

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 32 (Summer 2005) of Private Hire News.

Although it is nearly the end of the summer and it will be late August / early September when the magazine arrives, there is a lot to report and we have delayed this edition to get in as much news as possible.

The hard work done by The LPHCA and The Private Hire Board (over many years) has contributed to the amount of recognition that the Private Hire Industry now gets these days. Our hard work has ensured that we are consulted by Government and regulators alike and we have two major consultation processes and a PCO review going on at the moment.

The first one from The Department for Transport (DfT) is published in full and contains a draft 'Best Practice Guidance' which has been prepared by The Department to assist Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle licensing authorities.

We are fortunate that in London the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 contains a very good framework for regulations, however we still have some difficulties with a few of the regulations introduced by Transport for London (TfL) - the London regulator. Differing legal interpretations of the 98 Act and the subsequently introduced TfL regulations means confusion and difficulties for the Industry.

These difficulties, whilst a nuisance, are insignificant when you consider the problems outside London where over 300 Local Authorities, across the country, interpret, enforce and make their own rules, sometimes with radically different thinking.

I recently visited A I in Deal and Arrow Taxis in Kent on a whistle stop tour. Both members have suffered rules and regulations that should have no place in modern licensing.

Local democracy can equal local bureaucracy when people that don't understand our industry start inflicting their rules on unfortunate operators and drivers.

We are very lucky that those who advocated 30 plus London Boroughs to introduce their own rules and regulations in London were not listened to. Clearly we would have the same chaos in the capital that we now have with parking, picking up and setting down, which in the main, is controlled by these Boroughs.

Drivers at Jimac Cars in Hackney, a long standing LPHCA platinum member, are suffering with others as cameras capture licensed drivers simply doing their job, picking up and dropping off passengers safely.

The DfT draft Best Practice Guidance document contains many sensible proposals and in many areas is consistent with our own thinking but not on everything. It will definitely help to standardise issues and expose bad practice introduced by poor regulators.

For this reason The LPHCA and The Private Hire Board need to respond. There is a great opportunity to set out our reasoning and make this good document even better when published.

The LPHCA will have a full member's meeting to discuss this and other topics in October but you can respond directly to The DfT with your own views. Alternatively you can submit your thoughts to us on areas that you would like to comment on and the Association will forward on your behalf.

Another important consultation process is being undertaken by the London Assembly's Transport Committee on the performance of the Public Carriage Office since 2000. The questions they are asking are set out in this edition of Private Hire News.

In addition to providing written views for the Committee to consider, The LPHCA will

also attend an informal meeting with the London Assembly's Transport Committee in late September.

Yet another review is taking place in London regarding the Public Carriage Office Private Hire Vehicle Operator Licensing Service and feedback will be forwarded based on historical information received from members.

These consultations and reviews are a very useful addition to our usual channels of communication to Government, politicians and regulators as they introduce scrutiny into the regulatory process.

There are many avoidable frustrations in regulatory processes in our industry and we have had much success from our dialogue with Government, politicians and regulators.

Feedback, scrutiny and best practice guidance can only help us to improve matters, so all are very welcome.

The Association continues to introduce more and more benefits to member companies and we are pleased to announce that our member's legal helpline is now available to Graded Members.

The 'free to member's helpline' will deal with Tax & PAYE, VAT, National Insurance Contributions, Payroll, Company and Contract Law, Employment Law and Personnel, Landlord and Tenant, Health & Safety, Consumer Protection, Copyright and Patents, Debt and Debt Recovery.

Elsewhere in this edition we are covering Red Routes and Parking, a visit to Guildhall to see the first minicab in the Lord Mayor's Cart Marking ceremony, a bright idea from 24 Hour Central and all the usual features like Whistle Stops, Graded Companies Listing and Message Board.

Following the mandate received at our AGM I have now formally written to the Mayor of London Ken Livingstone to request a change in the regulations on signage a copy of that letter is published in this edition of Private Hire News.

STEVE WRIGHT *Chairman*

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