4.12 Deputy S.J. Gleave of St. Helier South of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding removing or amending taxi restrictions and requirements. (OQ.101/2026)

Firstly, I would like to thank the Minister for his very helpful and positive response to my Written Question. Further to that, will the Minister consider making early Ministerial Decisions to remove or amend specific outdated or disproportionate taxi requirements, including restrictions on advertising, before completing the wider regulatory review; and will he set a deadline for Driver and Vehicle Standards to publish a comprehensive list of all requirements currently applicable to taxi drivers and licence-holders?

Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade (The Minister for Infrastructure):

I am grateful to the Deputy for the question. I have also had representations of a similar nature from within the industry. I have considered, in particular, the question of allowing advertising on taxis and my view is that the advertising question can safely be separated from the wider regulatory review I have already announced. I also agree that a ban on advertising is not necessary in the modern day and age. Accordingly, earlier this morning I signed a Ministerial Decision which will have the effect of removing the blanket ban on advertising for all future licences. There is a small caveat in that this policy change will depend on the development and publication of advertising standards to be undertaken in consultation with the industry to ensure vehicle advertising is appropriate in terms of size, placement, content, *et cetera*. While I am happy to deal with the advertising question separately from the wider review, I do not currently intend to remove or amend any other taxi regulation outside the review. In respect of the second part of the question, I will publish a discussion paper before the end of the year setting out proposals to revise and update the regulatory framework. The list of all current requirements, as requested in part (c) of Written Question 177/2026, will be included in that paper.

4.12.1 Deputy S.J. Gleave:

Thank you, Minister. I am absolutely delighted with that response, as I am sure he will be aware. Taking what he said, that he does not want to take anything out outside of the wider review, will he commit to taking a practical approach and, as unnecessary restrictions are identified, rather than allowing them to remain in force while the review is waiting to be published, perhaps take similar action with Ministerial Orders?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think I am unlikely to do that, although I would not rule it out. I think it might help to just say a word or 2 about the way I will approach, given that she has raised that question. We regulate for several reasons. We regulate to improve public safety; to achieve our social, environmental, economic policy objectives; to level the economic playing field, to stop bad businesses undercutting good businesses, for example. I am not anti-regulation but my principle is - and the principle I shall be bringing to this review - that we should have the lowest possible regulatory footprint, consistent with our policy objectives. The review of taxi regulation will start with policy objectives - what kind of taxi service do we want - and then put in place the minimal regulation necessary to try and further those objectives.

4.12.2 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

The Minister may be aware of reports of off-Island technology companies visiting the Island to review our taxi industry, and that Jersey has seen recent work by companies such as The Messina Group, whose C.E.O. (Chief Executive Officer) has been suggested through historic leaks to be tied to lobbying for the global firm Uber. Given this, how will the Minister ensure that any further decisions are not unfairly influenced by external forces, and change is aligned to Jersey's best interests?

[11:00]

Deputy J. Renouf:

It is a good question. I hope that Members of the Assembly will accept if I say that I will be taking a holistic view about this. I have outlined in my previous answer how I am going to approach this review. I think we will want to have a debate about what kind of taxi service we wish to have, how do we provide to make sure we have disabled passengers; there are a number of issues that we need to resolve. The question of Uber or other ride-hailing apps that might come from outside is not directly within my control. Uber or any other company - assuming they set up according to the regulations we have in force at the moment they arrive - can operate in this Island. It is not something which I can facilitate or refuse; it is simply there as a possibility. However, this does give us an opportunity to think as a society about what kind of taxi service we want. Maybe we want more taxis, we may want to reduce car ownership, we may want to encourage E.V.s (electric vehicles) through the taxi service. There are lots of things that we could think about in terms of the taxi service, and I hope this review will give all those who have an interest in that the ability to comment.

4.12.3 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

The Minister will know that the change in regulation of taxi industries globally has in many ways changed by the advance of technology platforms. It is understood that many of those have lobbied heavily to ensure that the policies they wish follow through, rather than the regulated platform that any community wishes, which has had good and bad consequences. Given this, will he ensure that any lobbying or representation by any companies is clearly marked when he submits his policy position, to ensure that where submissions are made they are clearly attributable?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I am sure I can give that assurance, in the sense that any submission I would expect to have to know who it has come from. I think the wider point the Deputy is making is about undue influence and, as I say, I can only repeat what I have said, which is I shall start and finish with a calculation about what I think is in the best interest of the Island. It is a complex issue. Everybody would like cheaper taxis and more taxis, but delivering that in a way that delivers wider social benefits and so on is not necessarily as easy as it might be thought simply by removing one particular piece of regulation. It does need a holistic approach and, as the Deputy has expressed an interest, I am sure he will make contact with me and express it in more detail.

4.12.4 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Setting aside for a moment my clear concern about the capture of Jersey's democratic process by external lobby groups, I was wondering, now that the Minister has signed this Ministerial Decision obviously enabling in the slightly longer-term taxi companies to take in extra revenue streams, which is superb, does the Minister expect to see a reduction in consumer prices as a result?

Deputy J. Renouf:

The honest answer is I do not know. The hope would be that a more profitable industry can use that more profitable position to reduce prices. I think that would be very hard to track, in all honesty, but it was certainly my hope - having had representations from within the industry - that they will be in a more financial viable position, and that should lead to some benefits in terms of the price of taxi services. But in all honesty I cannot guarantee it.

4.12.5 Deputy K.F. Morel:

I will be slightly harder then. Given that the Minister plays a role in regulating the maximum price of taxis, will he be taking the extra revenue streams that he is enabling into account when setting that price?

Deputy J. Renouf:

My recollection is that the regulated taxi fares relate to rank taxis and not to all fares. Many fares - for example booking a minicab and so on - are not regulated. Certainly I will bear that in mind. It is a fair point. If we help increase revenues then that is worth reflecting on when we come to set those regulated fares that I do control.

4.12.6 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

The Minister has made references to the principles of the policymaking around the taxi regulations. Will the Minister guarantee that during his regulation review he will keep passenger safety and driver accountability at the forefront of this review?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Certainly. As I said, the whole point of the review is to take a holistic approach. While removing unnecessary regulation is absolutely a part of that, the test of what is necessary depends upon our wider view about what kind of taxi service we want, what kind of services we want to secure, protect, and so on, and the overall safety of the service of course.

4.12.7 Deputy T.A. Coles:

The Minister has mentioned a rank taxi and a minicab being slightly different in the regulation, and obviously most people will not know the difference between a minicab and a taxi directly. Will this also then pull the minicab regulations into the same review?

Deputy J. Renouf:

My recollection is that the formal distinction between rank and minicab taxis was removed many years ago by a predecessor of mine. What remains is a distinction in the fare setting; only certain fares are regulated. Certainly we will look at that with a view to understanding which bits of the industry need to have regulated fares so, yes, it will be a part of it, but the actual formal distinction between minicabs and taxis no longer exists.

4.12.8 Deputy M. Tadier:

We were reminded earlier that people like straight speaking in politics, so I will probably ask the question more directly that other Members have been skirting around. Given the fact that many of us widely believe that the 2026 election was bought by The Messina Group, will the Minister give an assurance that our local taxi industry will not be bought by The Messina Group or any other outside interests that some politicians in this Assembly might be seeking to put forward?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think I will just answer that, yes, I can give that assurance.

4.12.9 Deputy M. Tadier:

More worryingly perhaps on a political level, when we talk about political capture do we think that given all the time that the ...

The Bailiff:

Deputy, I would remind you that a question should be not framed to convey a point of view, it should be designed to seek information from a Minister.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, if we apply that in every question that is being asked today, or indeed in the last time memorial, I think that ...

The Bailiff:

Could you just ask an appropriate question?

Deputy M. Tadier:

I will ask an appropriate question, thank you. Does the Minister believe that while the taxi reform programme might be urgent for some people - especially those who find themselves going back and forward to the airport because maybe they have properties or business interests in London - that when it comes to how his time is best used as a Minister, given the fact that there are big problems about cost of living, food bank use, accommodation, migrant workers in Jersey, that this might be a distraction for both him and his Council of Ministers?

Deputy J. Renouf:

No, I do not accept that, and I would say that the taxi service is of value to far more people than people going to and from the airport. It is part of the night-time economy, it is part of people going to and from hospital, there are lots and lots of different ways in which it works, and it also could be - if we were to see it as potentially expanding as a service - part of our decarbonisation policy. We could potentially think of using taxis more as part of our transport system, reducing private car ownership and so on, which the Deputy might like. So I do not accept the narrow premise of the question. I am not going to be spending every waking minute on this review; these are things that you choose as a politician to focus on. Officers who are very well-equipped to deal with this will bring forward options for me and Ministers to consider, and I will engage with any Member, with the public, and with industry in a way that is proportionate to the task ahead. It is a reasonable thing to do. It has not been looked at for quite a long while.

4.12.10 Deputy G.A. Raimondo of St. Brelade:

I will try and keep my question more to the point. I know you have no control over ride-sharing apps coming here, but would the Minister believe that the regulation is preventative and uninviting for companies to come here and make it easier.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think I will fall back on what I have already said, which is I want this review to look at the whole picture. It may well be that companies from outside regard aspects of our regulation as a barrier. I want to look at this with an open mind. *Apropos* of previous questions from Deputy Curtis, I will approach this with an open mind. I do not come at this with a pre-set view, and so I am not going to go any further than that in stating a view that might pre-empt the conclusions of what I am going to look at.

4.12.11 Deputy G.A. Raimondo:

Would the Minister also look into consulting with young people as they are often a group that struggles more to find transport around the Island, they cannot drive and often the bus services will not always bring them to the correct places. Has the Minister considered also asking their point of view?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Yes, it is a valid point, and in answer to Deputy Tadier I pointed out that many different people use the taxi service, and young people certainly should be consulted as part of that. We know that it is relatively difficult to engage young people in general but I shall certainly do what I can. It might be something we can talk to the Youth Assembly about, and certainly I would be keen to involve young people in that.

4.12.12 Deputy S.J. Gleave:

I am really pleased that the Minister both confirmed his commitment to the health and safety of passengers, and also recognised the wider economic value of taxis. This is not just about getting businessmen to the airport; it is about our tourism industry and our night-time economy. I recognise also that he is aware that we need to look at the costs of taxis and anything that we can do to reduce those. It is more expensive for a visitor to get a taxi from the east of the Island to the airport than it is for them to fly from Gatwick to Jersey. Going back to giving businesses clarity, can the Minister commit to doing that list of requirements of what a taxi company has to comply with, because if we can give them clarity over what they need to do operationally that will help reduce their administrative burden and their costs.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I thank the Deputy for her question and for her engagement with me on this matter more generally. I think I did answer the question she is asking in my first answer, which is that the list of all current requirements will be published in the paper that I intend to submit before the end of this year. To be fair, there is quite a lot of information out there and the answer to the Written Question that she posed a few weeks ago did include some of that, but I accept that we need to have a comprehensive list. Clarity is always a good thing and that is why I have committed to provide it.

[11:15]