

Thursday 13 January 2005 saw the first formal consultation meeting between **The Greater London Authority, The Public Carriage Office** and various organisations within the Private Hire Trade in London at **The Public Carriage Office** in Penton Street.

**The Mayor's Office** was represented by **Mark Watts** (Special Transport Advisor to the Mayor), the **Greater London Authority** had **Kevin Austin** and **Rhiannon Hill** present.

**Ed Thompson, Roy Ellis** and **Allan Matthews** represented **the Public Carriage Office** and there were representatives from other trade associations and trade unions present.

### OUR TEAM

**The LPHCA** team included Graded members **Alec Smith, Bill Edwards, Eddie Townson** and **George Walker** with **Chairman Steve Wright** and **Robin Hulff** (LPHCA's political advisor) completing the team.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH MEETINGS

**The LPHCA** has been meeting **The GLA, The PCO** and **The Mayor's** representatives for quite a while but this was the first time we met the group collectively.

Everything that happens of importance in the regulatory process will be subject to political as well as regulatory consideration and for this reason this meeting was very significant for The Private Hire Industry.

For the first time we had the opportunity to collectively present the views of the Private Hire Industry to the regulator as well as the political decision makers and the meeting was a great success.

### AGENDA

We were invited to put forward topics for debate and **the LPHCA** submitted the following key points for discussion.

- Bus Lane access / stopping on red routes**
- Public Awareness / Advertising**
- Driver Shortages**
- Vehicle Signage**
- Touting**
- Vehicle Inspection / Testing**
- Medical Standards**
- Future driver training & testing**

All the above were thoroughly discussed to the extent that the meeting ran well beyond schedule but nevertheless a lot was covered very thoroughly.

As there are actions to follow the meeting it would be inappropriate to discuss in detail potential outcomes from the meeting but we can reveal areas where progress is reportable.

### BUS LANE ACCESS

**The LPHCA** will be writing on behalf of **The Private Hire Board** to **The Mayor** and **The Association of London Government** (who have a major say in who uses the bus lanes) setting out the case for Private Hire to be allowed this vital access.



**TfL** are undertaking an impact assessment and we await the findings with interest.

### PUBLIC AWARENESS / ADVERTISING

The industry is upset about the small amount of positive publicity for the Licensed Private Hire Trade and in particular the negative pre-Christmas advertising campaign.

As licensing completes we would like to see more positive publicity and an improvement in **the PCO** website.

### DRIVER SHORTAGES

It was raised that there had been a serious shortfall in Private Hire Drivers over the Christmas and New Year period and there were now difficulties and it is expensive for people to work part time in the Private Hire Industry.



### VEHICLE SIGNAGE

**The LPHCA** requested a review of Private Hire signage, as it is a safety issue for passengers and drivers. **The PCO** confirmed that they would be looking at reviewing Private Hire signage once vehicle licensing had been completed in April 2005.



### TOUTING

The problem was raised including the prickly subject of drivers doing private jobs, which is of course illegal if they are not licensed operators with operating centres. (We will be covering this in detail in the next edition of **Private Hire News**).

### VEHICLE INSPECTION / TESTING

**The LPHCA** raised the fact that there are not enough testing stations, they are poorly located for some drivers and there are far too many failures still. As **The LPHCA** had met with **The PCO** and had considerable dialogue outside the meeting it was agreed not to duplicate this work in this meeting.



**The LPHCA** will therefore report back to members at the **April 20th** meeting at **The National Union of Teachers**.

### MEDICAL STANDARDS

All Private Hire representatives expressed grave concern that good drivers were being lost to the industry, particularly on grounds of diabetes and eyesight requirements. **Steve Wright** pointed out that drivers being refused by **TfL** could work same day for over 50% of the local authorities outside London.



**Roy Ellis** pointed out that the **National Private Hire Association** supported the draconian group 2 DVLA standards. **George Walker** expressed dismay that as their London representative he had not been told and he categorically disagreed with their position.

**Ed Thompson** sympathised with the **Private Hire Group** on this and agreed to look at the merits of reviewing the eyesight standards for Taxi and Private Hire drivers and report back at the next meeting.

### FUTURE DRIVER TRAINING & TESTING

**The LPHCA** reminded everybody that technically some driver training and testing might be required next year (2006) for new drivers. We also raised concerns that the scope and provision of testing would be difficult for the industry to bear and would become a barrier to entry. **The PHCA** said that driver training should be left to the individual operators.



### MEETING SUMMARY AND ACTIONS

**The LPHCA** has received a summary of actions from this meeting and is looking forward to these actions taking place. We will report back progress to members by newsletter, fax, email and at our April meeting.