

CAB

Trade News

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Cab Section

THE CAMPAINING PAPER FOR THE LICENSED TAXI TRADE

OCTOBER 2010

MINICABS CLEAN UP AT TV AWARDS

On the night of September 6th the Dorchester Hotel on London's Park Lane hosted one of the popular TV Choice Magazine Awards 2010, which is sponsored by detergent company Daz. As one could imagine there was a plethora of famous faces and other guests at the annual event and should have been a lucrative source of work for London's taxi drivers on a quiet post summer Monday night.

Unfortunately this was not the case. Taxi drivers turning up at the hotel soon realised that their taxi rank adjacent to the Ballroom entrance of the hotel had been suspended for the night and a mini-cab clipboard operation appeared to be in full swing. Fortunately many of the capitals cab drivers are using the popular social networking service twitter and were able to spread the word quickly to their cab driving

By PETER J ROSE
Secretary UNITE Cab Section, London Branch

'followers' to what was going on and quickly descended on the hotel to 'take back the work'. What they found there was not only a clipboard operation in full swing but the minicabs were using the rank to accommodate the 'clipboard Johnnie' at the entrance of the hotel. Some drivers reported that immediate minicab hiring's were taking place.

The following day UNITE's Jim Kelly emailed the head of London Taxi and Private Hire (LTPH) for an explanation of events. The Head of LTPH replied saying "In the first instance and most importantly I would like to sincerely apologise to you, your members and all taxi drivers for the way we have handled this matter. In June this year a request was made to TfL through the normal route by the event organisers for a suspension of the ranks and parts of the red route to create a "pick up zone" for departing guests. This, I understand,

is similar to requests made and accommodated for this and other events at the Dorchester in the past. However, it is clear that a more detailed internal consideration of the nature and impact of this request should have been made at a senior level. Whilst obviously TfL has a duty to do what it can to help organisers of such events service guests transport needs a more detailed and thorough understanding should have been given at the time as to the exact nature and purpose of the request and the impacts of accommodating it. With regards to the use of the suspended bays by private hire vehicles clearly any bookings taken on street or cash journeys booked on street would be illegal and we have contacted both Lewis Day and Addison Lee regarding the nature of their operation. Both companies have assured TfL that all journeys were pre-booked by various TV associated companies such as ITV and

guests from the Dorchester Hotel at the conclusion of the TV awards with Lewis Day employing their own marshals to ensure that their pre-booked customers were shown to the correct vehicles. However, given the allegation that cash bookings were observed being taken on street, I have asked for all records for both companies to be reviewed to ensure that all journeys, as advised, were indeed pre-booked.

Jim Kelly replied saying. "Surely, this situation would, to any reasonable member of the public, be mistaken for a normal rank, with these vehicles lined up for immediate hire? It is therefore the view of Unite that no further dispensation should be allowed with this type of operation. Also the presence of marshals, in nearly all cases, adds weight to the impression that passengers can simply walk up and into waiting vehicles. Often the wording on marshal's jackets can be deliberately misleading, meant to attract potential passengers to an illegal operation. We would also be interested to know if The Dorchester is a registered PH operating centre, or a satellite office? Also, was the method and recorded information of pre-booking robust and did it conform entirely to existing Private Hire legislation? Further, what was the role of the Marshal and what information was recorded on his/her clipboard, Was the marshal working for the main operator or the sub-contractor? Is this information also recorded and available to TfL officers?"

Head of LTPH replies. "I can confirm that the Dorchester is a registered PH operating centre and we understand the marshals were provided by Lewis Day to facilitate the Lewis Day bookings and customers. As I indicated in my letter to you yesterday, we are looking into the allegations that were made regarding bookings being made on street but our understanding is that these marshals were specifically engaged to ensure that passengers taking pre-booked journeys made it to their respective vehicle.

We look forward to the results of their enquiry and will keep you posted through the pages of CTN.

The full emails between UNITE and LTPH can be read @ cabtradenews.co.uk - you can also follow me @ twitter.com/peterjrose1



CHANGES TO BRIGHTON TAXIS

By MIKE HEDGES



A package of proposals to improve taxi services in Brighton & Hove for disabled people was considered by councillors at a meeting recently.

The move follows consultation by Brighton & Hove City Council with groups representing disabled people and taxi drivers in the city.

Members of the city council's Licensing Committee will discuss a report containing a range of proposed measures to benefit all passengers, particularly disabled people.

Proposals include:

- Raising standards by improving the complaints procedure for any passengers who are not satisfied with the service they have received
- Increasing the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles available by ensuring that when a hackney carriage licence is transferred (ie when a taxi driver transfers his taxi licence to someone else) the new licence holder drives a wheelchair accessible vehicle. New licences issued would also only be for wheelchair accessible vehicles
- Installing CCTV cameras in all taxis

from April 2011 as a safety measure for all passengers and drivers.

- Introducing a one-year pilot scheme to enable people to phone the drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis directly to book a vehicle
- Providing a wider choice of wheelchair accessible vehicles, by allowing the use of rear-loading vehicles
- Increasing the maximum age limit for wheelchair accessible vehicles from 10 to 12 years, subject to regular vehicle tests, so that they can be on the road for longer

Councillor Denise Cobb, chairman of the Licensing Committee, said: "Most of our taxi drivers are very professional and do a good job across the city, but we are not complacent and we know from feedback – particularly from disabled people – that there is room for improvement."

"We have worked closely with the taxi trade, private hire operators and disabled groups, and taken into account the views of all parties involved in drawing up these proposals."

We shall have a full report about the outcome of the council meeting in the next issue of Cab Trade News.

COST CUTTING! THE REAL REASON FOR IDENTIFIERS?

From the UNITE Cab Section



It seems that identifiers for London's taxis will be introduced by the Public Carriage Office. These will show which area in London a driver is licensed to ply for hire. It is difficult to see the rationale for this other than as a cost cutting exercise by the PCO. The identifiers will be meaningless to the general public.

Even Londoners do not know the differences between Green and Yellow badges, let alone the differences in yellow badge zones. In fact it is likely that green badge drivers will not know the differences in yellow badge zones. So if this has nothing to do with the general public what is the intention of the identifier?

At the moment enforcement officers are issued with a hand held computer that can quickly identify a taxi and its proprietor. This will show whether the driver is likely to have a yellow or green badge. At the moment this information is used by the enforcement officer to check on drivers to see if the driver is plying for hire outside of their licensing area.

The PCO has put in place a series of penalties for any infringements of plying for hire outside of the drivers licensing area. UNITE has always supported the PCO in their quest to stop this and all of our members support the PCO in policing this. The policy seems to be working very well from the reports that we receive from the PCO and the declining numbers of yellow badges that are caught plying for hire outside of their area.

So if the PCO's enforcement team are actually being very successful in curbing illegal plying for hire then why have identifiers? It could be said that having an identifier will deter those remaining drivers from plying for hire outside of their area. If they had the identifier then other drivers could see very easily if a driver was plying for hire in an area not identified by the identifier that the vehicle will be displaying. Of course the driver may be operating perfectly legally, such as having a legitimate radio job, being pre-booked or simply picking up a friend. The

driver behind will not know any of the reasons that could be valid. Instead this driver will only see what is suspected to be a driver picking up outside of the zone identified by the identifier. The onus is then put onto this driver to report the wrongly identified driver to the PCO.

Just this scenario of one driver reporting another is open to widespread abuse. Drivers with grudges or other gripes may report other drivers or take meaningless pictures and send them in to the PCO's informant telephone number. There is no evidence of any wrongdoing and potentially this could lead to a driver being wrongly accused and maybe losing their license. In effect drivers are fulfilling the role that should be done by the PCO enforcement team.

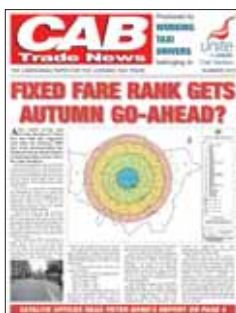
So we come to the real reason why the PCO are so keen to bring this forward. Why have enforcement officers checking vehicles when drivers will check each other. Enforcement officer numbers can therefore be cut and money can be saved.

At a time when satellite offices and private hire are threatening to take over London the last thing we need is the PCO setting taxi driver on taxi driver and cutting enforcement officers. No driver should operate outside of their licensing area but how will a driver reporting another driver be useful. There will be no supporting evidence or independent witness, so how can this information be used and should we as a trade be accepting this as a way forward?



CAB TRADE NEWS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE!

Cab Trade News the national taxi paper produced by drivers belonging to the Cab Section of UNITE the Union is now available to read online at the UNITE the Union Website.



Please Visit: www.uniteunion.org/cabsection

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CTN

Comment

A LOUD AND UNITED VOICE!

By FRANK HULL

Like the rest of the people in this country we have heard the message that things are going to get tougher financially. With increases in fuel prices on the way this year and the forthcoming VAT rise early in the coming new year, we don't need to be told by anyone that financially things are going to get tougher!

We wonder if all of us financially challenged taxi drivers and the taxi trade in this country will be allowed a voice in this Government's "Big Society" or will we remain that handy and assumed panacea for all of those troubles real or imaginary that are exposed from time to time in local council meetings across the country.

If we are allowed serious voice in the "Big Society" then we must make sure that it is loud and united in the interest of the taxi trade in this country.

We all know what is needed, that is, of course, modern taxi legislation that considers taxi drivers as well as our customers and those that administer trade regulations.

We need to voice loudly our dissatisfaction at the treatment many local trades across the country have received. For instance there are many decent taxi drivers who are having to pay the price for their council's lack of foresight when deciding to issue more taxi licences in areas that did not have adequate ranking space for the original taxi fleet!

Now taxi drivers in some licensing areas are having to pay parking fees that have been imposed on them for doing what, in many areas, is considered normal working practice to the modern taxi driver; that is over-ranking whilst waiting to gain a place on a rank. Many authorities and local police overlook this practice and allow taxi drivers some leeway in this practice. However; there are some areas, such as that historical city of Cambridge, that will give no leeway. The only things they will give are parking tickets!

This has been the practice in St Albans until last month when the taxi trade there decided to strike and have a slow drive procession through the town. This action caused those in authority to think negotiation and met with the trade to hear its problems and offer the trade a fairer way.

We wonder if this is an example of a voice being used in the "Big Society"?

If so then perhaps it may be a way forward for other areas such as the Cambridge City taxi trade!

Wirral council has over the last few years caused its taxi trade much trouble and expense through its decision to delimit the trade. Now they are going to impose a dress code on taxi drivers there. This decision was taken in this "Big Society" without considering the voice of a local taxi trade, even though the imposition of a dress code might be illegal. One of the things on the list is torn clothes despite the fact that, in this age, in all walks of life in this country and abroad torn clothing is a fashion statement!

We have mentioned here just a couple of items that are causing problems for local taxi trades. We all know there are many more problems that need sorting.

If we look at the example of the St Alban's taxi trade then it is obvious we need a loud and united voice to get our grievances across.

Why not join with us to achieve these aims with a loud UNITE voice that will be heard in this "Big Society"?












Fill in the application on page 15

Frank Hull is a UNITE Cab Trade Committee Member.

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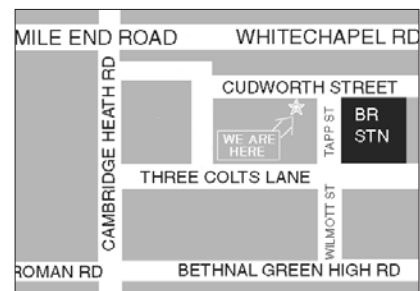
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London-WIDE

By **PETER J ROSE**

Secretary UNITE Cab Section, London Branch

COCK-UP OR CONSPIRACY?

Looking at the many taxi trade blogs, twitter posts and the like, it is obvious that the major issue on the minds of capitals cabbies is not a standard colour for taxis, not dress codes for drivers and not even sector identifiers for taxis, the so called yellow badge stickers. No!, the one thing that is on the lips of most concerned taxi drivers, is the rampant touting by minicab drivers and the illegal activities of the Clipboard Johnnies.

The UNITE Cab Section through Cab Trade News has been highlighting these problems for many a long month now. Traveling London-wide, seeking out the dubious activities of private hire trade and their controlling Johnnie, clipboard in hand, ready and willing to accommodate the expectant minicab driver. Recent events at the Dorchester Hotel, has without doubt magnified the attention on London Taxi and Private hire. The TfL department as well as this cab section was inundated with emails and telephone calls of complaints from working taxi drivers, angry and confused that a working taxi rank had been suspended in favour of a minicab operation. The Response from LTPH was at least swift, frantically sending out emails apologising to the trade. But as I write this I am aware that as yet LTPH has yet to make an official statement on the TfL website. Let's hope we don't have to wait as long as we have for the PCO notice regarding taxi drivers being included in Boris's 'One strike and you're out' to be amended. Yes we got an apology but the notice still stands two years later!

Every taxi driver that works past 10.00pm knows that the enforcement of minicab touts and Clipboard Johnnies is, despite 'best efforts' frankly pitiful. The trade seems to spend its time chasing its minicab tail like a demented dog, going round in circles getting nowhere, unable to catch our elusive appendage.

Stuck with a Mayor, that promised much to the trade but as yet has unequivocally failed to deliver. If anything the situation is getting worse. But why? Lack of police numbers is the most often used excuse and we are frequently told that even if they had a thousand enforcement officers, they would still not be able to get on top of the situation. Perhaps it's time we looked at how we got here and examine logical solutions for a way out?

Reading the 1998 Private Hire Act it would look to have reasonable safeguards in place for the taxi trade, in particular the record keeping arrangements for private hire, stating that full records must be kept at every centre the licensee operates from. As well as the details of every booking that the centre undertakes, a full set of records of the drivers that were available do the work was to be kept at the relevant operating centre. The 2008 Transport for London Act removed this requirement. Now driver records only have to be kept at a one 'designated operating centre'. My view is that this change in requirement has led to widespread abuse of the system and minicab drivers are turning up at clipboards ad-hoc, in the hope of a job. Of course the police on the ground have 'no hope' of checking to see if the driver is taking the

booking legally because the operator has no requirement to keep a record of his drivers at the centre. Worth noting that in June of last year the then PCO issued a notice reminding operators of their record keeping requirements. Although the notice focused on the destinations of the bookings it is relevant that operators had to be reminded of their obligations.

Another issue that has come to light is that of Planning permission. We know from Peter Bond's report in last month's CTN, that the PCO, despite denials, removed the requirement upon themselves to check that operators had gained the appropriate planning permission for their centres and left it to local authorities to check. With this in mind, UNITE Cab Section activists are at the moment gathering information from local councils regarding the planning requirements, asking what the requirements would be if someone wanted to operate minicabs from a bar, club or restaurant. So far only the City of London has responded to our requests. It would appear that the City does not require a club, bar or restaurant to seek planning permission for a minicab operating centre, providing that the service is only used for the customers of that particular venue.

The situation does change however if you wanted to operate minicabs from somewhere like the Royal Exchange. Then you would need to jump through several hoops to get your minicab office. I'm willing to bet that when we get the responses from Westminster etc. the story will be much the same. In fact I'm willing to bet that Westminster Council is more concerned about the planning requirements regarding Addison Lee's ashtrays than they are about Satellite offices.

The third piece of this particular jigsaw is the police. In a recent email to one of the blog sites, LTPH said that in spite of issuing a notice in May, stating that from the 1st June 2010 there would be no more Satellite office licences issued until after a private hire trade consultation was complete; they would issue a licence should there be exceptional circumstances, i.e. a request from the police.

Why would the police request a Satellite office be licensed? I can only surmise that the request would have something to do with public order concerns. Am I right? Is the loose system of minicab satellite offices being used as a way of clearing the streets of potential trouble quickly, therefore reducing police resource requirements? A frightening prospect, given the unacceptable number of sexual assaults that take place in minicabs. Let's hope I'm wrong on that one.

So what's the way forward? I believe that not only do we need better enforcement on the ground, something that Ken Livingstone has promised to address should he regain the Mayorship of London, see page 7. We also need to look at the way TfL, local councils and the police have allowed private hire regulations to be chipped away. Hopefully these observations will be open to debate when we finally get the promised private hire consultation. Anything less will only confirm my worst fears.

Be seeing you.



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THE LONDON TAXI COMPANY LAUNCHES EXCITING NEW WEBSITE



People all over the world can now find out more about The London Taxi Company by surfing the net. A new dedicated site has been launched at www.london-taxis.com which tells everyone all they need to know about the famous London Taxi.

The London Taxi Company is the international sales brand for LTI Vehicles, the British manufacturer of the iconic and purpose-built London Taxi and the company is promoting not only the London Taxi but also the best taxi service in the world.

"This new website shows drivers and operators how they can operate The London Taxi Service wherever they want in the world," said Matthew Cheyne, International Market Development Director. "We are proving in so many markets around the world there is a demand for our taxi together with the great service; just like you get in the UK. Many operators have increased their profits already by

operating The London Taxi Service which we help them to launch."

The London Taxi Company website gives information about the taxi as well as The London Taxi Service and benefits for passengers, drivers and operators. It even allows people to enquire about The London Taxi Service franchise and how they can benefit or apply to join.

"We will be using The London Taxi Company website to connect to our growing list of partners so that wherever people go in the world they will be able to hail a London Taxi.

The website at www.london-taxis.com lets visitors download images and brochures or read the latest press releases. Visitors to the site can connect to their local operator or apply to become an operator in just a few clicks.

The site is lively and easy to navigate and will soon include video, more press stories, and news of all the latest launches of The London Taxi Service.

For more information please contact 00 44 (0)24 7657 2246, email enquiries@londontaxis.co.uk or visit www.london-taxis.com

BILLINGSGATE PORTERS' CAMPAIGN

Don't throw the market to the sharks

London's Billingsgate Market is the UK's largest inland fish market, and it's under threat.

Sign the online petition @

www.unitetheunion.org

or send a letter of protest to Billingsgate market's management.



Billingsgate traces its history all the way back to 1327 and was originally a general market for corn, coal, iron, wine, salt, pottery, fish and other goods.

However by the 16th century the market had become associated exclusively with the fish trade and in 1699 an Act of parliament was passed making it "a free and open market for all sorts of fish."

That's why the market provides the opportunity to see and purchase the largest selection of fish in the United Kingdom, and every year around 25,000 tonnes of fish are sold generating revenues of some £200 million. But that could all change.

Help protect jobs

The porters at Billingsgate market are fighting to protect their jobs after the Corporation of London announced it wanted to make a series of changes.

Licensed porters are central to the character and success of Billingsgate market. Their knowledge of the market, understanding of products, sizes and grades as well as commitment to the job make porters the life and soul of the market.

The Corporation of London's changes, if implemented, will damage how the market functions, ruin Billingsgate and destroy the market's heritage.

Billingsgate is a London landmark. It has a proud history of delivering the finest seafood products to the people and restaurants of that great city, stretching back centuries, and the workforce are central to its character and its success.

The workers contribute to the wealth and well-being of London and UNITE is arguing there is absolutely no reason to suddenly change what has worked for centuries. That's why Unite is urging the Corporation of London to think again.

Get involved

And that's why Unite is asking members to get involved:

- If you want one of the UK's most iconic markets to retain its character, then get involved in the campaign. Sign the online petition now.
- If you think imposing change and ripping apart years of history is wrong, then get involved. Send a protest letter now.
- And if you think attacking workers and long standing working practices is wrong, get involved and get your friends to sign the online petition.

For more information about UNITE's campaign and to sign the online petition, please visit www.unitetheunion.org

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UNITE CAB SECTION BACKS KEN LIVINGSTONE FOR MAYOR



The fight to be the Labour candidate for London's Mayor has entered its final weeks with the decision being announced at the Labour Party conference on 25th September.

UNITE Cab Section has supported Ken Livingstone throughout his campaign to be Labour's candidate. Many UNITE members have been active in Ken's campaign from phone canvassing to being involved in the launch of his Transport Manifesto. Peter Bond (Cab Trade Committee Member) and Louise Osborne (Chair London Branch) were at the launch of Ken's Transport Manifesto, which can be found at kenlivingstone.com showing their support. It is clear that it is only Ken that can challenge the disastrous policies of the last few years under Boris. The UNITE Cab Section will be meeting with Ken Livingstone and his Transport team to discuss the issues facing taxi drivers in London and how we would like Ken to solve them. There is no doubt that Ken will listen to the taxi trade far more than Boris has done, despite all the talk at the election of how Boris was the taxi drivers friend.

Ken Livingstone's Transport Manifesto can be found at kenlivingstone.com in which he has a section on taxis. We shall be vastly expanding this in the run up to the Mayoral election.

Ken on taxis

London's taxi and mini-cab services are a critical element of door-to-door services. From the many cabbies who phone into my radio show it is clear that there is widespread dissatisfaction with Boris Johnson's administration, which has failed to live up to many cab drivers' expectations. There is a lack of clarity in the trade about how to deal with Boris Johnson's administration. Cab drivers may not have always liked every decision I took but their representative organisations knew who to talk to and knew the door was open.

There is widespread disaffection in the cab trade at changes to how they deal with the Public Carriage Office directly. Cab drivers know better than anyone that there is a gulf between the rhetoric about dealing with road works and the practice.

The utilities and private companies that dig up our roads are still under too little pressure to co-ordinate their works and keep disruption to the absolute minimum amount of time. There is renewed concern about illegal mini-cab touting – people who are not licensed, but try and pick up fares on the street, usually at night. From charging outrageous fares to attacking women, these rogue operators are a menace which both the legitimate taxi and mini-cab trade quite rightly want off our streets. As Mayor I would work with the police to come down vigorously on the touts and raise the level of deterrent against them. Black cabs are a London icon

which must be protected, but like all motor vehicles we need to take steps to reduce their pollution. Purchasing a cab is a large expenditure for a self-employed cabbie and so while the Mayor needs to set appropriate pollution standards, it is also right that Transport for London should be working with vehicle manufacturers to ensure that there is an equally iconic, affordable, low-carbon alternative to the current diesel vehicle.

Ken has made protecting Londoners from the governments cuts a major theme of his election campaign. He is the only politician standing for Mayor to argue against the cuts agenda that is going to affect us all. As taxi drivers we depend on the well being of London and the people that live and work here. Printed below is Ken's introduction to his 'London can't afford the cuts' manifesto showing how we will all be worse off under this government in which Boris Johnson is integral. It can also be found at kenlivingstone.com

Ken on cuts

The scale of the government's cuts is breath-taking. Their agenda is entirely ideological – there are alternatives that do not involve slashing services, jobs and pay, and risking pushing us back into economic downturn.

This document sets out the impact on London alone. Reports tend to focus on individual years of the budget cuts. But taken across the period set out in George Osborne's budget earlier this year we can calculate that London stands to lose by some £45 billion. That's £5,625 for every Londoner.

These will be cuts at a level far worse than those introduced by Margaret Thatcher. We saw what those cuts did to the quality of life in London – a bus service in decline, the tube allowed to deteriorate as investment was choked off, our public realm on the slide, visible signs of poverty with rough sleeping on the increase, police numbers cut, too few affordable homes built, and social dislocation and conflict. Leaving it to the market and slashing vital public services harms everyone and does not work. In the course of the next eighteen months we need to mobilise opinion against this agenda and send a message to David Cameron, George Osborne and Boris Johnson that London rejects their cuts and higher fares. We need to stand up for public services and look after those who are on the sharp end. Boris Johnson will do everything humanly possible to avoid culpability. **But the government's cuts are his cuts.**

Boris Johnson began taking his axe to services in London even before the government was elected: cutting police numbers, failing to guarantee the future of safer neighbourhood police teams, reducing financial backing to the police service, gutting Transport for London

PCO Notice 22/10

Transport for London
Taxi and Private Hire



National Fraud Initiative Important Information for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers

As part of the 2010 National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching exercise, Transport for London (TfL) is required by law to release information about licensed taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers to the Audit Commission. In October 2010 we will provide the Audit Commission with the name, address, date of birth and National Insurance number (if available) of every licensed taxi and PHV driver.

Since 1996 the Audit Commission has run the NFI, an exercise that matches electronic data within and between audited bodies to prevent and detect fraud. This includes police authorities, local probation boards and fire and rescue authorities as well as local councils. Further information about the NFI is available on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nfi.

Data matching involves comparing computer records held by one body against other computer records held by the same or another body to see how far they match. This is usually personal information. Computerised data matching allows potentially fraudulent claims and payments to be identified. Where a match is found it indicates that

there is an inconsistency which requires further investigation. No assumption can be made as to whether there is fraud, error or other explanation until an investigation is carried out. The use of data by the Audit Commission in the data matching exercise is carried out with statutory authority under its powers in Part 2A of the Audit

Commission Act 1998. It does not require the consent of the individuals concerned under the Data Protection Act 1998. Data matching by the Audit Commission is subject to a Code of Practice which can be found at: www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nfi/pages/codeofdatamatchingpractice.aspx.

Further information on the Audit Commission's legal powers and the reasons why it matches particular information can be found on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/fairprocessing.

Data Security

TfL considers the security of data as very important and will ensure that the data is transferred securely to the Audit Commission. – John Mason, Director Taxi and Private Hire, 19 August 2010. For previous notices visit tfl.gov.uk/tp

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Street Legal

By ELLIE REEVES

BUILDING SCHOOLS

When the Education Secretary Michael Gove cancelled the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme he suggested that there was little evidence that the condition of school buildings affects educational standards.

This isn't about aesthetics. Many school buildings are not fit for purpose. Sitting in cold rooms with buckets catching the drips from the leaking roof cannot be conducive to learning.

Even more seriously, many of the schools that were to be refurbished under BSF were built before 1970 and contain large quantities of asbestos. In fact schools were still being built with asbestos materials up to the 1980s, even though its dangers were well known.

As the buildings fall into disrepair, deadly asbestos fibres may be being released into classrooms, corridors and halls.

If the state of school buildings doesn't impact on standards now (and I am convinced that they do), they may be setting our children up for tragically early and painful deaths in the decades to come.

The TUC says that the number of teachers who have died from the asbestos-related cancer mesothelioma rose by over 300 per cent in the last twenty years.

There is also medical evidence that children exposed to asbestos are five times more likely to develop mesothelioma than adults in the same environment. At Thompsons we are seeing increasing numbers of clients who have developed the disease in their middle age who were exposed to asbestos when they were young.

Government advice is that asbestos in good condition should be left in place and managed. But asbestos management in schools is often ineffective. The teaching unions advise that total removal of asbestos in schools is the safest option. But for many schools, BSF presented the only realistic opportunity to do this.

When I was at school we had lessons in huts and the sixth form block was a prefab in the playground. It was largely rebuilt under the Labour government.

Labour had also accepted that asbestos in schools was a serious problem that needed addressing. It was working with the Asbestos in Schools group (AIS), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Department for Children, Schools and Family to try to find solutions.

Now no government department is taking the lead on asbestos in schools. The renamed Department for Education (DFE) says it is the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The HSE says it is for the DFE to establish a strategy.

Many local authorities are also failing to act on asbestos in schools. The HSE is facing massive budget cuts as a result of the coalition government's economic policy, meaning that inspections and prosecutions will fall further. The government's current review of health and safety regulations is expected to propose reducing protections for working people.

The drive to allow schools to take on Academy status and for parent and other groups to set up so-called "free schools" will further drain money from the state school system.

It appears that thousands of our teachers and children are being condemned to being taught in buildings that are not only not fit for purpose, but might actually be killing them.

For more information about the problem of asbestos in schools see www.asbestosexposureschools.co.uk

HARLOW LIGHTS

By CTN REPORTER

In Harlow the local UNITE membership have for well over ten years in many meetings with the council fought off the idea of roof lights being fitted to PHV's.

In spite of all the logical reasons put forward by the local trade backed by the DFT best practice guide the Council there decided to go ahead and make it a condition of licence. End to the matter? No, because one local private hire driver, at his own expense, took on Harlow council in court, where the magistrates agreed with him that it was not reasonable for such a condition to be imposed on the local private hire trade. Last month after all of the waste of various people's time and council tax money, the council agreed not to pursue the matter further. Now they have decided to take up the noble cause of emission standards.

They have in fact begun this process after being briefed from, what the Harlow taxi trade state is, a questionable report from a council officer with little experience of the taxi trade.

This exercise is being carried out once again at council tax payers' expense even though most of the sixty odd taxis meet at least Euro standard 3 conditions and with the knowledge that the council can have no control over the many hundreds of other vehicle types that are polluting the local atmosphere far in excess of any damage that could be caused by the local taxi trade.

BASILDON SURVEY?

Basildon Council is meeting with various interested parties to consider the practicalities of commissioning a local taxi survey.



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UNITE the UNION Cab Section isn't it time YOU joined!

*Savings are in comparison to Martin Cordell & Co's normal full service accounts charge for taxi drivers of £410.00 including VAT. Actual saving made is: £77.87 including VAT. Figures correct at time of going to press. More benefits for members can be found on the UNITE the UNION website unitehethunion.com

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MARK EDWARD TAYLOR

BAGGAGE

Following the worst winter since weather began, the south of England has had a very average summer. As the days get shorter and temperatures fall, those of us who've been lucky to get away will have packed some possessions in a suitcase. Taxi-drivers spend a little more time with luggage than most people. Whether loading cases into the front of cabs or packing our own baggage for a well deserved vacation. A couple of colleagues made some observations on the subject of baggage....

Have you noticed that *rat ta ta ta* noise or perhaps a rhythmic, *clickety clack*, as suitcases are pulled along the footway, commented one driver. The sound of cases being rolled down the street has become a zeitgeist of recent years. As another driver said, "Who had the brilliant idea of building wheels into suitcases?"

PLASTIC ON PAVEMENT

There used to be cases carried by hand. Rich folk usually got someone else to do the humping. Then sometime in the eighties travellers strapped their luggage onto fold-away metal trolleys. This wasn't always satisfactory as the cases slid off or buckled under the weight of an over heavy load. Then... Bingo!...cases with wheels, manufactured into the body.

Has this pull along luggage had a detrimental effect on the cab trade? Would a punter prefer to roll his baggage on a short walk to the station, whereas in the past, carrying a case could have been uncomfortable and burned up a few more calories so he or she may have hailed or called a cab? This could be one reason why we have seen a rise in obesity levels in the UK.

Pulling is easier than lifting. There was a time in the dim and distant past, when no one had a remote control for their TV. Every time you wanted to swap viewing between one of the three channels, you had to get up off the sofa, walk to the telly, press a button and walk back.

Who says modern life is rubbish!



Cabbies relationship with suitcases has always been interesting. Some

drivers are very helpful in assisting passengers load and un-load their stuff. Others have a, *couldn't care less*, attitude watching their fare struggle with cases. It has been said, all luggage has to be carried in the front luggage compartment of the taxi or the tiny boot and never in the passenger area.

The reason for this being cases may topple over and injure the travelling public. Has this ever been tested in Hackney-carriage law or the courts?... Is it case law?

The sight of people at the roadside with lucrative luggage is enough to have some drivers slam on the brakes in the hope they could be going to the airport. When a hotel porter wheels out a cart of baggage there is that moment of anticipation for the cabbie as to whether the job is going to the flyers, or just around the corner to the nearest station....

As to wheels on cases and their impact on the taxi business... well!... There is always something coming up on the horizon to test our trade....

The larger wheels of the Mayor's cycle hire scheme could be one of these too. After a few months of the bike rental project going live the answer would appear to be. No. As summer goes to winter the idea of cycling in the rain, wind and cold will have less appeal. Taxi drivers should welcome Boris's Bikes.

The more people who cycle mean less cars on the road, more road-space for cab drivers and in the long term a healthy and fitter population demanding lower resources on the National Health Service and therefore less tax.... Late night casual users of the bike hire scheme may think twice about pedalling home once the last tubes have gone, the night bus looks hell and opt for jumping into a passing cab. But, there will always be someone with baggage who will have to hail a cab... then again... everyone seems to have baggage of one sort or another....

Thankfully you can't get much luggage on a bicycle.



LONDON TAXIS SCORE A HAT-TRICK OF AWARDS



London Taxis and London Taxi drivers have come top of a recent poll for the best taxis in the world for the third year running. London Taxis won the award in the recent Hotels.com survey of over 1900 travellers for the best taxi in the world. Beating cities such as New York, Tokyo and Berlin, London scored the hat trick with its third poll topping success in as many years.

"Once again the London Taxi and The London Taxi Service have been recognised as the best in the world," said Matthew Cheyne. Cheyne is the International Market Development Director for The London Taxi Company the manufacturers of the famous black cab.

The London Taxi was also voted the safest, friendliest, best drivers and cleanest taxis in the world. There was no surprise when the drivers were voted as having the best Knowledge as well.

"London Taxi drivers train for up to three years to learn the knowledge and become a driver in London," said Matthew. "It's part of what makes them so professional."

But Cheyne also explained how any city

in the world could benefit from The London Taxi Service.

"We export the London Taxi and The London Taxi Service all over the world. The London Taxi can be left or right hand drive with different specifications to suit all types of climate."

Cheyne and his team also export the high class premium service that comes as standard with a taxi in London.

"We have a unique driver training course that we can adapt to any city, culture or language and we teach drivers the importance of good customer service. There are already successful London Taxi Service operations in Riyadh, Beirut, Bahrain and Prishtine. Soon there will be similar services in cities such as Barcelona, Kuwait, Paris and Moscow."

To find out more about The London Taxi Service franchise visit www.london-taxi.com.

Matthew Cheyne finished by saying: "I am sure the London Taxi will be voted the best in the world again next year, but who knows it might be The London Taxi Service in Madrid or Paris or Dubai!"

PCO Notice 25/10

Transport for London
Taxi and Private Hire



Advertising – Private Hire Services

Despite repeated reminders and clear guidance and advice issued by Transport for London (TfL) we continue to receive a high level of complaints, information and evidence showing that some licensed London private hire operators continue to advertise their services using words 'taxi' or 'cab'.

Again we would like to inform all operators that the advertising of their services in this manner is clearly not permitted under the conditions set out in section 31 of the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998.

This section clearly states that no private hire advertising can use the words 'taxi', 'taxis', 'cab' or 'cabs', or words closely resembling any of those words, and that any person who contravenes this is guilty of an offence.

TfL will always take appropriate action

against those licensed operators who commit such an offence but such activity is very time consuming, is not a cost effective use of our resources and has a direct adverse impact on the private hire licence fee.

Operators are therefore reminded that they are not permitted under any circumstances to use the terms 'cab(s)', 'taxi(s)' or any words closely resembling these terms in advertisements and that they must comply with section 31 of the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998.

Failure to do so can result in the revocation of your operator licence and / or legal action.

I thank you for your co-operation with this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or queries regarding the above. – John Mason, Director, Taxi and Private Hire, 7 September 2010. For previous notices visit tfl.gov.uk/tpb

marktaylor842@btinternet.com

VERIFONE UNVEILS NEW CARD PAYMENT SOLUTION FOR LONDON BLACK CABS

Licensed Owner Drivers can Increase Revenues and Provide Enhanced Passenger Choice



VeriFone, a global leader in secure card payment solutions, announces VeriFone Taxi Systems (VTS) in the UK, equipping London's licensed black cabs with new card payment capabilities. VeriFone's unique and proprietary system, designed exclusively for black cabs, will allow drivers to offer secure and reliable credit, debit and contactless card payments for improved passenger convenience.

For licensed London black cab drivers, all VTS equipment, installation and maintenance are free. Card payments are processed quickly and securely allowing cab drivers to recover fares fast and more effectively manage their finances.

Mark Roberts, VP Sales VeriFone, comments "This is a revolution for London black cab drivers. Owner drivers will now be able to offer fast and efficient credit, debit and contactless card payments, which has a multitude of benefits for both driver and passenger."

Typically, taxi drivers will see increased tips due to "rounding up". More journeys can be made in a day, as there will be no need to stop at ATMs for passengers to pick up cash, and payment authorisation and payout to drivers will happen within three business days. Additionally, drivers will be carrying and handling less cash, which is a huge safety bonus."

The VeriFone in-cab payment solution consists of a Vx 810 PIN pad securely mounted passenger-side, integrated with a Vx 510 for driver login and receipt printing. The hardware is coupled with VeriFone's payment processing software, PAYware Merchant, which is used by many UK high

street retailers. VeriFone's payment solution also minimises the risk of fraud, by keeping cardholder data encrypted during transactions, enabling cab drivers to gain consumer trust by delivering highly secure passenger card payments. Finally, a Passenger Information Monitor (PIM) delivers video content and safety information directly to the passenger.

London has approximately 22,000 licensed black cabs and competition for passengers is fierce. Offering a wider choice of payment options to passengers will result in increased revenue for drivers and greater convenience for cab users. And the VeriFone payment system is designed just for black cabs, allowing them to differentiate themselves from minicab drivers.

Mark Roberts adds, "In the US there are more than 20,000 taxis using a VeriFone payment solution. It is a huge success and very popular with cab drivers – and we are pleased to now bring VeriFone payment technology to UK black cab drivers. The London black cab community is renowned worldwide for providing excellent customer service. We want to help the best get even better by offering our revolutionary black cab payment solution for free to all licensed London black cab owners. We hope that every driver takes us up on our offer and installs the solution over the coming months."

An in-cab pilot programme of the payment solution is scheduled to begin in the near future with the involvement of the LTPH office (London Taxi and Private Hire).

www.verifone.com/uk-taxi

"ADDENDUM TO ENGLAND FANS IN SOUTH AFRICA"

England fans adorn 'Fork' Restaurant, 84 Long St, Cape Town, before England v Algeria. Probably the best restaurant in Cape Town, maybe even in South Africa, serving Italian Tapas – a must if you visit Cape Town, say hi to Ed, the owner, say you know me, and he'll probably charge you double!

He's recently opened another one – 'Knife' at the Crystal Towers Hotel – presumably 'Spoon' is on its way!



T H E A T R E

By Tony Benson

DEATHTRAP

at the Noel Coward Theatre



DEATHTRAP: Simon Russell Beale & Jonathan Groff. Photographer: Hugo Glendinning.

Ira Levin established his credentials as a writer very early in life with a succession of suspenseful novels: "A Kiss Before Dying" (when he was 23), "Stepford Wives", "The Boys from Brazil" and "Rosemary's Baby", all of which became films.

He followed these with the play "Deathtrap", which ran on Broadway for 1,793 performances, a record for a comedy/thriller. Levin also wrote the book and lyrics for a Broadway musical, "Draught the Cat", which lasted less than a week – but that's another story.

There's a line in the play when the central character, Sidney Bruhl, a playwright-lecturer, says to one of his students who has submitted a play for his approval: "Do you know how much this play could net in today's market? Two million dollars, and that's not including the T-shirts." And, oddly enough, that's exactly what Levin made on the Broadway run of "Deathtrap".

The programme for this production includes an exhortation to the audience to "please keep the plot a secret" and I am happy to comply since there are so many twists and turns, along with one or two cul-de-sacs – and I am not known for my sense of direction – that I'd be hard put to give the game away, anyway.

However, I will mention that there is one scene so scary I swear I saw the people sitting in front of me spring six inches out of their seats. And there are some funny one-liners, such as when Bruhl, aware that his once admired creative powers are on the wane, utters sadly: "Nothing recedes like success."



DEATHTRAP: Simon Russell Beale & Jonathan Groff. Photographer: Hugo Glendinning.

Sort of Agatha Christie meets Neil Simon, this production owes much to having Simon Russell Beale, Britain's finest living actor, in the lead. He is supported by Jonathan Groff as his ambitious protégé, Claire Skinner as his wife, Estelle Parsons as their clairvoyant neighbour and Terry Beaver as his lawyer.

The brilliant direction and design are by Matthew Warchus and Rob Howell respectively, while the atmospheric incidental music is by Gary Yershon.

THE THUNDERBOLT

at the Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond



THE THUNDERBOLT 3: Front row: Janet Spencer Turner, David Antrobus and Geoff Leesley. Back row: Osmund Bullock, Brenda Longman, Julie Teal and David Whitworth. Credit to Robert Day.

Ira Levin establishes Arthur Wing Pinero's rarely performed 1908 satire opens with the assemblage of the middleclass Mortimore family. Their unmarried eldest brother, Edward, a prosperous brewer, has just died at the age of 53, apparently intestate. The rest of the family, three brothers and a sister, are eagerly anticipating a sizeable inheritance which they each, for various reasons, desperately need, not least daughter-in-law Phyllis: the snobbish Mortimore family into which she has married has never accepted her as her father was a mere shopkeeper.

With a large sum of money she and her teacher husband, Thaddeus, can move from the small claustrophobic town where she feels trapped, and start a new life elsewhere.

Of course, the inevitable happens. Edward had sired a child who turns up to throw an extremely large spanner into the works. The intelligent Helen has been an art student in Paris, where she and her father had been very close. How, she agonises, could he have failed to secure her future?

The family reconvenes to discuss the new development in what soon becomes – as evidence concerning a possible will comes to light – a tense but very funny courtroom drama with no judge or jury.

"The Thunderbolt" has the best ensemble acting I've seen in years. Natalie Ogle as Thaddeus's tearful, "socially inferior" wife Phyllis and Grainne Keenan as Helen, Edward's love child, are outstanding. As are the family when squabbling over the anticipated spoils: Geoff Leesley thunders around the small Orange Tree space as the most articulate of the brothers, Stuart Fox is the nervously disintegrating Thaddeus and David Whitworth is Stephen, a local newspaper proprietor whose connection with the Temperance movement makes him seem an unlikely candidate to accept an inheritance from a brother who owes his entire wealth to booze.

The remaining female cast are sufficiently bitchy to perform as Ugly Sisters come Christmas. The scene changes are cleverly choreographed and Sam Walters directs with his customary skill.



THE THUNDERBOLT: Stuart Fox and Natalie Ogle. Credit to Robert Day.

ON-STREET COMPLIANCE AND LICENSING

By **PETER BOND**

The same story regarding the percentage of Taxis being inspected 'On-Street' in Period Five (25th July-21st August) compared to PHV's remains similar to those reported in the last issue of CTN.....

Only 2% of the PHV fleet checked compared to 7% of the Taxi fleet.

The rate of unfits is similar, 7.1% of PHV's and 6.9% of Taxis, but this figure is misleading as the CO's checking all these vehicles admit that not only do they know Taxis inside-out making it easier to locate any likely problems, but the PHV fleet is made up of untold makes and models, that they have little experience in checking, and many have mouldings under the wheel arches and masses of pipes, electrics and coverings when the bonnet is opened, all making it far more difficult to find faults compared to Taxis.

Bearing all this in mind these statistics surely show that it is the PHV fleet that should be targeted more than the Taxi fleet, whereas in reality there is a target of 15000 out of a fleet of about 22000 Taxis that has to be reached each year, with no target for PHV's.

The statistics for last year were - 18529 (about 85%) of Taxis inspected 'On-Street' compared to only 13027 of PHV's (about 23%), which we deem to be an unacceptable disparity.

On a more positive note most of the high profile joint operations (when LTPH work with Police, Councils, Immigration, Vosa etc) have been aimed more at PHV's, and the Compliance Team have drastically increased the number of PHV's inspected 'On-Street' from when we first started this consultation process.

Once again if you have a clean Cab with your Badge/Bill (signed)/Tax/Insurance all in order you may prevent a full inspection - strangely the CO's and LO's have noticed a big increase in drivers not wearing their badges with no particular pattern as to why this is occurring - the theory that this must be Suburban drivers not wanting to be identified was dismissed as most turned out to be Green Badge Drivers. Be careful as City Police are currently prosecuting a number of Drivers for this with fines ranging from £280 - £400.

Another worry is the number of Taxis with illegal tyres that we have been asked to point out. One surprise here is that most of these are not Journeyman, but 'Mushers'. Remember if the Police are present its £80.00 and 3 points per tyre - you could lose your Licence in one hit!!

Once again only two Suburban Drivers were issued with warning letters for working out of their area.

Another common-sense move in the right direction is the Compliance Team

will soon have a list of 'Advisories' ready to start implementing, although this will differ from the ones used at SGS.

With all the problems and delays renewing Drivers Licences there seems to be some confusion as to when you can legally work if your new Licence has been issued but you haven't received it - previously we were told no Licence in your possession - NO WORK. Now some at LTPH state you can work whilst waiting for it to arrive, some of you may be sent an email similar to the old cover notes and some that you still cannot legally work without your Licence.

Regardless of the above you should receive your renewal form 8-10 weeks before expiry and your new Licence 2 weeks before that date but if you don't, you MUST call 0845602700 at least a month before it expires, as it is your responsibility to renew. The new office for LTPH in Blackfriars Rd has no service counter but in exceptional circumstances if it's not your fault you may be called in by appointment to sort out any problems. You should now never send your Licence, original or copy, with your renewal documents regardless of what the Post Office personnel tell you, if you choose to use their check and send service.

At our request after a number of members reported the PHV office at City Airport acting illegally, both the LTPH Licensing Officers (LO's) and STC Police Officers independently checked on the behaviour of this office and found nothing untoward.

Presumably an employee of this operator must have been acting beyond his remit for a short period - the point here being that LO's, CO's and STC do respond at our request if a misdemeanour is reported. We will continue to monitor the situation with the help of UNITE members that work the airport.

All these agencies are keen for the Trade to use their dedicated email, ltph.enforcement@tfl.gov.uk, to report suspicious or illegal activity giving as much information as possible, including photographic and video evidence. Be careful with any video evidence submitted as you could incriminate yourself if, like some have already done, it's obvious you filmed an incident whilst driving!!

A number of Private Hire Operators have been warned for using the term 'Taxi' on their websites and those who've ignored this warning have been passed to the Licensing Authority for revocation.

At a separate meeting with senior LTPH officers we have been assured that it will be Taxi Drivers who investigate complaints from the public of a topographical nature and not an administrator who would have to resort to 'Google Maps' or 'Sat-Navs' to check the route.

PCO Notice 26/10

Transport for London
Taxi and Private Hire



Licensed Drivers Convicted or Cautioned for Touting - Update

On 1 August 2008, the Mayor introduced a 'one strike and you're out' policy for licensed private hire drivers convicted of touting. As a result 320 PHV drivers have had their licences revoked in the past two years.

In February 2010 Transport for London extended the policy to include Adult Cautions as well as convictions which has resulted in a further 61 revocations.

Despite this policy it is clear that some licensed drivers continue to break the law. TfL takes a serious view of touting and will not tolerate such illegal behaviour. Therefore, for the avoidance of any doubt, all PHV drivers are reminded that any

licensed driver convicted of, or cautioned for touting will have his or her PHV driver's licence revoked.

An application to be re-licensed will not be considered until at least 12 months after the date of revocation, subject to the driver having had no previous similar convictions or cautions.

This policy does not affect a licensee's statutory rights of appeal against the decision of the Licensing Authority.

For previous Notices visit tfl.gov.uk/pco

John Mason, Director Taxi and Private Hire, 17 September 2010. For previous notices visit tfl.gov.uk/tph

VICTORIA STATION UPGRADE

From Monday 27 September 2010 Terminus Place will be closed for a period of approximately nine weeks as part of the London Underground Victoria Station Upgrade works.

This will result in taxis leaving the front of Victoria Station not being able to turn right onto Buckingham Palace Road and instead having to head south along Buckingham Palace Road at the start of the

journey. Therefore some taxi journeys, particularly those to destinations north of Victoria Station, will be longer than usual. During this period Wilton Road will remain temporarily closed to general traffic.

Taxis departing from the rank at the back of the station (Rail Air Deck), immediately adjacent to the pedestrian exit, will be able to depart as usual, without being affected by local diversions.

THE MORE FOR MEMBERS UNITE CAB SECTION BENEFIT BOOK

Unite Cab Section is offering all members the chance to save money on a whole host of products and services with the launch of 'More for members' the Cab Section's new member benefits scheme.

Working with benefits specialist, Personal Group, Unite Cab Section have put together a comprehensive package of benefits for all members. These include discounted retail vouchers, fantastic offers on music, short breaks and hotels, a financial and mortgage advice service plus much more!

Use your Retail Vouchers to make great savings of up to 12% at several high street stores, save money on large household purchases with 9% discount at B&Q, 10% at Curry's and Comet, cut the cost of food with a number of popular supermarkets including Asda and Sainsbury's. Cut the cost of shopping online with 7% off purchases at Amazon, plus many, many more discounts.

To be able to enjoy life luxuries to the full we understand that the most important thing to concentrate on is you and your health and wellbeing,

which is why we have included significant benefits in your package such as discounted eyecare, and the Taxi Drivers Personal Group Hospital Plan.

Every Unite the Union Cab Section member can now take advantage of all these benefits, simply for being a member.

Remember for more information and to view all your benefits simply visit:

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Department for Transport

EQUALITY ACT 2010

ARE YOU A TAXI OR PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE DRIVER?

There are some changes in the law which will come into effect in October 2010 which might affect you.

The Equality Act, which was passed earlier this year, includes some provisions relating specifically to taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs) and disability.

Certain parts of the Act do not become law until the Government makes commencement orders to bring each part of it into force. The Government intends to bring into force several parts of the Act in October 2010, including some, but not all, of the provisions that are specific to taxis and PHVs. Other provisions will come into force later – but not before April 2011.

This note describes what will happen in October in relation to those parts of the Act that are specific to taxis and PHVs, and what the implications will be for taxi and PHV drivers.

This note focuses on the implications for the taxi and PHV trades of the October provisions. A separate note has been prepared for licensing authorities.

Duties on drivers to assist passengers in wheelchairs

The Equality Act is due to place duties on the drivers of designated wheelchair accessible taxis and PHVs to provide physical assistance to passengers in wheelchairs. A further announcement will be made on when the duties will come into force, but it will not be before April 2011.

The duties will apply to the driver of any wheelchair accessible taxi or PHV which is on the licensing authority's list of "designated vehicles".

If you are the driver of a wheelchair accessible taxi or PHV, it is advised that you find out whether your licensing authority intends to maintain a list of designated vehicles, and therefore whether the duties are likely to apply to you.

Before the duties are brought into force, any drivers who suffer from a disability or a condition which would make it difficult for them to provide physical assistance can apply for an exemption from the duties to offer assistance.

The opportunity to apply for exemptions starts on 1 October.

What do I need to do?

If you are the driver of a wheelchair accessible taxi or PHV, the first thing you need to do is establish whether your licensing authority intends to keep a list of designated vehicles. We are encouraging licensing authorities to make their decision known to drivers and perhaps establish a "shadow" list as soon as possible.

If your licensing authority does intend to maintain a list of designated vehicles, and your wheelchair accessible vehicle is to be included on the list, you will be required to carry out the duties to assist wheelchair users.

What are the duties?

The duties being placed on the drivers of designated wheelchair accessible taxis and PHVs are:

- to carry the passenger while in a wheelchair
- not to make any additional charge for doing so
- if the passenger chooses to sit in a passenger seat, to carry the wheelchair
- to take such steps as are necessary to ensure that the passenger is carried in safety and reasonable comfort; and
- to give the passenger such mobility assistance as is reasonably required.

What does mobility assistance mean?

Mobility assistance essentially means helping passengers who use wheelchairs by providing physical assistance.

If the passenger wishes to remain in the wheelchair, the driver must help the passenger to get into and out of the vehicle.

If the passenger wants to transfer to a seat, the driver must help him or her to get out of the wheelchair and into a seat and back into the wheelchair; the driver must also load the wheelchair into the vehicle.

The driver must also offer to load the passenger's luggage into and out of the vehicle.

What if my licensing authority does not intend to keep a list of designated vehicles?

If a licensing authority does not intend to maintain a list of designated vehicles then the duties will not apply; the duties only apply to drivers of vehicles which are on the licensing authority's list of designated vehicles.

What if I have a back condition which makes it impossible for me to help a passenger in a wheelchair get into a cab?

The new Act allows for exemptions from the duties on medical grounds or if the driver's physical condition makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for him or her to comply with those duties.

It is the responsibility of drivers who require an exemption to apply for one from their licensing authority before the duties come into force; they will have at least six months to go through this process.

Who decides if a driver is exempt?

The local licensing authority decides if a driver should be exempt from the duties.

What if the licensing authority says that I am ok to carry out the duties and I disagree?

The legislation allows a driver to appeal to the magistrates' court within 28 days if the licensing authority decides not to issue an exemption certificate.

TfL INTRODUCES NEW ADVISORY NOTICE SYSTEM

TfL introduces new advisory notice system Transport for London has introduced a new advisory notice system for taxi vehicle licensing inspections.

The new system commenced from 24 August, providing a formal and consistent approach when making decisions on the roadworthiness and conditions of taxis.

Vehicle inspectors, working for our vehicle licensing service provider (SGS), will now be able to use the electronic inspection system to identify whether certain failure items should be classified as a 'pass advisory' or a 'failure'.

Selecting the 'pass advisory' option for certain (non-safety related) failure items during a licensing inspection will result in the issuing of licence plates accompanied by an advisory notice. The notice will inform the vehicle owner/driver that the defect requires attention and rectification within a reasonable amount of time.

Helen Chapman, Deputy Director of Taxi and Private Hire said: "Every effort has been made to ensure we provide this

additional flexibility through the annual licensing inspection without reducing or compromising the standards, quality and safety of the vehicles used by the travelling public.

"TfL will keep the new system under review and will amend or adjust the system if necessary. We hope that drivers and operators will welcome this new approach to annual inspections.

"We are currently developing a similar system for on-street compliance inspections which we hope to implement in September."

Further information:

Please send comments or suggestions regarding the new advisory notice system to: tphenquiries@tfl.gov.uk

Taxi inspection manual: updated version incorporating the new system can be found at www.tfl.gov.uk/tp

The non-safety related components and system areas (listed below) that will be subject to the advisory notice option are:

Auxiliary front lamp	Ashtray
Engine oil leak	Interior fixtures/fittings
Coolant system	Cushion / upholstery
Boot lid	Chassis under body
Coach lines	Reservoir levels
Boot floor	Exhaust assembly
Window markings	Gearbox oil leaks
Driver mirror	Spare wheel
Badges / motifs	

How will passengers know that I am exempt from the duties to assist passengers?

The Department will be printing and issuing to licensing authorities special Exemption Notices which exempted drivers must display on their vehicles in order that passengers will know that the driver is exempt from duties.

When will the duties come into force?

A further announcement will be made about when the actual duties to assist will come into force, but it will not be before April 2011.

Drivers with a medical condition that prevents them from carrying out the duties will be able to apply to their licensing authority for an exemption from October 2010, before the duties come into force.

Guide Dogs

The other thing that will happen on the 1st of October is that the duties placed on taxi and PHV drivers and on PHV operators to carry guide dogs and other assistance dogs will transfer from the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to the Equality Act 2010.

In practice, the duties will remain exactly the same as they are now.

Any person who is currently exempt from the duty to carry an assistance dog

on medical grounds will continue to be exempt.

That is because we have made a change in the law so that all existing exemption certificates and all existing exemption notices remain in force as though they had been made under the Equality Act 2010.

Will I have to take a different approach to the carriage of guide dogs from 1 October?

No. The change is a purely technical one; the duties to carry guide dogs and other assistance dogs will not change at all.

I have an exemption certificate which says that it was issued under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – do I have to get a new one?

No, you do not have to get a new certificate, the certificate which you have been granted remains valid until its expiry date.

I have a special notice in my taxi/PHV which says that I am exempt from carrying guide dogs and mentions the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – do I need to get a new one?

No, you do not have to get a new exemption notice; the notice which was provided by the licensing authority remains valid until its expiry date.

— OBITUARY —

Fred White 1936 – 2010



FRED WHITE BY HIS SON MARK

On Wednesday the 4th of August 2010, London Taxi driver, Fred “Chalky” White, went to join God’s ‘Great Cab Rank in the sky’ after 44 years of driving a cab around the streets where he had grown up.

I’d never seen my Father drunk let alone incapable and we were amazed when the Doctors told us he had cirrhosis of the liver and that the disease was getting worse. Although he enjoyed the odd glass of beer or a rare glass of scotch, Fred rarely drank as he was always too busy driving people around; even at Christmas when all our relatives had a tippie, he would end up driving them home as a ‘Love Job’. But then Dad loved the job; I used to joke that he would die in his Taxi, which was always spotlessly clean and that he loved the Cab more than anyone else in the family. “Chalky”, as he was known in some quarters, was always smartly dressed in a blue shirt and collar and tie and we knew what to buy him for ‘Father’s Day’; he had more shirts than M&S!

Dad got his Taxi Badge in 1966 and he never looked back; mind you he had gone through so many jobs since leaving School at 14, that I don’t think there was anything he hadn’t tried. He’d driven enormous articulated Milk Lorries for Express Dairies during the night, whilst learning the ‘Knowledge’ during the day, having been made redundant from his job as a buyer at Smithfield Meat Market. In the days of back doubles and short cuts, driving a Taxi around the London streets he knew like the back of his hand, was a natural progression.

Fred appeared on Thames TV discussing Cabbies Nicknames in the early 80’s. In the King’s Cross Railway Cafe he was ‘Shiny Tops’ and someone’s wife had embroidered the names on money bags for him and the gang! In fact, many of his friends had strange names; there was Wally “Bag-Wash”, ‘Cheese Roll Joe’, “Gorgeous George”, ‘Aural Alan’, “Terry Stutters”, ‘Isle of Wight Alex’, ‘Mr Pastry’ “Two Wallets” and “Ginger Alan” so trying to let them know of his passing is difficult as they are not in the phone book as that! I once remember going with him to see a mutual friend who was ill in Hospital in Essex, and as we entered the Ward, Dad pulled me back exclaiming “how can we go in and ask the Sister for ‘Dirty Bob’?”

Fred was a member of the T&G (now Unite), as most Taxi Drivers had to be when he started driving a Taxi. He was also an early member of the LTDA having attended meetings on the Southbank and was always in attendance at the Taxi driver of the Year Show in Battersea, where he seemed to know everyone. He later joined the LCDC when I was involved with the ‘Club’, but was also a fixture at “Tina’s” Tea stall in Paddington and the ‘Friday Fish and Chip shop’ in Paddington. Fred also spent time driving on ComCab, Black Radio Cabs and London Wide; he had many friends on the other Circuits particularly on ‘Lords’ as it was then known.

Mum and Dad had been married for almost half a Century and so when Mum died on 11 September 2006, she left a big hole in his life. He also entered the Hospital straight after her funeral for an operation to remove his gall bladder and that was the start of his health problems. The operation was not a complete success and there were complications.

However, “Grandad” Fred did recover enough to enjoy spending time with his three Granddaughters, Victoria (20), Rachael (18) and Sasha (13) who helped fill the void. When Mum died he’d had to cancel a long planned trip to the USA. Having planned to go to Nashville and Memphis to see the Home of Country Music and Elvis Presley, he was reluctant to go without her, but his Taxi driving friends, who he used to meet every night in both the Royal Oak and Great Southwark Street Diners, encouraged him to go and he had a great time visiting the New Orleans Jazz festival as well.

Cabbing and meeting his Taxi driving mates kept Dad alive and gave him a structure and purpose in life coupled with the ability to spoil his Grand children. He regularly chauffeured Sasha to the West End where he would take great pride and joy, watching her in the stage shows that she appears in. Whilst she rehearsed with the Stars he would eat with his own ‘special’ group, John, Jim, Vic and the “eight O’clock club’ in the Diner before taking her home to Northwood where he lived with my brother, Clive. On other nights he would do a couple of hour’s work which always seemed to finish with a job home! It was on one of these occasions that Dad was eating with John that he collapsed and had to be driven home. Not wishing to alarm anyone he returned home as if nothing had happened, yet a few days later he collapsed in the bathroom and was rushed to Hospital. Although Dad recovered and managed to return home, he was never the same and went in and out of Hillingdon, Mount Vernon and Northwick Park Hospitals whilst he had a multitude of tests. Eventually it was discovered that he lacked an enzyme in his liver that stopped it working properly.

Dad was buried on Tuesday the 17th of August 2010, at Kensal Green Cemetery, on the Harrow Road, where he was reunited with Mum.



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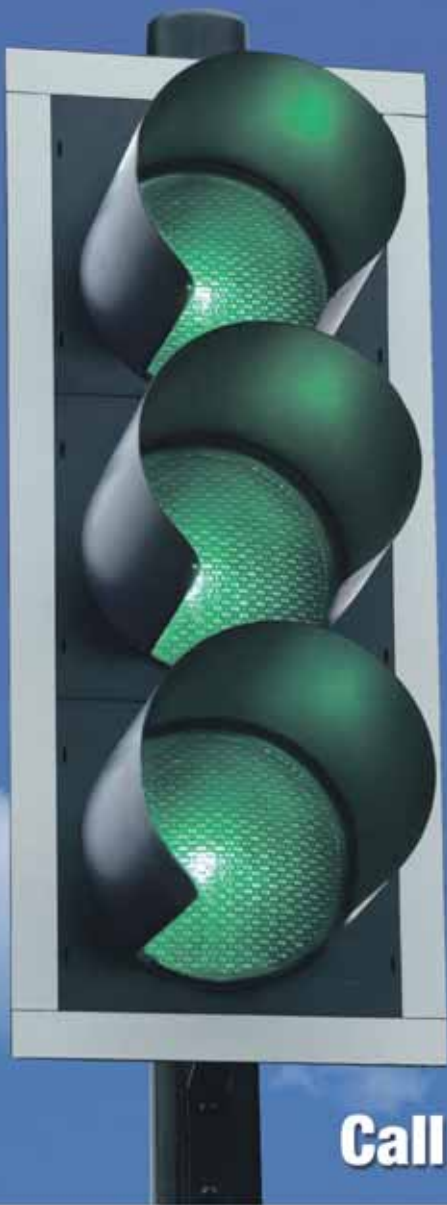
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