

Talking of Grading...



by GEOFF WRIGHT

Once again I have the opportunity to field a brief editorial about the Grading Companies System and the way in which it has become fairly institutionalised, particularly in London and more surprisingly in the Provinces.

This is proven by the way in which we continue to retain support from our 'Out of London' Southern Regional Companies, some of whom are very far removed from the 'London Scene' and to whom we extend our sincere thanks for their continued and much appreciated support both morally and financially.

Significantly there are more and more work providers and procurement teams enquiring whether a Private Hire Company is Graded by The LPHCA.

Local Authorities, big transport providers and businesses of all sizes are amongst the many who are emailed or faxed listings from the office. With our website undergoing major development this information will soon also become available online.

We recently supplied details about Graded Members in the Heathrow / Twickenham / Sunbury area for a potential major tender and procurement exercise. In addition more and more

individual members of the public are concerned about travelling safely and they call us for information about the Graded Companies in their area.

To gain the advantage of enjoying the benefits of our successful Insurance Schemes companies must be Graded to a minimum of Three Stars for the normal Hire & Reward Insurance packages and currently need to be Five Star to obtain all the discounted insurances on offer.

These criteria should not prove an insurmountable barrier for the majority of those of our Membership wishing to participate in our insurance scheme, as their Grading report will almost certainly outline how they can make the relevant Graded Category.

When Licensing was first introduced following the implementation of the London Act many people thought that the Graded Private Hire Companies system would suffer at the expense of the Regulator's efforts.

Some Companies felt that there was no need to be both Licensed and Graded. We did at first lose some members, but the attendance at our regular awareness meetings and the number of calls, emails and enquiries we are fielding has shown the need for what we do.

Our meetings are attended by the Regulator's senior representatives, together with representatives from the PCO and the various Government bodies concerned with the Licensing programme.

It could be argued that there would be no way that such high profile officials would even consider attending such meetings if they did not think that the LPHCA and its related Graded Companies regime was anything other than the recognised 'listening post' for the London Private Hire Industry and we must credit them with their foresight in this regard.

Much of the work that the LPHCA has thus far been charged with undertaking has come about as a direct result of mandates from the members.

To be a Graded Company now has far more significance than it did in past years and I am more than pleased to report that in recent times I have been undertaking 'New' Gradings. In addition some significant former members have decided to rejoin the Association and become Graded again, they will be amongst those listed in the next edition of the magazine in January.

Geoff Wright



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Middlesex HA1 1RU
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(5 lines)
Fax: 020 8863 2081