I want that hackney.' And they'll work it flat out 24/7, kill the car in the process but the owner's happy because he's got an extra £50 a week for it, and keeping the numbers as they are, the plate value stays as it is, he can then turn round and say, 'Well buy the car off me, I'll sell it to you for £65,000,' when really they would be better off walking down to the car auction and spending four or five grand on a car, plating it with the Council and putting it on the private hire circuit." (Hackney carriage driver)

"It's (only) the independence of working for yourself. At the end of the day, the only reason you go to work is for money, and you would earn far more money often with a private hire plate than you would with the hackney, and you wouldn't have had to lay out so much money either. That £60,000 is better in your pocket than on the back of a car." (Private hire driver)

- One of the hackney drivers expanded on the final point made above, and the **appeal to hackney carriage drivers of working for themselves:**

"A lot of it boils down to the fact that a lot of drivers want their freedom and if you're working for Apple, for example, and you've told them, 'I'm going to be there at 6 o'clock to work,' you've got to be there at 6 o'clock. With a hackney you can be thinking, 'I can't be bothered. It's chucking down with rain, it's going to be a quiet night, the students are away, I'll stay off.' However, Apple don't work that way. They would've already taken bookings for that car knowing it's supposed to be on the road at 6 o'clock and expect it to be there at 6 o'clock, and I don't think a lot of drivers want that control. And then you've also got the logs that are kept. Apple run a system where they know, their computer knows, what that car's done, where it's been, what it's doing and how much it's charged a customer. You don't get that control with a hackney. Someone can jump in a taxi, they could go whichever route they want to get the person there, whereas if they did that on Apple they would be pulled into their office and told, 'Look, this is not the correct way to go, you've overcharged this customer, now refund the customer.' I don't think a lot of drivers want to be controlled and told when to start and finish work." (Hackney carriage driver)

- Another hackney carriage driver felt that drivers' enthusiasm to take up any new hackney plates issued might be misplaced:

"If they de-restrict, I'm sure there will be another 50 people going to apply for it and they will want to jump on the same bandwagon, but they'll realise it later on it's a mistake. The only purpose they will be applying for it is because they want to enjoy being self-employed, that's the only thing you get through this job." (Hackney carriage driver)

4.3 Opinions on increasing the number of hackney carriages

- The older persons' focus group included some discussion of whether more hackney carriages would be beneficial for the general public. There was no strong feeling about the issue but the balance of opinion in the group was in favour of more hackney carriages on the roads.

"Possibly I have stood outside John Lewis and there not be a taxi, especially on a wet day, they're all gone. So maybe there's a case for a few more Hackney Carriages." (Older persons' group)

"I think possibly Hackney Carriages could be stepped up in numbers a little bit because they're not commonly seen. Unfortunately if you stepped it up too much you're going to end up with fights on the taxi ranks 'cause they're trying to get twelve cars in a five car taxi rank and things like that. But I think that possibly would make things a little bit better." (Older persons' group)

"There weren't any (at John Lewis) this morning when I walked past, because I walk up and down there all the time every day, and I just can visualise it this morning, there weren't any there. Because I was walking and looking to see if maybe there was a bus that was going to take me home but there wasn't so I walked." (Older persons' group)

"I would say there is often nothing outside the Chevalier. Cause it's a long walk from there to John Lewis's if you're carrying things." (Older persons' group)

"I think (more hackneys) would be an advantage, especially if they pursue the idea of increasing the parking charges and then stopping any cars going in the centre of the city at all. We're going to need to have some method of taking people from shops to their cars. That sounds silly I know, but if they abolish all the private cars in the middle at the times when people are shopping, there's not going to be any way of getting around. I know there's a pay as you go bus but they don't answer the individual uses that people want. And that's what taxis are there for, one would have hoped. / I think there's certainly scope for more, whatever the figure is though ..?" (Older persons' group)

"You get an element of self-regulation anyway. If you've got a taxi firm and you're not making money then there's no point in having a taxi firm. An awful lot of them, the drivers are sub-contractors to the companies. They're self-employed. So if you've got a city this size 200 private hire cars suits it then do you want, would you want to set up another company? But I think Hackney Carriages, there aren't enough. You couldn't wait outside where my son lives because it's pedestrianised. Had there been a suitable taxi in the taxi rank he could have taken that but there wasn't. He has the four numbers of the only taxis that can take his chair." (Older persons' group)

- Some older people in the group felt that **private hire cars being allowed to pick up passengers without advance booking might benefit the public.**

"If there are no Hackneys, you aren't near a taxi rank and you need a taxi not everybody has a mobile phone and sometimes they run out of battery or run out of power and if a taxi comes along, for goodness sake! / And what's the mischief that's trying to be obviated by not allowing private cars to pick you up?" (Older persons' group)

"The private hire people sometimes get round this business of being on the street in that they say, no, I can't take you, but if I make a phone call to the office and act as your agent to hire the car, then I can take you, so that's what they do. To be honest it happens anyway, doesn't it? People stop private hire cars and they just say, no policemen around, get in the back. / That's never happened to me. / I've seen it happen all the time, of an evening in town, they're driving up and down the streets picking people up all the time." (Older persons' group)

- Among the private hire drivers who took part in the group, **knowledge of any information regarding the possible changes that the Council may make was limited:**

"The Council are not planning to de-regulate so much as restrict access by seeking a higher standard. That's as far as I know. / To be honest, that was the complete opposite of what I had heard and it was quite reassuring to hear that actually The way it had been presented to me in the past, and that was quite a while ago, was as a complete free-for-all." (Private hire driver)

- Private hire drivers tended to feel that there were **enough drivers of hackney carriages and private hire cars on the road already**:

"If you're interested in the point of view of private hire drivers, if every single one of them were in this room right now and you asked them what the single biggest problem is they'd say there was too many drivers. Irrespective of whether they're right or wrong, that's what they'd say. / A top earner will tell you, 'It's not worth joining our circuit,' and that's our top earner and he takes exceptional money / One driver may earn £400 a night, but there's always someone else earning on the same night nothing. It's not that the money's spread out. I've never taken 400 quid on a night. Well once or twice maybe I have, but you can't talk as if it's a regular thing" (Private hire driver)

"The drivers pick up exceptional money, but they would not encourage other people to come on the circuit, because it dilutes their income. / All taxi drivers will say there's too many drivers." (Private hire driver)

"There are peaks within the city where there aren't enough cars but it's minimal. Very few and far between. It's probably a Saturday night, going out between 7 and 8pm and coming home between 2am and 4am in the morning, or 1am and 4am in the morning. But there are also times within the year when the city is a ghost town. When the students are away ... People think it's like it is now (November) all the year round, but it's not. There are huge dips in the drivers' income, whether you are a private hire or a hackney, but fortunately we don't probably see the same dips as some of the hackneys do." (Private hire driver)

"We've got the contract with Exeter Airport and because of the lower earnings in the area we're having East Devon hackneys ask to join us, which they're doing. They're working at the airport. And perhaps next year it'll be easier for them to work around the city. But the money is there over the year. There are troughs but over the year the money on the private hire I would say is higher than the money over the year on the hackneys." (Private hire driver)

- Most private hire drivers felt that rather than issuing extra hackney plates, there were **enough private hire drivers and cars to meet demand**, allowing for some obstacles to doing so:

"I personally don't think (customers wait too long), I think that we meet the demand. I think if we do need more cars, we get more cars." (Private hire driver)

"I think John Harvey was wrong when he prevented the private hire turning right into Sybil(?) Street. It means our passengers have to wait the other side of the buildings in darker areas and that's not right for anyone. I'm sure he wouldn't want his wife or family waiting round the back of the buildings rather than in a well-lit street. / It's very difficult for private hire to pick up in the city centre even though we have probably 300, 400 more cars than the hackneys. It's strange that we are the ones who are restricted even though we provide the bigger service to the customer." (Private hire driver)

- Another private hire driver highlighted the **potential lowering of the standard of hackney carriage drivers through issuing a significant number of extra plates**:

"If you put on another ten (hackney) cars now, what's to say that you wouldn't put another ten cars on in another six months and then that really would dilute the trade, certainly from a hackney driver's point of view. These guys are already working long hours for smaller and smaller returns, if you put more cars on they're going to end up working longer and longer, the trade will fragment and the standards will come down. Like it has in Cardiff, like it has in Bristol and all the other big cities. You

“speak to a driver there, their incomes have gone through the floor, the standards have come down and it is hopeless.” (Private hire driver)

- Only two private hire drivers made comments in favour of a **limited number of extra hackney plates being issued**.

“If the Council issue a little bit more plates, I don’t know how many, I’m agreed to that, but I’m not agreed to complete de-restriction because that would put everyone off the business. If there’s too many hackneys on the road then basically anybody can have a taxi, work weekends, and then they have their own private job, and that affects the full-time taxi drivers, who’ll totally depend on a taxi. If they issue some extra plates, I don’t know how many, then maybe that’ll sort out the problem a little bit, but complete de-restriction would be not good for anybody.” (Private hire driver)

“I think you have a positive difference between Hackneys and private hire; hackneys have a very high profile but a very low availability in some circumstances, private hire provide a totally different type of service, but both of them are essential for the secondary transport system of this city and it needs more, not less.” (Private hire driver)

- A more common theme in the private hire drivers’ focus group was that of the **private hire and hackney carriage trades making more effort to co-operate to meet demand**, although some felt that this was a vain hope:

“(Combining two PH companies’ accounts) shows that they were well in excess of £100,000 a month. That’s work that the hackneys are unfortunate enough not to get a look-in on, and to my mind, the thing I find very frustrating is that so many of them are sitting earning no money when we are turning money away and it really needs a better liaison and development between the hackneys and the private hire to see that they benefit with what we can’t cope with. It shouldn’t be left that the public is frustrated and they aren’t earning.” (Private hire driver)

“You have your total independence as a hackney driver, but that comes at a price, which means a lower income than somebody working perhaps on Apple would get. But we also have people that only do limited hours for us and we had one man last week who simply worked one night but he took £400. Now without being unkind, I don’t think the hackneys could say that they did that. You might on a Friday or a Saturday but this wasn’t a Friday or a Saturday. And we are turning work away. I’d like to see (hackney) people involved with us so they pick up the money and we give a better service, because it’s not good for us to say, ‘I’m sorry, we can’t do it.’ But it requires goodwill on (both sides). It’s certainly there on our part.” (Private hire driver)

“Perhaps we could say to them (hackney drivers), ‘These are your quiet times, you must do the analysis. If you do the analysis and work out when you’re not really working, maybe we can come to an agreement on what it costs you to work for us.’ It certainly wouldn’t be the same as working full-time, but if that tied in with our peak periods and such, then we have the availability of more cars, you pay us perhaps nominal sums for work that we can’t cope. Anyway, there’s scope for us to discuss it.” (Private hire driver)

“In reality in the real world that would never ever happen in this town because there’s a big divide between hackney and private hire. / There shouldn’t be. / Well there is, and there always will be and nothing that the Council will do will change that. / There would be a few that would like to come over to private hire, I know from people that have spoken to me in the past, but their plate owners won’t let them. They don’t want to see Apple grow and succeed and probably take the station over ... / That’s more like it! / ... so their worry is that if you go and work for Apple you’re going to lose your rent and

they'll give it to someone else who's out there willing to rent the car. / At the moment this is the problem; if a hackney driver says 'I want to work with Apple,' lots of people say, 'If you go to Apple you lose your station permit, you are not allowed to work.' (Private hire driver)

"They never will get on. I hate to say it, it's chalk and cheese, always has been a big divide there; they do things their way, we do things our way, we'd still never help each other or work with each other. It's silly really because there are times when we need them to help us out and I'm sure they want to earn the money, but in reality it won't work." (Private hire driver)

Within the **hackney carriage drivers' group**, participants made it very clear that all present believed that the Council were considering either increasing the number of hackney carriage plates issued, or removing the limit altogether. The comments made by hackney drivers in response to this, for them, crucial part of the discussion were therefore given in some length and detail.

Private hire drivers sometimes made similar comments supporting the hackney drivers' point of view, and these are therefore also included within the comments grouped together in the rest of this section.

- Overall, the hackney carriage drivers felt that there was **not enough evidence of public demand to justify increasing the number of plates**:

"We have over 50 pages of our customers which is from the time you said you're going to start consultation. We started taking the signatures from our customers which says they are nice and happy and even the waiting time is zero." (Hackney carriage driver)

"People are happy with our service and we have really more than enough taxis and nobody's waiting in the taxi rank for taking a taxi." (Hackney carriage driver)

"How long do I wait for a £5 fare from Exeter St David's to University? Believe me, sometimes we are waiting more than two hours. Last night I waited from half past ten, I was second position, I got a job ten past eleven. So I wish Exeter City Council Licensing Committee, all the councillors, they come to see us down at the rank, watch us for a week, two weeks, three weeks, whatever they want. It's not easy to work and earn money at this time. From last year the students who used to pay £3,000 a year, now they are paying £9,000 a year to university. We've lost lots of business from the students; they are not coming to the rank any more, they are walking. Paddington train coming at half past seven in the evening, there used to be at least 50 jobs five years ago, now London Paddington is coming for five jobs or six jobs. You can watch us. You can just bring the CCTV camera and record us what really happens there." (Hackney carriage driver)

"Some of the older people, a full-time driver here, there is not a job for them, they have to go to private hire. (Named driver) is over there. Honestly, private hire pay the money, he has to work over there, because he said, 'I can't find a job in the station, I can't park.' / Literally can't make enough money on the rank to cover his obviously bills, he's working for a private hire company to top up obviously." (Hackney carriage driver)

"Last time we faced de-restriction, before the committee made a decision we went to the Head of Exeter City Council, and also we had a PC came to the meeting, so they made a speech to the councillors and they went against de-restriction. They explained that de-restriction isn't in the best interests of Exeter. I'm sure that will happen again because de-restriction isn't in the best interests of Exeter at all; we are a small city, population 129,000 people." (Hackney carriage driver)

"If we can't handle the customers, we would ask the Council to issue more plates! / Because we like to work happily with our customers, we want to offer good customer service; it's job satisfaction rather than all money all the time. It's nice to be happy with your customers. It's as simple as that." (Hackney carriage driver)

- Hackney carriage drivers also commented that there was **insufficient space on the ranks at the current level of demand to allow for any more plates being licensed:**

"(Recently) the licensing officer came and asked me to leave the rank, 'There is no space to park.' I don't know why they bring all this out because they know themselves they can chuck you out of the ranks so where are they going to park the rest of the taxis if they give it to them? The rank is long, they're full up, even the next road behind which is North Street, you park there, they come and ask us to leave the rank so we can't park there, on the weekends especially." (Hackney carriage driver)

"At the moment we have lots of taxis. I said to the last meeting that when I come to park my taxi outside John Lewis, honestly, believe me, I came there, I turned round, all around the building four times until I got a space to park outside John Lewis, before waiting and then getting a customer." (Hackney carriage driver)

"St David's used to be 45 spaces, they increased it to 60. Even there, there are police complaining - 40 or 50 taxis come over here, where can they park? They can't say, 'Go home, come back Saturday night.' And then people complain, and the Council say, 'Oh, we'll make a restriction.' So we need to reflect this point with the City Council. I said, 'Look, if you have more taxis there is nowhere to park. Where can they park it?' This causes trouble for the police, health and safety, as they said, more pollution, more problems for the taxi driver and also public." (Hackney carriage driver)

"We pay rent to go down the station, we pay about £600 by 60 (taxis), so £36,000 a year to go down there. Any new plates issued... there's a limited number go down there. The cars on John Lewis join a waiting list to go down there, so if you issue five new plates they can only go to John Lewis rank, they can't go on the station, and the John Lewis rank is well full-up at the moment. If you de-restrict altogether and you had 20, 30, 40 cars, you could only go on that one rank. / Which is 11 spaces!" (Hackney carriage driver)

"Exeter St David's taxi is private land, and if we are paying for that about £700 a year, nearly £36,000, it's still not a guarantee that we keep this rank forever because a private landlord, they can kick us out any time they like. If 50 taxis from St David's moved to John Lewis rank and you issue another 50, what then?" (Hackney carriage driver)

"You look around at the ranks down at St David's Station and up at John Lewis's, and guys are sat there for a long, long time. You don't really want more hackney carriages here; there's enough parking up already. Alright, Saturday night at two o'clock in the morning, yeah, of course there are never enough taxis, but ..." (Private hire driver)

- Private hire drivers added further comments about the situation on the rank at St David's station in particular:

"Maybe a couple of times a day there's a situation of no hackneys left at St David's. / You do get issues where you've had trains running late, they're delayed, and then you end up with them coming in behind each other. / You'll get one mad rush and the rank'll be empty for a while. Luckily enough Apple are down there so some will walk into Apple's office. But eventually... it'll probably take 15, maybe 20 minutes - because I marshal sometimes on a Sunday night - but by then it will catch back up again and people will be sat there waiting for another hour for the next lot of trains to come back in. So there's a

lot of dead time. And in that time that the trains are coming in you can probably manage to squeeze maybe one or two jobs in before you're then sat back down again waiting. So it might look busy when you walk out and there's a queue of people but it doesn't take long to shift them." (Private hire driver)

"We can't put any more taxis down there anyway because St David's is limited to the amount of taxis that are allowed to work down there. They pay a permit and it's been restricted, so only 59 of the 67 hackneys can actually work there at any time. So if, for example, the Council were to grant a new plate they couldn't come and work that car down at St David's Station anyway, they'd have to buy a permit off the railway and it's restricted at 59 at the moment. That rank is totally independent, it's got nothing to do with the City Council at all, it's controlled by the railway." (Private hire driver)

- Some hackney carriage drivers also **feared a process of complete de-regulation, and the problems that could bring:**

"Most times in cities, people are adequately covered with private hire because everybody calls them a 'taxi' and they ring them to get home to go out. The hackneys are used mostly late at night for getting people home. Out of all the cities and towns I visit where they've deregulated, it's chaos; there's too many taxis, nowhere to park on the ranks, stations are complaining. There's overcharging, there's fights, there's cherry-picking, people picking their jobs, and this is all over the country. The drivers are really uninterested in their trade anymore because their earnings have dropped so much and they're all wishing they could turn the clock back. And where they are a little bit organised, where they have a chairman, like we have here, and a well-run city and taxi trade, and where they have de-regulated they're all wishing they hadn't, even the Councils are wishing they hadn't. They've cut it off now so they're not issuing any more plates. Whereas our system here, where they have a survey every couple of years and we look at the population we have and issue the numbers, that's the fairest way forward." (Hackney carriage driver)

- One of the themes common to many hackney carriage drivers' comments was that they **needed to protect the investment they had made in their vehicles against trade falling away through diluted demand:**

"We've operated as a business since God knows how long, and we've found it the most difficult environment at the moment ever, and I just can't see how increasing the number (of plates) is going to help. I mean, these chaps take a lot of care in what they're doing, some have invested lifelong savings, and it just seems unfair that it just takes it away from them. I think we're all doing a good job at the moment and, I just don't see how it's going to improve it." (Hackney carriage driver)

"The Government says anyone who has invested money in the taxi shouldn't lose their investment. So where has my money come from (when) I bought a taxi? I was working about seven years, very hard work and the money has come from my sweat and blood, and also I was working about two and a half years in a chicken factory and I was working two years in cash and carry, and I got some money and then I borrowed from all of my friends and family some money and then I bought a taxi. I have two children, my wife is full-time going to the college, she can't work and she can't do anything. In this situation, if the Council is going to bring more taxis, that means they're going to take myself away from my family. At the moment I can earn every day maybe like £30 to £35, or £40 if I'm lucky or £50 if I'm lucky. And, and the Council is going to bring more taxis?? I can earn maybe half of that, it depends how many more taxis come on the rank. I don't know where the money I invested on the hackney is going to. So that means in the past ten and a half years I've been working so hard but I earn nothing, I'll have lost all of my money." (Hackney carriage driver)

"Private hire companies don't keep wheelchair vehicles because it's too expensive. I was issued a plate about 10 years ago. I was told, 'Can you buy wheelchair-accessible London cab? £31,000 cash.' It was

impossible to buy it but I made it with the finance. In eight years I paid £55,000 for a London cab, and obviously I'm losing my capital as well because I pay that money for the business. Now after this consultation, if it's going to be (more hackneys), I don't think anybody can buy a London cab in this business – it's impossible, because there is no money to survive. You will pay £800 a month finance, and then this car, as special wheelchair cars are, you've got only one garage licensed, you have to go there. That costs about £700 and £800 every month to pay to the one dealer; we're stuck for three years. That thing is impossible.” (Hackney carriage driver)

“Since last year, only six months, I paid £2,700 for one bill to the mechanic, and another £1,500 on another one. I have to pay all this, I pay my credit card too. For the last five months I've paid £157 interest rate on my credit card. I couldn't clear this £5,000 because I have to work, I have to repay my card and I have all this pressure on my life, on my family, our children. So if the number of taxis increases, I have to die, there is no way, because what shall I do? Ten years being in the trade and suddenly I lose my job, I lose my family and everything!” (Hackney carriage driver)

“If they do make the decision against us, we are going to claim compensation because, as my friend said, we'll have lost value. Many of them here are working day and night. They have to work, no sleep. In terms of our taxis, if our properties are devalued we are going to take the Council to the court complaining that we deserve compensation and even shouldn't pay the Council Tax, to be honest.” (Hackney carriage driver)

“What they're trying to do, now we are in their hands basically. The private hire company bosses, such as the guy who bought 400 cars in one day in Exeter, but never one wheelchair (accessible vehicle) extra on top of it, now they'll try and destroy this business and obviously we will go to them for a job. This is the reason one of the guys, private guy, is pushing these things, to destroy this business, he will get us. Now we number 60- 65 including other drivers, owner, businessmen, and we look after this business. The business makes little value on top of it. Why? Because we look after customers and we have to. I have to look after my customers all the way through, never cheat, take him, help him. I do every crazy thing to get money as long as I can stay in this business. Now things are changing, the politics, the doors are open. You can get very cheap labour here. I'm here, I've got a mortgage, I've got kids, at school and everything, I'm in the system paying tax, Council Tax, business rates, all these things. If I lose my business, I can't pay those things. If I lose my earnings, and earn a little, I can't pay. Who pays? Okay, the guy comes from Eastern Europe, nothing has he got. What does he need? He needs £20, £30 a day. These are the things that we will lose, and then (private hire) will pick them up and then we will be destroyed completely.” (Hackney carriage driver)

- Hackney carriage drivers also **voiced their frustration with the Council for proposing changes to the taxi service:**

“Within the last 14 years our taxi trade has been walking on eggshells; there's always been a threat for our trade, de-restriction, now they're trying it again. Last time the trade was faced with de-restriction the councillors and the committee educated themselves. They rang up the other Councils in cities who have de-restricted, and then they educated themselves and when they came to vote they voted against it because they realised that they were in big, big, big trouble.” (Hackney carriage driver)

“We've just done the local elections and we've got more Labour seats in the committee, so those councillors are young councillors, they're not old councillors. My advice to those young councillors will be, 'Educate yourself, ring up to the other Councils, find out what de-restriction is, find out what pollution is, then make up your own mind.’” (Hackney carriage driver)

“For the safety of passengers, we as a taxi driver trade are paying for the marshals to stay on the weekend in Exeter. So we're taking the pressure, taxi drivers, not the Council, we're paying for it,

they're charging us. When you renew your plate every year, the Council will take your money without too much explanation, to be honest with you." (Hackney carriage driver)

"The Council had three options; consultation, de-restriction, or survey, they picked up the consultation. The reason they picked up the consultation, one of the councillors turned around and said that, 'We give them the plates for nothing. They sell it for £60,000.' That was wrong. He influenced all the committee members. They put their hands up and they said, 'Consultation,' because of his speech. Now, the Law Commission report, page 164, clearly indicates that average plate in Exeter £30,000, Torbay £20,000, Reading £25,000, so where does that £60,000 come from?" (Hackney carriage driver)

"We had a taxi forum meeting on 19th September. On the agenda, item 3 was the Law Commission report and proposed bill. The Lord Chancellor's department, the Law Commission, made a report to the Government. Page 251, item 3, indicates that the restricted cities will stay restricted, cities unrestricted will stay unrestricted. So they are using the status quo, what they're saying actually is leave it is it is. 2015 is the elections, the report, the consultation. After 2015 the Government will take a decision on regulating United Kingdom and Wales. So where's the rush? Why are the Councils rushing? Why can't they use 292 pages of the Law Commission report? It took two years' consultation, the answer is in the report. Secondly, the Law Commission report p.262, says that they'll get rid of the 1847 Act, hackney carriages will be gone, it will be just 'the taxi'. Make it clear to the public, regulating the whole United Kingdom and Wales, and private hire will stay private hire - they won't be able to call themselves 'taxi', that's all he's said. But 292 pages, the Exeter City Council, they've read it, this is why they're trying to pull a fast one on our taxi trade and we are not having it. Exeter city is restricted, we wish to stay restricted." (Hackney carriage driver)

"The trade is frustrated because of Exeter City Council's decision. Now, if it goes for the worst, if it gets de-restricted, then by law we've got three days to appeal against it. Well I'm sure that my trade will appeal against it, but three days isn't enough to appeal against it. Because if you go to the shop, if you buy an item, they'll say to you, "You can bring it back within 14 days", not within 3 days! So just to let the councillors know now that the trade is going to get legal advice if it goes forward with de-restriction. We will appeal against it. We've got so much in our bag, we'll take as long as it takes. Yes, the trade will be ready to appeal against it." (Hackney carriage driver)

- Although there was some support in the hackney carriage drivers' group for conducting an **unmet demand survey**, other comments made in the private hire drivers' group cast doubt on the validity of this type of survey:

"I think as well as doing the consultation I think they should do the survey as well to prove there's not unmet demand." (Hackney carriage driver)

"Three years ago Exeter City Council (did a) pop-up survey, March 2011, so on that pop-up survey we (were) never consulted as a trade. All of a sudden on a Saturday night we see the camera on top of Fore Street focusing on our taxi rank and we see another camera outside Next focusing on John Lewis. We found out that Exeter City Council started doing a survey in the city without consulting the trade. There again, we proved there is no unmet demand. Exeter City Council issued more plates, which is a bit naughty really because what's the point having a survey and then you're still issuing plates? So the plates they issued on the unmet demand affected us dramatically. Now there's too many taxis out there. Do we need any more taxis? The answer is no. My question to the Council is that it's OK, you can sit on the table, you can go for consultation, you can go for this, you can go for that, but there's only one councillor that comes out on a Saturday night. He stands on the corner of Mary Archer Street with the police on public safety. He even told me that there are too many taxis - this was the councillor's words to me. So now, do we need any more taxis? Definitely not." (Hackney carriage driver)

"The trouble with the survey is it's flawed from the start because they know it's coming out, they know that they're stood doing whichever ranks they're doing that night. / The drivers know where they are, what ranks they're on, because they're stood there with their clipboards monitoring, the cameras are up, so they cover it. The owners that are out there don't want to lose the rent that they're charging at the moment so they don't want more plates issued. They don't want the value of the plate to go down, so they want those spaces covered. So, for example, if they knew that North Street, which nobody uses, is getting surveyed that day, they're going to cover it. They will lose a day's earnings to make sure that rank's covered. And they'll work between themselves so then it comes back, 'There was nobody waiting for a taxi on North Street, it's covered.' Now once that survey's done for that week, or however long they've done, it comes back and reports, 'There's no unmet demand, there's nobody waiting for taxis, the biggest wait was such and such.' That's because everybody's put the effort in; they've got all the cars on the road. They've had them fixed as best they can, got them out on the road and covered all the ranks that are going to be done. So the survey report comes back saying there's no unmet demand."
(Private hire driver)

"They tend to pick the survey when the students are away as well so it's a quiet town. So it is flawed really in a sense." (Private hire driver)

- Finally in this section, two of the comments made by hackney carriage drivers drew attention to economic aspects of the hackney carriage trade:

"The city council, when they have a new retail development, look at the effect the new retail development has on the city centre shops. Well, a new set of hackney carriages on the fleet would severely affect the running cost and the profitability of the businesses in the city. Now, I reckon there's about 100 families that depend on hackney carriages for their living, so they should take that into account." (Hackney carriage driver)

"This business used to be okay 'til 2008 when the recession hit and affected us afterwards. Some of the reports to the Council say that these guys are renting the taxis from the owner, for £350 a week. That money is probably a major problem for the Council, they're thinking, 'Oh too much money! How can they even pay it?' But if the owner is giving the taxi to the driver, paying his insurance which is over £2,000 or £3,000 a year and then paying all the maintenance, wear and tear, including all the tyres and everything, and gives it to the guy, saying 'There is your taxi for you. Everything's ready. Go to work.' And it's £350 a week to pay back. If we go back to a rental company and rent a car, how much does it cost you for one week? Some owners put half of the petrol in it as well. The rental company put a restriction on the mileage. Our guy, who'll be happy, he says, 'Who does these things? Give me a taxi! I don't have to buy another car for my family. We can use this for family reasons, go to London, unlimited mileage span, owner pays!' And so £350 – it is too cheap!" (Hackney carriage driver)

4.4 Opinions of a requirement for new hackney carriages to be low emission/ electric

The group discussions with each type of respondent asked for opinions of several different requirements that could be placed on the vehicles and drivers relating to any new hackney plates issued. One such requirement discussed was for all new licensed vehicles to meet the Euro 6 emissions standards, and possibly, in future, to be electric.

- Drivers in both the hackney carriage and private hire drivers' groups initially pointed out what they saw as flaws in the logic behind the effort to curb emissions relating to new plates:

"If you issue more plates you're creating congestion, you're creating pollution, those issues are very important." (Hackney carriage driver)

“Exeter City Council have two zones where they have severe pollution on the roads and they’re keen to reduce the nitric oxide levels and particles levels to them. So one of the reasons why they want to go from Euro 5 emissions standard to Euro 6 emissions standard is because Euro 6 has a marginally better regulation to it, but if they put more cars on the rank the cars will start out cold; they start out cold now but they’ll be even colder. So in fact the AA and the RAC clearly state that if a car is cold the emissions are 25% higher, so in fact having a cold Euro 6 emission car will give out substantially more emissions than a warm Euro 5 emission car. So it defeats the whole object of the city-wide plan of reducing emissions. And the Council really don’t consider us when they do road things. There’s a lane near Marsh Barton, they won’t let taxis go down there, they allow buses only. You can actually have a device fitted to your taxis, which they have in Bath, Chester and York, to go through traffic lights. It recognises the taxi as it goes through them and changes. So why don’t the city have other plans like that for us so that we can reduce our waiting time in traffic to reduce our emissions, rather than have Euro 6 vehicles?” (Hackney carriage driver)

“TXs, in terms of emissions, are one of the highest emitting cars, aren’t they? The London style cabs, they’re not at all eco. So in one respect they want the wheelchair vehicle, this, that and the other, but, if you want an eco car that’s not the car to have.” (Private hire driver)

- One of the hackney carriage drivers suggested a **discount to encourage take-up of low emission/hybrid vehicles**. A private hire driver also commented on a similar theme:

“Hybrids are expensive cars to buy. I know the driver’s obviously saving on fuel and road tax but it would be nice if the Council had realised that drivers have spent a lot of money on their vehicle and would give you a reduced plate. It would encourage other people then to go and buy these things. Everybody’s worried about lowering the emissions, but there’s got to be a bit of give and take here.” (Hackney carriage driver)

“At Gemini we had a large fleet of hybrids and the emissions came down significantly. We approached the Council to see if they would be interested in giving us the plates at a lower rate for this but that never materialised even though there was an interest expressed. Because of the situation financially with the Council, they decided that we would have to pay the same for a hybrid as any other vehicle. So in many ways, there isn’t that much of a gain for spending that much more on a hybrid rather than another vehicle. Which is why now you don’t see so many private hire vehicles as electric because they’re so expensive out there.” (Private hire driver)

- Both hackney carriage and private hire drivers felt that a requirement for **electric vehicles would be a step too far given the limited options currently available**:

“(Electric’s) not applicable, though, for hackneys, because of how many miles later you have to charge the batteries and everything else? For private it might be different, they might just select the jobs, and that sort of thing for cosmetic reason, but for us as a hackney you’re just out and about all the time. Somebody might want to go to Bristol or Barnstaple, you’re talking about 100 miles, you’ve got to be able to charge your battery. / We could do dual fuel, mix of petrol and battery. / Well, still it’s not feasible, it’s not practical for a hackney taxi.” (Hackney carriage driver)

“We’re confusing a little bit between electric cars and hybrid cars. So the hybrid cars, the Toyota Prius, the Honda Civic, Audi do one, Lexus has just brought out one, £38,000 – very nice! But they really don’t have the luggage space. All of us work mainly from the station where people have luggage – students have multiple luggage now – so a lot of us have quite large cars to take luggage and there is not even a hybrid car which is suitable for us.” (Hackney carriage driver)

"An electric car is no good to the taxi trade. We'll send somebody to Norwich or Ipswich. Where's he going to find the means of charging it that's guaranteed? It's an ideal thought and maybe if the Council cars run around locally, fine, but it's not for the taxi trade." (Private hire driver)

"I'd be pretty gutted if I was at the front of the rank and – like I had the other night – someone walked out and said, 'Take me to Andover,' and I'm looking thinking, 'How am I going to charge this up on the way up? Am I going to get back?'" (Hackney carriage driver)

- Some of the discussion in the private hire drivers' group noted some **potential new technology for low-emissions in the field**:

"We've got somebody in Exminster who's putting a unit in cars and trailing them and apparently he's had a grant from the university. There's a unit to go in the cars that will convert the emissions to hydrogen which is really clean. The university has given him a very substantial grant to work on this and so have two or three other places. He's coming back to Apple in January or February to put a trial unit in the car. This will bring the emissions right the way down. And these units will cost somewhere in the region of about £400 each; it's a lot cheaper than buying some of the other cars. For the university to take an interest is very encouraging." (Private hire driver)

- The older persons' focus group discussion confirmed **some level of public interest in, if not demand for, low emission or electric vehicles**, while appreciating that there may be some difficulties:

"The public will look for electric cars. They feel that they're helping the environment. I'm talking about private hire. So the public, when they're phoning, they would keep that number of that company." (Hackney carriage driver)

"Electric cars are lovely, you can't hear them, I mean they need to have a bell in the front really because you can't hear them coming and going but they are so comfortable. And they're so good for the eco system. / Yes, I think we're all aiming for that, aren't we? / Very commendable." (Older persons' group)

"If I had a choice I would certainly go for that but I mean if you were at a taxi rank, you go for the one in front, you can't pick and choose." (Older persons' group)

"So long as pressure wasn't put on them to actually change vehicles ... / It would be such a problem too, if you said, no, no I don't want to go in that one, I want to go in this one." (Older persons' group)

4.5 Opinions of a requirement for new hackney carriages to have CCTV installed

- The balance of opinion among drivers in both types of drivers' focus groups was fairly evenly balanced for and against having to install CCTV in new hackney carriages. Where people did not support the idea, this was down to cost as much as any practical or moral concern:

"I doubt that people would object to CCTV, they wouldn't mind, but they cost money. We pay over £1,000 for a station permit, £2,000 for insurance, £700 for the City Council; every driver at least with a taxi if they're going to work they need to find £4,000 a year they have to pay, and pay out every month. For the CCTV camera I doubt that they will object, they will have it, but they don't want de-restriction." (Hackney carriage driver)

"We're happy, no problem at all. Regarding having less incidents with CCTV, we never had any problem with customers, any accidents, it's all been made up." (Hackney carriage driver)

"I worked in another town previously with a CCTV camera in my private hire car. Didn't use it much anyway. We spent the money many years back, it was there, it cost about £450, but then got nothing out of it, personally, myself." (Hackney carriage driver)

"We should secure the marshals in the taxi rank really at the weekends, that's more safety than having a CCTV camera in the car./ They might have a camera themselves as well. If marshalls have their camera, CCTV or whatever, then that's a point of safety really. / At the moment we finance the marshalls on two ranks on Saturday night from 12 'til 4am, we pay for that in our extra licence fee. I don't know but I would suggest that if there were more plates issued we wouldn't be prepared to finance it. I'm absolutely certain the police would say that the crime level in the city centre has gone down – absolutely guarantee it." (Hackney carriage driver)

- Some drivers identified **passengers' privacy concerns** as a potential issue:

"If I was in a taxi with my girlfriend and I'm married at the same time, I'm having an affair, I wouldn't like it. It's very simple to explain. It's privacy rights." (Hackney carriage driver)

"We are hackneys, we go after the nightclubs, picking up lots of customers. So if some of them don't want to be seen on CCTV, (that cab) will lose the job." (Hackney carriage driver)

"I wouldn't mind CCTV because, don't forget, the CCTV would only be accessible by the licensing officer or the police, not for general viewing. I couldn't look at it and no one else could look at it. If it made people safer, I wouldn't mind it. I'd prefer not to because some people don't like it. I am worried about it, but I'm not against it." (Hackney carriage driver) The idea of CCTV drew **little support in the older persons' group:**

"No, we don't need that here. / No. Does much crime go on in taxis? / No. That's overkill. I wouldn't have thought there's a need for that. / And these sort of things all put up the price, don't they? The minute you did that then I think the price would substantially have to go up." (Older persons' group)

- **Safety** was the main motivation for drivers to support CCTV in hackney carriages, firstly for drivers themselves in case of either assault or false accusations:

"In the 15 years I drove a hackney I had once an assault where somebody held a knife at my throat, once in 15 years. Considering the thousands of jobs I did that's nothing, I could've been attacked just as easily on the street. I think however, whatever anybody says, there is racism in the trade, particularly on a Friday and a Saturday night when people have been drinking, and I think that (hackney drivers) do need all the protection that's available." (Private hire driver)

"One of my friends three years ago, somebody smashed the back of his head, some customer, but he went to hospital and he nearly died. After that he left the taxi trade and everything and he sold the taxi and he doesn't do it now. If he could have had CCTV on the hackney carriage, then it should be better for the protection of the driver." (Hackney carriage driver)

"I think if there is CCTV in the car and people know they're being watched it does change their behaviour, drunk or not. They have to watch what they say, watch what they do, I think. / I don't think people always realise just the amount of aggression and unpleasantness, not just hackneys but all of the drivers suffer, and they really do." (Private hire driver)

"Often it could work to the driver's advantage because some of the young women when they get drunk are far worse than the young men when they get drunk. I was on the quay once with a couple of drunk women fighting in the back of the car. I went and got a policeman, he came, he put his head into the

car and then said to me, 'Sorry, mate,' and walked off, and when I said, 'That's not good enough,' he said, 'I daren't risk my job, why should I do it?'" (Private hire driver)

"I had an allegation made against me which went through the courts and that lot, and, luckily enough, it was found that she was pulling a fast one. But if I'd had that camera I wouldn't have been suspended for the time that it was going through the courts. So you've got that advantage, it's there." (Private hire driver)

- **Safety of passengers** was another reason given by drivers to support CCTV in hackney carriages:

"If there's going to be de-restriction obviously they need these type of things because the crime will be increased. The only way to control it is to put the cameras in the cab and they'll find out what's going on." (Hackney carriage driver)

"Maybe women on their own might prefer CCTV. Apple or Gemini and Capital has a very good reputation for safety, in terms of if a lady's on her own and needs to get home she'd phone that cab because she can trust them. But, as you say, it might sort of reinforce the safety aspect thinking, "Ooh, that's okay, I'm on CCTV," regardless of whether it's hackney or private hire. / Now, maybe if the CCTV was in there they would feel safer because they know that driver isn't going to get up to anything while he's being watched on camera. / Yeah. And by having the camera in the car they think, 'Well that driver doesn't mind being filmed and he's proud of what he does and the standards are high.'" (Private hire driver)

- In addition to personal safety, drivers also highlighted **the benefit that CCTV could offer in ensuring that passengers are not over-charged by their driver:**

"I'm sure there are rogue drivers, both private hire and hackney, who wouldn't want CCTV for the very reason that they don't want to be seen to be doing what they're doing. Big Brother watching them is what they don't like the sound of." (Private hire driver)

"I hate to say it, I know the CCTV is not welcome, but if it was put in a hackney vehicle at least it would show somebody in the organisation that that driver went the wrong way, because a lot of things we hear about is hackney drivers going the wrong way. A lot of these new guys who come in don't have a clue where they're going and they're charging customers all over the place. So the CCTV would prove that the driver didn't have a clue where he was going and has gone the wrong way round everywhere, so not only to protect the driver, it's there to protect the customer as well." (Private hire driver)

"I've done the survey on the rank and gone up to people and drivers, 'Would you have CCTV fitted?' because I've been working closely with the police on this issue and looking at prices, , because the police are fed-up with the amount of complaints that are coming in for over-charging on bilkings and things like that. When they get there the police are saying, 'Well hang on a minute, how comes this fare's £35?' Now, you see, of course, if all that's on the camera there's no argument, it settles that argument. If the driver says he went here, he went there, then he went there, then he ended up there, yeah, but if the customer says, 'No, I didn't, I went straight from Fore Street to here... ', it's there, it's all on camera, they can follow the whole route and how long it is and what the argument was over, you've got it all there, and then you're not left with that argument or got a civil matter. Bilkings a criminal offence, and if you've got that evidential proof you're going to get your fare back instead of arguing and having to take it as a civil matter later on." (Hackney carriage driver)

"We do also have a problem – and I'm not pointing any fingers or anything with hackneys – but we do have problems where we regularly get calls saying, 'I got ripped off by one of your cars. They said it was £25 to Exmouth and it ended up being £40.' They didn't get in the right car but the car they got in had

Apple cards in the car because they'd acquired them from somewhere and were saying, 'Oh we've been called by Apple.' And that happens a lot, which is difficult." (Private hire driver)

- Among the other reasons given by drivers for supporting CCTV was **reduced insurance premiums:**

"I know one guy who's put CCTV into all his cars because it lowers his insurance by 15%. / That's a lot of money! / Yeah, particularly if someone goes into the back of you, it stops them turning round saying, 'You reversed into me,' and all these sorts of things./ This chap's got one front, one back, one side." (Private hire driver)

4.6 Opinions of a requirement for new hackney carriages to be wheelchair-accessible vehicles

Among the additional requirements that could be placed on new hackney carriage plates, the issue of wheelchair-accessible vehicles generated the most comment, and arose at various stages in each group discussion.

- In the older persons' group discussion, the question was raised of **how a wheelchair-accessible vehicle should actually be defined:**

"There are two categories aren't there, because the smaller wheelchairs will fit in much more easily to the more 'standard' type of car. It's just unfortunate that my son and plenty of other people have to have a chair that's a little bit higher. There was one taxi that started off in the road where we live and I said, 'Oh, good, we'll get friendly with that driver, we can have an account and everything will be easy.' Didn't work out like that because when my son got into the taxi it was just too low and although he did one or two journeys with that it wasn't very comfortable and probably not very safe. But anyway that chap has sold his taxi to somebody else and has now got a flash car. / You need to draw a distinction, don't you, between people who can actually get out of their wheelchairs, and you just want the space for the wheelchair, and people that need to drive in to the vehicle in their wheelchair, when you do definitely need the straps." (Older persons' group)

"Depends what you mean by wheelchair-accessible. / If that means you fold up a wheelchair and put it in the back with a suitcase. / Well, that's different. / That's rubbish, I can do that in my car. / Yeah, you expect that! / MS people who can manage four or five steps from their wheelchair and then get in and sit down, and then the wheelchair folds up flat, does that make that wheelchair-accessible?" (Older persons' group)

"I've seen swing-out seats on a private car with somebody who has MS, and considered whether it would be useful for us, but it isn't useful because my son can't stand on his legs." (Older persons' group)

- Some in the private hire drivers' and older peoples' groups **questioned whether more wheelchair-accessible vehicles were really needed:**

"I know that we're very short of disabled cars on Apple but I know a guy who's got his own wheelchair vehicle now, his own company going, but he's still sat around doing nothing. I know there are a lot of disabled people out there in wheelchairs but I never hear stories about 'Mr. Smith didn't get a wheelchair car today because they're all off the rank or they're all doing work on private hire circuits.' Is there really a problem with wheelchair people round here? / But most of them book sensibly ahead of time, don't they?" (Private hire driver)

"I don't think you could ever expect to have a lot of these taxis where you can stay in your wheelchair and have everything big, because they are very expensive vehicles, obviously. And also they always need a skilled driver who can do all these things. You couldn't expect these to be standing there all day. / I wouldn't think so, it's far too expensive. / It depends on the design of them because some of them can still get four people in them. So you could still use it as a normal taxi." (Older persons' group)

"Why don't those hackneys with wheelchair access promote their business? They've got the vehicle, why don't they promote it?" (Private hire driver)

- From drivers' points of view, the major problem was **the cost involved in buying and running a wheelchair-accessible vehicle:**

"It's interesting the cost of these vehicles that the Council's suggesting. A London cab painted red, yellow, green or whatever colour, would be about £38,000. Most wheelchair-accessible vehicles at the moment, like Fiat Doblos or that sort, I believe – I stand to be corrected – they're about £15,000. I have a saloon car, I've just replaced my car with a three year old Peugeot and it's cost me £6,000. So the increased cost is going to severely damage our business." (Hackney carriage driver)

"We supported the Council on having swivel seats. I have a swivel seat in my car which cost £1,800. I was told if I didn't fight this and accepted it, we would keep these sort of vehicles. No one has ever used my swivel seats in my car in six years, not once have I swivelled it out. And now, in fact, the other day when I tried to use it I couldn't remember how to swivel it out. So we've supported the Council in what they wanted us to do by having swivel seats, it's now an obligation for them to keep to what they agreed to. I haven't protested against it in the past – you can imagine I would have protested – because we had a verbal agreement if we did that that would stop us having to have wheelchair-accessible vehicles." (Hackney carriage driver)

"Disabled vehicles are very, very expensive to buy. Yes, there are some hackneys that are wheelchair-accessible. Nobody wants to look at the disabled in a lower light and treat them any less but the fact is we (private hire) don't have the number of disabled vehicles because they are so expensive and you don't get the return back. And obviously nobody wants to sort of discriminate but it would be nice if there was some sort of level where there would be a subsidy or something available so there could be more provision for disabled use." (Private hire driver)

"This is the problem. Nobody wants to rip off disabled people but because of the way the Council do the system and the price of the vehicle, you have to charge disabled people more than normal able-bodied people to make it pay for the vehicle, don't you? / I think unless they subsidise vehicles for the disabled or there's a provision, I don't think there's any way you could offer the same service to disabled people at the same price because we are here to make money even though no one wants to discriminate." (Private hire driver)

- One of the private hire drivers pointed out that the high price may actually be a positive factor in ensuring that the right type of new hackney carriage drivers come into the trade :

"If the Council push the restrictions up and make it more difficult to actually get a hackney plate, issue more plates but make the restrictions a lot higher, so, for example, instead of putting a Fiat Doblo on at £12,000, they've got a requirement for a side-loading wheelchair-accessible vehicle like a London cab or a Peugeot E7, which is going to cost you somewhere between £35,000 and £40,000, you might then see it's genuine people that want to come into the trade and not someone who's thinking, 'I want a plate because tomorrow I can sell it down the road for £65,000.' They're not going to get it and then go and sell it to his mate down the road later and try and make some profit on it, if the restrictions were a lot higher. At the moment they can just stick a Doblo on." (Private hire driver)

- Some drivers also commented that **the standard of wheelchair-accessible vehicle should be set higher:**

"I think (new plates) need to still be for a wheelchair-accessible vehicle, but I also think it should be a higher standard of wheelchair-accessible vehicle, not these Doblos. It needs to go into either a Mercedes Vito or a London TX. These people that have had these TXs before in the city, as hackneys have gone to Doblos, in doing that they've lost two or three seats, because your seating capacity would've been six or seven in a London cab, but you can only seat four in a Doblo. That's the biggest trouble we struggle with now on a Friday, Saturday night. You'll get eight marines stood waiting for a taxi, they want to go back in 7-seaters, you know. So the 7-seaters are pretty thin on the ground."
(Hackney carriage driver)

"Since the last unmet demand surveys were done, there's been five or six plates issued since then and all of those have been sold on. Now, the majority of those plates were originally won on the grounds that there's a call for a wheelchair-accessible vehicle when they've gone in and said their little story. One that's recently gone through the court case - he hasn't got a vehicle but he's waiting to put it on, plate 67 - he went round all the nursing homes, all the disabled homes and that lot, they wrote him letters and he's got a file that thick, saying that, 'Yeah, they do struggle to get a wheelchair-accessible vehicle.' Plonks that in front of the Council, says, 'This is what I want, I want to be able to put a TX London style cab on because they're saying there's not enough available, blah, blah, blah.' He's been granted a plate now through the courts. However, he's now going back to the courts because he doesn't want to stick with the vehicle that he's been asked to get. He wants to stick it on a Doblo because it's cheaper to buy, and we're getting back to this situation again of having a proper vehicle." (Private hire driver)

- Several hackney carriage drivers suggested that **it should be not only the hackney carriage sector that takes responsibility for providing a wheelchair-accessible service**, and this was supported by some in the older persons' group:

"Private hire companies need more wheelchair (-accessible vehicles) than us because we work in town driving around. Very rarely do you see somebody on a wheelchair going night-clubbing. If they did, we have at least 40 taxis with the wheelchair option, but private hire companies, they don't even have hardly any, maybe one, and they've got a monopoly now, these two companies bought by one guy. I mean, they don't even have one wheelchair-accessible vehicle - and them controlling the price in this city! They have no problem. Look at the problems that we are having! It's just not fair." (Hackney carriage driver)

"I was surprised how many of the (private hire) companies don't have a facility for disabled people in the first place. / It's only a few. / There aren't very many. A number of the Exeter firms have been taken over by a company called Apple. Now, I wrote to them just to find out what's happening. I've not had a reply. I wrote to the boss of Apple to say, basically, 'What's the score with disabled facilities? Do you have any plans for the future now you've taken the companies over?' No response. I've spoken to a few other private hire firms because I've got some contacts within the taxi firms. But there aren't a lot of facilities." (Hackney carriage driver)

"If they're being licensed by the council, the council must, surely, have some responsibility to make sure they're suitable to be licensed. If we're going to licence Fred Bloggs to set up a taxi business, then we should be saying to him, 'You want 12 taxis? Two of them must be capable of taking disabled people before you get your licence'. / In the same way that building regulations these days say you've got to have so many, a certain percentage of affordable houses and some for disabled people as well." (Older persons' group)

"Perhaps if it was more centralised that several people with wheelchair-accessible vehicles could just work for the one company, it might work better, and it could also then go into the weekend which is

important, isn't it? If they're talking about doctors working seven days a week, I certainly think taxis ought to." (Older persons' group)

- Linked to the same theme, some drivers – both hackney carriage and private hire – noted that the **limitations of wheelchair-accessible vehicles can deter some customers:**

"We've got quite a lot of wheelchair-accessible hackneys in our fleet, but for cars operating for the hotels or somewhere else, because that job is for private hire, these guys should buy one of those (wheelchair-accessible) cars rather than buying BMW or Mercedes, making a pose,. We're spending loads of money, and for the repairs too. In hackney cars, some of the customers don't want to go out of town. I'm driving a London cab, I've got the flip seat and some customers don't like it because it's not comfortable for the long journey. Private hire guys are all taking all the cream of the jobs and the cream of the customers. What's left on the market doesn't give us much value for the job really." (Hackney carriage driver)

"They call them the 'bread vans'. If you've got them at the front (of the rank) people would want to go back to a saloon car because they don't want to travel down country lanes with that, going through potholes, banging around, ramps clattering. They would rather be getting in the saloon car where it's all nice and sound and comfortable." (Hackney carriage driver)

"The other thing that I don't think some people take into consideration, they are not the best vehicles to drive, certainly not the Doblo, and some of the customers hate going in wheelchair-accessible vehicles because they're uncomfortable. There's not enough work just to do wheelchair-only work and there's a lot of rattling, there's a lot of vibration in these vehicles. / They're built for utility, aren't they, not luxury? / Yeah. And if we send them off to Heathrow where we do a lot of long distance work, the customers absolutely hate it and they say, 'Don't send one of those again.' So it's a very difficult game." (Private hire driver)

- Some hackney carriage drivers also noted that wheelchair-accessible vehicles do not suit all types of people with mobility issues:

"The Council want a side entrance E6 emission standard vehicle? I believe at this moment there's only two; a London taxi and another one. So in fact the Council's proposals dramatically reduce the standard. In fact, if someone's got a little bit of knee trouble or severe knee trouble, they don't want to step up into a vehicle, they won't want to go into those." (Hackney carriage driver)

"I have a wheel chair access taxi . When we're picking up the customers, the old ladies are never going to use my taxi because they say this is high. I had a London taxi, it was green, it was very nice, but they never used my taxi, they said, 'This is high.' They come to me and just say, 'Sorry darling, this is too high, I'm going to the next car.'" (Hackney carriage driver)

"What's not mentioned is that a lot of people in wheelchairs, when you get up beside the car or the cab they want to get out and sit in the seat. They don't want to travel in the wheelchair, and there's an awful lot like that, aren't there?" (Hackney carriage driver)

- One of the private hire drivers recognised that **private hire companies and the hackney carriage trade could co-operate more to help people needing wheelchair access:**

"If private hire and the hackneys got on a lot easier, then private hire could call on a lot of wheelchair-accessible vehicles. 60% of the hackney fleet is now wheelchair-accessible, They could say, 'Look, give us a hand, we've got a load of private hire bookings coming in for wheelchair people,' and help them out. Because private hire haven't got so many wheelchair-accessible vehicles, they struggle. / We've got five at Apple/ (In the past) I would even pay over the top of the fare (to a hackney driver) to get

someone to look after the customer, and then somewhere someone instructed them not to assist what was Capital in those days, and it was very negative because I paid cash to the drivers without any hesitation.” (Private hire driver)

4.7 Opinions of a requirement for improved standards and knowledge for new hackney carriage drivers

- Drivers in the focus groups recognised that there may be **room to improve the current type of test(s) used to assess new hackney carriage drivers to maintain standards**, and this was often mixed with a view that any new plates issued could only lower standards:

“I have an example of Coventry City Council; there is a course for people to become a taxi driver. That course takes one week, it’s three days English lectures and another two days of Maths lecture, so if anybody (wants to) become a taxi driver as a foreign driver, British or non-British, they take an actual English test so the driver is able to write, reading, speaking, listening and reading. Then there is another test, take 100 questions, they have to write an article, whatever they want to say, then the driver, if they pass, they give you a badge. But Exeter just recently said last year, for no reason, they are happy and drivers from everywhere apply for a badge because it’s 30 questions over an hour. . .? If they want to increase the choice or the safety for customers, it’s not increasing the number of hackneys, but it must drive the standard of quality for the knowledge and the driver.” (Hackney carriage driver)

“Issuing more plates will create more taxis or people in the ranks but I can’t see how the quality will be maintained. I mean, what people here are interested in, well they have a vested interest in maintaining quality, and yet remove the restrictions and people flood in, presumably, so what are the conditions of these people coming in, working, getting their licence or whatever, compared with what we’re doing at the moment, which is really a professional job, I think.” (Hackney carriage driver)

“I can see the idea of starting up your own taxi business, but if you’re going to take Joe Smith off the streets so you’re just going to get into a car and drive round like a taxi driver, where’s the quality of work there? What Apple and Capital have generally done is bought up taxi drivers and taught these drivers their way of doing the business. If you’ve got one-man-bands all starting up, you’re not going to get the quality of driver there that you ‘d have done if it was a private hire driver.” (Private hire driver)

“In other cities where they’ve (removed number restrictions) it’s actually brought down the standards rather than improved standards. / It fragments the trade. / I think a big responsibility the Council has, but that they don’t face, is that they issue licences and say, ‘Here you are, go out and play’, but they don’t tell the person the rules of the game, and I think it needs far more training and instruction than is given.” (Private hire driver)

- Private hire drivers expressed **concerns over the quality of some hackney carriage drivers, and their knowledge of the city, indicating support for improved testing and training:**

“How the Council license these drivers and they’ve got through the test quite easily, but some of them have gone in not for the difficult test but the easier test. They buy a sat nav and they rely solely on the sat nav. They put it in the windscreen. And if you’re at St David’s Station, for example, and you programme that sat nav to take you the fastest route and the customer walks in and says, ‘Can you take me to Exeter Airport?’ it will take you out along Exbridges, onto Alphington Road, onto the A30, onto the M5, around the M5 and onto the A30 up towards Exeter Airport, putting a fare that should be only about £16 up to £32!” (Private hire driver)

"Hackney drivers, you get to a point where the people jump in your car and they're so used to now saying an address and the driver not knowing where they're going they don't tell you, they'll just give you an area, say Pinhoe, and then when you get to Pinhoe they then start directing you, 'Left here, mate, right here.' And then when you get there you think, 'Where am I? Oh, when did this get built?' And you could do with going back on a refresher course just because the roads are building so fast around Exeter at the moment. There are roads that I don't know, and get stuck with. It's one reason I carry my guide pack straight on the 3G, Google Earth, 'Oh yeah, that's where it is.'" (Hackney carriage driver)

"Well I think the difference between private hire and hackney is hackney are always picking up from a rank or from Debenhams, whereas we (private hire) are going out at 7 o'clock at night to Stoke Cann and Thorverton, Cranbrook, picking people up. / Our business is out there, it's not in one place. / You've got to find it. It comes on your data reg, you've got to go to Mill Cottage on such and such a lane, you've got to find it. We get the customer, 'Down here, mate, through that gateway, through that field, over that ford and you're there.'" (Private hire driver)

"I'm not just saying it's just hackneys - quite often what you see on small companies, anybody can get a badge, go out there and start doing the job and it's not necessarily that they're doing a good job, quite often we hear horror stories. When we have a horror story within our company... and we have them ... but we deal with it and we sack them, but then they go off and work somewhere else." (Private hire driver)

- Some private hire drivers suggested that the **private hire companies could play more of a part in formal training for the city's taxi drivers:**

"I think it's the validity of that test. Anybody can memorise those 60 questions, but do they actually know the city? And the answer probably is no. / The new system that's been introduced, while it's more difficult, it's actually not correct, it's not a good system, some of the questions are ambiguous, they're incorrect. / Some of the questions... It gives you four different routes and the driver would not take any of them. / The right thing is if people like Apple or the other companies start driver training schools and they should be responsible for the standard of their circuit, and we would do a damned sight better job than the knowledge test that's required by the Council. / You'd have experienced people teaching them, this is the thing." (Private hire driver)

"There used to be a green badge and a blue badge. You started with the green badge which was private hire, and I think you carried that for two years before you applied to become a hackney driver. That way you got all the support that you needed from the operators while you learnt the city, because learning enough to pass the badge is not the same as knowing the city. And I would like to see the two tier system reintroduced, private hire first to move on to the hackneys. Private hire is always classed as the driving skill. / It's the opposite now. You're allowed to score a lot less to get your private hire badge. Because the way the Council looked at it is you always had the office for back-up, if you got lost you could then radio back and say, 'Look, I can't find it, it's not in my A to Z, blah, blah, blah,' and they would direct you in - as long as you had a decent enough operator. And then once you learnt the streets you could then obviously come back and re-sit your hackney badge and, if you wanted to, move on to the hackney trade. But that's gone, you can just pass your hackney badge tomorrow. I see it so many times at St David's, 'Can you take me to Exeter College?' they're looking at it, they're sat at the front of the rank looking at it and they can't find it because it wasn't part of the original 60 questions they were sent through." (Private hire driver)

"Apple's ambition is to have a training school for drivers and I think this goes back to what I said about the two badge system. The Council should look seriously at reintroducing that, so they'd come onto a

service like Apple where they are taught the trade before they strike out for their own independence. It would be to their benefit as well as to the public's benefit." (Private hire driver)

"The training school, to me... it's old-fashioned, I know it is, we should move on from this, but it's the only way forward here. If you want to have taxi drivers, private hire or hackney, who know where they're going, they should be put into a school, start at the very bottom. These guys don't run off an operator, if they've got problems in term of where to go, like 'Where is Exeter College?' they can't ring up somebody and say, 'By the way, where's Exeter College?' At least with the private hires you've got someone to fall back onto. They've got a basis to build on but with the best will in the world they need people that will help them go on another stage." (Private hire driver)

4.8 Opinions of the Council's suggestion for a new livery for all hackney carriages

In each group, the participants looked at the alternative suggested designs for a new livery for Exeter hackney carriages, on a London cab style of vehicle.

- Some of the private hire drivers felt that **the livery was simply not an important priority for hackney carriage licensing:**

"The colours of the cars look very, very nice but before you start deciding about the colours of the cars you've got to train the people inside the cars, the way they dress, the way they conduct their business, the way that they go. But that is a small thing to sort out, is the colours, it's about the people driving the cars, to be quite honest, because that is a reflection of what Exeter's all about, it's the people driving that car, not the colour of the car." (Private hire driver)

"I think the colour of the cars is a nice romantic view but in terms of the sort of priorities its way down there. / Bottom of the list. / Way down." (Private hire driver)

- Some participants in the older persons' group felt that any such **livery change might be unrealistic:**

"I think the thing from the council's point of view though is selling it to the owners. / Albeit if it was said, the next time you replace your Mercedes or whatever it is it's got to be a London taxi, that might work, but you're not going to get them changing their fleet of cars next week because the council rules have changed." (Older persons' group)

"I think they're fine as they are. Green might be nice, but the main thing is not to make people change what they've got. It's a very expensive business having a car sprayed." (Older persons' group)

"I think it's very smart but in this day and age of trying to keep costs down I think it's superfluous, but very nice." (Older persons' group)

- Regardless of the colour and design selected, several participants commented on the **potential benefits of all hackney carriages changing to the same livery:**

"If you go to London you can see a taxi coming from the other end of Oxford Street. Here they're sort of a mix and match of different types of cars. A London taxi, if its yellow light's on, is available for hire and you can see it for miles away coming towards you whereas here, to be honest, half the time in town I wouldn't know whether it was a hackney carriage or whether it was a private hire. / Not until it's gone by. / The plate on the back makes it obvious but that's no good. / No 'cause by then it's gone." (Older persons' group)

"At the end of the day, they (Bristol) are saying that the only thing they've ever seen come out of it is when people are coming in from like Cardiff or anything like that and trying to work the streets, the

licensing officer can sit in the CCTV room and look, 'Oh yeah, look, he shouldn't be doing that,' and it makes his job easier because it's not a blue car." (Hackney carriage driver)

- One hackney carriage driver spotted some **drawbacks of the fleet of hackneys using the same standard livery:**

"A problem with that is that now, if we get a complaint come in, we can narrow it down slightly, because they say, 'It was a silver car.' 'Right, okay, was it hackney? Was it a private hire car?' 'It was a hackney, he had the roof sign on.' 'Right, OK.' So then you can go round... you'd narrow it down to, say, five or six cars. Admittedly, when it comes as a black Doblo you're a bit stumped. But by making it all one colour, the whole 67 cars, and they say, 'Yeah, it was a green taxi,' well ..." (Hackney carriage driver)

"Bristol's Bristol blue. I meet quite often with the Bristol reps and that lot at the National Taxi Association and they've got this problem." (Hackney carriage driver)

"Another problem Bristol also have is when the vehicle comes off the road they've got to find a hire company that's willing to shrink-wrap or spray a car blue so they can have a courtesy car for a week while theirs is being repaired, because that's what they've got to have on the road up there." (Hackney carriage driver)

- Finally, one participant in the older persons' group commented that wheelchair accessibility as well as livery could identify a hackney carriage:

"With regard to recognising what is and what isn't a taxi, some of these smaller cars are actually wheelchair friendly, not necessarily the biggest wheelchairs but the little Fiat Doblo cars which don't really immediately strike you as a taxi. But they have been bought specially so that wheelchairs can get in. I think that's why we're starting to get a model of what the design of the taxi is like, and how you recognise it." (Older persons' group)

Appendix 1: Telephone Survey Questionnaire

Q1. Do you use taxis in Exeter?

- Yes
- No

Q1a. Please could you tell me why you don't use taxis in Exeter?

READ OUT LIST BELOW, AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY

- Cost
- Concerns over safety
- I use other modes of transport
- Other reason [CODE AND TYPE IN BELOW]
- _____
- _____

Q2. What kind of taxis do you use?

READ OUT THE LIST BELOW, BUT CODE ONE ANSWER ONLY .

- Private Hire only, by which we mean a taxi booked in advance or by phone
- Hackney Carriages only, by which we mean from a taxi rank or flagged down on-street
- A combination of both of those

Q2a. Please could you tell me why you only use Private Hire vehicles? (those which have been booked in advance or by phone)

READ OUT LIST BELOW, AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

- You feel safer booking in advance
- Convenience
- Cost
- You don't like waiting at a rank
- You have special requirements
- Other reason
- _____
- _____

Q3. How often do you use Hackney Carriages in Exeter? These are the taxis you get from a rank or flag down on-street.

READ OUT OPTIONS AND CODE ONE ANSWER ONLY. CODE THE FINAL ANSWER EVEN IF ONLY 'Once a year' OR SO.

- Daily
- Not daily, but at least once a week
- Less than once a week, but at least once a month
- Less than once a month, but a few times a year

Q4. How long do you usually wait for a Hackney Carriage?

READ OUT OPTIONS AND CODE ONE ANSWER ONLY

- 1 to 5 minutes
- 6 to 10 minutes
- 11 to 15 minutes
- 15 to 30 minutes
- 30 minutes or longer

Q5. When do you usually use Hackney Carriages?

| | Daytime | Early evening | Late night | Never use on these days |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Weekdays (Monday to Thursday) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Weekends (Friday to Sunday) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q6. How safe do you feel when using Hackney Carriages? Please answer on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1=Very unsafe, but 5 = Very safe.

- 5= Very safe
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1=Very unsafe

Q6a. Please could you tell me why you don't feel safe using Hackney Carriages?

READ OUT LIST BELOW, AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

- Concerns about waiting at the rank
- Concerns about the driver
- Concerns about the safety of the vehicle
- Other reason

Q7. In some cities, taxis have a distinctive colour scheme, such as yellow New York taxis, or blue for taxis in Bristol. Would you support the idea of introducing a distinctive colour scheme for Exeter's Hackney Carriages?

Yes
No

Q8. The Council could require that in-cab CCTV is fitted to protect occupants. Do you think this is a good idea?

IF RESPONDENT DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT CCTV IS, EXPLAIN: CCTV is a closed-circuit TV camera, where the taxi operator has a security camera placed in every taxi.

Yes
No
Don't know/ Not sure

Q9. How do you think that Hackney Carriages in Exeter could be improved?

READ OUT LIST, AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

More Hackney Carriages
Better standards for vehicles
Better standards for drivers
More electric or hybrid powered vehicles
Lower fares
Reduced waiting time at the rank
Other improvement (CODE AND TYPE IN)

Q10a. Do you think taxi fares for Hackney Carriages in Exeter are reasonable?

Yes
No
Don't know/ Not sure

Q10b. Do you think taxi fares for Private Hire taxis in Exeter are reasonable?

Yes
No
Don't know/ Not sure

Q11. How satisfied are you with the service overall? Please answer on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1=Very satisfied, but 5 = Very dissatisfied.

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 5=Very satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1=Very dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q11a. Please could you tell me why you're not satisfied with the service?

READ OUT LIST BELOW, AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| The driver's knowledge of the area (or lack of knowledge) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The driver's manner | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cleanliness of the vehicle | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cost of the service | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Waiting times at the rank | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other reason (CODE AND TYPE IN BELOW) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
-

Q12. Which of the following best describes you?

READ OUT LIST AND CODE ONE ANSWER ONLY

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Member of the public | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Taxi Driver with a Hackney Licence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Taxi Driver but not with a Hackney Licence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employed in the taxi trade, but not as a driver | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q13. I'd just like to finish with a few questions about you to make sure that we're speaking to a wide range of people in this survey.

Firstly, please could you confirm which of these age groups you're in?

READ OUT LIST BELOW

- | | |
|----------|--------------------------|
| 16 to 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25 to 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35 to 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 45 to 54 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 55 to 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 65+ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Refused | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q14. Please could you tell me your home postcode?

Postcode: _____

Q15. Gender [DO NOT ASK RESPONDENT]Male Female Transgender **Q16. Do you suffer from a disability which limits your day-to-day activities?**Yes No **Q17. Please could you tell me which of these best describes your ethnic group?****READ OUT LIST AND CODE ONE ANSWER ONLY.**White - British White - other Black - British Black - other Asian - British Asian - other Other ethnic group (CODE AND TYPE IN
BELOW) **Q18. Would you be willing to be invited to take part in a focus group to be held later this month at the Civic Centre in Exeter to discuss this subject?****THEY WOULD FIRST BE RE-CONTACTED BY EXETER CITY COUNCIL WITH FURTHER DETAILS. THE GROUP ITSELF WOULD BE RUN BY MARKETING MEANS.**Yes No **Q18a. And would you be willing for your answers to this survey to be passed on to the Council, so that they can select different types of people to invite to the focus group?**Yes No

Q18b. Please could you confirm your name and the best telephone number or email address that the Council could contact you on if they want to invite you to take part in a focus group? IF THIS IS THE BEST NUMBER FOR THEM, JUST TYPE "SAME NUMBER" IN THE TELEPHONE NUMBER BOX BELOW.

Name: _____

Email address OR Telephone number: _____

.....

That's all of the questions that I have for you today. Thank you very much for sparing your time. Just to confirm, my name is (...) and I've been calling today from Marketing Means, an independent research agency, on behalf of Exeter City Council.

If you have any queries or if you'd just like to verify that this call is genuine, I can give you either our number or the Market Research Society's phone number.

If Yes:

Marketing Means: 0800 849 8014

Market Research Society: 0500 396 999

Appendix 2: Weighting of the Telephone Survey Sample

The data given by respondents to the telephone survey for their age band and gender were weighted to the demographic profile of Exeter residents aged 18+, collected in the 2011 Census. The table below shows the 'raw' profile of respondents in the first pair of data columns and the weighted profile of respondents in the second pair of data columns.

| SUB-GROUP TYPE | Number of respondents (Unweighted) | % of 500 respondents (Unweighted) | Number of respondents (Weighted) | % of 500 respondents (Weighted) |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| GENDER: | | | | |
| Male | 230 | 46% | 239 | 48% |
| Female | 270 | 54% | 261 | 52% |
| AGE: | | | | |
| Under 35 | 138 | 28% | 184 | 37% |
| 35-44 | 68 | 14% | 72 | 14% |
| 45-54 | 77 | 15% | 82 | 16% |
| 55-64 | 89 | 18% | 67 | 13% |
| 65+ | 126 | 25% | 93 | 19% |
| DISABILITY: | | | | |
| Disability or long-term limiting condition | 83 | 17% | 72 | 14% |
| No disability or long-term limiting condition | 427 | 83% | 428 | 86% |
| ETHNICITY: | | | | |
| White – British | 428 | 86% | 425 | 85% |
| White – other | 42 | 8% | 42 | 8% |
| Other | 30 | 6% | 33 | 7% |
| RESPONDENT STATUS: | | | | |
| Member of the public | 493 | 98% | 492 | 98% |
| Taxi driver with a hackney licence | 3 | 1% | 4 | 1% |
| Taxi driver – no hackney licence | 1 | <1% | 1 | <1% |
| Employed in the taxi trade, not as a driver | 3 | 1% | 4 | 1% |

Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

Welcome and introductions

The group discussion is being led by Marketing Means (Ashburton-based MR agency) on behalf of Exeter City Council.

Marketing Means' moderator is independent and unconnected to the Council [but the group will be introduced by Rob Simmonds, consultation manager, who will also help to answer any queries that arise during the course of the discussion].

Exeter City Council is conducting five focus groups at the Civic Centre with different groups with an interest in the Exeter taxi trade.

The groups are intended to consult with the taxi trade, the public, and other interested parties. The aim is to consider whether to remove the policy of taxi restriction in a managed way, and how it should be done. Can it be done in a way that improves the quality controls of taxis and prevents any negative impact from de-restriction?

We're looking to hear your views on the proposed changes, so that the Council can be sure that as many voices as possible have been taken into account before any final decisions on those changes are made.

- We'll start with introductions and a general discussion of how well you think the system works at the moment.
- The group will last for no longer than an hour and a half, so – we'll finish by ... pm.

Before starting the group discussion, we need to cover a few 'housekeeping' items:

- Safety rules of the room, fire exits, toilets etc.
- 'Ground rules' for the group.
 - This discussion will be conducted in line with the MRS Code of Conduct.
 - The discussion is being audio-recorded (people can leave if they are not happy to be recorded).
 - We have (15-20) people here, so this is a large group. You'll all get a chance to have your say, and we'll split into smaller groups sometimes to give you chance to discuss things outside the full group.
 - Everyone can chip in at any time, but please try to let someone finish what they are saying and avoid talking over other people. I'll do my best to let everyone have a fair say.
 - Some of the topics will generate contrasting reactions, and we're keen to cover the whole range of opinions. Don't be afraid to speak up if you find yourself thinking differently to what other people are saying!

- Please be reassured that the Council will hear the voice of the group, not individuals.

START RECORDING

- Introductions (introduce person next to you – name/ how long driven a cab/ hackney and private?/ favourite part or view of Exeter)

2. General discussion to set out key issues (20 minutes)

Start discussion around flip-chart, setting out the DoT's reasons for recommending that councils do not restrict the number of hackney carriage licences.

Display the following points on flipchart:

Restricted numbers of Hackney Cab licences:

- *Restrict those wanting to start up a taxi business*
- *Reduce the availability of taxis*
- *Increase waiting times for customers*
- *Reduce choice and safety for customers*

This is your chance to have your say. Starting with any of those points on the board, please could you tell me what you think about how fair those reasons given are?

From your point of view, what does the DoT (and/or the Council) need to understand better about the day-to-day requirements/limitations of driving a hackney cab?

➤ SPLIT INTO GROUPS FOR QUICK DISCUSSION

Regardless of how you feel as a driver, please now put yourself in the customers' shoes. From the customers' point of view, on which of those reasons do you think that the DoT has a fair point?

PROMPT THEM TO THINK ABOUT DIFFERENT TYPES OF CUSTOMERS – vulnerable adults/ elderly/ u-25s/ mobility-limited – How well do they think the current system meets the needs of each of those groups?

- Are they aware of any specific issues that those groups have?
- Have any of the drivers had experience of situations where their hackney cab status made it more/less difficult to give the service that customers wanted?
- Would removing restrictions benefit customers in some ways?
- In what way will it not benefit customers?
- What do you think customers' concerns about hackney cabs would be at the moment? Why don't they use them more?

- Outside of broadening the pool of hackney cabs and drivers, what could be done to improve customers' views and attract them to taking a hackney rather than a private hire cab?

Overall, what special circumstances exist in Exeter to justify the Council maintaining the restriction?

2. Higher Quality Standards (10 minutes)

The Council is also looking at other ways of increasing quality standards for licensed cabs in the city.

One of those ways is to reduce emissions. New licences currently have to meet the Euro 5 standard for emissions. To strengthen the move toward lower emissions, the Council could require all new licensed vehicles to meet the higher Euro 6 standard.

For the same reason, the Council would also like to see the number of electric taxis to increase.

- What do you think of those ideas?
 - Will they bring you any benefits, as hackney drivers?
 - What will the problems be?
 - Could they actually offer more opportunities as customers opt for a lower emission taxi?

Another option could be for the Council to require CCTV to be installed in hackney cabs, to improve driver and passenger safety. This is already used in some cities, as you may know.

- Again, what do you think of that idea?
 - Will having CCTV bring you any benefit as the driver? Would it give you greater peace of mind?
 - What problems would it cause?
 - Do you think that having CCTV in-cab could actually help to attract customers to what they see as a safer option?

- Do you think setting a higher quality bar for new drivers to enter the hackney trade will help you and other current drivers? Why is that?

3. Wheelchair access/ disabled users (10 minutes)

Currently, the Council's policy requires that all new Hackney carriage applications are wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

We understand that about half of the licenced vehicles in Exeter are standard saloons that have not been adapted for wheelchair use.

- How many of you have vehicles that are not wheelchair-accessible? Have you changed vehicle recently to become wheelchair-accessible? What made you do that?
- Should the requirement be that all licensed vehicles are wheelchair-accessible? Why/ Why not?
- If the restriction comes into force, what could the Council do to help drivers whose vehicles are not wheelchair-accessible?
- *Any problems with finding a wheelchair accessible vehicle that is also able to meet the targets for low emissions?*

4. Livery (5-10 minutes)

Currently, the Council's policy requires is to have no colour restriction on Hackney carriage vehicles. The Council is considering whether to have one colour scheme to clearly identify vehicles that they have licensed.

- What do you think of these ideas?
- What could the Council learn from other cities in this regard? Has anyone ever driven a licensed cab using a non-black livery/ colour scheme?
 - If so, was that a good or a bad thing? Would you like to see the Council bring this in?
- These are some of the designs that the Council is considering if it does make the switch to standard livery. What do you think of these designs (labelled A,B,C, D)
 - What are the pros and cons of switching to this type of design for all vehicles?

5. Knowledge (5-10 minutes)

Currently, all new, but not existing, licensed drivers are required to pass a drivers' knowledge test.

- Do you agree that existing drivers should also be required to pass the drivers' knowledge test on a 3 year basis?
- **[IF NOT ALREADY COVERED]** If the business is de-regulated, what other tests would you like to see the Council put in place for drivers to qualify as hackney carriage drivers?
- As existing hackney drivers, are you wary that if de-regulation happens, you may face even more tests or requirements to maintain your status? Which would concern you most, and why?

6. Final thoughts (5-10 minutes)

Following on from what we've discussed today, are there any points that we haven't covered in terms of advantages and disadvantages of removing the limit on the number of hackney licenses issued?

FINALLY ...

We've had quite a wide ranging discussion this afternoon, and that's all we wanted to cover. Does anyone have any final questions or points to raise about anything that we've discussed?

THANK AND CLOSE