

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 38 of **Private Hire News**. As you will see from the cover, our long battle on **Red Routes picking up and setting down rights** is over as we have now gained parity with **Taxis** for the **Private Hire Industry in London**.

After much activity at the **Public Carriage Office (PCO)** and the **Mayor's Office** on the subject of picking up and setting down on London's **Red Routes**, the **LPHCA**, the **Private Hire Board** and the **Door to Door Campaigners** have met with success.

In the weeks running up to the **Mayor's** announcement, the **LPHCA** met with the **Department for Transport (The DfT)** to discuss, **Red Route picking up and setting down** as well as any **potential signage requirements**.

This followed a temporary impasse with the **street management** part of **Transport for London (TfL)** after some animated meetings at **City Hall** and the **PCO**.

Following the impasse a meeting was arranged by the **LPHCA's** political consultant **Robin Hulf** with **Mark Watts** the **Mayor's Senior Transport Advisor**.

As **Eddie Townson** was unfortunately unwell, the **LPHCA** team comprised **Bill Edwards**, **Robin Hulf** and myself. **Eddie** had already sent communication on behalf of the **Private Hire Board** and this was followed by a letter from the **LPHCA** to the **Mayor's Office** following the meeting with **Mark Watts**.

This letter was responded to by **David Brown** the **TfL Surface Transport Managing Director** whose responsibilities include **London Buses**, **Street Management**, **Congestion Charge**, **Taxi & Private Hire**, but most importantly **Red Routes**.

David Brown's response contained the good news that in the near future **TfL Licensed Private Hire Vehicles** will get parity with **TfL**

Licensed London Taxis when picking up and setting down passengers on the capital's **Red Routes**.

This signifies a great victory for our industry and the full story is covered in this edition of **Private Hire News**.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic personal support of **Mayor Ken Livingstone** whose statement last July to **The London Assembly** said "I have made clear to **TfL** that I expect them to find a way to do this if it is at all humanly possible". This was when he was informed of the difficulties that **Private Hire Drivers** were experiencing doing their day to day work with regard to **Red Routes**.

On behalf of our industry I personally wish to thank **The Mayor** and his team for their support on **Red Route 'Picking up and setting down'** issues.

Another significant piece of good news is that we have been successful with the **LPHCA's** long campaign to remove '**Planning Consent**' as a condition of **Operator Licensing** in London.

One of **Roy Ellis's** final acts as **Head of the PCO** was his agreement to the removal of the troublesome requirement.

Mary Dowdye (**Roy Ellis's** Successor at the **PCO**), has as her first major contribution to our industry, signed off **the removal of planning consent** as an **Operator Licensing** requirement. Details of the **PCO Notice** and the story are published in this edition of **Private Hire News**.

The removal of this requirement marks a significant step for the **Private Hire Industry in London** and for sensible requirements. It is also a big leap towards improving what are already good regulations.

The **LPHCA** is now moving its attention from regulations to **enforcement and the administration of the PCO** from their customer's perspective and by customers we mean us – **Licensed Operators and Drivers**. Yes, as well as being regulated we are in fact customers, who are purchasing **driver and operator licensing** as well as its **effective administration**.

The removal of **planning consent** as an unrealistic requirement of licensing is as a direct result of customer feedback.

As your trade association the **LPHCA** set out a reasoned argument on our member's behalf as to why **planning consent** was not a realistic requirement. Of course our success has provoked negative rhetoric from some of the **Licensed Taxi** media who often have a lot to say about our industry – but not for the first time they have conveniently confused **Licensed Operators** with **bogus cabs**.

Following our success on **Red Routes** and **Planning Consent**, we are now focusing on the **administration and enforcement** side of regulations. Many **London** members say they are unhappy with the efficiency and bureaucracy of licensing and there are also concerns over the targeting, style and manner of enforcement.

The **LPHCA** is meeting the **PCO** in May for frank and honest talks about the difficulties reported by **London members** regarding **unannounced licensing visits** and other concerns.

We are hoping that these talks will lead to '**targeting the bad**' operators rather than '**constraining the good**' and we have several proposals to discuss.

The removal of **planning consent** and the close support we have received on **Red Routes** shows that the **PCO** is prepared to listen and most importantly act where things can be improved and we thank them for affording us the time for such meetings.

We are also looking at **National Difficulties**, especially some of the restrictive practices invoked by **Local Authorities** outside London, in particular '**out of touch**' **sub contracting laws**, which compromise safety and smack of protectionism.

Just to show that its not all hard work and regulations, **Eddie Townson** and I were invited to speak at a **PCO** hosted **Middle East and North African** delegation and tour organised by **UIPT**. (**The International Association of Public Transport**).

Details of this and a brief story about **Private Hire in London** are also in this edition of **Private Hire News** as well as another big project – '**Private Hire in Bus Lanes**' or, as they are more correctly known in other parts of the world, '**Public Transport Lanes**'.

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