

2018.11.06

**14 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding feedback from the Jersey Taxi Drivers Association regarding recent changes to the industry: [OQ.180/2018]**

What feedback, if any, has the Minister had from the Jersey Taxi Drivers Association with regards to the recent changes made to the industry, including in relation to fares and charges for waiting times?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):**

Further to the meetings with the Jersey Taxi Drivers Association, the feedback centres around 2 aspects of the taxi review. Firstly, they have requested that the waiting time charge, which is applied in traffic, returns to the previous level of 11 miles per hour as opposed to the revised 7 miles per hour. Secondly, they believe that issuing of purple plates will see more vehicles trying to access limited space on the public ranks and, as such, wish to halt the process. On both the above points, I have been provided with no objective information to justify these claims or to explain why this would be in the customers' interest. Taxicabs have just received a 3.3 per cent R.P.I. (retail price index) taxi increase in tariffs. The tariffs remain within the highest 10 per cent in the U.K. on a par with Cheltenham and Guildford, among others, reflecting the cost of living in Jersey.

[11:15]

**4.14.1 Deputy M. Tadier:**

While it is not my place to speak on behalf of the Taxi Drivers Association, does the Minister accept that the 3.3 per cent increase in tariffs is not an average overall increase in the remuneration that taxi drivers effectively receive? They would argue that there is, for example, a 30 per cent loss in waiting times and in extras that they were able to charge before and so the increase that the Minister referred to is not necessarily a representative one. Does the Minister accept this?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

There was a certain amount of levelling out, but consultation was carried out with the industry over fares, resulting in an overall fare increase of 3.3 per cent linked to the March 2018 R.P.I. and this was recently implemented.

**4.14.2 Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

How will the Minister demonstrate that the changes put forward by his predecessor have been of benefit to the public, how will that be demonstrated?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

There was some disruption but there was considerable loss of taxis and cabs at the harbours and airports, or should I say the cabs had to wait in one area and taxis in another, so there was at times of high demand a lack of transport returning people to their homes or to town. The flow of taxis and cabs has increased at the harbours and airports.

**4.14.3 Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

I think perhaps the Minister did not quite hear my question. How will the department demonstrate, how will they prove, that the changes put forward have been of benefit to the public?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

We have the statistics that show that. This has been monitored closely and I am more than happy to get these statistics to the Deputy.

**4.14.4 Deputy R.E. Huelin of St. Peter:**

I am not going to do myself any favours with the Jersey taxi drivers by mentioning this, but has the Minister considered totally revolutionising the service that we have and going to some of the disruptive technologies that are used on a global basis like Uber?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

We do not have Uber in Jersey, but both taxis and cabs have their own apps now where the vehicle can be summoned, so I do believe that is an equivalent. Of recent times, the Taxi Drivers Association have introduced their own app so they are able to take on rank business and also private hire business.

**4.14.5 Deputy R. Labey:**

I do understand the difficulties at the airport with taxis and coming in. Last night at 8.30 p.m. it was particularly acute because one flight was a little delayed so flights arrived together and there was a queue of about 30. But when one takes the cab you can hear them in constant contact with the airport and the various cabbies trying to get back as quickly as possible. I just wonder if there should be some information on or around the taxi shelter there so that visitors and others can be assured that a taxi will come eventually, maybe some estimation as to approximate times, just so that we are keeping people informed that they will get home via a taxi.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Indeed; it is very difficult. The converse is quite true that taxi drivers can look at their phones and see when planes are coming in and at what time the plane is landing and time their pickups accordingly. Of course it is beneficial to taxi and cab owners if they can be taking a fare to the airport to coincide with that so they do not have a wasted journey. But it is very difficult to have a sign up at the airport to say there is a taxi or cab on the way, they do have at times marshals on duty at the harbour and the airport who can summon cabs by radio if there is a sudden demand with the public coming off the plane.

**4.14.6 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I thank the Minister for his answers so far. There was talk previously I think by the last Minister about a 6-month review taking place on the new taxi regulations. Will the Minister confirm whether this has taken place or whether it is still an intention to have a review of a bedding-in period for the new regulations?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I believe there is a review, I think possibly January, but I need to get back to the Deputy on that.