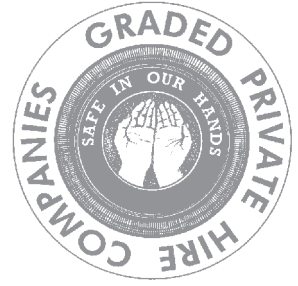


PRIVATE HIRE NEWS

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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 33 of **Private Hire News**. At the present time we are in consultation meltdown with the recent **Department for Transport (DfT) Draft Best practice**, a formal review of the performance of **The Public Carriage Office (PCO)**, a **Greater London Authority (GLA)** review of the impact of **Operator Licensing** and a **Private Transport for London (TfL) Bill** (that has considerable implications for the industry) all having been formally responded to by **The LPHCA**.

In addition, we also have live, another important consultation for improved signage and proposals for improved 'one stop' vehicle testing stations in London. We are also about to review new proposals on medicals for drivers.

I wish to thank the **Private Hire Board** for their work in the medical area and I am sure **Eddie Townson** will be covering the progress that has been made in his column.

Whilst we are extremely busy, we are not complaining because we are being very successful with our lobbying. A measure of that success is that the route to any regulatory change starts with consultation and we are certainly being consulted.

In the past some of our consultation responses have 'in part' been ignored first time round. In some cases at a cost to the industry and also in certain instances we believe to detriment of the safety of the travelling public.

We do not spend hours of our time listening to our members and industry customers to be dismissed or ignored. In addition we expect the consultation process to meet Government guidelines so we can thoroughly consult our members for their views. Ironically, TfL have published yet another consultation by way of a draft **Private Bill** covering many aspects of **Transport in London**; however we were unable to respond as fully as possible because (for reasons outside our control) we did not

receive the consultation until one day before it was required back.

This **Private Bill** contains some **sensible proposals** for **Private Hire** but others that we feel will need to be put before members at a formal meeting; and in spite of being given an extra 10 days this was impossible.

We have expressed our reservations and I will be meeting **Roy Ellis** with our Political advisor **Robin Hulf** at **The PCO** for further talks before our January member's meeting where we will have time to put it before members.

If you read the consultation on **Signage and Testing Stations** (published in this edition of **Private Hire News**) you will see that much of what we have proposed has now been accepted by both politicians and our regulator as sensible and I would like to congratulate TfL and **The PCO** on the high quality of this document.

As well as our very heavy workload on consultations we are now being very proactive politically. As this magazine is being produced I have just completed a meeting with **Roger Evans** Chairman of the powerful **GLA Transport Committee**.

It was his colleague **John Biggs** who gave us support to be exempted from the congestion charge and it was **The LPHCA's** political dialogue with him and others that ultimately secured the exemption for the industry.

By the time we go to press we will also have had further dialogue with the **Mayor's advisors** and **Peter Hulme-Cross** another important politician on **The GLA**.

There will be a very important **LPHCA meeting at the end of January** at **The National Union of Teachers** in Saint Pancras and details are published elsewhere in this edition of **Private Hire News**.

Amongst matters being discussed will be **signage, driver medicals** and the new proposals on **vehicle testing**. In addition, the **temporary permit system is coming to an end in the spring** with the transitional arrangements that we fought so hard for to help get drivers into the industry quickly.

The end of these arrangements, if no alternative is put in place by TfL, will take us back to the dark days when no drivers entered the industry for 3 months. **Yes the temporary arrangements that The LPHCA fought so hard for will end soon – you have been warned.**

If this wasn't frightening enough 2006 sees the potential requirement for **training and testing** for certain drivers.

I have been on the stakeholder board for **GoSkills** who are looking at the perceived training requirements for the **Taxi and Private Hire** industries.

The LPHCA has a mandate from its members that any **training and testing requirements must be minimal** and not impact on the already **thin supply of new drivers**.

We do not want costly external certification, but we do want the findings of the **Private Hire User Liaison Committee (PHULC)** for minimal requirements managed by **Licensed Operators** to be adopted.

That committee which included **The LPHCA, The Private Hire Board** and **The Chauffeur & Executive Association** must not be ignored. It concluded that a driver getting lost was not the reason for Licensing and that **Licensed Operators** should, as they have always done successfully, be responsible for determining a driver's skill set and give work appropriately.

In addition to the **PHULC's** findings, technology has now completely over-ridden the need for the 'parrot style' knowledge that the **Taxi** industry has always tried to thrust upon **Private Hire**, in spite of constantly complaining about it themselves.

So yet another meeting at **The PCO** will be needed in this area to discuss the potential requirements. **The LPHCA's** position remains that **Licensed Operators**, for commercial reasons, **must ensure their drivers have an appropriate level of competence** and as such **should remain responsible for training and testing** as a commercial consideration based on the **needs of the company and its customers**.

We accept that basic **disability awareness, customer care, driver safety, legislation awareness** and other sensible requirements **should be deliverable by operators** via booklet, CD Rom and other electronic mediums like **the Internet**.

As every **Private Hire Operation** is unique, key skills can be delivered in a modular basis by **Licensed Operators** at low cost and at a level appropriate to the needs of their particular business.

Season's greetings.

STEVE WRIGHT *Chairman*

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