

Uber loses licence to operate in York



By [Oscar Bentley](#), Editor (2018)
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Image: Sandeepnewstyle

York council has refused to renew the operating licence of Uber, which is set to expire this Christmas Eve. The ban comes as a blow to the taxi giant, which has already been banned in Sheffield and most notably London.

On Tuesday 12 December the City of York Council's Gambling, Licensing and Regulatory Committee "decided to refuse the application having concerns about a data breach currently under investigation and the number of complaints received." This follows last month's revelations of a massive data breach at Uber, affecting 2.7 million UK customers, with hackers obtaining names, email addresses, and phone numbers.

Uber's head of Cities for the North of England, Neil McGonigle, told councillors on the committee that the app had 28,000 users in York over the past three months, and has 10 registered drivers in the city.

Over the last 12 months York Council has received 155 complaints about Uber vehicles and drivers. McGonigle stated that they had been "open and cooperative" regarding complaints. However, only four of these complaints pertained to drivers licensed by York Council, with 129 being made against drivers registered with other local authorities.

The decision was greeted with cheers by 35 local taxi drivers watching the meeting, some of whom has previously spoken voicing concerns regarding the firm's use of drivers from outside York. Mike Palmer, secretary of the York Private Hire Association, told *York Press*: "When I was going into the meeting I thought the best result we could hope for was for Uber to get some restrictions on their licence. It's a great result for us and every council can use it to suspend them all over the country. It's a morale boost

because a lot of the drivers on both sides – the Hackney Carriages and Private Hire – have put a lot of hard work into this.”

Regarding the council’s decision, McGonigle stated that “This is a disappointing vote for the riders and drivers who use our app in the city. More choice and competition is a good thing for both consumers and licensed drivers in the area.” He added that Uber will review the decision.

York Council has twice previously granted Uber a licence to operate, the most recent of which was December 21st 2016. The company has 21 days to decide if it wants to appeal York Council’s verdict.

Second year Halifax student Will Batchelor commented: “Why should we have to pay more for a more substandard service [provided by other taxi operators], Uber is far more reliable and more reasonably priced than any taxi I have ever had. Why is it that in another industry if a competitor comes in and undercuts on cost and provides a higher quality of service it’s praised, but when it comes to taxis that’s not okay?”

A fellow second year Halifax student had a different view on the council’s Uber verdict, commenting that students should “Just get the bus, totally works and costs way less than Uber anyway – plus York is comparatively very safe and the 66 runs all night through term. I’ve honestly always been fine to walk through town even at night.”

Uber’s ban in both Sheffield and London however has been called into doubt. Sheffield City Council lifted its suspension on the firm on 13 December, stating they had given “satisfactory replies to the questions asked by Sheffield City Council about the management of Uber”, while the company’s appeal against Transport for London’s decision not to renew its licence will not be heard until next April at the earliest, with Uber free to operate as normal throughout the legal process.



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