

TIME TO TAME TIGER TIGER

By **PETER J ROSE**

Secretary UNITE Cab Section, London Branch

One of the biggest successes UNITE the Union's London Cab Section has had as part of the United Trade Group is the allocation of several new night time taxi ranks in the Capital's west end, the biggest of these was in no doubt the new rank at the Nobu restaurant in Berkeley Street.

But Nobu was not the only rank; another success was the huge night time rank outside the Tiger Tiger club at the top of the Haymarket. Unfortunately working Tiger Tiger is proving to be a little more difficult. Night after night minicabs are still to be found touting outside, making it almost impossible for taxi drivers to put on the rank. UNITE is aware that some drivers have tried to remonstrate with the minicab drivers of the explaining that they should not be parked there. The response of the minicab drivers has been reported at times as being quite feral.

UNITE the Union has informed the relevant authorities of the problem facing the trade and they have been more than sympathetic to the trades plight. We do know that traffic wardens are known to have been intimidated and threatened physically at some locations in the west end. Another problem is the fact that new enforcement cameras installed by Westminster City Council are not fully on line yet. But the main problem with the rank is the simple fact that it is not clearly marked out.

The rank at Tiger Tiger is in three parts: The first three spaces are clearly marked and operate twenty four hours. The second part is a daytime loading bay and the final part is a part time bus stand. After 10pm the three cab rank, the loading bay and the bus stand all combine to form one large taxi rank. UNITE the Union will be putting forward the idea of superimposing or marking out the rank within the existing markings of the loading bay and the

Continued on Page 4



Mini-cabs still touting for business outside Tiger Tiger.

**THE EQUALITY
BILL AND
PRIVATE HIRE
PLYING
FOR HIRE**

**SEE FULL STORY ON
PAGE 2**



THE EQUALITY BILL AND PRIVATE HIRE PLYING FOR HIRE

By MIKE HEDGES



The Equality Bill has been quietly working its way through Parliament during the last few months and has largely attracted very little comment despite the consequences of the Bill being very harsh on taxi drivers and many people with disabilities. This Bill is being heavily supported by Baronesses Morris, Wilkins and Warsi.

Many aspects of the Bill are progressive and UNITE the Union supports them. But for some reason MP's have decided that this should be a vehicle for including an updated version of the Disability Discrimination Act relating to taxis. Whole sections of the DDA relating to taxi accessibility have been lifted and placed into the Equality Bill, but with the very draconian element of criminal convictions thrown in.

This will affect every taxi driver as the courts will deal with any transgressions not the local licensing authority. These transgressions include not having the appropriate ramps, securing the wheelchair correctly, helping with luggage and generally assisting the wheelchair user. A driver found guilty of any offence under these clauses is liable, under summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding Level 3 (up to £1,000) on the standard scale. We do not agree that taking power away from councils and using the courts is the way to deal with this. Punishing drivers through the courts has been shown to be less effective than giving proper training and education into disability issues.

There is currently a consultation into taxi accessibility being held by the government which has reported in previous issues of Cab Trade News. We are currently waiting for the governments reply to the responses to the consultation. UNITE's response to the consultation was very detailed but we believe that ultimately it is for local councils in liaison with local taxi drivers and users that should decide the number of accessible taxis that is required for a licensing area and that the best way of achieving this is through surveys.

This would allow a balanced mixed fleet to be achieved outside of major metropolitan areas. Imposing a fully wheelchair accessible taxi fleet outside of metropolitan areas will not work. The majority of people with disabilities do not require a wheelchair, but often have an ambulant disability. A mixed fleet would cater for all users.

Therefore it is surprising that the Equality Bill seeks to impose a fully wheelchair accessible taxi fleet in every licensing area regardless of demand or the needs of the disabled people in the area whilst this consultation is on-going. It would appear that until recently there has been no communication between the Equalities department and the Department for Transport.

There have been a number of amendments to the Bill introduced recently. These include lifting whole sections applying to taxis and inserting private hire in place of taxis, so there is a requirement for disabled people to be able to travel in private hire vehicles while in wheelchairs amongst other requirements. There is also a requirement for a private hire vehicle

which is plying for hire to comply with provisions as to the carrying of ramps or other devices designed to facilitate the loading and unloading of wheelchairs. And you thought that private hire vehicles were not allowed to ply for hire. The other amendment recently introduced is relates to the control of numbers of licensed taxis.

What this will mean in practise is difficult to ascertain. Much will depend on how the Secretary of State decides the proportion of wheelchair accessible taxis required within the area. Will this be a minimum set "one size fits all" percentage, will there be surveys carried out in each area or will the percentage be related to urban, rural or town population sizes. Whatever the scenario is decided upon it will almost certainly have massive cost implications on the taxi trade and could seriously affect the service given to many non-wheelchair disabled users.

We do not see this as a progressive step forward but instead is likely to drive taxi drivers into becoming private hire drivers, thereby reducing the number of taxis available in an area. Those that remain will have to absorb huge additional costs to remain taxi drivers with very little extra work to compensate. Whilst this seems like a very good Bill for wheelchair users it is in fact the opposite. Only 0.4% of disabled people need to permanently use a wheelchair and this Bill is aimed at that small percentage whilst ignoring the vast majority of disabled people with ambulant disabilities.

The economics alone make no sense for taxi drivers but add in the lack of choice to disabled users and it can be seen that this is a badly thought out Bill. There is no doubt that the movers of the taxi clauses are well meaning but the government's taxi accessibility consultation is the best way to determine how taxis can provide the best service for the disabled.

The government should remove all references to taxis and private hire from the Equality Bill and allow the ongoing DfT consultation to determine the best way for taxis to serve disabled people, so that all disabilities are catered for equally. The measures outlined in the Equality Bill certainly do not determine the best way for taxis to serve disabled people.

A copy of the bill can be found at www.publications.parliament.uk

Mike Hedges is a member of UNITE's Cab Trade Committee.



- PRESS RELEASE -

Private Hire Operators warned: 'One strike and you're also out'

From TfL Press Office

- Transport for London (TfL) toughens up the rules against touts
- Operators could lose their licence and face being prosecuted if their staff are caught touting

From 1 January 2010 the 'one strike and you're out' policy introduced in August 2008 to tackle touting was expanded to include private hire operators based in late night venues.

Previously, the policy only applied to licensed private hire drivers convicted of touting. To date, more than 230 private hire drivers' licences have been revoked or refused renewal as a result of the 'one strike and you're out' policy.

As part of TfL's continued commitment to combating illegal cab touting, private hire operators in the Capital have been warned that if their staff are found not to be complying with the licensed operator rules, they will be penalised and, if necessary, prosecuted.

Private hire operators, including those based in late night venues are reminded that:

- Bookings must only be taken inside the premises that are covered by the TfL private hire licence, and that the licence should be on display;
- Staff must not take bookings outside a building that has a private hire licence and are prohibited from soliciting for hire under any circumstances;

- Private hire drivers must not park or wait illegally outside venues.

John Mason, Director of Taxi and Private Hire at Transport for London, said: "We know the public have concerns about taxi touts and that there is particular confusion when licensed operators' staff work outside venues.

As a result I've reissued guidelines to the relevant operators and venues, and instructed my enforcement teams to extend the 'one strike and you're out' policy.

"The TfL funded Metropolitan Police Safer Transport Command continues to clamp down on illegal cabs, and we are determined to tackle any issues surrounding this matter head on. It's important that every Londoner understands the difference between legal taxis and minicabs on the one hand, and illegal cabs and touts on the other.

It is a legal requirement to pre-book minicabs, and if you don't you are putting yourself at risk.

"My message to operators and venue managers is that it's essential you make your staff understand and abide by the law, and we will be pushing for the strongest possible penalties if operators and their staff are found not to be complying with the regulations."

UNITE THE UNION – COMMENT

By JIM KELLY



The above release from John Mason, the new Head at PCO is welcome. The "One strike and you're out" policy caused controversy in 2008 when PCO attempted to use the policy, not to enforce the law on touting, but to attack licensed taxi drivers.

It started when one Met Police unit tasked with apprehending mini cabs touting in London's West End instead began arresting taxi drivers going about their business in a lawful manner. One individual officer in particular appeared to get a perverse delight from arresting taxi drivers.

This situation was eventually changed when UNITE, alongside other trade organisations in a similar position, legally defended its members in court.

When the role of this unit was finally changed back to its original remit to tackle mini-cab touting, PCO agreed to institute the original "One strike and you're out" policy. Instead of focusing the new policy

on illegal activity by touts the Management at PCO at the time amazingly included taxi drivers. It was also pointed out by UNITE at the time that the policy would not cover touts who were not licensed in the first place.

This quite perverse decision was only revoked when the trade, led by UNITE, LTDA & LCDC demonstrated at Trafalgar Square last February. Since then UNITE has been calling for the policy to be extended to include PH operators as well as drivers.

So the above press release is a step in the right direction. The question now is whether there is a willingness to prosecute operators and also where to start. Although there have been a number of actions against touts ranking outside clubs in central London and there have also been a number of new night ranks, the situation has not improved in many areas of the West End.

Part of the reason is the problem with Westminster Council's camera enforcement. But also the sheer scale of the problem created by PCO's licensing of so called "satellite offices".

If this new initiative fails to stem the tide of illegal touting outside clubs will PCO change its policy on satellite offices? Until then we wait to hear of the first prosecutions.

Jim Kelly is Chair of UNITE the Union's Cab Trade Committee.

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CTN

Comment

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

By FRANK HULL

As we enter the final year of the first decade of the twenty-first century we here at "Cab Trade News" would like to wish our readers and their families a belated Happy New Year!

However; trade wise, we are sorry to say that we cannot see anything happy heading our way this year.

As this trade huddles about the dying embers of this administration trying to gain some political warmth from it, we are aware that there will be none for this trade. Whatever administration is voted in next May will not, we predict, give us any either.

Therefore; this year we should be strategising for all contingencies that are bound to be coming our way after the next election. We know what they will be for we have faced them all before, probably in different guises.

The biggest threat to this trade is its own apathy. On the outside of this trade is a private-hire trade that is encroaching the now slim dividing line that separates both trades and it is our own apathy that is allowing it to happen.

There are many places in the provinces where councillors think that it is a bloody nuisance to have two trades doing what they see to be the same job. These people who have no idea about the running or financing of a taxi business are not really interested in these realities and would endorse the unification of the two trades. No doubt there are those, at this moment in time, pushing for this and would happily leave both trades to the vagaries of those mysterious market forces.

We suspect that many within the London trade will scoff at these remarks. However; we are talking provincial trade here and if it were to happen in the provinces then politically London ain't that far away!

As we have seen by the past actions that this trade has taken in its own defence the most effective part of any strategy has been that of trade unity. This Cab Section believes strongly in unity and invites all taxi drivers to Unite with us to demand what we, taxi drivers, know to be the best direction for this taxi trade to proceed

Please fill in the application form on Page 11.

Then perhaps we can help make all of our future New Years HAPPY – YEAH!

Frank Hull is a member of UNITE's Cab Trade Committee.

Continued from Page 1












bus stand. If the proposal is accepted, UNITE of course appreciates that this may not be possible because of traffic management regulations but if we are successful there will be no doubt about when parking is permitted for private cars or minicabs.

The rank outside Tiger Tiger is not the only problem in the Haymarket. UNITE has observed a minicab marshal or Clipboard Johnnie outside the Pep-C nightclub just a few hundred yards down the road from Tiger Tiger on the corner of Orange Street. The UNITE observer saw the marshal who was wearing hi-vis with the word CAB on the back making what appeared to be a booking via clipboard, see inset picture on Page 1. Unite will again inform the authorities of what is happening.

Of course these problems do not excuse the minicabs touting activities, something clearly needs to be done. The recent press release by Head of Taxi and Private Hire outlining the new 'one strike and your also out' for operators of minicab offices, see page 2, will hopefully go a long way to sorting the problem of Tiger Tiger, but if this policy is to be successful, it will need to be vigorously enforced. If not then the authorities will be seen as weak, not necessarily by the licensed taxi trade but by the very people the proclamation is aimed at the operators.

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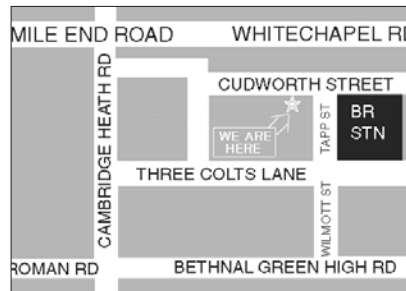
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FIGHT AGAINST DELIMITATION CONTINUES

By MIKE HEDGES

UNITE has tirelessly been opposing de-limitation whenever it has been proposed. From the initial Office of Fair Trading (OFT) enquiry into taxi numbers, the Parliamentary Transport Committee report into the OFT findings in which we demolished the OFT to forcing the government to concede that councils could retain limits where surveys found no unmet demand, UNITE has been at the forefront of the fight.

Since the government published their guidelines to councils recommending de-limitation many councils de-limited without first carrying out a survey in the belief that this was the only option available. To many it seemed to be a simple solution to the problem of how to tackle the huge demand that is suddenly created on Friday and Saturday nights. The idea of flooding the streets with taxis and letting market forces drive taxi drivers into working the most unsocial hours was one of the many fallacies created by the OFT report.

Many councils followed this logic although there was no evidence to support it. Others simply gave up as the demand for three yearly surveys seemed too expensive and onerous. Indeed the capping of numbers had proved very successful in meeting demand as it ensured a constant supply of taxis at all times of the day. De-limitation removes the necessity of drivers double or triple shifting a cab. Given the choice most drivers choose to work daytime hours and ignore the market forces that the OFT suggested would be paramount in forcing drivers to work unsocial hours. UNITE knew this wouldn't work as did the Transport Select Committee. Instead we argued that local councils should work with the taxi trade and users to use surveys to manage the number of licenses that were available to match demand.

This not only gives a quality service but stops the problems created by de-limitation such as increased fares, badly serviced vehicles and taxis clogging up town or city centres. Unfortunately the government allowed political dogma to dictate to councils the need to delimit. Much of the OFT research relied on findings that they made in Sheffield which was a de-limited council. Since then we have seen Sheffield re-limit taxi numbers as de-limitation was clearly not working despite a huge increase

in taxi numbers. Unmet demand was still found despite this increase in numbers, exactly as UNITE predicted would happen. But unfortunately this has been against the general trend with only 65 councils left with capped numbers. The latest councils to de-limit being Salford and Dover.

But there are also some signs that the affects of de-limitation on taxi drivers' incomes are being recognised. Following the re-limitation that has taken place in Harlow and Southend, in which UNITE played a leading role, some de-limited councils are now looking to have unmet demand surveys as a precursor to reapplying limits on taxi numbers or at the very least having a moratorium on the issuing of new taxi licenses. Neath and Port Talbot council are the latest council to back demands for a survey to be held with a view to capping numbers.

Basildon council are also looking to hold an unmet demand survey. Following a recent drivers forum meeting at which UNITE responded to the councils concerns regarding re-limitation with a written report and presentation to the meeting there is to be a licensing committee meeting to look further into the issue. We believe that an unmet demand survey will show that there are more than enough taxis in Basildon to meet all demand. UNITE will again be representing our members in Basildon and continuing our campaign against de-limitation. To that end UNITE will be doing everything we can to put pressure on the Transport Minister to bring to an end the de-limitation nightmare that has been created. Whilst it will be difficult to turn the tide against de-limitation it is not impossible.

If your council has de-limited then now is the time to start to pressure them into carrying out an unmet demand survey and using the results to look into stopping the issuing of further taxi plates. In Basildon our representatives asked the council the simple question of how did they know whether de-limitation had worked if no survey was consequentially carried out. If enough momentum builds up then the government will be forced to listen although it is going to be a very hard fight.

Mike Hedges is a member of UNITE's Cab Trade Committee.

ECO CITY SELLS 500TH VITO TAXI CAPTURING 30% OF THE NEW LONDON LICENSED TAXI MARKET



Eco City Vehicles PLC, a developer and supplier of eco-friendly commercial vehicles and the London licensed taxi, is pleased to announce that it has reached a significant milestone with the sale of the Group's 500th Mercedes-Benz Vito taxi (Vito).

The sale reflects continued solid demand for the Vito since its launch in July 2008, making it an increasingly familiar sight in the capital. The Group has sold approximately 100 or more Vito taxis since announcing its interim results on 29 September 2009, increasing the cab's share of the London new taxi market to 30% from 25%

over the period.

The Vito uses Eco City's patented rear wheel steering technology, co-developed by the Group, its associate company one80, and Mercedes-Benz. Key benefits, as reported by taxi drivers of the Vito include: better fuel economy; lower emissions; more space and comfort with air conditioning for driver and passengers; and six passenger seats instead of five. As a result, an increasing number of passengers are now specifically requesting the Vito when booking cabs and are also opting for the Vito for longer journeys, often in preference to private hire vehicles.

The 500th taxi was purchased by Mark Stansbury who has been a London owner/driver cabbie for eight years.

Peter DaCosta, Chief Executive Officer of Eco City, commented: "The Vito is fast becoming the cab of choice by London taxi drivers and has firmly established itself as the latest iteration of London's iconic black cab. With new air quality regulations proposed in London and overseas, the Vito's long term prospects continue to look bright."



Street Legal

By ELLIE REEVES

FREEZE ON LABOUR LAWS

The request from the British Chamber of Commerce at the end of last year for a three year moratorium on labour legislation is misguided. It fails to take account of the UK's obligations under EU law as well as the fact that many of the measures likely to be implemented are, or already have been, subject to staged or delayed implementation.

The absolute deadline for the implementation of the EU Agency Workers Directive is December 2011. If the government delayed effective implementation in the UK of the rights contained in that directive beyond 2011, it would be in breach of its obligations under EU law. It could, in principle, be sued by the European Commission in infraction proceedings, or by workers disadvantaged by the failure to implement the directive.

The Conservatives have said that they will review the UK regulations if they think that the government has "gold-plated" the directive. It is far from having been. There is considerable doubt as to whether or not the draft Regulations do actually encompass the obligations in the Agency Workers Directive and go far enough.

If anything, the draft Regulations may well amount to a defective implementation of the Directive and challenges to them may materialise unless they are strengthened.

The BCC also wants to stop or delay the Equality Bill. The reality is that the government will be hard pushed to get the Bill through parliament in advance of the general election anyway.

Presumably the BCC's concern centres on the introduction of pay audits – crucial to end the gender pay gap. Yet private sector organisations with more than 250 employees are to be given until 2013 to publish pay audits, and then only voluntarily.

There is no justification for delay in implementation of the measures in the Equality Bill concerned with public procurement. Those measures are an imaginative method for furthering equality through the way in which public contracts are awarded.

The government has long considered it appropriate to extend paternity leave but has consistently put back the implementation of it proposals for economic reasons.

When new paternity leave entitlements are finally implemented it will be disingenuous for the BCC to claim that its members have been taken by surprise when the proposals have been under consideration for a number of years.

Indeed, David Cameron claims that he will take Labour's proposals on paternity leave even further if he is elected.

It's impossible to see how a "labour legislation freeze" would work in practice, particularly bearing in mind the UK's obligations under EU law. The reason why the BCC makes the suggestion is because it wants to delay for as long as possible what it perceives to be the imposition of extra costs on its members.

It should be honest about that, so that the questions of whether there are any additional costs, and if so whether they are justified, can be addressed.



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Mark's Mélange 71

MARK EDWARD TAYLOR

FROM OSAMA TO OBAMA THAT WAS THE NOUGHTIES... WELCOME TO THE TEENIES



So it's goodbye to the last decade and hello to the new. Some pedantic folk believe the decade does not begin until you see the back of a year ending in a zero. For the Melange column, we just want to feel upbeat and enter a new decade as soon as possible.

The noughties saw great changes on planet earth and the cab trade had a few landmarks on the way too but, nothing much changes for taxi drivers because, all we really do is pick people up and drive them to where they want to go. That's been the case for a few hundred years...men, and of late women, just ferrying punters around....

The last ten years have been dominated by fear. They began in relative calm; however, things changed rapidly with the 9/11, or in English, the 11th September hi-jacked aeroplane attacks on New York's twin towers. This sent a shock wave across our safe European home. Terrorism and security were the decade's dominating themes.

On the lighter side, there's been 10 years of the London Eye, a much overdue change in relaxing the pub licensing laws, the adoption of the Euro by most of our European neighbours and the ever increasing role of the internet with the on-line life taking an ever larger role. Then, Barack Obama was elected US President. Not the end of racism, but certainly a big change in attitude.

What happened to the London Cab Trade in the noughties? We began with significant changes as London elected a mayor. Ken Livingstone was put in charge of transport in the capital. The cab trade had missed the last five decades under Met police control. Suddenly we were rammed into the modern world. No bad thing. Meter rates were adjusted to reflect anti-social working hours. No bad thing. Emissions equipment had to be fitted to older cabs and newer vehicles had to meet clean air directives.

Probably no bad thing to be trying to clean up the air we breathe in one of the world's most choked up cities. This has had a substantial financial impact on drivers. It was necessary. Drivers with long memories will be able to remember the great fogs of the thirties, forties and fifties when seeing twenty yards ahead was impossible. The government of the day introduced a clean air act. They had no choice.

So what lies in front for the next ten years? Early in the decade London plays host to the world with the Olympic Games. It will be fine. Many people, including a few in the cab trade, are getting all hot under the collar with the impending festival of sport. Why worry....there should be plenty of work for drivers around in August 2012. Plus, the wonderful spectacle of beach volley-ball on Horse Guards Parade. Remembering it is August; lots of people will be leaving the metropolis too.

Hopefully the trade's diver's organisations will protect the capital's cabbies on the much publicised, priority lanes, for those

unaware; these are priority routes for officials, competitors and dignitaries to be ferried between hotels and venues at speed.



The TEENIES will be the decade of domination by Tesco's, Wetherspoon's, Football on Sky TV and Simon Cowell. Yes, by about 2015, the average UK citizen will have all their food from Tesco's, attempt to enjoy a drink in a Wetherspoon's giant alehouse with all the comfort and charm of an airport terminal while watching football played in an empty stadium on Sky TV. Once that's over Simon Cowell will serve up a Nobody from Nowheresville to feed us culture...this is the future unless we do something about it....

For taxi drivers the future will probably hit us with more emission strategies. We are an easily identifiable group able to be targeted. Bicycles will be sharing more and more road-space with us as the bicycle becomes the vehicle of choice. Understandable...Green, cheap, healthy and small. The mayor's cycle schemes will be made to work no matter how many setbacks they encounter. Tourism will play a far greater role in a cabbies work. As the human race progresses, life experiences will mean more than possessions. Look forward to more travellers visiting your city.

There are 25,000 licensed cab drivers in London. A number which has been fairly constant over the previous decade. Fewer than 500 of these drivers are women. The number of female drivers should increase greatly over the coming ten years.

Hopefully, also on the increase, will be the work by the police and licensing authorities to tackle mini-cab touts. Drivers ended the last decade by fighting back against private hire drivers who were flouting the rules and muscling in on our work. Drivers need to remember this episode once work levels return to where they were before the economic downturn.

Finally, one thing that seems to have crept into modern life over recent years is people finding things to get upset about or worry over where no threat really exists. It's a case of the *Daily Mails* or unfounded *nimbyism*. This is likely to get worse in the next decade as people have far less to worry about they find things to get anxious over. Try not to let this happen to you....



Enjoy... The World Cup is coming soon... this could be the best decade of your life.
marktaylor842@btinternet.com

HEATHROW UPDATE

By **DANNY FREEMAN**
Secretary UNITE Cab Section, Heathrow Branch

UNITE THE UNION DOES THE BUSINESS!

Dave Eshun, (Unite Shop Steward) has notched up his 20th successful appeal against parking tickets and yellow box junctions.

His latest victory was when he represented a member who received a ticket from Hounslow Council. He was ticketed for parking in a loading bay. The photograph clearly showed him dropping off only partially in the loading bay. The adjudicator once again agreed with us. Well done Dave!

Unite the Union does the business – Again! Park Inn - sorted.

Over the past two weeks there has been 2 incidents regarding drivers having their vehicles clamped before they went past the barrier to the Park Inn.

Dave Eshun (Unite Shop Steward) and Colin Evans (Unite Member) went over to the Park Inn and got the drivers money refunded by the hotel. The Assistant

Manager sent the following email.

"You have our assurance that we have informed the parking contractor that they should no longer be clamping black taxis who are dropping off/setting down at the hotel.

I hope that this is the end of these unfortunate episodes and I look forward to a continued good relationship with all black taxi drivers – *kind regards, Neal, Neal Holloway Executive Assistant Manager Park Inn Heathrow.*"

Well Done to Dave and Colin!

Join Unite now and become part of the Heathrow family with over 44,000 members at Heathrow!



Dan Freeman is
Chair Heathrow Union
Learning Forum
Chair West London Area
Activist Committee

WARSAW WELCOMES THE LONDON TAXI

Warsaw is about to play host to a very special new arrival in the form of the world famous London Taxi. The vehicle, which is being promoted by a local Polish company called Dufort London Taxis, is to get its first public unveiling in the capital city, Warsaw on the 26th January.

The event is to be held at Motortest, an established car dealership and vehicle repair workshop centre, situated in close proximity to Warsaw's airport starting at 5pm.

This is the first European launch of the year for the London Taxi and its new International Sales brand The London Taxi Company.

"When we began selling the taxi internationally from our new production plant in China, we wanted a new brand for LTI that made it obvious who we are and what we do," said Matthew Cheyne, International Market Development Director for The London Taxi Company.

"We have been building the taxi in the UK for over 60 years now and no one knows more about taxis than we do. Producing in China gives us a more global appeal now so we aim to see the London Taxi on sale all over the world. Poland is the first European Capital city to launch the London Taxi in 2010 and we are sure it won't be the last. In 2009, we sold vehicles in

Germany Spain, Austria, Serbia and Kosovo." Jacek Kurowski, the official representative for the London Taxi manufacturer in Poland, is delighted with the reaction people are having when they hear of the arrival.

"Many people are looking forward to seeing the vehicle here in Poland. It will initially be run by a leading local taxi company called Wawa, who will operate it as a premium service taxi. The London Taxi is more than just the greatest taxi in the world, it is also part of the greatest taxi service in the world and that is what we are planning to bring to Poland."

Jacek has worked hard with The London taxi Company to bring the taxi to Poland.

"People deserve a choice other than the local cheap mini-cab style taxis and expensive limousines. Now they can have that choice with the London Taxi and a world class professional taxi service. They get a fantastic unique vehicle, a great service, professional drivers and their own private space in the cab. What more could people want?"

Jacek aims to sell more taxis onto the streets of Poland, in every city, welcoming international business and leisure travellers and anyone wanting to know more can visit www.londontaxis.co.uk, www.lti.co.uk or www.dufort.pl



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London-WIDE

By PETER J ROSE

Could it be that something is stirring within the minds and hearts of the Capitals Cab drivers? Looking over a couple of taxi drivers blogsites it would appear so.

One of them has recently run an article bemoaning the situation that is now prevalent in the trade. The fact that we have London's taxi radio circuits openly working with Private Hire. Of course this is not a subject that is exactly new to me, as regular readers of this column will testify; it is a subject that keeps returning to the forefront of my mind. But the thing that is different this time is at least a couple of drivers have been prepared to but their feelings on the record and argue the case for taxi only radio circuits or T.O.R.C. perhaps?

In the year just passed we have seen drivers doing it for themselves by way of tweetalondoncab, the taxi booking service run for drivers by drivers using the popular social networking site.

Customers opt to 'follow' these drivers via the service and when they need a taxi simply put a message out over the network. It's a system proving to be very popular with the public and drivers alike, with drivers having the opportunity to have direct involvement with its customers and input into its success.

Not so the traditional radio circuits, drivers on those have been told of the inevitability of working alongside private hire and that they would lose business if they did not. But since the downturn drivers have seen a worrying loss of work and are now questioning, mostly in private, the reasoning behind the association.

I can't remember a time when so many drivers are choosing simply to come off the radio and take their chances on the streets. It's almost as if John Griffin of Addison Lee will get his way and get radios out of taxis.

Speaking of Addison Lee (Sorry) I see that they now have a minicab bow booking App for the iPhone. I wonder if the radio circuits have thought of using this popular gadget to generate some business for their struggling taxi driver subscribers.

Please let me know. Perhaps they have been too busy attending dinners at the Worshipful Company to notice the downturn, busy looking after their private hire interests?

This would seem to be the allegation of another taxi blog. The point I think this person is trying to put over is that while the London Taxi Board may be defunct after the Heathrow fiasco.

The same people that caused its demise are still happily taking wine in this dining society. My own view is that anyone or any body that has private hire interests has no place in the world of the licensed taxi. What the trade has seen over the last year would seem to bear me out, drivers have not been 'taking back the work' for nothing. It surely comes of a frustration; this downturn has shown taxi drivers just how much work has been lost to private hire.

Not only from the streets via the satellite office but also from the virtual satellite office within their own circuits. Time for change perhaps?

Be seeing you :-)

*Peter J Rose is Secretary
UNITE Cab Section, London Branch.*

TfL TO TRIAL AVERAGE SPEED CAMERAS ON A13

Notorious A13 blackspot is the first place in UK where average speed cameras will enforce speed limit along a major urban road.

Work has begun to install average speed cameras on a notorious stretch of road in east London.

Special cameras are being trialled that will mean the A13 is the first place in the country where average speed cameras can enforce the limit on a road with multiple entrance and exit points.

Transport for London (TfL) is installing the new cameras between Canning Town and the Goresbrook Interchange as the collision rate on that part of the A13 is almost a fifth higher than is typical of major roads in London.

Huge potential

Nearly 500 collisions, including three fatal and 34 serious accidents, were recorded on the stretch of road between 2006 and 2008. Half those collisions were caused by speeding.

Ben Plowden, Director of Integrated Programmes at TfL, said: "Traditional safety cameras are very effective at reducing the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on London's roads, cutting casualties by an average of 50 per cent at the sites where they are installed.

"However, roads such as this 12km stretch of the A13, which has a high level of speed-related collisions, have huge potential

to benefit from the new average speed camera systems.

A total of 84 cameras

"Once operational, the new cameras on the A13 will cut the high casualty rate along the road, and should significantly reduce collision-related traffic congestion in the local area."

A total of 84 cameras, based at 37 locations, will monitor the speed of vehicles as they drive along part or all of the Canning Town to Goresbrook Interchange section of the A13.

If the average speed for a vehicle along the stretch of the road they drive along is above the speed limit for the location, the owner of the car will be issued with a Notice of Intended Prosecution.

The system will be fully operational by this summer.

Goes live

While the camera system is being installed and tested, signs will be placed along the A13 informing drivers that the average speed camera system is not currently enforcing.

However, the existing GATSO speed cameras along the stretch of road will continue to enforce the speed limit until the new system goes live.

The number of people killed or seriously injured on London's roads has fallen by 43% since the mid to late 1990s.

MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

A personal view by Fred Housego



Many years ago, the then Cab Trade Committee of the then T&G fought very hard to bring in a National Cab Act. Indeed, it would be better to say the National Cab Charter. As per the usual, blinkered Government ignored the sound reasoning behind this policy and it was swept away with the move to deregulation, an open wound that is still with us today.

London at the time was exempted and on the basis of this unique position it is my contention that we need a London Cab Charter, especially now as private hire has been licensed and the anarchy that was predicted has now come into full bloom.

For example, in recent years what private hire can do or can't have been given such a broad constitution that some genuine private hire drivers, genuinely believe they are licensed to act as licensed cab drivers. However, the majority in the private hire sector have used the vague edges of legislation to drive a clapped out Ford Cortina through every loophole.

What needs to be established is a set of laws enshrined in a charter that is clear and unequivocal. If we look at recent events you will see what I mean. The so-called satellite private hire offices, the 'clip-board johnnies', the abuse of the M4 coach and taxi lane, the way in which the carriage office gave away the power to license minicab offices to local authorities, the indifference shown to illegally setting up private hire ranks are just a few of the examples of the blurring of the edges which gives TfL, the PCO, the Met Police and local authorities to evade their responsibilities.

How that charter is written and the proposals it contains must be set out in a clear and a non-contradictory manner. Here are some of my personal thoughts:

1. Rights and responsibilities of the PCO to be written out and in the possession of all cab drivers.
2. Relationship with TfL and the mechanism for complaints against the PCO and TfL employees also to be in the hands of all cab drivers.
3. The complaints procedure against licensed taxi drivers that doesn't change on the whim of PCO employees and takes into account civil and human rights in line with the rights of all employees.
4. A more coherent fare charging policy. No removal of extras, shortening of unsocial hours payments without full negotiations.
5. Representation at the Carriage Office and the TfL where we have a proper input and are not there purely as observers.
6. Complete recognition of our role in London's transport, once again no equivocation, same rights as buses, e.g. express route from London to the Olympics.

These are some of my own ideas. There are many in the industry who will have their views and, through the various trade papers, I would very much like to see this debate continue. There are many more areas of contention, for example Heathrow, the stations and of course the issue of cab ranks at various high demand spots, such as tourist attractions, clubs, restaurants and theatres.

This is not the be all and end all, the charter must have within it sufficient flexibility so that as the future beckons the cab industry facing issues such as carbon-free and electric vehicles, changing demand and pressures placed upon the industry can be dealt with without continuous resort to changing legislation.

In the last two years newer members of the industry have shown their mettle and have begun to fight back to not only defend our trade but to enhance its viability. I am in my 38th year as a driver and I am more than prepared to stand alongside those who will inherit our industry.

T H E A T R E

By Tony Benson

THE PITMEN PAINTERS at the Lyttelton Theatre

Playwright Lee Hall thrilled theatregoers with his story of Billy Elliott, a miner's son who longs to be a ballet dancer. In "The Pitmen Painters" he tells the story of eight Newcastle miners in the Thirties, who hope to take lessons in economics but, unable to find a tutor, instead invite Robert Lyon (Ian Kelly) to lecture them in "Art Appreciation". Lyon soon discovers that the miners are not interested in the Sistine Chapel. Instead, he takes a practical approach – "seeing by doing" - and gets the men themselves to start painting. They are briefly acclaimed by the art world before the demands of life and war intervene.

The story bursts with the struggles of everyday life particularly in the story of Oliver Kilbourn (Christopher Connell), the most talented and class-conscious of the group, who would have liked to become a full-time painter but feels he cannot detach himself from the community into which he was born. The play is enormously moving, especially in the closing scenes which depict the euphoria of post-war Britain and the subsequent unfulfilled promises.

Max Roberts' fine production has some interesting working-class characters, particularly Deka Walmsley as an uptight local Union official, and Michael Hodgson as a devout Marxist. A fascinating social document ("Art isn't just for those who have money – art is for everyone.") and an inspiring political warcry.

NATION at the Olivier Theatre

Based upon Terry Pratchett's novel for children, "Nation", adapted for the stage by Mark Ravenhill, can't quite make up its mind whether it's a full-length play or a collection of short stories. Ultimately it is neither and, as a result, disappointing. It begins with a lad, Mau (Gary Carr), on a South Pacific beach, survivor of a tsunami that seems to have wiped out the entire local population. He is soon joined, however, by Daphne (Emily Taaffe), a young Victorian miss, and her know-it-all Parrot, Milton (Jason Thorpe), survivors of a shipwreck. A series of spectacularly staged adventures follow which I think the kids in the audience enjoyed.

ROPE at the Almeida Theatre

In this 1929 Patrick Hamilton thriller, two wealthy gay students perform a Nietzschean experiment. They murder a young friend and hide his body in a chest, convinced that their intellectual superiority will prevent their being caught. Around the chest they arrange a macabre dinner party, the guests of which include the victim's father. The plot, based on the real-life 1924 Chicago Leopold-Loeb case, is gripping cat and mouse stuff but also so absurd that it can't help but be very funny. Blake Kitson and Alex Waldman are convincing as the two students, as is Bertie Carvel as the clever guest who trips them up.

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