

182 Cab Drivers Licence Stockport England

' anger as council draws lots to decide who gets black cab

BY

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Taxi drivers have reacted angrily after a lottery-style draw that allocated licences to own black cabs. A total of 34 names were pulled out of a hat at Stockport town hall on Wednesday to establish who has first refusal on 15 new taxi plates. It will increase the number of black cab owners operating in the borough to 136.

Luck of the draw - Mayor Hazel Lees and Chris Gordon pull driver names form the hat



Cabbies argue there is already too many for the work available and that the criteria to be eligible for the draw - three years service within Stockport - did not give long-serving drivers the advantage they deserved.

But the council says the three-year ruling was to ensure minority groups were not discriminated against.

While the extra 15 plates will not necessarily lead to more black cabs on the road, just that drivers will be able to own rather than rent them.

Dennis Kidd, secretary of the taxi owner drivers' association, said: "There are too many black cabs already, trade is at rock bottom. People are working all day and clearing £30 or £40.

"The criteria were not strict enough to get the right people who were deserving of the plate. There are people who have been given cab plates today who are not cab drivers. There was nothing wrong with the system."

Barry Daws, a driver for 25 years was among the lucky ones to be drawn in the first 15. He said: "Years of service should have been used. I'm relieved but there have been people who were not as fortunate. One guy has been in the game 30 years but lost out."

The draw was made by Mayor of Stockport Hazel Lees and Councillor Chris Gordon, head of licensing.

Other criteria were not having held a black cab plate previously and being prepared for the vehicle to meet certain environmental standards.

Cabbies must now go through the formality of applying for the license with the first two names out of the hat able to immediately.

The next 13 will do the same at the rate of one a month while names 16-34 are on a reserve list.

Mr Elthorpe, the council's team manager for licensing, says the extra 15 plates were released in response to complaints from some drivers that they were not able to own a black cab.

He said: "It doesn't increase the number of black cab drivers, it means they own their cab.

"We thought long and hard about the criteria and we did look at length of service. After three years cabbies are going to get as good as they can in terms of quality of service.

"We had to put the cap somewhere and at three years it doesn't discriminate against minority groups. Longer would have made plates go to people who were male, white and more elderly."