

# SKETCH: A NEW DRAW FOR THE LONDON TAXI TRADE

By PETER J ROSE

**At last and after many months of campaigning, notably by the management of Sketch themselves, the taxi rank outside 9 Conduit Street is in place.**

**The new rank will operate from 18:30hrs in the evening until 08:30hrs every morning. Its setup is unusual because it is a dual use space similar to Tiger Tiger in the Haymarket**

By day the space will be available to all, except taxis plying for hire as a pay by phone parking bay. Then in the evenings it becomes the much wanted taxi rank. Because of this there may be a few teething problems as regular members of the public get used to moving their cars when the rank comes into operation.

UNITE would ask taxi drivers to be patient while the transitional period is in place. Car drivers that do park beyond 6:30pm during this time will be issued with a warning notice, which will look like a parking ticket, but carries no fine. After the transitional period, fourteen days from the time TfL put the taxi signage up, vehicles contravening the rank will be eligible for a fine in the normal way. Unfortunately Westminster Council does not have any towing arrangements, so any vehicle that does overstay will stay put until the owner returns to it, which will obviously cause problems for taxis trying to use the rank. Again UNITE would ask for patience.



The rank at Sketch has been a long time in the making and started when Sinead Mallozzi the CEO at Sketch spotted the then new taxi rank outside Nobu in Berkeley Street. At the time Sketch was and still is having trouble with illegal minicab touting on the doorstep of the venue.

The solution to her seemed simple, 'a taxi rank' like Nobu. She was genuinely astonished when told that Nobu fought tooth and nail not to have a taxi rank outside their door. Sinead approached Westminster Council who were at first reluctant to give up the pay by phone parking spaces. However after much to-ing and fro-ing between Sketch's solicitors and the council, Westminster came up with the compromise solution detailed above.

Sketch will get its rank and the taxi trade will gain a valuable source of work. It's also worth noting that Sketch has contributed £4000 to the cost

of the rank. Put that together with the cost of their solicitors acting for them, this new rank represents a considerable financial investment for this destination venue.

As we go to press we are still awaiting the final piece of signage to be placed that is the Taxi Rank sign from TfL. This we have been told will be in place by the end of May. Even without the signage I have been informed that the rank can operate as 'live'.

It is Sketch's intention that all being well they will be able to offer drivers a sandwich and tea, coffee or a soft drink on the evening of Friday 3rd June to make drivers aware of the new rank.

**If you would like to know more about this amazing venue, visit [sketch.uk.com](http://sketch.uk.com)**

## WESTMINSTER CCTV PARKING CAMERAS JUDGED TO BE ILLEGAL

### COUNCIL FACES CANCELLING THOUSANDS OF PARKING TICKETS AND REPAYING MILLIONS OF POUNDS OF ILLEGALLY COLLECTED FINES

*From Barrie Segal - founder of appealnow.com™*

Councils face repaying millions of pounds of illegally collected fines.

Parking ticket expert, Barrie Segal, the founder of the parking ticket website [www.appealnow.com](http://www.appealnow.com) says, "Westminster Council will have to cancel tens of thousands of CCTV issued parking tickets after my landmark ruling by the Parking Adjudicator and in my view must stop using these cameras immediately. Furthermore the council also faces the prospect of repaying millions of pounds which they collected using these illegal cameras."

In two far reaching decision for motorists the parking adjudicator has decided that Westminster Council's CCTV parking cameras do not comply with the law.

The challenge was mounted by the UK's leading parking ticket expert, Barrie Segal, who claimed that Westminster Council's CCTV footage did not comply with the law as individual frames were not numbered sequentially as required by law.

After considering further evidence from Westminster Council and Barrie the parking adjudicator, Carl Teper decided in PATAS cases 211000697A and 2110013024 "... that the failure to sequentially number the captured images, by means of a visual counter, to be a procedural impropriety as so defined.... The appeal is allowed".



Barrie goes on to say, "The camera problems in these two cases apply to all the video footage that I have seen since Westminster started using their new cameras. These decisions and the evidence I have seen in several other cases I am conducting show that the CCTV cameras used by Westminster Council do not comply with the law and therefore parking tickets issued using them cannot be enforced. Westminster Council should stop using those cameras immediately and cancel all parking tickets issued as a result of their use. They should also refund all parking tickets paid by motorists who were caught by these cameras and believed the cameras were legal"

*Editors note: Barrie Segal has very kindly acted as an advisor to UNITE Cab Section Officers, when dealing with members parking contravention appeals.*

## MAYOR OF LONDON ASKS HOME OFFICE FOR GREATER POWERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST MINICAB TOUTS

The Mayor of London has written to Home Secretary Teresa May asking for increased powers to tackle the Capitals ever growing illegal touting by minicabs.

Dear Theresa

I write to seek your support in helping to address the serious problems of taxi touting in London through the introduction of tougher sanctions against those that continue to commit these offences. I raised these issues with the former Government and despite them providing initial support for new stronger measures to help tackle this dangerous activity I am afraid very little progress was made.

Despite significant progress over recent years illegal cabs who 'tout' for business on the street remain a serious problem in the Capital and are a highly under-rated menace and danger to the travelling public in London. These 'cabs' are unregulated and uninsured for the purposes of carrying passengers and in some cases are linked to more serious crimes including rape, robbery, weapons and drugs. In 2009/10, there were 143 reported cab-related sexual offences, 24 of these were rapes. I am sure you will agree that together we must pursue every possible option in order to rid our streets of such heinous crimes.

As Mayor of London, I have made it a priority to eradicate illegal cab activity from the Capital. I have introduced a number of measures to ensure that touting is dealt with more robustly. I have doubled the number of police officers dedicated to tackling illegal cabs in London and have overseen a significant improvement in the availability of reliable and legitimate travel options through Transport for London's effective approach to the licensing and regulation of the taxi and private hire industry.

In 2008, I introduced tougher regulatory penalties for any licensed private hire vehicle driver convicted of touting and to date over 400 licensed PHV drivers convicted of or cautioned for touting have had their PHV vehicles revoked for a minimum of one year. Yet despite this, in many instances, these drivers merely return to the streets unlicensed.

The MPS Safer Transport Command's cab enforcement unit has made over 6,000 arrests for touting and dealt with another 2,000 offences by way of summons since its inception in 2003. However, it is galling that the vast majority of these cases have gone to Magistrates Courts resulting in derisory fines of £135. I am sure that you will

agree with me that this average penalty is far too low for what is a serious offence. I, along with TfL, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and City of London Police (CoLP) are united in our belief that a number of further measures would greatly assist in tackling this problem.

- Increasing the penalties for touting and unlawful plying for hire offences including fine and immediate driver license disqualification following conviction or caution for touting
- Powers to seize and dispose of vehicles used in touting and unlawful plying for hire offences
- Clearer legal definitions for touting and unlawful plying for hire offences to improve regulation and enforcement

These concerns are shared by the licensed taxi and PHV trades as illegal cab activity not only poses a risk to the travelling public but also presents a real economic threat to the licensed taxi and private hire industry. Both industries face significant investment and overheads to trade as a licensed service. Touts and illegal clipboard operators operating outside major venues intercept their customers and represent unfair – and unsustainable – competition. We are working closely with the trades to help preserve their high safety and professional standards and protect their legitimate business but more needs to be done to deter illegal activity.

With the Olympics fast approaching the efforts to deal with these issues are becoming increasingly important. Millions of visitors to London, most of whom will be unfamiliar with taxi and private hire laws and the risks posed by illegal cabs, could be put at risk.

I believe the above measures will assist in delivering more effective enforcement against perpetrators and will create a safer environment for London. My office has provided further detail on the proposals should it be required which I have enclosed with this letter.

I ask for your commitment to work with us to introduce these measures at the earliest legislative opportunity. TfL officials will take this forward with the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Department for Transport. If you could identify the appropriate lead in the Home Office I will ask TfL to make contact in order to discuss this further.

*Yours ever, Boris Johnson, Mayor of London*

## ANTI-TOUTING COMMITTEE REPORT

By PETER BOND

The lead member and Chair of this Committee, Joe Royle of STC, is, unfortunately, soon to retire.

As this column has stated before, although the Taxi Trade, with justification, want far more to be seen to be done to combat the blatant touting by licensed and unlicensed mini-cabs, including some operators, via their clipboard Johnnies, it has to be acknowledged the successful work this committee has overseen which is thanks mainly to Joe. Also he has always made himself available at any time of day or night. I wish him all the best and a long and happy retirement.

Joe's successor is Sultan Taylor who attended this meeting and seems to be an able replacement. He is no stranger to the problems in London having previously held senior posts in the Met in six South-West Boroughs, plus Ealing and Havering.

The usual hotspots were discussed:

**Abacus** – the rank has been moved closer to the door but not close enough. Right outside is the only place it should be sited. All participants of this committee support this view, including the City of London Police (COLP), but unfortunately not the Corporation who flatly refuse to move it any closer. It was agreed to approach the Corporation again.

The licensed operator seems to be working legally here for now after recent warnings but, as always, consistent enforcement is the only answer.

Other venues in the City with touting problems were discussed, including Revolution in Leadenhall St and Anthologist in Gresham St.

**Charterhouse Street** – no change here with the ever-increasing line of mini-cabs ranking up unhindered. It seems there is no chance of a Taxi Rank until the long-term works on Farringdon Station are completed.

**Camden/Chalk Farm and Clapham High Street** – although plenty of enforcement activity in these areas the touts just seem to return as soon as the coast is clear.

**South Woodford** – STC, LTPH enforcement officers and even senior individuals from LTPH have all witnessed first hand the blatant touting. We have been promised action against the culprits in the near future- see letter below sent to all operators in the area from John Mason as a starter with effective enforcement to follow if the abuse continues.



### TOUTING AND OTHER ILLEGAL ACTIVITY IN SOUTH WOODFORD

The purpose of this letter is to remind operators in the South Woodford area of the law and their responsibilities in relation to touting in the locality. The letter is being sent to all licensed operators in the South Woodford area.

Transport for London (TfL) and the Metropolitan Police Safer Transport Command (STC) have received reports of touting and other illegal cab activity taking place in South Woodford and surrounding areas. We have been made aware that licensed private hire operators, including those operating from late night venues, and licensed private hire drivers have been touting.

There have been observations made of persons outside late night venues which have licensed private hire operators operating within those premises accepting private hire bookings in the street, and in some cases clearly making the initial approach to persons leaving these premises as well as persons passing in the street. We must remind you that TfL expects all of its licensees to understand and be fully compliant

with the obligations placed upon them by the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 and its supporting Regulations. Please find attached the latest notices on touting. As you should already be aware, private hire bookings must only be accepted in a premise that is specified on a valid operator's licence. To clarify, it is illegal to accept a private hire booking in the street. We also ask that you remind all licensed PHV drivers employed by you of the law in regards to touting and display the enclosed poster where your drivers will see this. TfL and the police will not tolerate breaches of the law in relation to touting and will take enforcement action against any licensed operator or driver breaking the law. Police and enforcement officers have and will continue to be deployed to the area to disrupt and detect illegal activity. There will be no second chances for any operator or driver found to be touting.

Licensed private hire operators and drivers convicted of or cautioned for touting will lose their private hire licences. Almost 600 driver licences have been revoked to date with more being processed. We will soon be publishing a list of drivers who have had licences revoked on the TfL website. We also encourage you to regularly check if a driver is licensed by using our online PHV driver licence checker at: [www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/businessandpartners/taxisandprivatehire/ph/licensing/](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/businessandpartners/taxisandprivatehire/ph/licensing/)

Should you have any questions about the content of this letter or require any further advice and guidance regarding your manner of operation as a licensed London private hire operator, please do not hesitate to contact the Compliance Manager.

We are committed to working with licensed and law abiding private hire operators and drivers to prevent this illegal behaviour that puts passengers at risk and undermines legitimate business. If you have information on touting please report it to TfL and the STC by emailing [ltph.enforcement@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:ltph.enforcement@tfl.gov.uk) or calling 0845 300 7000.

*Yours sincerely John Mason, Director, London Taxi Private Hire and Chief Superintendent Joe Royle Safer Transport Command*

Quite unbelievably at one South Woodford club, three PH operators are licensed – WHY?? – no answer given.

The answer to most of the touting problems has to be effective enforcement and effective punishment by all the agencies, including the Magistrates Courts. To try and move this forward this committee is attempting to get all the Boroughs on board in the near future by approaching the equivalent to Martin Low at Westminster, where we have had some notable successes: Nobu, Movida, Sketch-son, etc.

All who attend seem to want the problem of touting eradicated and we have to acknowledge some excellent work has been done, but as shown by the letter from Boris to the Home Secretary it must be soul destroying to get a conviction only for the courts to give the culprit a slapped wrist. In what seems to have been a one off, not for the want of trying, the COLP managed to get one touts' vehicle crushed, although this may have been as much to do with a lack of insurance as for touting!

Steve Wright of the Private Hire Association requested problems of touting affecting his trade in the Enfield area be addressed – it will be interesting to report on that after the next meeting.



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# CTN

Comment

## FARES FAIR

By FRANK HULL

In this time of rapidly rising fuel and other costs it is incredible to see the vast differences in taxi fares across the country.

Some of these area taxi fares are being deliberately held back by worried taxi drivers concerned that any increase in fares, regardless of the percentage, will cause a further drop in trade. However, what these people seem to forget is that taxi driving is a business and should be treated as such and such chores as financial calculations, as in any other business, should be carried out regularly to make sure outgoings do not exceed income and a reasonable profit is made. It is no good turning a blind eye to this essential motive which, we repeat, is making a reasonable profit and not one of giving people cheap taxi rides. This might be jolly nice of a local trade but it will not finance the costs of running a taxi and feeding a family.

There are taxi trades across the country that are denied increases by elected councillors who may have little or no experience of driving a taxi for a living. Those trades that are denied a reasonable increase in fares, we are sure, would have their local authority's reluctance to agree overturned in a court of law. But why should members of this trade have to take legal action to obtain a reasonable increase in fares? What other industry is treated like this?

In the last few months Manchester has had an increase of 7% this has been introduced there without a lot of trouble from the authority, the drivers or the taxi user.

The taxi trade in Rochford, Essex has been allowed an increase that will add 20p to a two mile journey. And £1.20p to a five mile journey. The Rochford trade's last increase was in 2008 even so you can tell from the press report that the trade was reluctant to request this increase. However, after two years of fuel increases it is obvious that these increases are justifiable.

North Devon Council has refused the local taxi trade a tariff increase even though the local taxi trade has not had an increase since 2003. Phew! We repeat we think any court of law would sort out what planet these councillors are on.

We have given here only a few examples of the different responses to tariff increases. However, these responses are typical of many licensing areas across the country.

Unlike the London trade that has its own mathematical table for calculating any reasonable increase the provincial trade has no uniform means of calculating reasonable increases. Whilst we realise that different areas attract different tariffs they are all affected by the state of the national economy so it would not be unreasonable for the whole of the provincial trade to use one basic formula to calculate tariff increases.

If you agree with what we have put forward here then why not Unite with us and attempt to make fares fairer?

See the application on Page 11.

Frank Hull is a UNITE Cab Trade Committee Member.

## SOUTHAMPTON

By CTN REPORTER

Earlier this month some 70 taxis and phv's circled the Southampton Civic Centre for over half an hour, horns blasting and engines revving. The scene was described as looking like something from wacky races.












These drivers were protesting at the Council's decision to appeal the favourable judgement given to the trade in its objection to the condition of licence that was being imposed for all licensed vehicles should be fitted with CCTV.

The cameras that were to be fitted would cost some £700 each and would be operable 24/7.

Unite's Southampton cab section Chairman; Perry McMillan said "The camera is an infringement of privacy. They record video and sound regardless of whether I'm driving my wife to the shops or driving a customer" He also added "I also think it is disgraceful that the Council is using licence fees to fund their appeal in a time of cuts".

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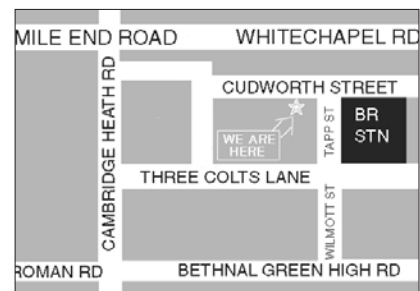
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# RANKS REPORT

By **JIM KELLY**

## Kings Cross Station

There will be a change to the road layout in Pancras Road from Monday 20th June. Pancras Road will be closed north and south bound at the junction with Haul Road. The access to the St. Pancras rank will be from Goodsway only. Entry and egress from Kings Cross rank will be by Euston Road only. There have been a number of complaints at the marshalling system being used at the Kings Cross rank at present. The way the scheme works appears to make loading a taxi longer rather than shorten the time. Discussions are also ongoing with The Great Northern Hotel over a taxi rank facility when it opens fully at the end of the year.

## Barking Station

Work scheduled to start at the station on the 1st June has now been rescheduled for the middle of the month.

## Paddington Station

A new taxi rank scheme at Paddington, due to start in early October has been rescheduled for 11 November. The scheme will consist of a new purpose built taxi deck accessed from Bishops Bridge. The new deck will accommodate 70 taxis.

## Tower of London Rank

The proposed closure of the rank at the Tower has now been put back. The rank was due to close in April, but will now be kept open as

long as possible. Building works for a new hotel at Sugar Quay means the space on Lower Thames Street will be closed to traffic for the duration of the works.

## Russell Square Cab Shelter

The cab shelter on the north-west corner of the square will close on 5 June. It will be re-sited on the southern corner and will reopen soon after.

## West London Cycle Race

A pre-Olympic cycle race is scheduled for west London on Sunday 14th August. A number of main roads will be closed on the day.

## Morden Rank

The local authority has now completed the first stage of agreeing and checking the site for a new proposed site at Morden station. It is now conducting a survey of residents and business in the immediate area before appointing the new rank.

## St. Pancras Hotel

A five cab rank has been agreed with the Hotel Management at this new hotel.

## Finsbury Pavement Rank

The Finsbury Pavement rank has been suspended and moved a few hundred yards north to the east side of City Road/ Finsbury Square.



## Victoria Station Upgrade

### ACTIVITY NOTIFICATION

13 May 2011

#### Advance ground treatment works

Preparatory works for the Victoria Station Upgrade are currently being undertaken on Little Ben Island, Victoria Street. The next stage of these works will be carried out in the area indicated on the plan below.

Work in the smaller area shaded green on the plan will begin on 27 May, and work in the full extent of the area will start on June 13. The work in this area is due to be completed by mid August.

Working hours will be between 8am and 6pm on weekdays and 8am and 1pm on Saturdays with an hour for workers to prepare and pack up either side of these times. Pedestrian access will be maintained adjacent to the worksite at all times.

If you have any concerns or queries, please contact us at [vsu@tube.tfl.gov.uk](mailto:vsu@tube.tfl.gov.uk) or call our 24/7 helpdesk on 0345 020 0015



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# TAXI CAMERAS – APPEAL AGAINST LICENCE CONDITION



**Southampton City Council**  
Southbrook Rise,  
4-8 Millbrook Road East  
Southampton SO15 1YG

On 24th November 2010, Mr. K. May appealed to the Southampton Magistrates' Court against Southampton City Council's imposition of a condition requiring the installation of a taxi camera in one of his licensed hackney carriages.

The matter was heard in the Southampton Magistrates' Court before District Judge Callaway on 23rd March 2011 and his judgment was issued on 15th April 2011.

The Magistrates' Court allowed Mr. May's appeal, but, at a subsequent hearing on 18th April 2011, declined to make any order for costs, thus both parties will pay their own costs in

dealing with this matter. The City Council's costs will be paid from the taxi and private hire licensing account which is funded by taxi and private hire licence fees.

On legal advice, the City Council is in the process of appealing the Magistrates' Court's decision. The appeal will now be heard in the Crown Court later this year. In the meanwhile and in light of the ongoing appeal both the Council's policy and licence conditions remain as previously implemented - licensed vehicles are still required to have approved taxi camera systems fitted and maintained.

*Solicitor to the Council*

## SOUTHAMPTON 'UNITE' CAB SECTION'S RESPONSE

*Email to the Assistant Solicitor to the Council and copied to all 48 Southampton City Councillors*

*Dear Mr Ivory*

**I have been requested to contact you by the Southampton 'Unite' Cab Section. I have also been asked to copy in all Councillors.**

Posted on the Southampton City Council's website is a statement dated 18th April 2011. Under the heading: Taxi cameras – appeal against licence condition.

Part of that statement says; "The City Council's costs will be paid from the taxi and private hire licensing account, which is funded by taxi and private hire licence fees."

On legal advice, the City Council is in the process of appealing the Magistrates' Court's decision."

On whose authority are the Southampton City Council's costs being met from the licensing account? The vast majority of the Taxi and PH licensed trade do not want cameras to be compulsory in their vehicles. Southampton City Council chose to run the case they didn't have to! Why, then, should the licensed community fund a court case brought by Southampton City Council regarding the imposition of a condition that the majority of

licensees do not want? Surely, therefore, general funds should be used not ring fenced licensing funds.

The statement makes it quite clear that taxi and PH licence fees fund the licensing account. What is the defined purpose of the licensing account? We are surprised that ring fenced licensing funds can have a surplus enabling the financing of court cases!

The Southampton 'Unite' Cab Section wishes to request, via the Freedom of Information Act 2000, a detailed breakdown of the Taxi and Private Hire licensing account for the last three financial years. We want details of all monies paid into the Taxi and Private Hire licensing account and details of everything it is spent on so that we can see how this 'surplus' has been built up.

Finally, why have officers taken the decision to go straight to appeal without reference to the licensing committee?

Southampton 'Unite' Cab Section looks forward to your earliest reply.

*Regards,*  
*Southampton 'Unite' Cab Section.*

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# CRAZY DAYS

FRIDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL – THURSDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2011

The end of April to the beginning of May saw one barmy week on planet Earth. Starting with a royal wedding and ending with a national referendum plus the execution of the world's most wanted man as the filling in a crazy week sandwich... what did you think of, nuts week, on this planet?

The Melange Column will try to relay how I saw seven days as somewhat surreal of the times we live in. This is my personal account and opinions of a mad week.



Preceding the royal wedding of Friday 29th April, I took the opportunity to drive my taxi around Westminster Abbey and see the small gathering of monarchist fans who had been camping out on the pavement to get a good view of the wedding. All my life I've had a belief these flag waving zealots are a touch un-hinged. Why do people do this kind of thing for a family who achieved nothing other than an accident of birth?

Surely, we are all born equal. Monarchy has never cut it with me, but I'm a free-thinker and could be convinced. Sadly the royal wedding had not brought a promised bonanza for the cab trade. It has been tough out there recently and none of the royal groupies had been using my cab.

The campers at Westminster Abbey had that look of *in-bred* from Norfolk or Somerset. What makes them tick? Can you spend a night under canvass without proper washing or toilet facilities and look elegant, ready for a wedding?

Nonetheless, crowds gathered. The very same people who would have the chance in six days to vote in the national referendum to make The United Kingdom a little more democratic. Democracy; a word that struggles to have any relationship with monarchy. I loved the answer that the actor, Colin Firth, gave when asked if he was a monarchist from his recent role in the hit movie, *The King's Speech*. His reply, coyly said, "I'm a fan of voting."

Enough of my republican views, many folk enjoyed the wedding and the day off work. I noticed many of the immigrant communities of London celebrated the wedding displaying pictures and flags with Wills & Kate images in their business premises. I guess this may show a sense of gratitude to the UK and a show of affection to their adopted country. Royalists trumpet the economic benefits of the Windsor's with them boosting tourism and British standing in the world. Oh Yeah! Paris and New York get more tourists than London and in Paris you can go and see where their royals used to live before their revolution.

British standing in the world does not really get enhanced with Prince Andrew and his associates or Prince Philip and his bigoted choice of language. Even, man of the moment, Prince William could not use his royal influence to secure the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

### FOLLOW THE MONEY

Government figures state each person in the UK contributes a little over 60 pence a year for the royals. Do the maths...60 million people times 60p...How well could you and your extended family live on an annual income of £36 million...Queen of England...nice gig if you can get it...

Friday night I found myself in the company of Punk Rock royalty at The Lexington in Islington, Vic Goddard and The Subway Sect in party mood. He gets my vote...Is Vic there?

Saturday was a little prosaic. The great weather meant you could sit around enjoying the rays. The papers were full of stories; pictures of the Abbey, Will and Kate on a grand horse & cart going up The Mall and moonlight photos of royals and celebs leaving the party in their cars. Not a single glimpse of the Wedding bash. No chance of seeing Princess Auntie Ann shaking her mane doing the funky horse or future King Charles the third, *dad-dancing*. I was surprised not to hear of anything on Facebook. Must have been gagged. I went to work in the evening. Trade had picked up a little.



Sunday the 1st of May, May Day, the **Workers' Day**. I had decided to go on the annual May Day march from Clerkenwell Green to Trafalgar Square. A gathering of lefties in their spiritual home heading for the rallying place of many years and struggle. I had jumped on a *Boris Bike* at St Pauls as the tubes were, as they often are at weekends, on a limited service. A pint or two in The Crown, although I prefer The Three Kings on Clerkenwell Close. It has the best pub sign in London...3 kings...Henry the Eighth, Elvis Presley & King Kong! The only kings you will ever need.

### SANDALS IN THE BIN

I awoke on Bank Holiday Monday to the news Obama had got Osama. **USA—USA!** chanted crowds in Times Square and outside The White House. This story blew the royals off the front pages. Barack Obama needed a boost for his faltering presidency.

Kempton Park racing was my destination for the day, with my wife and a couple of friends, one who owned a horse, and an American horse at that, which was running in the first race. It didn't do very well, unable to match the American triumphalism mood. The meeting at Kempton that day was bizarre, a family fun day sponsored by **Peppa Pig**. I am none the wiser on Peppa Pig but he/she or it would appear to be some cartoon character for small kids. There is a Peppa Pig world somewhere in Surrey should you wish to find out more... Anyway, lots of young children were at the track and being give free reign on the tannoy system to give their tips and predictions to the crowds. This surprised me. I guess the gambling industry needs to hook 'em young...the afternoon flowed well with plenty of TEA...Traditional English



## Street Legal

By VICTORIA PHILLIPS

### SHAMELESS ATTACK ON WORKERS

The coalition's shameless attacks on working people's rights in order to please the Tories' friends in the City and the business lobby must be challenged with hard facts.

Ministers are relying on anecdote, gossip and dodgy statistics when they claim that businesses are being shackled by onerous regulations.

The recent consultation by the department for Business, Innovation and Skills about changing the employment tribunal system in order to reduce claims used some very questionable "evidence" as justification, including that there had been a "dramatic" increase of 56% in claims from 2008 to 2010.

Yet the Ministry of Justice's own figures for the end of last year showed that ET claims fell by 51% compared to the same period in 2009. Either government departments don't talk to each other, or it's the old adage about not letting the truth get in the way of a good story.

And now we have George Osborne announcing a "wholesale review" of employment law while speaking to the bosses union the Institute of Directors.

An audience like that was bound to lap up the myths he peddled about the impact on growth that the so-called unlimited compensation for discrimination victims, the right of workers to be consulted 90 days ahead of collective redundancies and the laws that protect employee pay and conditions when a business is transferred to a new owner are having.

The reality, as the TUC pointed out, is that making it easier to make people redundant and giving the workforce less time to come up with alternatives and save jobs will simply worsen unemployment.

As for unlimited compensation for discrimination, it's hard enough for people to win these claims in the first place, and the amount they get will not make them rich – especially given that most will have lost their jobs. The average tribunal award in sex discrimination claims last year was £19,500, £10,931 for age discrimination and £18,584 for age discrimination, according to the government's own statistics.

If employers really are too scared to employ people because of the prospect of having to pay that sort of money to them, shouldn't they just ensure that they treat their workers fairly? Tribunals don't award compensation to employees who can't prove that they've suffered an injustice.

Osborne may talk a good talk to his mates at the IoD, but the reality is that there's not much he can actually do about employment laws that come from Europe. It was the European Court which lifted the cap on discrimination compensation because it was contrary to the Treaty of Rome and did not provide an adequate remedy for a discrimination victim's losses.

And the rules about consultation on collective redundancies and transfers of business are also governed by EU directives which are binding on the UK.

Osborne called on the business community to get stuck into the argument and make the case for growth, against what he anticipates will be opposition from the unions.

They should start by acknowledging that little grows in constantly shifting sands and an insecure workforce which can be sacked at the drop of a hat isn't going to be spending the country out of its economic doldrums.

### Alc... Serious Drinking!

Tuesday & Wednesday I spent the daylight hours trying to eek out a living. The evenings were spent watching Champions League football on the TV either in my house or at The Hare pub on Cambridge Heath Road. It's a great boozier for viewing the big games, however both matches were underwhelming. Madrid and Barca splashed around in the Spanish rain and Manchester United overcame Germans, Schalke 04, with ease. Does 04 mean they always lose by four goals? Chatting away with fellow footie fans, aside from Jose Mourinho delivering cynical fare, the great topic of conversation was... Is Bin Laden really dead?

Conspiracy theories abounded. Not just in the pub, all over the media too. Surely President Obama will look very silly if the conspiracy theorists are correct? Of course he is dead. The US navy seals did not mess this mission up. A swift in and out of Pakistan with an Islamic funeral quickly administered, as is the Muslim code and hurled into the Indian Ocean without a place to mark the burial site. There will be repercussions. At the time of writing this article the Pakistani Taliban have already caused one major atrocity... Meanwhile... Man United will meet Barcelona at Wembley on Saturday 28th May in the Champions League Final. This will be good for the London cab trade with loads of Catalonians coming to our city and

boosting trade. I guess the Manchester fans will walk to Wembley as many of them only live around the corner.

Finally, the crazy week ended with only the second referendum in my lifetime. Set against The Arab Spring uprisings, the British people had the chance to change their voting system and bring in the Alternative Vote method which is a midway step towards proportional representation. The price demanded by the Lib-Dems to be coalition partners. It was a no-brainer, vote **Yes** and the Tories would be unlikely to ever secure a majority again.

The vote was lost. An apathetic campaign which highlighted the low standing of Nick Clegg and raised questions over Ed Miliband's leadership of The Labour Party. Miliband minor's presentation is poor. He always sounds like he has a mouthful of soft fruit. Labour has probably elected the wrong Miliband. David would probably tick more boxes with the electorate.

A mad week with the **WINNERS** being the Tories, Barack Obama, Royalists, Man United, Barcelona, Pubs, Navy Seals, Race track owners, The Middleton Family and apathy.

**LOSERS** were; Republicans, football fans, terrorists, Pakistani Security Services, Lib-Dems, Ed Miliband, future voters and democracy... Unless, you think otherwise... Dear reader?

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## Mayor's Air Quality Strategy

### Important information for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers and Operators

As you may be aware, in December 2010 the Mayor's Air Quality Strategy was published which contained a wide range of initiatives aimed at reducing harmful emissions in London. The actions outlined in the strategy included initiatives focused on reducing harmful emissions from licensed taxis and private hire vehicles.

You can find a full copy of the Mayor's Air Quality Strategy on the GLA website at: [www.london.gov.uk/publication/mayors-air-quality-strategy](http://www.london.gov.uk/publication/mayors-air-quality-strategy)

The air quality initiatives for taxis and private hire vehicles included:

- From 1 January 2012 a 10 year rolling age limit will be introduced for private hire vehicles and a 15 year rolling age limit for taxis unless exempted.
- From 1 April 2012, unless exempted, all newly licensed private hire vehicles must, as a minimum, meet Euro 4 standards for emissions and be no older than 5 years and all newly licensed taxis must, as a minimum, meet Euro 5 standards for emissions.
- TfL will work with both the taxi and private hire industry to introduce ecodriving training from 2012 and to promote efficient driving techniques to reduce emissions with Eco driving elements being required for all new taxi drivers before becoming licensed.
- By April 2013 changing the taxi licensing regime from one combined

mechanical and licensing inspection to two MOTs per annum with a basic annual taxi-related inspection undertaken by TfL.

Posters explaining the age limit and Euro standard requirements are on display at SGS inspection centres and a copy of the poster is attached to this notice and can also be downloaded from the [TfL website](http://tfl.gov.uk).

Private hire operators are encouraged to display the poster in areas where their drivers will see this so as they are aware of the age limits and Euro standard requirements for private hire vehicles.

It is proposed that there will be certain limited exemptions to the above maximum vehicle age limits. TfL proposes to begin a consultation with the taxi and PHV industry in May as to the categories of vehicle it proposes should be exempted. Further information on the consultation and exemption proposals will be provided in due course.

TfL is also actively pursuing discounts and other initiatives that may assist taxi and private hire drivers impacted by these changes.

If you have any further questions or comments regarding these changes please do not hesitate to contact us by emailing [tpb.enquiries@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:tpb.enquiries@tfl.gov.uk)

*John Mason, Director, Taxi and Private Hire, 5th May 2011. For previous Notices visit [tfl.gov.uk/tpb](http://tfl.gov.uk/tpb)*

# UNITE AND BRITISH AIRWAYS REACH AGREEMENT ON CABIN CREW

Unite the union and British Airways have reached an agreement to resolve the long-running cabin crew dispute at the airline, the union announced recently.

The agreement is to be put to a ballot of Unite cabin crew members, with a union recommendation for acceptance. In the meantime, the union has decided not to call any industrial action at the airline based on its present ballot mandate.

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey, who led negotiations for the union, said today: "We always said that this dispute could only be settled by negotiation, not by confrontation or litigation. And so it has proved.

"We are delighted to have reached an agreement which I believe recognises the rights and dignity of cabin crew as well as the commercial requirements of the company. This agreement will allow us to go forward in partnership together to strengthen this great British company – good news for BA, its employees and its customers alike.

"I am particularly pleased that staff travel concessions will be restored in full with the signing of the agreement and the implementation of the new structure for working together that we have negotiated. A customer-oriented



business can only succeed with all its employees valued and respected.

"And above all I would like to pay tribute to Unite's BA cabin crew members. Their resilience, discipline and determination to be treated properly has been an inspiration to all who have worked alongside them in this dispute and has been a model of twenty-first century trade unionism. They deserve this agreement and the prosperous future at British Airways I hope it secures."

# THEATRE

By TRUDI-JOY LEVY

## TANGO FIRE – FLAMES OF DESIRE at the Peacock Theatre

If they ever produce a TV programme called "Argentina's Got Talent" they would be hard pressed to choose a winner from all the country's talented tango dancers. Fortunately for us, a number of them are currently strutting their stuff on the stage of the Peacock Theatre in this exciting production.

The five couples display their gymnastic skill, sometimes individually and sometimes in ensemble, alternating with a young singer, Jesus Hidalgo. The first few numbers are fast and furious and, just when I began to think it was becoming repetitious, they performed a slower number which was almost balletic. They were accompanied throughout by four talented musicians called Quatrotrango, who also performed some beautiful Astor Piazzolla compositions as instrumentals, without the distraction of the dancers.

All the dancers performed a tango ballet to another Piazzolla classic – 'Oblivion' which was quite exquisite, and the finale 'Verano Porteno' in which they incorporated chairs, which was reminiscent of 'Cabaret'. The choreography by Yanina Fajar, the costumes and lighting all combined to provide a (literally) breathtaking show.

## ECSTASY at Duchess Theatre

For the first time Mike Leigh has returned to one of his past plays. Ecstasy was first produced, as were many of his plays, at the Hampstead Theatre, in 1979.

The action, or, more accurately, inaction, takes place in Brummie Jean's Kilburn bed sit. As the play opens we find Jean lying naked on her bed, apart from her married neighbour, Roy, with whom she has just had a casual sexual encounter. Self-destructive Jean leads an empty life, working in a petrol station. She does have one friend, fellow-Brummie, Dawn, mother of three children, who nicks clothes from C & A. There is always humour with pathos in Leigh's work and this is no exception: Dawn tells Jean that she will return the stolen blouse, should it not fit her.

In the second act Dawn and her wastrel husband, Mick, return to Jean's bed sit after

a night at the pub. They are accompanied by an old friend, Len, who has returned to London following the breakdown of his marriage. They drink, smoke and sing songs, reminiscing about the past; but the future seems bleak for Jean. The play ends as it begins, with Jean lying on her bed, but this time Len offers to sleep in a chair and seems genuinely concerned for her. Perhaps there is some hope, after all. The performances throughout from Allen Leech, (Mick) Sinead Matthews (Dawn) and Craig Parkinson (Len) are faultless, but none more so than Sian Brooke as the tragic Jean. Your heart aches for her.

## IRISH BLOOD, ENGLISH HEART at the Trafalgar Studios 2

Writer Darren Murphy's inspiration for this play came from a philosophical cabbie who, pointing to his cab, muttered "They'll f--ing bury me in that".

An Irish immigrant London taxi driver has committed suicide in his cab. His son, Con Sweeney (Ian Groombridge) visit's the secret lock-up where it happened and discovers a treasure trove of memories from his father's life. Con also became a cabbie, but lost his green badge (the reason subsequently becomes clear) and is now struggling financially.

His wife, Peggy, (Carolyn Tomkinson), dreams of opening a studio and café and resents the fact that Con's estranged elder brother, Ray Suede (Howard Teale) has become successful by writing a best seller based on their lives.

Ray agrees to meet his brother at the lock-up during a book tour, but it is evident that his memories of his father are quite different from his brother's. Both men don their father's tweed jacket at different times, as they relive their conflicting childhood memories of him.

We don't truly know the nature of the man until we meet Anthony (Oliver Gilbert), a youth who has just earned his green badge. A former burglar, their father has taught him the knowledge intensively every day, in the lock-up, for the past 18 months, and saved him from a life of crime.

The claustrophobic atmosphere of the tiny space is perfect for this production and the excellent cast, directed by Caitriona McLaughlin, draw you into their complex lives.

# GLASGOW CALLING

By CHRIS FARQUHAR

Once upon a time Glasgow was known as the second city of "The Empire", but alas no more. Our taxi trade is suffering more than most other areas, as we are required to use only hackney type vehicles, but are we rewarded for this?

The answer is no. We have the lowest fare structure of any city in the UK and Glasgow City Council (GCC) has decided in their wisdom not to give us an increase for the forthcoming year.

In addition to this we are plagued by Private Hire cars and out of town taxis from several other areas "pirating" our streets. I realize that these are problems in a lot of other areas, but not I think to the extent that it is in Glasgow? They blatantly rank up in

the same hotspots week in and week out! Glasgow has a "Taxi and Private Hire Enforcement 'team', but they seem to be unable or unwilling to curtail it. On a Friday and Saturday night their shift ends at 2am just as the "pirating" "hits a peak . . .

The Unite Union Cab Branch is at this time liaising with GCC, surrounding area councils and the police to get "The Enforcement" more 'cross border' powers to stop out of town taxis ranking in Glasgow.

Only time will tell if this is successful. Although I fear that it will take the rape or murder of some innocent member of the public to make the authorities sit up and take notice.

**NEWS RELEASE**



**The London Taxi Company implements transparent pricing on used vehicles**

Great news for owners looking for their next used London Taxi!

The London Taxi Company has announced that it has now revisited its entire portfolio, applying its transparent pricing to all used taxis in its seven retail outlets across the UK.

Sales Director, Rob Laidler said: "We launched the new TX4 Style and Elegance range from £28,995 on the road – that's up to £4,500 less than its closest comparable predecessor, making a new top of the range London Taxi cheaper than it was a decade ago. We felt that the time was right to apply transparent pricing across our used taxis portfolio, not least because of the increasing number of local authorities implementing emissions or age restrictions, therefore putting additional pressure on our used stocks."

The transparent pricing strategy exploits the costs saving that the company is now able to achieve through dealing direct with their customer base.

Rob added: "It has been a thorough project, spanning a couple of months, which has created some cracking used taxi prices across a range of ages and mileage.

"Residual values remain strong, given the high demand for our used stock, which is important for buyers and also great news for those looking to part-exchange. We'd urge owners to visit any of our dealerships or for our full used taxi range, visit [www.london-taxis.co.uk/used](http://www.london-taxis.co.uk/used)."

**Global Growth for the London Taxi Service**

The number of countries operating The London Taxi Service continues to grow as further vehicle orders have been placed for the Middle East and Europe. The London Taxi Company has also reported additional interest received from India and Morocco and fresh orders from Turkey and Russia.

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In Lebanon, appointed partner National New Dawn operate The London Wedding Service. In Malta, Dial-a- Cab Ltd operate a fleet of chauffeur driven bright yellow London Taxis and in Saudi Arabia, The London Cab Club is a membership and loyalty scheme that rewards it's customers with discount at shops and restaurants etc.

Most importantly The London Taxi Service provides a recognised and iconic vehicle that is only purpose-built to be a taxi. There is a spacious passenger compartment that allows business colleagues to continue their meeting, tourists to relax and take in the sights or brides to sip a glass of champagne with their new husband.

"The London Taxi Service is a premium rate taxi service that combines a fantastic and unique vehicle together with professionally trained drivers," said Matthew Cheyne, International Market Development Director for The London Taxi Company.



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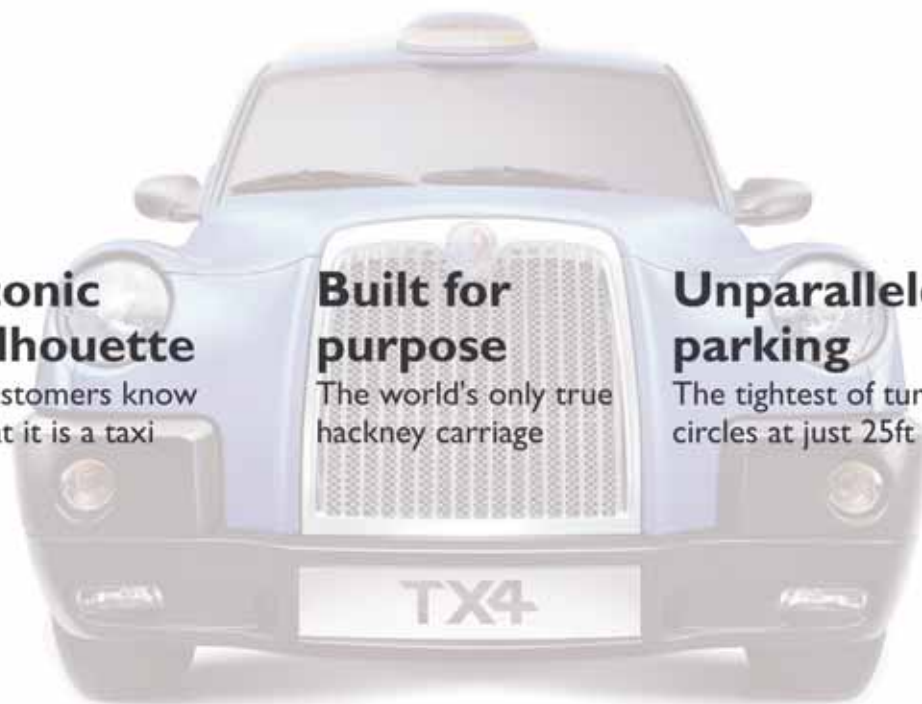
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