

## Press Release

### Commission for Taxi Regulation Publishes New Action Plan

(27<sup>th</sup> February 2008) The Commission for Taxi Regulation has today published its Action Plan for 2008 – 2009 'Always Driving Forward', which outlines its plans for the ongoing reform of the taxi, hackney and limousine industry.

Commenting on the publication of the new Action Plan Commissioner for Taxi Regulation Kathleen Doyle said; "Much has been achieved since the establishment of the Commission. In just a few short years we have successfully introduced a new licensing system, the national maximum taxi fare and taximeter area, a new driver identification system and new vehicle standards. In addition, we have established consumer and industry information lines; a complaints process and we have deployed Enforcement Teams throughout the country.

The purpose of this latest Action Plan is to maintain our progress and meet our objective of a first class, professional, efficient, safe and accessible customer-friendly service for small public service vehicle passengers and service providers."

Measures to be taken during the course of the Action Plan include the Commission becoming responsible for the administration of dispatch operator licensing and SPSV driver licensing in addition to its current role as the single authority for vehicle licensing.

The Commission is of the view that Dispatch Operators in Ireland are, and will continue to be, a key element in the provision of a first class service to the travelling public. The standards required for a Dispatch Operator will be as follows:

- The provision of a booking system that is accessible to people with disabilities such as fax, email and text.
- Training for management and staff, including customer care, fares, complaints, health and safety and assisting people with disabilities.
- Training records must be held and made available to the Commission on request.
- Dispatch Operators must, where possible, ensure that a fully accessible service is available to people with disabilities.

The Commission will audit Dispatch Operators to ensure the standards are in place prior to licensing.

SPSV Driver licensing will be taken over from An Garda Síochána, although they will continue to take responsibility for the vetting of applicants as a 'fit and proper person' to hold a licence.

At such time as the Commission takes on the responsibility of administration of SPSV driver licensing, it will also implement a skills development programme with immediate effect for all new applicants. The programme will include;

- Relevant legislation
- Route selection and area knowledge
- Customer care training
- Fares and charges
- Health and safety
- Safety and security

- Manual handling and lifting
- Good driving practice
- Equality and diversity training
- Disability awareness
- Knowledge of in-vehicle operational equipment
- Opportunities to innovate

New regulations will be put in place from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 imposing certain new responsibilities on taxi vehicle licence holders. The aim is to increase accountability in the industry, particularly in respect of licence holders employing a driver(s) or renting a licence.

Further highlights of the Action Plan include;

- The introduction of colour coded-tamper proof discs to differentiate between taxis, hackneys and limousines
- SPSV Driver Licences will require renewal every three years instead of every five.
- A voluntary quality assurance scheme and quality mark will be piloted.
- A public consultation on and review of, the National Maximum Taxi Fare during 2008.
- Research into fares charged by hackneys and limousines.
- A review of vehicle licence fees.
- A requirement that all wheelchair accessible vehicle license holders provide the Commission with contact details for booking their services from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 they will then be published on [www.taxiregulator.ie](http://www.taxiregulator.ie)
- The production of guidelines for the provision of accessible taxi ranks nationwide.
- Phased implementation of the new vehicle standards announced in 2007.

Ms Doyle concluded; "Our achievements thus far have largely been the result of a collaborative process between the Commission, the industry, the public and other stakeholders and it is my intention that this process will continue. One of the key factors in a regulatory process is consultation and it is my intention to continue to consult to the widest possible extent with all relevant stakeholders including those representing people with disabilities and representative bodies of the industry.

The reforms that were put in place during 2006/2007 will continue to be monitored. The new key reforms outlined in this plan will be implemented over the next two years and will be subject to continuous monitoring. The Commission will continue to ensure a fair and balanced approach which strikes a balance between the needs of the consumer and the service provider while taking into account fully the benefits and costs involved."

**Ends**