

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 40 of Private Hire News. This edition has been delayed to enable us to cover the big news in London that the Transport for London (TfL) Board has signed off new regulations for Licensed Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) in the capital to enable picking up and setting down on London's Red Route network.

The delay was caused because this historic decision for Private Hire in the capital required an additional identifier, which the TfL Board needed to agree to and sign off.

There were many differing views within the trade associations as to the size, shape and wording on the signage and it remains the LPHCA's view that we have ended up with an identifier that is bigger than is realistically needed.

The extra identifier was deemed necessary to enable Red Route Penalty Exemptions and it will be viewed by some with dismay. We had been informed initially that a simple extra identifier to enable improved camera recognition would be necessary, however along the way it has clearly become something else.

Whether these identifiers are 'fit for purpose' and appropriate in their current format only time will tell.

Ed Thompson – Taxi & Private Hire Director of the PCO at a recent meeting asked that the signs are given proper consideration and a reasonable period of time to assess them, which is a fair request given that this is to be an 'interim measure'.

This will not placate many of our Chauffeur and Executive Members who throughout the 'extra identifier' discussions with TfL, the PCO and the Mayor's advisors were given assurances that they were primarily required to assist camera recognition.

Matters changed at the tenth hour to signs that would also prevent other drivers setting down after seeing PHV's doing so, then

again at the eleventh hour things changed when 'Pre Booked Only' was added, considerably increasing the size of the stickers.

LPHCA member and Chauffeur & Executive representative Bill Edwards was very unhappy that what he considered to be an agreed position was scuppered at the last minute. 'This signage is more appropriate to camper-vans than Chauffeur and Executive Vehicles said Bill'.

The introduction of these identifiers has created yet more delays in establishing the new regulations that will determine what will also be allowed on PHV's in London as 'branding signage'.

The LPHCA's long standing position on branding signage is that like Red Route Penalty Exemption identifiers, they should be optional and in the form of rear windscreen and number plate attachment style branding. We must not end up with only the expensive rear windscreen signage and we must have the more affordable 'Mogo Style Number Plate Attachment' variety.

The Company Name being permitted on street pick up vehicles is desired by the public for safety and security, whilst vitally assisting the Police and other agencies against illegal touting.

On the subject of Touting discussions are ongoing with TOCU (The Transport Operational Command Unit of The Met Police) and we have now written to Transport Minister Rosie Winterton with a request to set up a 'Touting Forum'.

Touting featured heavily at our own meeting and at the recent National Association of Licensing Enforcement Officers (NALEO) conference both which are covered in this edition.

Our overdue 2007 AGM finally took place at the packed National Union of Teachers conference facilities in St Pancras and we had a very interesting evening with presentations and talks from the PCO about the new identifiers, Alan Haslehurst on Internet Licensing Management, Paul Smithers from TOCU on Touting and a full Private Hire Board update from Eddie Townson.

The usual mandates and other AGM business were also concluded by the voting members

and I am grateful for the support and kind words I received from the floor about the LPHCA's work.

There has been a great deal of other business to attend to in London and details appear elsewhere in this edition of Private Hire News. We are however becoming more and more involved in the National picture and we are pleased to say that we continue to firm up positive links with other Associations and Operators.

Following closely on Select Transport from Birmingham applying to become Graded we now have Graded a large Manchester Operator – Cresta Cars to be amongst our latest members. We have also had discussions with Operators in Leeds and the Association of Nottinghamshire Private Hire Operators (ANPHO).

We are delighted to be progressing with other 'like minded' Operators and Associations. We do not echo the view that life stops outside the M25 and we have already gained so much from our existing members outside the capital over many years.

Following our AGM, Ray Butterworth (of the Association of Nottinghamshire Private Hire Operators) who attended as our guest, kindly sent information about a 'PHV's in Bus Lanes Trial', that is taking place in Birmingham and we have just learned that this Bus Lane initiative was started by Select Transport's Pat Murtagh. This information and level of networking is priceless and shows why we will be increasing our membership and relationships outside London.

Elsewhere in this edition of Private Hire News, Talking of Grading covers the need to have Fire Risk Assessments, we have further information about the Red Route stickers & rules and closure of the 'so called' loopholes, news of the Private Hire Board's proposed new constitution.

In addition we cover the launch by one of our latest Platinum Members 'Ruskin Private Hire' of fantastic training and development premises in Southwark. Our AGM is also covered in full with several other industry interest articles.

Wishing you all a great 2008.
Steve Wright MBE Chairman

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