

## Guidelines for Obtaining a Local Area Hackney Licence

### Background:

Action 46 of the Taxi Regulation Review Report published by the Government in January 2012, recommended the introduction of a local area hackney licence to address transport deficits in certain rural areas. Regulations enabling the issue of these licences came into effect in December 2013 and were amended in April 2026.

The Local Area Hackney (LAH) Small Public Service Vehicle (SPSV) licence is a limited, special-category licence designed to support rural communities by providing a locally operated hackney service. Unlike standard SPSV taxi and hackney licences, which permit nationwide operation, an LAH licence is restricted to a defined local area. The online LAH application portal shows available areas for application and only one licence will be issued per area by the NTA.

Holders of a LAH licence may pick up passengers only within their approved local area and are not permitted to pick up passengers outside it. They are also expected to actively promote the service to ensure residents are aware of its availability.

Applicants must demonstrate community support for their proposed service. This support may come from local businesses, community groups, charities, or enterprises, and must be provided both at the time of application and at each annual renewal.

Like standard SPSV licences, LAH licences must be renewed annually but they may only operate for a maximum of five years from the initial date of issue. After this period, the NTA may reassess the eligibility of the area. Should the area remain open for applications a new application can be made.

To support continuity of service, licence holders may appoint up to four additional drivers to operate the LAH vehicle during the five-year licence term. All drivers must hold appropriate licences issued by An Garda Síochána.

Because the LAH licence is a special category, its requirements differ from standard SPSV licences. LAH vehicles are not required to be wheelchair accessible, and LAH drivers are not required to complete the full SPSV Driver Entry Test that applies to nationwide operators. LAH licences must be renewed within three months of expiry, a shorter renewal window than for standard SPSVs, and application fees are lower. Holders of a local area hackney licence are prevented from holding a regular SPSV licence.

This guidance note outlines the application process for Local Area Hackney licences.

### Applicable process steps:

- Select an eligible area using the online Local Area Hackney application portal.
- Submit your proposed area to the NTA for review.
- If the area is approved, the NTA will issue an application pack.
- Complete the application form (LAH26), including:
  - the registration number of the proposed vehicle
  - four LAH community support documents
- NTA validates the application form and community support evidence.

- If all details are valid, a 90-day conditional offer is issued for the vehicle registration provided.
- The chosen area is reserved on the LAH application portal (no other applications can be made for that area during this time).
- Begin preparing the vehicle for licensing, this may include purchasing the vehicle if not already owned.
- Book the vehicle for its Initial Suitability Inspection.
- If the vehicle passes the inspection, the LAH vehicle licence is granted. The applicant may then begin the LAH driver licence application process.
- Complete the free online Safeguarding & Disability Awareness eLearning.
- Call the NTA and pay the €20 driver licence application fee. A receipt will be issued.
- Apply for the LAH driver licence at your local Garda station.
- An Garda Síochána conducts background checks and either grants or refuses the licence.
- If granted, the NTA issues the LAH Driver ID and Display Cards.
- Create the driver-to-vehicle link in the SPSV Driver Check app.
- The LAH service may now commence.

### Available areas:

A key part of applying for a Local Area Hackney licence is identifying the specific area in which you intend to operate. To support this, the NTA has developed an online Local Area Hackney Application Portal that allows applicants to create a custom map using Central Statistics Office (CSO) Census “Small Areas”.

Applicants can select one or more adjoining Small Areas, and the tool will automatically calculate the combined population. The total population of the selected area must not exceed 5,000, and this figure is displayed through the “Population Total” widget once areas are selected.

This mapping tool enables applicants to clearly define the boundary of the community they wish to serve. Once the map is completed, it must be submitted to the NTA for review using the same application portal.

### What is a Small Area?

CSO ‘Small Areas’ are the smallest standard geographic units used by the Central Statistics Office for statistical purposes. Each ‘Small Area’ typically contains between 60 and 120 households<sup>1</sup>. This allows for more accurate analysis of local population characteristics and helps ensure that services such as Local Area Hackneys are targeted where they are most needed. The country is separated into 18,919 small areas<sup>1</sup>.

### Unavailable Areas

Some areas cannot be selected in the Local Area Hackney Application Portal. This may be because a Local Area Hackney service is already operating there, or an application for that area is currently in progress. In addition, areas located within built-up or urban communities are not selectable, as providing a Local Area Hackney licence in an urban setting would be contrary to the purpose of the scheme.

These restricted areas appear in red on the portal.

If you wish to operate in one of these red areas, you should apply for a standard SPSV licence instead<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [Press Statement Census 2022 – CSO launches interactive map for Census 2022 Small Areas - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/taxi/vehicle-licensing/applying-for-an-spsv-vehicle-licence/>



Choose your Small Areas by:

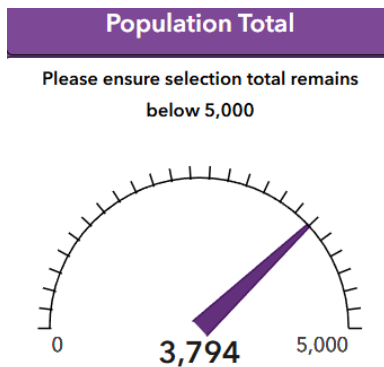
- I. clicking them one by one, or
- II. clicking and dragging to draw a box around several areas.

Double-click on the area to finish your selection.

Click the arrow icon again to turn the tool off. This will allow you to move the map to review your area if needed.

#### 4) Check the area total population

After selecting areas, look at the Population tool in the top right corner.



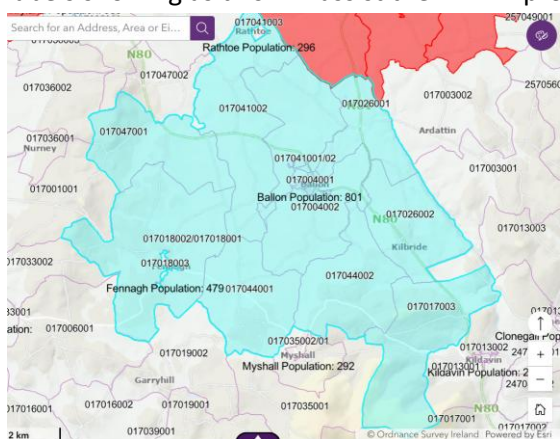
The combined population of the Small Areas you select must be under 5,000. If your selection goes over this limit, click "Clear All" and choose the areas again.

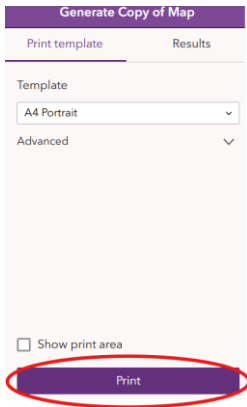
Once you have selected a group of Small Areas with a total population below 5,000, make a note of the final population number. You will need to enter this figure later in your application.

#### 5) Name your area

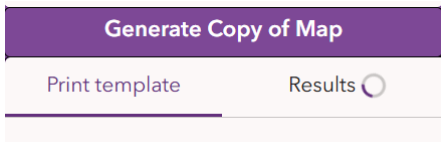
Find the most built-up or best-known place within the Small Areas you have selected. Make a note of this as this name will be used as the official name of your Local Area Hackney (LAH) area.

Example: If your selected Small Areas include the settlement of Ballon and it is the main built-up area, you will name your LAH area "Ballon". Adjust the map so all selected areas are visible on screen. It's best to have 'Small Area' ID labels showing as this will assist the NTA in promptly validating your request:

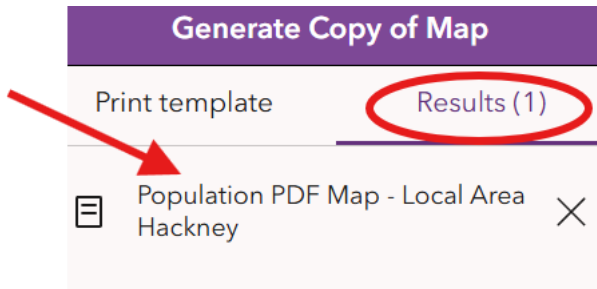




You will see the 'Results' loading while the map is generating:



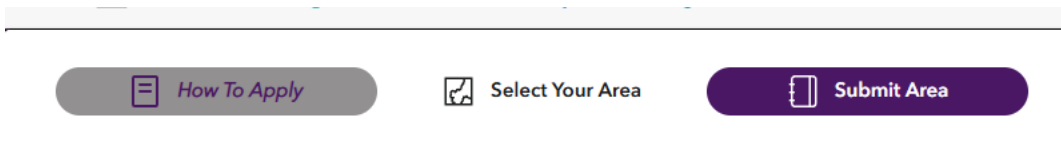
When the map is ready to access the loading (circle) icon will no longer appear. Click on 'Results' followed by the PDF document that has generated:



The PDF will open in your browser as a new window. Save this locally on your device for upload later.

### [Step 2\) Submit your proposed area to the NTA for review](#)

Click on 'Submit Area' on the top of the page.



Complete all required fields on the form including the population total you noted earlier. Upload your map PDF and click 'Submit'.

A confirmation message will appear on screen and within a few minutes, you will also receive a confirmation email from the National Transport Authority.

### [Step 3\) If the area is approved, the NTA will issue an application pack](#)

Where an area is deemed valid NTA will issue an application pack containing this information guide and the:

- Local Area hackney Application form (LAH26)
- Community Support template
- SPSV Official Manual for Operating as a Local Area Hackney

Where the application is deemed invalid or incomplete, correspondence will be issued to the applicant outlining

reasons.

Please note, at this stage the proposed local area hackney area will remain open to other applicants. Only after a valid application is received by NTA, including proof of community support, is the area closed to other applications. This will go to the first valid application received regardless of when the area was approved.

#### Step 4) Submit the application

1. Complete the LAH26 form.

You must fully complete the LAH26 form, including:

- Your personal details
- Acceptance of all declarations
- Details of your proposed vehicle

Before submitting your application, please ensure that:

- You do not already hold an SPSV licence in any other category.
- You are tax-cleared, and
- The name on your application matches your Revenue record exactly.

All proposed vehicles must be suitable for use as an SPSV.

**Do not purchase a vehicle** until you have:

1. Confirmed that it appears on the [Suitable Vehicle List](#) for SPSVs
2. Confirmed that you can obtain SPSV insurance

You should contact your insurance provider in advance to discuss SPSV insurance options. Only specific makes and models are approved for use as a hackney SPSV, so checking suitability beforehand is essential.

All LAH vehicles must:

- Be less than 10 years old
- Have four doors
- Pass the NCT, regardless of age
- Have clear (non-tinted) windows
- Carry all required safety equipment

2. Community support template.

A Local Area Hackney (LAH) SPSV is a special-category licence that does not need to meet all the requirements of a standard SPSV licence. This exemption exists because LAH licences are intended to support rural communities that consider themselves underserved by existing transport options.

To qualify for an LAH licence, the applicant must show that the local community supports the need for this special category licence instead of a standard SPSV. To demonstrate this, the applicant must identify four organisations within the proposed operating area that support the application. These must include a mix of public and private organisations.

A relevant representative from each organisation will complete the Community Support Template, which must be submitted to the NTA along with the licence application. The NTA will then contact each organisation to verify the information provided.

Below are examples of what may be considered suitable public and private organisations.

Private Organisations	Public Organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pub(s)</li> <li>• Restaurant(s)</li> <li>• Guesthouse / B&amp;B / Hotel</li> <li>• General Practitioner (GP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charity (for example, Meals on wheels, Age Action etc..)</li> <li>• Community sports clubs (for example, GAA clubs, walking groups, parkruns etc...)</li> <li>• Recreational groups (for example, card playing groups)</li> <li>• Local schools</li> <li>• Local religious centres</li> </ul>

### 3. Submit your application

You can submit your application and completed community support templates to NTA via email or post.

- Email - [Taxis@nationaltransportauthority.ie](mailto:Taxis@nationaltransportauthority.ie)
- Post - Local Area Hackney Licensing Section, PO Box 436, City North Business Park, Tuam Road, Galway

NTA will review your application and will contact you with the outcome.

#### Step 5) Conditional Offer is sent to applicant

An application fee of €50 is required before your application can progress to the Conditional Offer stage. The method of payment will depend on the preference you selected on your application form. In most cases, you will receive a phone call from the Information Line to take payment over the phone.

Once the fee has been paid, a Conditional Licence Offer will be issued for the vehicle registration number you provided. You will then have 90 days to prepare your vehicle for inspection.

#### Vehicle Requirements Before Inspection

Your vehicle must:

- Have a valid NCT certificate issued within 90 days of your inspection appointment for the vehicle you intend to license; and
- Meet all vehicle requirements that apply to a standard hackney.

Please check the [Initial-Suitability-Inspection-Manual.pdf](#) for details of what is checked in that inspection.

#### Step 6) Book your suitability inspection

After receiving a Conditional Offer, you must have your vehicle inspected at an NTA Inspection Centre to confirm that it is suitable for use and meets all relevant SPSV vehicle requirements. There is no additional charge for this inspection.

You may book an appointment at any of the 12 SPSV Inspection Centres nationwide ([SPSV Centres - National Transport](#)).

When booking your inspection, you must:

- Have SPSV insurance in place for the carriage of passengers for hire or reward; and
- Be fully tax cleared with Revenue.

The name on your insurance and tax record must match your application exactly. A 100% name match is required.

#### Step 7) Complete suitability inspection

At your inspection appointment, your vehicle will be assessed to confirm that it meets all requirements set out in

the SPSV Inspection Manual.

You must bring the following documents:

- The **original certificate of insurance**, confirming that the vehicle is insured for use as an SPSV.
- **Proof of ownership** of the vehicle, or proof of legal entitlement to use the vehicle as an SPSV.

The name on all documents must match your NTA record exactly.

If your vehicle successfully passes inspection a Local Area Hackney (LAH) vehicle licence will be issued.

- This licence is valid for one year or until the vehicle reaches ten years of age, whichever comes first.
- After five years, a new application is required to obtain a new LAH vehicle licence.
- Tamperproof discs will be applied to your vehicle, and you will receive your SPSV certificate on the day of inspection.

### Step 8) Apply for your Local Area Hackney driver's licence

Now you have successfully been granted your LAH vehicle licence you can now apply to An Garda Síochána for your local area hackney drivers licence.

- 1) NTA will issue you a link to the free online Safeguarding & Disability Awareness eLearning which you must complete before paying your SPSV driver licence application fee
- 2) Call the information line (0818 064 000) to make payment over the phone. This can be done by credit or debit card. The five-year licence fee costs €20.
- 3) Visit your nearest Garda station to obtain and complete a PSV15 form and submit it to An Garda Síochána along with:
  - Two passport-style photos
  - Your Tax Clearance Access Number
  - NTA driver fee receipt
  - Your standard driving licence
  - Your NDLS driver statement
  - Any other documentation required by An Garda Síochána
- 4) An Garda Síochána will complete a full background check. They issue the driver licence to you directly and inform NTA, who then issues your driver ID cards and add the information to the SPSV public register.

This process can take approximately 12 weeks to complete.

### Step 9) Commence your Local Area Hackney service

Once you have both your:

- SPSV Local Area Hackney (LAH) vehicle licence, and
- SPSV LAH driver licence,

you are fully authorised to begin providing a rural hackney service to your community.

Before you start operating, there are two final steps you must complete:

#### **1) Advertise Your Service**

You are required to promote your service within your community. The NTA will have already provided posters that include your booking details, which you can display locally.

#### **2) Create a Driver-to-Vehicle Link**

You must create a driver-to-vehicle link for the LAH vehicle you will be operating. You can do this by:

- Using the online guidance at Driver Linking on the NTA website ([Driver Linking - National Transport](#)), or
- Calling the NTA Information Line on 0818 061 000.

Creating this link is a legal requirement. You cannot operate your LAH service unless this link is in place.

#### **Why the link is important**

- The NTA maintains a database that records which licensed SPSV is operated by which driver.
- As the driver, you are legally responsible for ensuring that this information is correct and up to date at all times.
- Failing to notify the NTA of a valid driver-to-vehicle link while operating is a criminal offence.
- This database powers the NTA's public safety app "Driver Check" which allows passengers to verify that both the vehicle and the driver are properly licensed.

#### **Additional information**

##### **Additional Local Area Hackney drivers**

A Local Area Hackney (LAH) licence can have up to five approved drivers over its five-year licence period. This is to allow for better service provision within a community.

To add an additional driver, each person must complete the same SPSV LAH driver licensing process, just as the original LAH vehicle licence holder did (see step 8 above). To begin this process, please call the NTA Information Line (0818 061 000) and request the LAH Driver Nomination Form.

Important: A nominated driver cannot operate the vehicle until they have been fully licensed by An Garda Síochána. All approved drivers must create a driver-to-vehicle link before operating the LAH.

##### **Expired Local Area Hackney vehicle licence**

Where a local area hackney vehicle licence is no longer active all associated LAH driver licences cease to be in force.

##### **Local Area Hackney renewals**

You will receive a reminder before your vehicle licence is due for renewal. As part of the renewal process, the vehicle must undergo a suitability inspection, just as it did when it was first licensed.

In addition, licence holders must reconfirm their community support at each renewal. This can be provided again using the Community Support Template, with a mix of public or private organisations. These organisations do not have to be the same as those used for the original application.