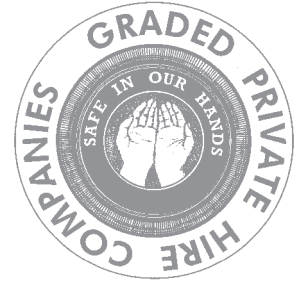


PRIVATE HIRE NEWS

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ISSUE 34



**The news magazine of the Graded Private Hire Companies
Incorporating the London and Southern Private Hire Car Associations**

Welcome to edition 34 of **Private Hire News**. We are sorry that this issue has been much delayed but we have been waiting for important news on several fronts.

We mentioned in our last editorial that we were in the midst of many consultations and meetings. Whilst the formal consultations have abated for the time being, we are still flat out with our very important role of briefing politicians, regulators and decision makers.

At our regular meeting with the **Mayor's Transport Advisor** in December we discussed and made progress on several fronts. From time to time we publish an update on these meetings in **Private Hire News** and details of this meeting are covered in this edition.

The following day we had a meeting with **Mike McGee** of **SGS** and **Alan Matthews** (**Private Hire Project Manager**) at **The PCO** to discuss issues raised by members.

This meeting followed problems booking in vehicles for inspections and was called for by **The LPHCA** following the good progress we have made with **SGS** at a previous feedback meeting.

Since the December meeting at **The PCO** complaints from members about the booking in process have all but stopped so thanks to **Mike McGee** and **Alan Matthews** for quickly addressing the issues.

Just before Christmas on the 16th December we got the outline proposals for **all new driver's to have a topographical assessment**, which has now been deemed as necessary by **TfL** lawyers in their interpretation of the **1998 Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act**.

With the industry in full swing in the run up to Christmas and with everyone looking at the 37 page consultancy document on signage and potential changes to the vehicle

testing system, the last thing we needed was another 20 pages of proposals.

However, duty called so we waded through the proposals and we were troubled to see that the documentation had been 'enhanced' in **Alan Matthews** words from what had been 'in principle' been agreed at meetings we attended between 2000 and 2002.

With our very important **LPHCA** meeting at **The National Union of Teachers** in **Saint Pancras** at the end of January already imminent, and invitations on their way out, '**topographical assessment**' was added to the growing agenda.

The 'enhancements' caused much misunderstanding between **The PCO** and **The LPHCA** and **the meeting rejected the 'assessment' process as originally set out in the draft documentation**, which we had received in December. Much work and dialogue between **The LPHCA** and **The PCO** subsequently has taken place and both clarification and alterations to some aspects of the draft specification have now taken place.

We also warned in our last editorial that **the temporary permit system for new drivers would be coming to an end in the spring (31st March)** and the transitional arrangements that **The LPHCA** fought so hard for to help get new drivers into the industry quickly, would go as a consequence.

We had already made representation to **The PCO** and **Mayor's Officials** at the meeting with the **Mayor's advisors** in December to extend these arrangements, but ultimately **The Government** would hold the fate of this in their hands, so we requested an urgent meeting at the **Department for Transport (DfT)**, which we secured for early January.

That meeting followed a **Private Hire Board** strategy meeting and we feel it went very successfully at **The Department (DfT)**, with **Bill Edwards, Eddie Townson, Robin Hulf** and me making up our team.

As we go to press we are delighted to announce that we have been told that we have been successful in securing an

extension to the temporary permit scheme until **31st December 2006**. I would like to thank **Karen Buck MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport)**, her officials at the **Department for Transport**, **Mayor Ken Livingstone** and his advisors, **The Private Hire Board** and **The PCO** for their vital support.

A further trip to the **Greater London Authority (GLA)** to visit **Murad Quereshi** **Chairman** of the important **Transport Committee** took place to informally discuss and update him on the impact of Licensing and its associated knock on effects in London.

As with other **London Assembly** members **Mr Quereshi** was very receptive to learning about our sector and has agreed to go on a whistle stop tour of **Licensed Operators**, which we are arranging with **Graded Members** this month (March).

We also mentioned in our last editorial that **TfL** would be introducing into **Parliament** a **Private Bill** covering many aspects of **Transport in London**. This **Private Bill** contains some **sensible proposals** for **Private Hire** but as mentioned before other proposals that cause us concern that we felt needed to be put before our members at a formal meeting.

This was done at the **AGM** in January and as a consequence **The LPHCA** has officially objected to one clause in **The TfL Private Bill** and utilised our Political team to present our objections formally to **Parliament**. Details of this objection and the progress of **The TfL Private Bill** are also featured in this issue of **Private Hire News**.

As always there is a lot happening in the sector and indeed the latest regulatory requirements for us now stretch to ageism, red route issues and disability awareness, (including the requirement to pick up guide dogs).

Eddie and Geoff will be covering some of these aspects in their regular columns and the remainder will be covered elsewhere in the magazine.

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Chairman LPHCA

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