

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 27 of Private Hire News. It has certainly been a very busy period for The LPHCA and The Private Hire Industry in London. Some cynics have said that our role would diminish when the London Private Hire Industry became licensed, however the opposite is in fact the case.

The LPHCA office has never been so busy. In London we have been following up the progress made after our successful campaign to get the driver regulations changed and we are delighted to report that some Graded Companies have advised us that the new regulations are genuinely helping with new driver recruitment.

Rather ironically this has caught The PCO on the hop and new high volumes of applicants have caused them to get behind with their five day turnaround target.

We have been assured that this has been addressed and if delays remain we will lobby TfL to commit the necessary resources to resolve any short-term problems.

In early February The LPHCA and The Private Hire Board had meetings with the PCO on the appeals process for drivers either refused a licence or, with revoked temporary permits.

In our opinion there is a great deal of confusion on what constitutes the refusal criteria for a private hire license or the revocation of a London temporary Private Hire Driver's permit.

The LPHCA website message board and our email system has also received and covered a few requests on medical issues, in particular diabetics and eyesight requirements.

Eddie Townson, Chairman of The Private Hire Board, and I have been working very closely on this and Eddie has covered the subject in great detail in the Private Hire Board pages in this issue.

The end of February saw another capacity turnout for our vehicle regulations meeting at The National Union of Teachers. In addition to very good member support The PCO and Department for Transport were on hand to help and advise members.

The Taxicard scheme and the current tender to undertake Taxicard work were also covered. There was also some great news on fleet insurance for Graded Companies that are involved with the member's captive insurance scheme and we will be in touch with everyone soon concerning this.

March saw further dialogue on medical requirements with the PCO and we await the news on the possibility of providing

medical centres to speed through the driver licensing process.

The end of March saw an evening meeting in London with two Government Ministers – Transport Minister Tony McNulty and Ivan Lewis, Minister for Skills and Vocational Education. Qualifications and appropriate skills for passenger-moving drivers were on the agenda. Feedback and comment is reported inside the magazine.

The Office of Fair Trading had its report into the Taxi and Private Hire sector mauled by The Transport Select Committee and the likely upshot of this will be the preservation of the status quo in the sector regulatory wise for the time being.

Bey Wilmshurst, one of our long standing out of London Graded Operators of A1 Cars in Deal, contacted us recently as A1 Cars had received the most unbelievable letter from Dover District Council who are now applying, what is in our opinion, the most unfair and draconian rules for vehicles via a new three year age limit rule.

The letter is posted on our Internet message board and is also printed with our frank response in the message board section of this edition along with other recent postings.

We are really pleased to be publishing Private Hire News again on the new quarterly scheduled regular basis as it gives us the opportunity to let the world know what we do and what we stand for.

As we did not publish for a few years, whilst being heavily involved in the Political arena, we have chosen to re-run through the Grading System in detail, highlighting the benefits of being a full Graded member.

Whilst Graded Company numbers have dropped back slightly, mainly due to companies merging, we are now getting more and more enquiries from new operators and in some cases former members about joining.

Talking of Grading will highlight the many considerable benefits of being Graded in this issue and we will also be welcoming new Graded Members in this and future magazines.

We will also highlight the reasons why an industry as big as ours needs to be represented on a full time basis and needs the support and backing of Operators to do our work professionally, for the best possible outcome for our members.

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