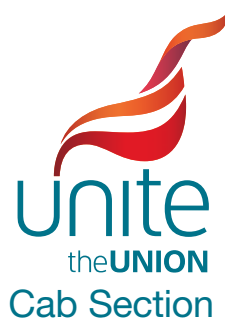


# CAB

## Trade News

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THE CAMPAIGNING PAPER FOR THE LICENSED TAXI TRADE

DECEMBER 2010

# UNITE WINS SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY

The Liverpool Branch of the UNITE Cab Section presents Louise Ellman, Chair of the Government Transport Select Committee, a petition with many thousands of signatures. The petition asks for a change in law regarding out of area minicab bookings. UNITE argues that private hire should be subject to the same laws that govern the UK taxi industry, that being; Private hire should only be able to take a booking from within their own licensing area.



See story on page 12 and the Select Committee announcement on page 14

# POLICY OF THE BLIND EYE...ADDENDUM TO LAST MONTH'S FRONT PAGE STORY

By **PETER J ROSE**  
Secretary UNITE Cab Section, London Branch

Shortly after we went to press with last Month's Cab Trade News, a UNITE Cab Section member found more documentation to support the notion that minicab Satellite Offices are not just there because of some cock-up by the authorities, but by design. A low cost solution to an unwanted problem.

CTN can now reveal that not only are Minicab Satellite Offices there by design, but those responsible for their implementation actually won a Herman Goldstein award for problem-oriented policing. Of course that was back in 2006 when cab-related sexual assaults were on the decline and before the present Satellite boom, as detailed by last month's front page story.

Since the 2008 relaxation of minicab booking requirements at Satellite Offices, sexual assaults are on the increase again. As I've said, this cannot be coincidental. In the last year sexual assaults in the capital went up by 7.1%. Rape is up by 32.1% and cab-related sexual assaults according to latest figures are up by a staggering 54%. In my view something is clearly going wrong with this problem solving approach to policing and needs to be addressed most urgently.

It can no longer be acceptable for the authorities to adopt a 'blind eye' policy when it comes to minicabs. It can no longer be the acceptable that

**Please visit [cabtradenews.co.uk](http://cabtradenews.co.uk) to read last month's issue of CTN and to see the presentation that helped the Metropolitan Police win a prestigious award.**



Minicabs park, or more correctly rank on restricted streets with impunity. It can no longer be acceptable that unlicensed minicabs can mingle with licensed ones un-noticed. It can no longer be acceptable that insufficient record keeping at Satellite offices is allowed to be got away with. UNITE Cab Section through Cab Trade News has for many months been campaigning to an end of the concept of the Satellite Office because of the all too apparent danger!

It is now time that the authorities take notice and work with the recognised taxi trade to find safe night-time transport solutions.

## Cab Section Comment

By **Mike Hedges**

# CROSS-BORDER HIRING

**Cross-border hiring is becoming an increasingly difficult problem throughout the country. Local authorities are losing the fight to enforce private hire drivers and vehicles that are operating in their area.**

With the recent decision of the Administrative Court in the Fiddler vs Stockton-on-Tees case where the Judge said the law was inadequate to deal with cross-border hirings, it has become imperative for parliament to take action to stop this.

In Liverpool where there is the massive problem of 1400 Sefton licensed vehicles consistently waiting in Liverpool for work, undercutting Liverpool drivers.

Unite has decided that something needs to be done to get this problem resolved collecting many thousands of signatures' supporting Unite's call for a change in the law to outlaw cross-border

hiring. These thousands of signatures' represent over 300 MP's constituencies from all parties. Following our successful meeting with Louise Ellman MP, Chair of the Parliamentary Transport Committee, the Transport Committee has decided to take evidence and look into the cross-border hiring problem.

The judge stated that only a law change could solve this problem. Unite, as the only National taxi organisation capable of achieving this, has taken the first step. It is now vital to get as much evidence to the Committee as possible to make sure the Transport Committee decides to back us.

We have done something that the whole of the taxi trade has been campaigning to achieve for many years. Never has the taxi trade managed to get this far on this issue that desperately needs resolving. Let's make sure that we win.

# HEATHROW UPDATE

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

## SAVE THE M4 BUS & TAXI LANE CAMPAIGN

*The fight continues!*



**As drivers have probably seen, the M4 bus lane decommissioning began this week.**

The Conservative Party along with their cronies the Liberal Democrats should hold their heads in shame. This was originally implemented as part of Labour's integrated transport policy under John Prescott. It allowed visitors and business users alike to be whisked speedily into our capital. What signal will be sent out now as we all sit in the slow lane going nowhere?

UNITE National Officer; Graham Stevenson has been in contact with Philip Hammond the Secretary of State for Transport. Graham made many valid points in his letter using research that we published in the last issue of Cab Trade News.

He also asked the question "in this age of austerity when our communities are being savagely threatened by cuts in government spending, is it right, morally or financially, to be spending an estimated initial £409,000 on decommissioning an important and successful part of our public transport infrastructure? Further to this, it is my understanding that this figure excludes the cost of its reinstatement for the period of the London Olympics and of any subsequent modifications once the lane closure is finally made permanent."

The Highways Agency has replied and have said that according to their data, 48%

of traffic now exits at Junction 3. Their computer model shows that all journey times will improve and this will result in economic benefits offsetting the £400,000 that will be spent in its decommission. They also make the point that this is an experimental order, and will be monitored. If a permanent order was sought, the necessary statutory process, including consultation will take place. The fight continues!

We of course dispute their findings and conclusions and have asked our research department to take a close look at their data. We will also be speaking to members of the Labour Party shadow cabinet to get their support in our campaign.

As the country's biggest union, UNITE has the organisational and political strength to fight this decision, which is why it is imperative that you join our campaign today.

**Join the fight – join UNITE!**

Please visit [cabtradenews.co.uk](http://cabtradenews.co.uk) to download UNITE's petition to save the M4 bus and taxi lane.

**Become part of the 44,000 Unite Heathrow family. Pop into the Unite office and join today!**



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

# HARLOW TARIFF

By **CTN REPORTER**

**Harlow Council agreed to the local taxi trade's request for its annual tariff increase.**

The rise will be approx' 3% and should be introduced in early December.

Now until the end of December, VeriFone is offering a sign-on bonus of £100 per driver. This offer is applicable to the first 3500 drivers who contact us!



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# CTN

Comment

## CONFUSED YEAR?

By FRANK HULL

The year 2010 is ending, as it started and continued for the taxi trade in this country, in legal confusion. Throughout the year the London trade has again been faced with the problem of touting and satellite offices and authority's seemingly disinclination to administer fairly those laws governing the practice of the London private-hire trade. Unfortunately for the London trade, private-hire infringement continues much of it assisted by 'blind-eye' enforcement!

The UNITE Cab Section at Heathrow has been to the fore in the struggle to stop the infringement of the private-hire trade into the taxi trade there as has been the case in other airports in this country. Where there have been many examples of legal confusion and arguments over the years.

In this year we have witnessed the introduction of the 'Equality Act' no doubt introduced on compassionate grounds. However; it will no doubt cause more legal confusion and further expense for many local trades. If only the architects of this bill had taken the prior trouble to visit several local taxi trades and gleaned some practical experience that would have included the pros and cons of local terrains, taxi trades and users. Then we are sure a different type of bill relevant to the taxi trade would have evolved. Then again who in authority gives a fig about taxi drivers? Now all we are is part of a mathematical problem to be solved by the Secretary of State

For many months of this year the provincial trade waited twice with bated breath for the results of High Court appeals first the Berwick appeal that when it came added nothing to what was already known that licensed taxis can be worked as private hire vehicles in other licensing areas without the driver or taxi being licensed by the other authority. The judgement did state that all vehicles licensed by an authority must be used predominately in that licensing area.

The second appeal was Stockton the result of which has given us not more but in fact less than Berwick, for the 'predominate' clause was not even mentioned. This has added confusion for many local licensing departments and local taxi trades. The fact that the appeal also concerned out of area taxis ranking up in a car park and was deemed by the court not to be the serious breach of licensing conditions that we believe it to be.

If, like us, you are concerned with these looming problems then why not Unite with us to take them on? Fill in the application form on page 15.

Frank Hull is a UNITE Cab Trade Committee Member.

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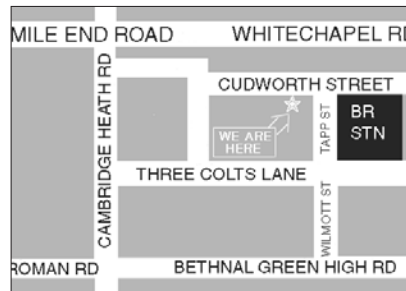
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# London-WIDE

By **PETER J ROSE**

Secretary UNITE Cab Section, London Branch

## HAILING APPS – THE NEW INTERNET TOUT

A few years ago I wrote an article entitled 'minicab-tout.com'. The purpose of the piece was to raise awareness of the abuse of the word TAXI, and related words in private hire websites and more worryingly the source code written within those websites.

At the time I couldn't get the then PCO to take notice. They said that it was a matter that I should take up with Google etc., a position which I found then as now, unacceptable. Thankfully the current Director of TfL Taxi & Private has taken this subject more seriously, even going as far as issuing TPH Notice 25/10, warning private hire companies of the abuse of the word taxi etc in their advertising. Although this does not take on the problem head-on it is at least a start.

Now a UNITE member has drawn my attention to another internet born problem, taxi hailing apps. Anyone that has got a new phone recently, is probably the proud owner of one of the many 'Smartphones' that are currently on the market. These devices are wonderful things, iPhone, Blackberry and Android to name a few – all offering a multitude of services. With them you can check your email, find your way around using the built in Sat Nav, (how many of you been told that you are going the wrong way by someone using a Smartphone?), engage with friends on Twitter and Facebook or search the internet using the browser. So what is a taxi hailing app? Doing a little research I find that these apps work by using the internet and the phones built in Global Positioning System (GPS). With the app installed on the prospective passenger's phone they can then do a search for the nearest taxi and more worryingly private hire vehicle. Should a driver be available they can message the potential passenger and make their way to collect them.

Sound familiar? Those of us that have been driving for a few years will remember the Zingo taxi hailing system, introduced by London Taxis International as an alternative to subscribing to a radio circuit. That system used old fashioned telephone technology plus GPS that had to be installed into the cab. Passengers using Zingo would phone into a central number and the system would find the nearest available driver. The driver's hands free phone (part of the system) would literally ring in the cab and the 'hail' was complete. Because of the instant nature of the transaction, Zingo was never available to private hire, because as we know private hire cannot take an immediate hiring. Grosvenor House take note!

To me these new apps are no more than the modern equivalent of Zingo, a 'taxi hailing' system and should not be available to private hire. This Time around let's hope that LTPH doesn't let this one slip to the point of no return.

### Staff Manual

Advice on the consideration of taxi and private hire licence applications in London

### 1.2 This manual

To ensure that the powers of the Licensing Authority are exercised in a consistent and reasonable manner, the advice in this manual is designed for the use of TPH staff. **It is important to note however that this is only advice and each case must be considered on its own particular merits.** We must also take into account the Human Rights Act 1998 whereby all are treated fairly and equally, and the Mayors policy on equality and inclusion.

### 4.3.2 Suburban drivers plying for hire outside of their licensed area

Suburban taxi drivers who ply for hire outside of their licensed area are committing an offence under paragraph 31 of the London Cab Order 1934.

If a driver committing such an offence comes to the attention of the police (conviction, caution, formal warning etc.), the matter should be referred to the Licensing Authority for consideration of suspension of his licence.

Suspension for 1 month will be the norm for first offences. Subsequent incidents may result in further lengthier periods of suspension or revocation of the licence.

Offences identified by TPH staff during compliance activity can be dealt with by a written warning from the Senior Compliance Manager for a first offence. Subsequent offences will result in a period of suspension.

**Incidents arising from complaints where there is no corroboration will be dealt with by a written warning to the driver in the first instance. Any further occurrences will result in a period of suspension being considered.**

As you can see from the last paragraph of the above extract from the LTPH Staff Manual, the prospect of Suburban taxi drivers having their licence suspended simply on the uncorroborated reports of others is already high. What then if the taxi driver identifier is introduced. UNITE has always maintained that enforcement should be the responsibility of the Licensing Authority and the Police. As said before the introduction of the identifiers will in all probability result in resentment and confrontation. It is therefore interesting to note that LTPH has found it necessary to announce in a recent newspaper article that driver guidelines will be issued along with the proposed identifier. It is also worth noting in the same article that as well as the relevant licensing area of the driver being visible, the **drivers badge number will be on every identifier, green or yellow badge.**

This will leave every taxi driver more open to false accusations not only from other drivers as but also from the 'rare' disgruntled passenger, who because they were unable to remember the actual driver, then take it out on the next passing cab. Is this in the spirit of section 1.2 of this manual?

Be seeing you! ☺



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# AN EXPENSIVE CAB RIDE TO STANMORE

By FRANK BRAVERMAN

A £30 cab ride to north west London turned out to be considerably more expensive for a north west London man when he took my cab a few months ago.

He ended up at Harrow Magistrates Court on 15 October, charged under Section 3(1) and 4 of the 1978 Theft Act, charged with making off without payment of the fare.

Mitul Popet of Stanmore was fined £200 with £150 costs and ordered to pay me the £30 agreed fare.

Popit and another man approached my cab early in the morning at Marylebone station and asked me how much a cab would cost to Stanmore, Middlesex. I told him that it would cost him approximately £30 on the taximeter. He then offered me £30 – which I agreed to and accepted.

When we got to the address he wanted at Stanmore, Mr Popet then left the cab and told me to take his companion who was with him, and never ever spoke to me, to go on to North Harrow.

I asked Mr Popet where my £30 was and pointed out that there was no agreement to go to North Harrow. Mr Popet started to walk away and I asked him where his money was. He said his friend would find a cash point on the way.

Once again I asked Popet for £30 and stated that under no circumstances was I going to continue this journey. I also told him that the actual reading on the meter was for £32 and that I was sticking to my side of the bargain and only asking for £30 as agreed.

Once again Popet made no attempt to pay

me and he walked away and entered a house, the address of which I noted. I contacted the police and I received a telephone call from Harrow police that same day.

Popet told the Court that he had told me to go to Stanmore and North Harrow at Marylebone station before we started. I told the Court that had he said that, then the fare would have been considerably more.

Many thanks to the efforts of Detective Constable Joel Pails of the Metropolitan Police, Popet was later arrested and taken to Harrow police station and charged that: "On 19/02/2010 at Knights Road, Stanmore, Middlesex, you, knowing that payment on the spot for services done, namely a taxi fare, was required or expected from you, you dishonestly made off without having paid as required or expected and with intent to avoid payment of £30. Contrary to Sections 3(1) and 4 of the Theft Act 1978.

DC Pails made a successful arrest in this case and is to be congratulated – but, in too many instances, police officers take the line of least resistance and inconvenience by telling cab drivers that they should go to a civil court to get their fare.

The shame is too many are getting away with avoiding payment (bilking).

Unfortunately too many cab drivers and police officers are probably unaware that avoiding payment of a cab fare is a criminal offence. The next time you call the police to report a "bilk" – try reminding them that the 1978 Theft Act is there to protect us cab drivers too.



Following representations to the UNITE Cab Section from drivers at London City Airport, UNITE requested a meeting with management at this important East London gateway.



Over the last few months, taxi drivers at London's East London airport have been complaining that a private hire booking desk inside the terminal has been acting illegally, by approaching potential customers as they pass through arrivals. Drivers have also said that when passengers ask at the information desk about taxis, they are directed straight to the private hire desk.

In response to this UNITE asked the relevant licensing agencies to pay it a visit. Reporting back directly to the UNITE, they concluded that during their visit no improprieties were found. Because the union is continuing to receive reports of this activity, we recommend that drivers should keep a record of when the instance occurred and a description of the offenders would also be useful. We would also remind drivers that any record keeping should be done discretely and accurately.

With this issue in mind UNITE arranged a meeting with the airports Director of Terminal Services, Melanie Burnley. Regarding activities of the booking and private hire desk, she told us that staff, are trained to provide information about the whole range of transport options including buses and Docklands Light Railway. The main problem seems to be, a lack of current taxi information available at the desk. UNITE is currently working with its City Airport members to update the current price guide which 'is' published on the airports website. Ms Burnley also explained that the private hire desk is situated at the front of the terminal because of restructuring caused by greater security requirements.

This was also given as the reason for the canteen closure and private hire cars being more visible. In the case of the canteen, City Airport had to relocate some catering services from their previous location. As the canteen was, she said, "little used", it was the obvious thing to do. Private hire cars are now more visible because the waiting area where they normally make their pick-ups from, known as the Triangle, is itself undergoing reconstruction.

Driver toilet facilities were also discussed, always a tricky subject. With the

closure of the canteen they have been replaced with the less than perfect porterloo option. Drivers have complained about the general cleanliness of the porterloos, describing them as a health hazard particularly for female drivers. Ms Burnley countered this by telling us that the toilets were cleaned on a regular basis. Drivers have since told UNITE that the porterloos are used not only by taxi drivers but by all sorts of people using the airport. Obviously this subject is going to need another 'visit'!

The subject of a driver dress code was also touched upon. UNITE pointed out that there has never been anything established that a driver's appearance makes any difference to passengers use of the London taxi. Drivers and members both on site and at branch said that they would be willing to consider a driver dress code if it would help to maintain work levels.

Greater availability of taxis that take credit cards was another subject that was raised at the meeting. LCA told us that there had been refusals particularly on short journeys. We explained that there was no requirement upon drivers to take credit cards for any journey. We suggested that perhaps the City Airport Voucher Scheme could be enhanced to make payment by card more available.

Pre-meeting, we took the opportunity to have a look round the airport from a passengers point of view. One of the observations made was that upon leaving the terminal the taxi rank is not obvious, particularly with the current building work. To get over this problem we asked Ms Burnley if additional signage could be placed outside to guide passengers to the rank. We are happy to report that UNITE has been informed that this has been done. One up to us!

UNITE London Cab Section looks forward developing a productive relationship with management at London City Airport for the benefit of our members and their passengers.

UNITE was represented at the meeting by Peter J Rose - Secretary UNITE Cab Section London Branch, and Mike Hedges - UNITE Cab Trade Committee.

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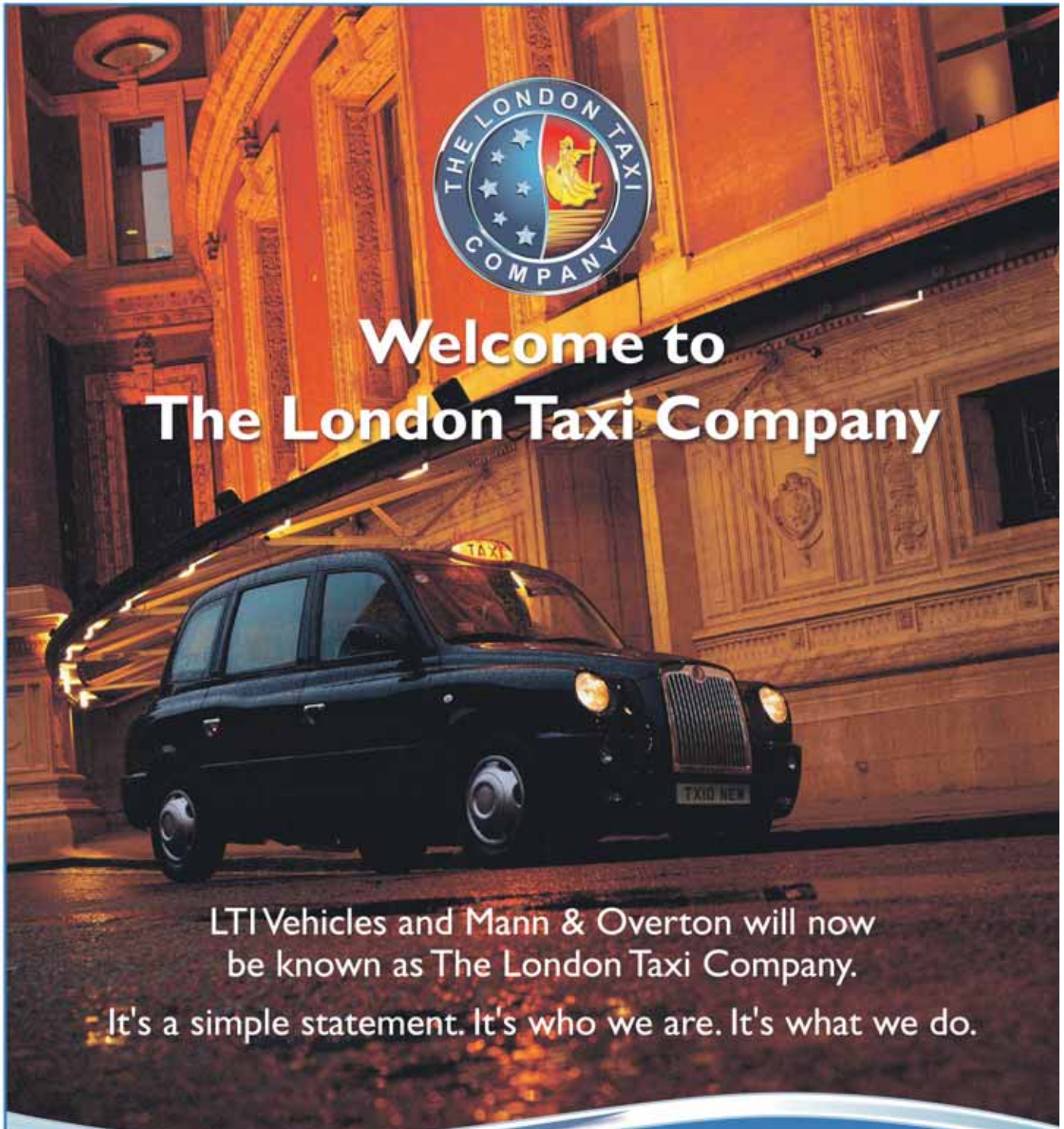


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# LONDON TAXI COMPANY GOES FOR STYLE AND ELEGANCE

By **FRANK BRAVERMAN**



So its goodbye LTI and its Bronze, Silver and Gold model cabs and hello the new London Taxi Company and its new revamped Style and Elegance models of the TX4 iconic London type cab, launched on 4 November 2010.

As announced a year ago, these new models are only now available at London Taxi Company (formally Mann & Overton) outlets in London, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds and also its new outlets at Edinburgh, Glasgow and Coventry.

With many parts of the TX4 now being manufactured at the Geely factory at Shanghai, China the new London Taxi Company's logo, front and back has been designed to represent "a clear, sustained message and reinforce the company's new focus" with three main colours, red, white and blue, plus two additional auxiliary colours, gold and silver – all of which represent the core colours of the British and Chinese flags – which is a clear confirmation of the importance of the company's joint venture with Geely.

Announcing these changes to the cab trade and cab trade press at their Brewery Road showrooms on November 4, John Russell (below left), Group Chief Executive of Manganese Bronze Holdings, the parent company of the London Taxi Company, along with Managing Director Peter Shillcock and Rob Laidler, Sales Director of the London Taxi Company told of the ending of what was two years of tough going for the company.



Peter Shillcock (right) declared that this day was "the culmination of a long period of change and that we now had a leaner, fitter company, plus a better and more cost efficient business."



John Russell described the company as one of having a "proud history. We've had a couple of tough years, lost money but we've come through that. We are now in a position to develop and resize to make the company viable and have weathered a difficult period." He said.

## LOWER PRICES

Rob Laidler (right) declared: "We are launching a new model range of vehicles that has been simplified and cut from three derivatives to just two. The new models also represent the culmination of all the work we have been doing to bring the vehicle cost down."



The new models are cheaper than the former Bronze, Silver and Gold models. The price for the new Style starts at £28,995, manual – (£30,995, auto) with black bumpers, trim and cloth seats. The Elegance begins at £30,995 – (£32,995 automatic) with full air conditioning, a chrome pack, colour coded mirrors, bumpers and optional metallic paint as standard. Laidler also pointed out that if customers ordered before the end of 2010,

they could claim an extra benefit of up to £671 additional savings before Government VAT went up to 20% on January 1, 2011.

The London Taxi Company seems to be carrying out a balancing act whilst looking over one shoulder at the success of the former PCO approved Mercedes Vito in London with the Elegance, whilst bearing in mind the less stringent demands of many cities and towns outside of London – hence the new lower price for the Style to compete with vehicles like the Peugeot E13 and others.

## CTN CONCERN

During a question and answer session Peter Rose and I were less than satisfied with the answers we got regarding the percentage of parts now being manufactured in China and the longer term future of the Coventry factory. We did not need to be told and we are fully aware that some parts are being made elsewhere, for instance the engine in Italy and the gearboxes, but no answer about Coventry was forthcoming.

Perhaps some clue to the answers to these questions can be found in the Interim Report by Manganese Bronze released on October 21 2010 where it was stated that earnings are now being positively impacted.

The report states: "Earnings are, however, now being positively impacted by the projects and initiatives to return the Group to profitability. These include closure of the North American business, UK cost savings, move to UK assembly operation, restructuring of the UK dealer network, the Chinese supply of parts and TX4 international sales."

## RESTRUCTURING

The report continues: "Since 16 August 2010 after the three week summer shutdown, bodies and panels supplied by Shanghai LTI Automobile Company Limited "Geely", have been assembled as TX4 taxis in Coventry."

Shepherd then dismissed reports in the press that "Geely" was seeking to become a majority shareholder in the London Taxi Company as pure conjecture. He reiterated the position as described in the 21 October Interim Report that no financial discussions of this matter were taking place since then or at present.

## GOING WITH VM MOTORI



John Russell also announced that the London Taxi Company was working in conjunction with VM to produce a Euro 5 emissions engine in time for the January 2012 deadline for small companies.

## A STRONG CHINESE PRESENCE

Shanghai seems quite happy with the situation as it stands at present if the strong Chinese presence which included representatives from the Chinese embassy, banks, national TV and "Geely" at the reception was anything to go by.



Manganese Bronze has also announced the appointment to the board of directors of Jie (George) Zhao 44, Vice President of Geely Automobile Holdings Limited as Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Wernming (Frank) Cao 37 (right), as a non-executive director on 4 November. Mr Cao is a board member and Executive Deputy General Manager of Shanghai LTI Automobile Components Limited.

I managed to have a limited conversation with Frank Zhao who was happy to say: "We have a very good relationship with the London Taxi Company."

I'm sure that Shanghai is happy – think of the strong control that China has on the world's financial markets – all those American Bonds and the weakness of the pound.

## KEEP GOING

For the sake of the future of our UNITE members at Coventry, we must in these difficult times, wish the London Taxi Company well in their efforts to keep the iconic London type cab on the roads and, hopefully protect jobs at Coventry.



## Mark's Mélange 81

MARK EDWARD TAYLOR

# 25 THINGS TO AVOID BEFORE YOU DIE

**Ah! The Grime Reaper's coming, and, I've not been to Glastonbury or Glyndebourne, or seen Jaguars in the wild. I've only seen wild people in Jaguars!**

Newspapers, magazines and the media in general are often full of lists of things to do before you die. There are the 50, *must see*, films before you depart this mortal coil. The 25 places to visit on planet Earth before you turn to dust! There have been lists of things to experience during your precious lifetime and as London listing magazine, Time Out, recently published 50 Things to do in London before you die.....

This does beg the question when you are lying on your death bed having the last rites given by the local priest or the Doc telling you your time is up, you'll be wanting to say...."Please don't let me die.....I've not visited *Machu Picchu*, watched *It's a Wonderful Life*, read *Huckleberry Finn* or *bungee jumped from the Eiffel Tower*....." Thomas Beecham, founder of The London Philharmonic Orchestra, is often quoted as allegedly saying; "one should try everything in life once except Incest and Morris Dancing." Is that necessarily the way to go? Readers to CTN are welcome to write or email their views.....

The Melange column, through the medium of Cab Trade News, now gives you, dear reader, in true taxi driver fashion, the A to Z of 25 things to AVOID before you die.....

Starting with **Arson**, it's never good to set fire to stuff, **Buggery**, well, unless all the parties are willing. The Catholic Church take note. **Collecting stuff**; you will never have enough space. Formats will change & it will make you boring. **Drunkenness**; life can be dull, but over imbibing is not cool. Northern Europeans make themselves look daft with alcohol excess. In Mediterranean Europe it is frowned upon. **Euthanasia**....life is precious. There's still lots not to do.

### TAJ MAHAL

Don't **dismiss** learning **French**, or any **foreign** language. It could help you understand your mother tongue a little better.

**Give** time to politicians. They will only let you down. 18 millionaires in the Cabinet....how can they empathise with real working people? Nick Clegg! Where's your conscience? **Heroin**, a fiscal cancer. **Ignore** family and friends advice on your wardrobe. **Jogging**... just go for simple a run. **Kleptomania**,

steal stuff you don't really need. **Lie** on a bed of nails and have a model walk across your chest.

That's almost half way through the Melange Column's lifestyle guide.....



**Mini Cab** driving is never a good choice of employment. Why not drive a proper cab? After all, we all do the same work. The only people who get rich from Private Hire drivers are those that own the companies. Sadly there's not a one tier Taxi system. Get **Naked**....well maybe? What the heck....it could be fun...everyone else will have a grin on their face. **Own** a dog. It will make your house smell and eventually it will own you. **Play** the banjo. By the way, do you know what is the best type of banjo? Apparently, one that has a foot through it! **Quibble** with your wife. **Read** *War and Peace*. **Swim** with dolphins, as everyone has done that now. **Take** up pipe smoking or **Torture** people. You decide which is best avoided?.....

**Under-take** a truck while riding a bicycle. This will speed up your death, and there are still many things not to do. **Visit** Blackpool. **Wrestle** crocodiles...for obvious reasons. Become **Xenophobic**, it will only make you mad. Try understanding the human need to prosper and get the terminology correct. Is an asylum seeker the same as an illegal immigrant? **Yodel** and stand down-wind of a **Zebra!**



Eagle eyed readers will have noticed there are 26 letters in the alphabet, and this article has only 25 things to avoid. Therefore there is the opportunity to experience something that really should be avoided.....no mutilation, no gross-out.... music maestro Thomas Beecham may just be right.....?

marktaylor842@btinternet.com

## T H E A T R E

By Tony Benson

### YES, PRIME MINISTER

at the Gielgud Theatre



Henry Goodman (Sir Humphrey) and David Haig (PM Jim Hacker) in 'Yes, Prime Minister'. Picture by Manuel Harlan.

You could be forgiven for assuming that this comedy by Antony Jay and Jonathan Lynn would be just another episode of the writers' highly successful TV series. But, in fact, it stands up well in its own right. The setting is Chequers, where Prime Minister Jim Hacker (an outstanding performance by David Haig) is hosting a delegation from Kumranistan, an oil-rich Central Asian state. Hacker's own position is critical: his majority in the House is tiny, he has a divided cabinet, and the economy is in desperate straits. But rescue seems to be at hand when the Foreign Minister of Kumranistan offers a ten trillion dollar loan for the construction of a pipeline which will weave its way across Europe to the benefit of both countries (don't ask). A deal is concluded but, having got off the economic hook, Hacker is faced with a new calamity. The delegation leader asks the British government to procure for his pleasure an underaged prostitute. Even if one were disposed to comply with such an outrageous request, where do you find a prostitute – of any age – in the vicinity of Chequers in the middle of the night?

At this point the play becomes a farce. All Hacker's advisors are called in to try and solve the problem: Cabinet Secretary Sir Humphrey Appleby, beautifully played by Henry Goodman, at one point recites a monologue which seems to go on for about five minutes without a breath (putting me in mind of Tommy Dorsey playing a solo on his trombone). A solution is offered by Principal Private Secretary Bernard Woolley (Jonathan Slinger) in Latin phrases, to everyone's consternation. Ultimately the problem is resolved, but I won't let on. The director is Jonathan Lynn.



Emily Joyce (Claire), David Haig (PM Jim Hacker) and Jonathan Slinger (Bernard) in 'Yes, Prime Minister'. Picture by Manuel Harlan.

### WHEN WE WERE MARRIED

at the Garrick Theatre

No one writes as well as JB Priestley about the hypocrisy and smugness of the Edwardian middle classes. In this comedy, written in 1938, three Yorkshire couples gather to celebrate their silver wedding anniversaries only to discover that the minister who performed their marriage

ceremonies was not legally qualified to do so, and that they have been living in sin for the past twenty-five years.



Picture by Geraint Lewis.

Once the shock of their guilt has subsided all sorts of possibilities present themselves. Herbert Soppitt (Sam Kelly) has spent 25 years kowtowing to his battleaxe of a wife (Maureen Lipman, whose withering glares could frighten Hitler), but now realises he no longer needs to do so and eagerly turns the tables. Annie Parker (Michele Dotrice, from "Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em") is assured by Councillor Albert Parker (Simon Rouse) that he'll do the right thing by her, but she's not sure now that she wants him to: she's had enough of this tight-fisted bore. Roy Hudd puts all his music-hall experience to good use as the photographer sent by the local paper to commemorate the happy occasion. He wields his tripod like a battering-ram and there is one hilarious scene where he performs a little dance while drunkenly singing "Dear Old Pals".

Leaving aside my one gripe – that the couples look old enough to be celebrating their golden, rather than their silver, anniversary – this production allows a chance to see the cream of Britain's comic actors, including Lynda Baron as the vindictive cleaning lady and Jodie McNea as the saucy maid. And Simon Hignlett's faultless set received spontaneous applause when the curtain rose. The director is Christopher Luscombe.



Picture by Geraint Lewis.

### ONASSIS

#### at the Novello Theatre

Martin Sherman's dramatisation, directed by Nancy Meckler, of a book by Peter Evans about the final twelve years in the life of Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis provides a starring role for Robert Lindsay which he uses to full advantage. During that period Onassis dumps his mistress Maria Callas (Anna Francolini), and invites Jackie Kennedy (Lydia Leonard) on to his yacht where he woos and later marries her – I hesitate to use the word "seduces" because Jackie was astute enough to know she was on to a good thing since she appears to have spent the rest of her life buying clothes. At the same time, Onassis is involved in dubious financial shenanigans with mysterious Palestinian who, it is suggested, he paid to assassinate Bobby Kennedy. Worth seeing if only for Lindsay's tour-de-force performance.

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All three directors remained within the business for 18 months post sale before completing a successful handover to the new management team.

Having pursued other interests, the three were ready for a new challenge when the Sovereign opportunity presented itself. Drawing on their vast

experience in this field they are determined to move the boundaries of customer service even further forward and to assist this Sovereign is developing new product offerings to provide a greater range of services to accident victims. Mobility solutions and requirements are continually changing and Sovereign is at the forefront of these developments.

Steve Johnson said, "The opportunity to return to the industry and develop exciting new products was one we could not resist. We saw the huge potential to build and grow a business in a sector where we have knowledge, expertise and no shortage of enthusiasm. There are interesting times ahead and quality of service is going to be paramount to us succeeding in our ultimate goal of innovating the market."

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**The new ConDem Government is committed to slashing public spending and accelerating and implementing privatisation on a scale we haven't seen before and Unite believes that the policies of this Government threaten to destroy the NHS that we have always been so proud of.**

The Unite 4 OUR NHS campaign has been launched to oppose the cuts and privatisations in the NHS and fight to protect NHS workers terms and conditions and pensions. Unite's campaigning has had a huge impact locally and nationally in both halting and slowing down threatened NHS privatisations and we must continue to support our activists in their local campaigns fighting the break-up and fragmentation of our NHS.

We want a reversal of the damaging competitive market that exists in England, that pits health services against one

another – instead in the forthcoming White Paper we are threatened with the disbanding of Strategic Health Authorities and the bulk of the NHS budget being handed over to private companies to spend and profit from through 'GP commissioning'. Even the NHS Confederation has described this as "potentially the biggest change in the history of the NHS".

Unite believes that the NHS should be a comprehensive, universal service publicly funded and accountable and managed as a public service for the benefit of all. This world class organisation should not be carved up for the benefit of private profit and now is the time for us to fight for our National Health Service, to ensure that it will be there for future generations.

**For more information about this UNITE campaign, please see: [www.uniteunion.org/health](http://www.uniteunion.org/health)**

## UNITE WINS SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY

UNITE, as the country's largest trade union representing taxi drivers, welcomes the decision of the Government Transport Committee to set up an enquiry which will include the issue of 'cross border hiring's. UNITE is not asking for major changes within the law Just one line to be changed in the 1976 Act that would require Private Hire Vehicles to return to their borough of licensing on completion of a fare. This is the condition that Hackney Carriages have to abide by.

We are not asking for different conditions just the same for both, if a Private Hire vehicle receives a job while in transit. Then that is acceptable, but to stay and wait in a neighbouring borough is most definitely not.

At present Private Hire vehicles throughout the country continue to work in neighbouring boroughs, which results with enforcement control being severely restricted if not completely nonexistent.


This increases the danger and safety to the travelling Public. The mood of the members is one of outrage and despair, at having to watch their livelihood being taken away on a daily basis which has

only been exacerbated by the current financial climate. 3400 petitions have been signed and posted.



Liverpool taxi drivers would like to thank all those from all over the country that joined our campaign to change the law concerning cross-border hiring. This campaign was created by the UNITE 680 Taxi Section in Liverpool and has been backed by the union at National level.

The catalyst for our campaign was brought about by the urgent need to regulate the Private Hire industry in our city. As we saw it, the current act of Parliament which governs Private Hire Operators and Drivers, does not go far enough in providing a fair and workable environment where both the Licensed Taxi Trade and the Private Hire Trade, can compete on a level playing field while servicing the public's transport needs. This is not solely a Liverpool issue however, Cross-Border Hiring occurs in ALL major cities and that is why we have campaigned in yours.



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# LACORS TAXI CONFERENCE

By MIKE HEDGES

Recently LACORS (Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services) which is now called Local Government Regulation organised a taxi conference to look at national standards for taxi and private hire.

At the conference Tom Moody from LACORS presented details of the scoping work that LACORS undertook in taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing, highlighting where there were common areas of concern. During the session, the taxi and PHV work plan and board report were discussed, and delegates provided their thoughts, highlighting gaps in the plan - such as officers having additional fixed penalty notice powers and taxi licensing being part of a shared service.

Some of the findings and recommendations from the taxi and private hire review by LACORS are shown below.

## 1. Summary

1.1 This report outlines the results of research undertaken with a number of council practitioners, trade associations, Government and affected parties across England and Wales, scoping out taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing to highlight where there are consistencies and differences of opinion, and what essential support LACORS can give to councils to add value.

1.2 Throughout the scoping work, in direct discussions and via email, council taxi licensing practitioners have strongly welcomed LACORS future support into taxi and PHV licensing. As a national body representing local councils LACORS can coordinate ideas and discussion, in what is a locally controlled service, as well as influence Government on any future legislation or further guidance.

1.3 For the purpose of this report any reference to 'taxis' will only refer to hackney carriages and not to private hire vehicles (sometimes referred to as minicabs). The significant difference is that hackney carriages can pick up passengers directly from the street - private hire vehicles must be pre-booked through a licensed operator.

## 2. Background:

To better understand some of the issues council taxi and PHV licensing services are facing LACORS visited over 40 individual district and unitary councils across England and Wales. Further views were sought through specialist emails sent to licensing practitioners. Discussions have begun with councillors to gather their opinions, of which early indication has shown that there is consistency with the views of practitioners.

2.2 Taxis and PHVs are an important mode of local transport. They are of particular importance in areas that are

poorly served by other forms of public transport such as rural communities. Elderly and disabled users rely on the service taxis and PHVs provide as what is sometimes a crucial form of public transport. Taxis and PHVs service the night time economy of many areas, ensuring the public return home safely.

2.3 Taxi and PHV licensing usually sits within a council's licensing department, but can also be found in other service areas such as Environmental Health or Legal Services. It is often combined with other licensing functions. A taxi licensing officer has delegated powers, acting as the council under powers given through the Local Government Act 1972. The licensing committee sits as a quasi-judicial body and therefore must follow the rules of natural justice - anyone affected by a decision has a right to be heard and no one should be a judge in his or her own cause.

## 8. Enforcement:

8.1 The general consensus from consultation with licensing practitioners is that they would welcome the additional powers of fixed penalty notices (FPNs), providing the revenue received went back into the taxi licensing department as a whole.

8.2 The benefit of a FPN system is that it would reduce the costs and burden of a council taking a driver to committee for trivial offences, such as not displaying a badge at all times. FPNs could be sold to the trade as the money claimed would reduce the fees of the compliant drivers, as part of a cost recovery licensing service. In theory the FPNs would raise the standard in quality of drivers, as the level of enforcement would increase for lesser offences.

8.3 There would need to be national guidance on what offences would warrant a FPN, and which cases would be better suited to take to committee (because of the severity of the case).

8.4 FPNs have also been successful in many other types of enforcement such as dog fouling, littering and smoking.

8.5 Most police officers do not receive any formal training on the enforcement of taxis and PHVs, and often incorrectly direct traffic violations to the local council. It was reported that many police officers did not know their powers in relation to taxi and PHV licensing as they were not trained when they moved to traffic enforcement, and often didn't treat taxis as ordinary vehicles. Some councils had agreed to run short training sessions with the police, to give them a brief overview of the council's and police's role. Taxi licensing is a local issue for the police and it would be difficult to recommend training packages with the police nationally.

# TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

## Select Committee Announcement

### New inquiry – issues relating to the licensing of Taxis and Private Hire vehicles

#### Terms of reference and call for evidence

The Transport Committee is to hold an inquiry into issues relating to the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles.

The Committee is interested, in particular, in cross-border hire problems caused by private hire vehicles picking up passengers on a large scale outside of the area in which they are licensed. Written evidence would also be welcome on other issues relating to taxi and private hire vehicles, including matters concerning passenger safety.

Written evidence should be submitted by **Monday 20 December 2010**. Oral evidence will be heard in the new year.

#### Notes on the submission of written evidence

It assists the Committee if those submitting written evidence adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Written submissions should be as short as is consistent with conveying the relevant information. As a rough guide, it is usually helpful if they can be confined to six pages or less. Paragraphs should be numbered for ease of reference. A single-page summary of the main points is sometimes helpful. The submission should be in a form suitable for monochrome photocopying.
2. Evidence should be submitted in Word or Rich Text format, by e-mail to [transev@parliament.uk](mailto:transev@parliament.uk). The body of the e-mail should include a contact name, telephone number and postal address. It should be absolutely clear who the submission is from, particularly whether it is on behalf of an organisation or in the name of an individual.
3. Once accepted by the Committee, written evidence becomes the Committee's property and it may decide to publish it or make other public use of it. If the Committee decides to accept your contribution as evidence we will email you formally accepting it as such. An acknowledgement of formal acceptance will be sent once all formalities have been completed. You may publicise or publish your submission yourself, once you receive the formal acceptance of your evidence

to the Committee. When doing so, please indicate that it has been submitted to the Committee.

4. Though the Committee is happy to receive copies of published material, formal submissions of evidence should be original work and not published elsewhere.
5. Committee staff are happy to give more detailed guidance on giving evidence to a select committee, or further advice on any aspect of the Committee's work, by phone or e-mail.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION:

**Committee Membership is as follows:**  
Mrs Louise Ellman (Labour/Co-operative, Liverpool Riverside) (Chair); Steve Baker (Conservative, Wycombe); Mr Tom Harris (Labour, Glasgow South); Julie Hilling (Labour, Bolton West); Kelvin Hopkins (Labour, Luton North); Kwasi Kwarteng (Conservative, Spelthorne); Mr John Leech (Liberal Democrat, Manchester Withington); Paul Maynard (Conservative, Blackpool North and Cleveleys); Gavin Shuker (Labour/Co-operative, Luton South); Iain Stewart (Conservative, Milton Keynes South); Julian Sturdy (Conservative, York Outer).

#### Specific Committee Information:

[transcom@parliament.uk](mailto:transcom@parliament.uk) 020 7219 6263/3266

#### Media Information:

Hannah Pearce [hannahpearce@parliament.uk](mailto:hannahpearce@parliament.uk) / 020 7219 8430

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## Your Letters

Dear Editor,

In the September issue of The Badge, the publication of the London Cab Drivers Club (LCDC), Committee Member Danny Sullivan wrote an article on the introduction of the identifiers that apparently had been confirmed by London Taxi & Private Hire (LTPH). He recalls a meeting he attended with Grant Davis, Chairman of the LCDC and Helen Chapman, Deputy Director LTPH.

Danny Sullivan recalls that while at the meeting Ms Chapman stated that yellow badge drivers had 'got up a petition to oust her from her job'. Being a suburban taxi driver and the author of several letters that had been photocopied and sent by suburban drivers to John Mason and the Mayor, Boris Johnson, concerning the identifiers, I am sure that I would have heard of such a petition. I called Helen Chapman who denied that such a petition existed and that she had been misquoted in The Badge. She elaborated further by stating that John Mason who also attended the meeting had said that there was a petition by taxi drivers to get him to resign and with a follow up by her saying that she wasn't flavour of the month with yellow badges, she could understand where the confusion was.

I telephoned the offices of The Badge and after a very brief conversation with the LCDC Chairman I was put through to Mr Sullivan. I told him I was concerned about the accusations he had written about suburban drivers and asked him for his comments.

For some reason Mr Sullivan became very vague and said he would have to speak to Helen Chapman, before he would comment. Is there some collusion on the identifiers between the LCDC and LTPH? I asked him again as he had been at the meeting and had written the article but

he stated that he would only speak to someone from a union that represented me before hanging up. I called again but was told by Grant Davis that he 'wouldn't talk to yellow badges'. I have reported their newspaper to the Press Complaints Commission.

I again called Helen Chapman to ask why Danny Sullivan needed to discuss his article with her. I also asked why, that after reading the article printed in the paper she hadn't asked for a retraction or apology as the quotes had been attributed to her. She replied that they didn't concern her as it was just an 'off the cuff remark' and she was too busy to bother. Have you noticed that now it's an 'off the cuff remark' and not a misquote. One can only assume that her demeaning of suburban drivers suited her purpose in respect of the identifier.

I reported Miss Chapman's allegations to TFL and have since had a lengthy conversation with John Mason. I have asked that Miss Chapman apologises for her comments about suburban drivers in the trade press but have been told that will not happen. It appears its ok to be quoted in the press when you want to spread accusations but when they come back to haunt you it's a different matter. Maybe The Badge will print a retraction in their next edition but I won't hold my breath.

I've also managed a glimpse at the latest edition of The Badge. It tells how forty suburban drivers were stopped by the City of London Police at their checkpoints around the square mile. What it doesn't say is how many Green badges were stopped to be billed and badged in the same period. It also omits to report on how many of the suburban drivers were reported for plying for hire out of their area. Maybe The Badge should stick to reporting facts instead of gossip.

*Stephen Barker, Unite Member*

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National monthly paper of the licensed taxi trade

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