



London **taxi** *news*

RMT news for the London taxi trade

Spring 2012

Meeting outlines action plan on Law Commission review RMT London taxi branch calls for unity to save trade

The London taxi branch of RMT has called for unity in the face of the massive challenges to the trade that lie ahead.

All London trade groups were invited to a meeting on March 19, not least to discuss a common strategy for the forthcoming Law Commission Review on Taxi and Private Hire Licensing in the UK, including London.

Among those attending were the United Cabbies Group (UCG), Heathrow Airport Licensed Taxi Drivers Unite (HATDU), the London Suburban Taxi Drivers' Association, the Edgware Licensed Taxi Drivers Association and the London Suburban Coalition.

Others, including LTDA, LCDC and Unite, were invited, but did not attend this time.

The review, to take place between April and June, could mean substantial changes to the way that taxis and private hire are licensed.

The two sets of legislation which govern licensing in England and Wales are the Town and Police Clauses Act 1847, together with the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

London is slightly more complicated, and much of the legislation that governs London taxis is contained within the various London Hackney Carriage

Acts, the Metropolitan Public Carriage Act 1869, and those that regulate private hire vehicles (PHV) fall within several Acts which variously govern driver, vehicle and premises licensing.

What had become apparent over time was that many drivers who were denied the opportunity to license their vehicles in one local authority as hackney carriages were able to license them in adjacent licensing areas and ostensibly work as private hire in their preferred areas.

This meant that drivers could work anywhere in the UK as PHV, but their vehicles would be plated as hackney carriages in the chosen licensing area.

This has made a mockery of the licensing system, and is one of factors that have led to the review.

The danger for London is that subsequent legislation, under the guise of levelling the playing field, could dispense with hackney carriages altogether.

And it is in order to put up the strongest challenge to any such move that we need the broadest possible unity.

Meeting details Page 2



RMT taxi drivers make their point

Members of RMT London taxi branch demonstrate in Stratford over a raft of issues, including the right to access the Olympic network, re-instatement of taxi ranks, enforcement of private-hire regulations and recognition of the RMT taxi branch - **full story on page 3**

Unity meeting discusses common approach to review

The March 19 meeting, called by RMT, was held in a spirit of goodwill and co-operation, and the key outcomes were:

- That a meeting should be called with the Law Commission to discuss its outline plans.

- Recognition that the current system of licensing in London is glaringly inadequate in the way that PHV is policed and controlled.

- That there should be a binding legal definition of 'plying for hire' in any new legislation using existing case law as guidance.

- That there should be more adequate enforcement of PHV both in the suburbs and in central London.

- That there should be a new requirement and arrangements for satellite offices in that where there is an application for a satellite office, then there should be the automatic provision of rank spaces outside the venue.

Where this is not possible then there should be no allocation of a licence for a satellite office.

- That the crisis of suburban sector viability would not be resolved by the suspension of new entrants to yellow badge knowledge, as this would only have an effect in the long term. This could only be achieved by the provision of sufficient rank spaces in suburban areas.

- That the current system of

ranks appointments, the joint ranks committee, the funding of ranks and implementation is currently not fit for purpose.

- That there should be a provision of more rank spaces where there is likely to be a large volume of potential work.

There should also be a review of suburban sectors to ensure that potential passenger demand is served and such a review should ensure adequate driver knowledge.

Such matters should be properly funded and should also include a structured management environment to ensure that demands are met without leading to an over-provision in any one area to the detriment of all.

- That there should be meetings with the Mayor and other politicians to resolve the concerns expressed at the meeting.

Notwithstanding any such involvement with the politicians at TfL and GLA, the delegates at the meeting resolved to bring these issues to the attention of the public by way of high-profile events (demos) if such meetings were not forthcoming.

There was agreement that all licensees have an equal right to be heard and that all policies that were discriminatory or divisive would be vigorously campaigned against.

It was made clear that those trade organisations not represented would be welcome to any future meetings without precondition in order to work for the common cause of a sustainable taxi trade in London for the 21st Century.

We can't rely on Boris

There may be some who will look to the London mayor to get the trade out of a potentially very big hole.

A recent copy of The Badge reported a letter sent by Boris to the Law Commission which made a plea on behalf of the London taxi trade.

But it is not enough, by a long way, to rely on Boris - who may not even be Mayor by the time the review is published.

The parameters of the review have not yet been published, but it is not just a case of keeping the status quo.

It is also a matter of addressing issues that have been piling up, such as satellite offices, the provision of taxi stands at night venues where 'clip-board Johnnies' run wild, and the enforcement of PHV regulations, which all taxi drivers in London know is a big joke.

Contact RMT London Taxi Branch on 07899 786 433

RMT scores major victory over pedicabs

RMT has scored a major victory over attempts to legitimise pedicabs, after months of dogged campaigning.

MP John McDonnell, the union's parliamentary group convenor, blocked the progress of the London Local Authorities and Transport for London (No2) Bill, and its sponsors have now withdrawn the clause which would have given Westminster City Council the right to register pedicabs and provide rank spaces.

This could have meant a fully fledged licensing regime giving pedicabs the right to ply for hire, which in turn may have given PHV another foot in the door.

"The idea that someone



on a lashed together pedicab should enjoy the same rights as a taxi driver who is tightly regulated on the grounds of both safety and knowledge is one that RMT taxi branch has

fought tooth and nail alongside our parliamentary convenor, John McDonnell," said general secretary Bob Crow.

"Everyone in the taxi trade knows that it is RMT that has led the way in this fight and it is the hard work and determination of our members, using the full resources of the organisation, which has secured this important victory."

"However, we are well aware that the pedicabs have a history of bending and breaking the law and of flouting public safety and the RMT campaign to get them off the streets of London altogether will continue," said Bob.

United we stand

Implementation of identifiers has been greeted by the trade with different levels of enthusiasm.

Some argue that it will stop illegal activity of taxi drivers working outside their licensed areas, but it has done nothing to stop the blatant criminality of PHV nightly flouting licensing laws.

The problem has always been the failure of TfL to control PHV - and it is they who will gain if we allow ourselves to be divided. We say that the priority is to police and control the illegal activity of PHV.

Demo at Stratford a great success

The RMT-led demonstration at Stratford Broadway on February 29 was a major success and the whole trade, both green and yellow badge drivers, was represented.

RMT has a raft of grievances against TfL, and the demonstration showed that RMT members are prepared to take to the streets to prove their point and will not be divided.

Access to the Olympic road network, re-instatement of taxi ranks, enforcement of private-hire

regulations and recognition of the RMT taxi branch were key demands and the union will continue to press them.



TfL seems unwilling even to correspond on these issues, as it knows it is "batting on a sticky wicket".

With the impending arrival of the Olympics there will be massive demand for taxis in London, yet TfL and the Olympic authorities are bent excluding you from the Olympic Route Network.

Once again the trade needs to stand shoulder to shoulder - both yellow and green badge - to challenge and win fair access.

RMT FREEPHONE helpline - 0800 376 3706

NATIONAL UNION OF RAIL, MARITIME & TRANSPORT WORKERS

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