

Civic Licensing – Coronavirus (Covid-19) advice and guidance

(Updated 13 October 2020)

This guidance is for current licence holders and anyone intending to apply for a new licence.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 sets out the rules for businesses and the public during the Covid-19 period of emergency.

A copy of the Regulations can be found at the below link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2020/279/contents>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2020/318/contents/made>

Highland Licensing Committee meetings

The Highland Licensing Committee meetings are now being held virtually on Microsoft Teams.

Any relevant party who would be entitled to be heard at a meeting will be notified and provided with a link to allow you to join and participate at the virtual meeting. You will also be able to provide a written submission in support of your case.

Hearings will be deemed to take place on the day that written submissions are considered (not the date they are lodged) and this date of determination will form the basis of calculating any further key dates for notifications of decisions and/or appeals.

Submitting new applications

We would request that applications are made electronically at the following link:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1125/licences_permits_and_permissions

We would also request that, if possible, that all paperwork is sent electronically to licensing@highland.gov.uk

If you do not have scanned/electronic copies, please send photographs of the documentation ensuring that the image is clear and legible.

Please note that the Scottish Government have made amendments to the licensing legislation. Section 3 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 has been amended to prolong the time that local authorities have to consider applications. The licensing authority now has 12 months to determine the application.

Existing licence holders

The legislation has also been amended in relation to late applications for renewals. The time limits have been extended to allow Council's to accept a late renewal application for **up to 3 months** after a licence expires, on cause shown.

If you are unable to re-apply before your expiry date or have exceeded your expiry date, please email licensing@highland.gov.uk confirming your reason for lateness.

If you are provided with an extension, please make sure you still apply for your renewal prior to the date of the extended expiry date. If you apply for your renewal prior to the date of the extended expiry date, the existing licence will continue until the determination of your renewal application. If you do not, no further extension can be provided and you would have to apply for the grant of a new licence and would not be able to trade until this has been determined.

Taxi/Private Hire Car Drivers

General advice

Drivers that continue to work should follow the health advice on the Government website:

https://www.gov.scot/utm_source=www2.gov.scot&utm_medium=banner&utm_content=notification-banner-text-button&utm_campaign=www2

The Highland Council advises that all drivers follow the Government issued advice and take simple and sensible steps at all times including encouraging drivers to:

- Always carry tissues and use them to catch coughs and sneezes
- Dispose of used tissues in the bin as soon as possible
- Wash hands with soap and water, or use sanitiser gel, to kill germs
- Clean surfaces regularly with sanitising wipes or spray to get rid of germs

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

If drivers are worried about Covid 19 symptoms, they should follow NHS guidance:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Taxi/ Private Hire Car Medicals

If you or a member of your household has Covid-19 or any of the symptoms and are self-isolating, please do not attend any medical appointment. Please contact your area office or licensing@highland.gov.uk to confirm this.

If your medical appointment is cancelled, we will be in touch with you directly as to the appropriate action.

Taxi / Private Hire Vehicle inspections

If you have a scheduled inspection you should still plan to attend. If inspections are cancelled, operators will be updated accordingly.

If you are unable to attend an appointment as you or a member of your household have Covid-19 or you are self-isolating, please notify us as soon as possible at licensing@highland.gov.uk

Please also ensure that your vehicle has a valid MOT and insurance certificate and is roadworthy at all times when in use.

Vehicle substitutions

At the moment, a number of inspection garages are still operating so the application procedure will be the same. Please apply online at the following link. Fees can be paid by card online to the Service Centre on 01349 886605.

https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/738739/taxi_and_private_hire/category/501/taxi_and_private_hire

As the licensing offices are currently closed, we cannot issue new licence plates. During this period of emergency, subject to the vehicle passing its inspection, you can take the licence plates from the previous vehicle and attach them to the new car. You can do this when you receive email confirmation from the Council that the substitution has been approved. Please keep a copy of this email (ideally print a copy) so that you can prove that the car has been approved if you are asked by the Police or a member of the public.

Taxi knowledge tests

Please note that if you are applying for a new taxi drivers licence, due to current Covid-19 restrictions, The Highland Council, as licensing authority, is unable to undertake taxi knowledge tests at this time. If you do still intend to apply for the grant of a new taxi driver's licence, please be aware that there will be a delay in processing your application until such time as the Covid-19 restrictions are eased. Should you require further information on this, please contact licensing@highland.gov.uk

If you have a pending application and still need to sit your taxi knowledge test, you will be contacted in due course.

Further guidance

We will continue to update the guidance as necessary. If you have an urgent or specific enquiry, please contact us by email – licensing@highland.gov.uk