

Ms Kathryn Ashton,
Licensing Office
Taxi and Private Hire Licensing
Swindon Borough Council
Wat Tyler House
Beckhampton Street
Swindon
SN1 2JH

6 June 2017

Dear Kathryn,

Flightlink Executive Travel Ltd
Operator's Licence Number - PO 0036

I am writing to find out if there is a possibility to review one of the rules in the Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Handbook of Swindon Borough Council reference the percentage of light transmission through the windows of vehicles licensed to be used for private hire.

On page 40 paragraph (number ix) of the current handbook it states "*Licensed vehicles must allow at least 75% light transmission through the front windscreen and no less than 70% of light transmission through all other windows. Any vehicle which does not meet this condition will not be eligible for licensing as a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire vehicle*"

You may or may not be aware that Flightlink Executive Travel Ltd is a chauffeur company providing airport and inter-office transfers for international corporate businesses in around the South West. We currently have a fleet of 26 vehicles - 20 E Class Mercedes Benz and 6 MPV vehicles including the Mercedes Viano model. None of our vehicles are older than 3 years due to the robust fleet replacement programme we have in place and we are now looking to replace 4 of the MPV vehicles. This is proving a problem as Mercedes no longer manufacture the Viano but has replaced it with the V Class which only comes with tinted windows and therefore not compliant with your requirements. At the time when we tried to place the order for the new vehicles (with clear windows) we were informed that we cannot change the window specification as the V Class manufactured for the UK market only comes with the tinted window option.

As you will appreciate this presents a huge problem for us. Flightlink have a unified fleet brand that our customers have grown accustomed to and is fitting with the type of service they expect and demand. We would not want to be put in a position where we are forced to run older less reliable vehicles and thereby giving our customers an inferior service, which will definitely cause damage to our business. It is in the light of this that we would really appreciate if you could see your way to giving Flightlink Executive Travel Ltd, dispensation in this instance to add the new V Class to our fleet, albeit with the privacy glass.

In order to support our case I would like to put a number of other points to you for consideration for a certain amount of leeway to Flightlink in this instance:

1. My understanding is that this rule was made in the first place to safeguard the general public by allowing members of your enforcement team to see into the vehicles at all times. I would

make the point that Flightlink does not transport ANY members of the general public. Our business model is based around business travel booked at least 12 to 24 hours in advance of travel, transporting senior members of corporate companies between their offices and homes in Wiltshire to the main airports (Heathrow, Gatwick, Bristol, Birmingham, etc.)

2. Flightlink is a member of the LPHCA (Licensed Private Hire Car Association) and all of my London colleagues in the same type of business (corporate travel) have privacy glass in all of their vehicles. I do appreciate that we operate in Swindon and by that there are different rules however one of the largest providers in London have privacy glass in all their MPVs (c. 4,000 in total)
3. Flightlink is a company committed to high standards and therefore the delivery of a high quality service. The first interface customers have with our business is through our drivers and our vehicles. As part of our operating procedures, all our drivers are uniformed, wearing dark suits and ties and all of our vehicles undergo a full valet before each trip. This is underpinned by achieving ISO 9001 accreditation since 2008 (certified by UKAS) - the only chauffeur company in the region with this achievement.
4. Flightlink is also an IIP (Investor in People) recognised company - again not other chauffeur company in Swindon has achieved this standard.
5. We have a total of 45 drivers (40 are PAYE employees) and as previously mentioned, we have 26 vehicles with the aim to increase our fleet in the course of the next 12 months to meet the increased demands as set out in our business plans. Since the beginning of business in 1994, none of our drivers has failed to operate within the rules and regulations of Swindon Borough Council.

I hope that you will take the above into consideration while reviewing our request for Flightlink Executive Travel Ltd to use and licence the V Class Mercedes Benz vehicles with privacy glass for private hire purposes.

I want to thank you for having taken the time to evaluate and consider my request. If I can supply any further information which can help you with this decision or if you think a short meeting could be beneficial, I will be more than happy to comply.

Yours sincerely

Cecilia van Zyl
Managing Director
Flightlink Executive Travel