

PRIVATE HIRE NEWS

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**The news magazine of the Graded Private Hire Companies
Incorporating the London and Southern Private Hire Car Associations**

Welcome to **Edition 25** of **Private Hire News**, which we are now going to regularly publish once again on a quarterly basis. Since our last edition a lot has happened both in London and nationally, with major changes in regulations and in particular the requirements for drivers.

The now infamous '**Enhanced Criminal Record Check**' has already brought hardship and chaos outside the capital, preventing legitimate drivers from working. **Ron Parker MD** of **Streamline in Maidstone** tells me that one driver's check took 10 months and it came through clear. This stupidity with other factors has now caused a **driver crisis** in London.

The **driver crisis** threatens to undermine the whole 'small vehicle people moving transport system' in the capital as the industry moves into the busy winter period. In the main, **Operator Licensing**, given the size of the task and the fact that both sides are wearing 'L' plates has gone smoothly and the illegal companies are now disappearing. **Driver Licensing** however is a different matter and here the legitimate Private Hire Car Industry in London is in serious trouble.

Very importantly we must focus our efforts on what can be done rather than apportioning blame and it is our judgement that there are many factors causing driver shortages. I must however remind the politicians and their lawyers at Transport for London, that they will be failing in their responsibility to deliver what they highlighted in their own second consultation document if they don't act soon.

The TfL second consultation set out – The impact of regulation upon London's private hire trade – *(To ensure that regulatory standards enabled established drivers to become licensed whilst encouraging good quality new drivers into the industry)*

The PCO promised a light 'touch' yet we are clearly getting the sledgehammer. The **Public Carriage Office** are getting the blame but in reality the decisions on regulations, are ultimately made by lawyers and politicians.

Graded Companies are reporting serious difficulties getting

drivers and the pool of drivers available to Operators is sinking rapidly. Since Driver licensing started on 1st June, TfL has had several hundred applications for drivers, however even in mid summer the need is for several thousand applicants.

Our thoughts and proposals regarding driver shortages are set out in our '**Driver Crisis**' article. Whilst we are in troubled times my full time involvement with **The LPHCA**, has enabled me to get to grips with other tasks.

As well as the re-launch of **Private Hire News**, **The LPHCA website** is now re-vamped thanks to a great deal of hard work by the team in the office and designers **FG-studios**.

The new site can be seen by clicking www.lphca.co.uk. As the site is expanded it will contain a wealth of information for both members and the travelling public. The member's section will be password protected, but will be well worth visiting and an extra benefit for members.

Running **The LPHCA** at the moment is a 7 days a week job, but there has never been a more important time for the industry and with the support of the members I believe we can come through this very painful period.

I make no apology for the straight talking that will be done in this issue, I always like to be positive but some things that are happening at the moment are completely unacceptable, so they have to be raised openly and this magazine reaches a lot of very important people.

I will finish on something positive. Just before going to press I was proud to attend with **Eddie Townson** and other members of **The Private Hire Board** the ceremony and presentation of the **first 4 Private Hire Driver Licences** at **City Hall**.

It was a special moment to see drivers being given the status of **Licensed** by **Mayor Ken Livingstone**. The status of **Private Hire Drivers** will now change as a result of the historic moment we have all been working towards, we must now ensure that the trickle of drivers becomes a torrent, very, very soon.

Steve Wright

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