

Minister for Community Safety
Ash Denham MSP



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Dear Margo

Thank you for your letter of 20 December 2019 addressed to the Minister for Older People and Equalities, Christine McKelvie MSP, regarding taxi and private hire car (PHC) wheelchair accessible vehicles in the Angus Council local authority area. I am replying to you as I have policy responsibility for issues relating to the licensing of taxis and PHCs.

The Scottish Government appreciates that taxis and PHCs can provide a valuable service to both residents of, and visitors to, Scotland.

I was pleased to read from your letter that Angus Council has undertaken work to understand the user needs of disabled people when using taxi and private hire services. This matches the ambitions of [Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework](#) that decisions about transport accessibility are made on the basis of the lived experience of disabled people.

On this point, I appreciate the Council has raised an issue concerning the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles, but I trust that the Council will work on tackling all of the user needs that will have been identified as a result of its engagement with disabled people. This would match the approach that will be promoted in Transport Scotland's forthcoming non-statutory national guidance on taxi and private hire car accessibility, which is a key priority within the Transport Scotland [Annual Delivery Plan for 2019-2020](#). This means looking beyond the accessibility of vehicles to look at themes including training for drivers to improve user experiences.

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More generally, the safety and wellbeing of passengers is paramount and the aim of the licensing regime is to ensure that taxi and private hire car customers have a safe, reliable and accessible service. Licensing authorities are best placed to take local circumstances into account in the decision making process to ensure that they provide safe and appropriate services for members of the public.

Turning to your specific point about seeking assistance in relation to potential funding streams, I can confirm that through Transport Scotland there are different models that you may wish to look into. These are funding streams that, if taken up, would not only increase the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles, but would also contribute to achieving wider climate change outcomes.

For example, interest-free loans of up to £120,000 are available from Energy Saving Trust, funded by Transport Scotland, to enable owners and operators of taxis or PHCs to replace their current vehicle with an eligible ultra-low emission vehicle through the Switched on Taxis loan. These vehicles would be wheelchair accessible.

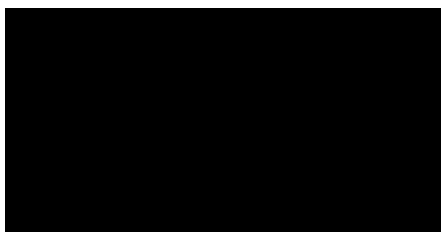
Separately, interest-free loans of up to £120,000 are available from Energy Saving Trust, funded by Transport Scotland, to enable owners and operators of hackney cabs to replace cabs that are more than eight years old with new, efficient models with emission standard Euro 6. The loan cannot be used for private hire or saloon vehicles. Again, these vehicles are wheelchair accessible.

Single operators can access both the hackney and the Switched on Taxis interest free loans but can only receive funding for replacing their existing vehicle. The amount they can borrow is therefore based on the maximum price for a single new vehicle. Currently the most expensive eligible model is the LEVC which costs around £59,000.

There are of course certain eligibility criteria around these schemes. These include that applicants must have owned their current vehicle for at least six months and that all loans are subject to credit and affordability checks, with repayments required over a maximum of six years. Once offered a loan, applicants have four months to purchase their vehicle and claim their money.

Further information on both of these funding streams can be provided by the [Energy Saving Trust](#).

I hope that this information is helpful.



ASH DENHAM

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