

NUMBER PLATES

As we are in the midst of a big debate on **signage for Private Hire Vehicles in London** and we are seeking to identify who is legitimate and who isn't, a very timely consultation is being undertaken by the **DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency)** on number plates.

The consultation is genuinely interesting, covering what may or may not be possible in the future for number plates, however of particular interest to us is the section on **Taxis and PHV's**. (section 3.6)

DISTINCTIVE NUMBER PLATES FOR TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE CARS (MINI CABS)

Taxis and private hire cars and their drivers are licensed by local authorities in GB and by DVLNI in Northern Ireland - and a series of checks are undertaken to ensure the suitability of both the vehicle and drivers to provide this service. There have unfortunately been instances of people posing as taxi and private hire drivers to lure unsuspecting members of the public into their vehicle. Serious crime sometimes results from such deception.

At present, all front plates have a white background and rear plates a yellow background. In order to make licensed taxis and private hire cars easily distinguishable to the public, it is proposed that number plates issued to these vehicles should be a different colour, e.g. blue or red.

Question 18 asks – Do you believe that issuing plates with a different coloured background to taxis and private hire cars would bring benefits to public safety?

Question 19 asks – If so, would there also be any merit in differentiating the colours of the plates for taxis and private hire cars?

Well, it is our interim view that there would be spectacular benefits by having different coloured number plates for Taxis and PHV's.

In conjunction with whatever signage the second vehicle consultation on vehicles recommends, coloured number plates offer two immediate benefits to drivers and the public.

Firstly safety, a coloured number plate, makes illegal touting much more difficult and gives the public a much better chance of identifying legitimate PHV's.

Secondly, we will in the future, as a licensed mode of public transport be needing to use bus lanes. One of the main objections to access for PHV's in the past has been the inability to differentiate PHV's from private motor vehicles.

Coloured number plates would virtually eliminate these problems and the adopted licensing identifiers such as 'Mogo style' plates and screen disks would compliment the process further.

Coloured numbers plates – a definite yes for public safety and private car usage reduction reasons.

There is also probably a good case for differentiating between Taxis and PHV's by colour. Taxis could perhaps be orange like their 'for hire' taxi signs and PHV's which are not for hire on the street could be blue or another colour. It would of course be for the Taxi Industry to put forward their feelings on this but as we now have several Graded Companies running Licensed Taxis we will seek their views before responding.

The consultation can be answered online at the DVLA website link: -

http://www.dvla.gov.uk/public/consult/vrm_security/vrm_security.htm

The whole consultation is interesting for anyone with a car, covering security and other issues, well worth a look at.



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What's in a name?

As it's a while since we've published Private Hire News, a lot has happened in the industry since edition 24. One piece of news is our 'name change' or rather the new or extra name for The LPHCA.

At an EGM in March last year The Trade Association was formally re-named The Licensed Private Hire Car Association. Member Companies can still utilise the old names – London Private Hire Car Association and Graded Private Hire Companies.

The new name was adopted because we are moving into a fully licensed industry and more than ever we are getting involved in National issues.

As London moves into regulation, National issues will affect London and many decisions made in London will no doubt have National implications.

So we are The LPHCA, The Graded Private Hire Companies and The Licensed Private Hire Car Association.

We represent Licensed Private Hire Operators that are prepared to be put under the microscope of our Grading Visit once a year.

The common denominator is our now, very well known, 'Safe in our hands logo', which can only be used by companies who reach at least our 3 star Graded rating (or the equivalent for small operators).