

# DOOR-to-DOOR to get on Board (The Private Hire Board that is!)

David Beck,  
Campaign Co-ordinator



*Door-to-Door Campaign Co-ordinator, David Beck discusses the Campaign's forthcoming move to become a fully fledged but independent committee of the Private Hire Board.*



In the last issue I suggested that the future of the industry, on a political level at least, is perhaps best placed in a revamped **Private Hire Board**.

To this end, the **DOOR-to-DOOR Campaign Organising Committee** has decided to terminate the Campaign's status as a company limited by guarantee, in favour of becoming a committee of the **Private Hire Board**.

The **Private Hire Board** is not an association like the **LPHCA**. It is a broad-based church, an umbrella group if you like, that brings together all shades of opinion to act together as a united front on matters of common interest. The main interest here is of course the need to protect and develop our industry, something that all parties share.

As the **NPHA's George Walker** puts it, 'A board is there to represent and promote the industry product, a bit like the **Meat or Milk Marketing Boards**. The product we are promoting to government and other authorities is obviously **Private Hire Public Transport Services**'.

**George** tells us that **Boards** of this type are instantly recognised at government level, which makes it easier to get an audience with key politicians as and when the need arises. The fact that the **Private Hire Board** is already well established just makes it all the more appropriate for the purpose.

The **Private Hire Board** was set up years ago by **Eddie Townson, Steve Wright** and others for precisely some of these reasons and has been hugely successful in ensuring that the best interests of the trade as a whole are consolidated prior to negotiations, and duly represented to the authorities without contradiction, conflicting agendas or the danger of becoming corrupted by attempts to divide and rule.

It has become a regular practice for some years now that representatives of the **LPHCA**, the **London Branch of the NPHA**, the **PHCA**, the **GMB Professional Driver's Branch** and the **Lambeth Minicab Forum**, meet up under the umbrella of the **Private Hire Board**. This happens under the **Chairmanship of Eddie**

**Townson**, prior to formal meetings with the **PCO, TfL** or the **Mayor's** advisors, to decide objectives and strategy going forward.

The sophistication and democracy of this level of co-operation has in itself boosted the integrity and reputation of the **London Private Hire** cause, especially with the **Licensing Authority**.

In opting to become a committee of the **Private Hire Board**, the **DOOR-to-DOOR Campaign**, will effectively lose its tag as an independent faction and assume an established industry-wide platform from which to rally further support from both within and beyond the industry.

**Believe me, this is no step down towards a surrender of the principles that we, as campaigners, have acted upon so steadfastly over the past year. A better position on the road, free of inappropriate penalties and full access to bus lanes with all speed, is our mantra and with nearly twenty organising committee meetings, a major rally and red routes resolution all but under our belts, we aren't likely to quit now, certainly not until the job is done.**

Throughout that time we've largely kept the same team on. A set of real industry diehards; all the trade reps and a full supporting cast of other men and women of such integrity, passion and commitment. There is no question of our succumbing to anything, let alone the pithy matter of what amounts to vain attempts at stalling the red routes exemptions by a few **TfL** officers acting for the partisan interests of other privately owned companies fronting other forms of public transport by road.

In standing alone, as the **DOOR-to-DOOR Campaign** team felt it had to do, we inadvertently left ourselves open to accusations of dividing the industry, something we've never even remotely intended to do. However by opting to move under the auspices of the **Private Hire Board**, we both demonstrate the fact of our original altruism, and further unite the industry at the same time.



NPHA's George Walker



Steve Wright



Eddie Townson

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The fact that, right from the outset, **DOOR-to-DOOR** was sufficiently far-sighted as to appoint **PHB Chairman, Eddie Townson**, as **Chair of the Campaign**, just makes this shift all the easier and there are certainly no concerns around continuity.

For the trade associations, who have all to one extent or another supported **DOOR-to-DOOR** to date, and who all themselves recognise or are already members of the **Private Hire Board**, the **Campaign** becomes an industry matter and thus removes the question of whether supporting the actions of a new crowd is likely to have any negative impact upon the individual priority of each organisation.

However, it cannot be denied that equally central to the adjustment in the placing of **DOOR-to-DOOR** is the issue of funding. Whilst financial resource will always be key to the success of any initiative at this level, there can no longer be any question as to where the money obtained through fundraising goes.

An eternal thorn in the side of any worthy cause is the need to constantly placate suspicious minds without damaging our own motivation or the cause as a whole. *Steve Wright* knows all about this, doubters clearly know not what they do as they cast their inevitable and ill begotten aspersions around. Their negative impact can be awesome in its effect: at best, taking the wind out of the sails of the drivers of an initiative; at worse, compromising buoyancy and sinking the cause in its entirety without trace.

Those of us, who have lent ourselves free of charge to a cause for the good of all, contribute gratefully to the efforts of others on our behalf. An occasional formal glance at the balance sheet is enough to satisfy ourselves of good practice. Invariably the doubters that do all the damage are nothing more than freeloaders out to gain the benefits of the initiative without having to contribute.

In its time, the **Campaign** has had more than its fair share of having to put up with parasites of this type. At no stage did we ask anything more than £150 from each participating operator, little over one driver's rent for one week to stop the fines and push for bus lanes, yet still the mindless aspersions flowed. In the build up to the **Rally** last November, the **Campaign** was always careful to make it abundantly clear that, as with the **Private Hire Ball** last month, any surplus funds would go to the **Private Hire Board** to be used for the good of all.

In the event, despite the over generosity of the **Keen Group, Ruskin Cars, Data Cars, Brunel Worldwide Chauffeurs** and many others who more than compensated for those who did not contribute, the **Campaign** struggled to pay the printer who produced all those brilliant posters and leaflets. **For the record not a penny piece went to any of the people who did all the work.**

Now, under the mantel of the **Private Hire Board**, fundraising will become a less sensitive issue for us and **DOOR-to-DOOR** will be left free to concentrate its energies on those highly desirable objectives within a broader, and even more democratic framework.

DAVID BECK

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I am personally delighted that the **Door-to-Door Campaign Committee** has voted to apply to become a formal committee of the **Private Hire Board**. This is exactly the type of thing that **Eddie Townson** and I wanted when we structured and formed the **Board** in 1995.

For those who don't know the history the **Private Hire Board** was put in place to encourage such committees and to give those who wanted more involvement that opportunity, however sadly the committee structure and impetus was not maintained.

The ongoing funding the **Private Hire Board** needs to be pointed out now because the **Board** was in fact only financially supported by the **Valuable Sponsorship of Industry Suppliers** and until very recently, just **LPHCA Members** from the industry.

The responsibility of maintaining the **Board's** very valuable **Political Consultant** and terrific **Political Lobbyist, Robin Hulf** as well as its excellent **Regulatory Legal Expert Lawyer, Maggie Leates**, rested with the **LPHCA**, which of course was not ideal.

The future of the **Private Hire Board** and indeed the **LPHCA** will, in the main, stay with those like the **Door-to-Door Committee** who are prepared to give their time to the Industry, without expenses and remuneration.

Thanks to the success of the **Private Hire Ball**, the **Private Hire Board**, now has more members as a direct result of those who had tables at, or sponsored the **Ball**. Alongside those hardy soles that have funded the board since 1995, through standing orders or sponsorship, these people are now its current voting members and as such they can now determine its future.

The **Private Hire Ball** was a lesson in the art of the possible and a very proud moment for me personally and the many people who contributed to the event. The **Ball** was also profitable and for the first time in many years there will be some money in the pot to do more of what the **Private Hire Board** was set up to do. STEVE WRIGHT

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comment