congestion charge concern
will central London PHV privileges be revoked?

consultation change confirmed
new London private hire rules come into force
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06 New private hire rules
Following the recent consultation, Transport for London has announced a broad spectrum of private hire rules that will impact upon every operator and driver in the capital.

View our extensive coverage of the new regulations inside this edition to find out how and when these changes will affect you.
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NEW PRIVATE HIRE RULES

Transport for London has announced its changes to PHV legislation - in response to last year’s consultation - which will affect all London private hire drivers, operators and PHV licence holders. You will be affected, so make sure you read this.

PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

HIRE AND REWARD INSURANCE
START DATE
- 27 June 2016 for new applicants
- Existing licensees are expected to comply by 11 July 2016

All private hire vehicles must have hire and reward insurance in place, both at the point of licensing and for the entire time the vehicle is licensed, including when the vehicle is not in use as a private hire vehicle.

What this means for you:
If you are a new applicant or are renewing your vehicle licence from 27 June 2016 you will only pass your vehicle inspection if you have hire and reward insurance at the point of licensing.

You will also need to have your hire and reward insurance available for inspection when your vehicle attends a vehicle test centre. If you do not, you will not be issued a new or renewal licence.

If you are an existing licensee, we expect you to make sure that by 11 July 2016 you have hire and reward insurance in place until the date your vehicle licence expires. If you fail to meet this requirement, you may face licensing action.

CARRY OR DISPLAY CERTIFICATE OF HIRE AND REWARD INSURANCE
START DATE
- 27 June 2016 for new applicants
- Existing licensees are expected to comply by 11 July 2016

Details of a London private hire vehicle's insurance must be carried by the driver or displayed in the vehicle.

What this means for you:
All private hire drivers will be required to carry details or display a copy of the vehicle's valid hire and reward insurance policy at all times and provide evidence that the driver is insured to operate the vehicle under that policy (for example, under fleet insurance).

Drivers can fulfil the requirement to carry insurance details by placing them in the glovebox of their vehicle or alternatively, insurance details may be displayed within the vehicle. It will not be acceptable for a driver to provide these details verbally, for example, via a call to an insurance company.

LICENCE REVOCATIONS
START DATE - Immediate
The private hire vehicle licence of a person whose private hire licence has been revoked will be considered for revocation.

What this means for you:
Where a licensed driver has their private hire driver's licence revoked or suspended and that driver is the owner of one or more licensed vehicles, then consideration will be given to revoking or suspending their licence(s), depending on individual circumstances.

SIGNAGE
START DATE
- 27 June 2016 for new applicants
- Existing licensees expected to comply by 11 July 2016

Signs or advertising material must not be displayed from, in or on a private hire vehicle unless they are exempt or approved by TfL.

What this means for you:
This is a change from the previous regulation, which did not allow signs or advertising materials to be displayed on a PHV.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8
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PRIVATE HIRE OPERATORS

BOOKING CONFIRMATION

START DATE
- 27 June 2016 for new applicants
- Existing licensees are expected to comply by 1 October 2016

Private hire operators must provide a booking confirmation to a passenger before their journey starts.

What this means for you:
All operators must (at a minimum) be able to provide a booking confirmation to passengers via email, text (SMS and MMS) message and phone (regardless of what booking channels the operator offers.

The booking confirmation must contain, as a minimum: the vehicle registration mark / the first name of the driver / the driver’s private hire licence number / where the passenger can receive it, a photo of the driver.

Where the person books in person or by landline phone, a photo must be provided if the customers request confirmation through a communications channel that can provide an image, eg: an email.

PROVISION OF CONTACT FACILITIES

START DATE
- 27 June 2016 for new applicants
- Existing licensees to comply by 1 October 2016

Private hire operators must ensure that passengers are able to speak (verbally) to someone at their operating centre if they want to make a complaint or discuss any other matter about their booking. That service must be available at all times during the operator’s hours of business and at all times during a passenger’s journey.

What this means for you:
As part of the pre-licensing inspection of your operating centre(s) the compliance team will need to ensure that a mechanism is in place for passengers to speak to the operator: verbally / during operator hours of business / at the time of the journey (including journeys carried out outside of operator opening hours / the person they are speaking to must be someone other than the driver carrying out the booking and must be situated in a licensed London operating centre.

Operators are expected to answer and resolve passenger queries in a timely manner and provide details of how to escalate a complaint to us, should the passenger be dissatisfied with the way the query has been resolved. Serious and urgent issues - such as those that have a risk to public safety, should be immediately reported to the police.

CHANGES TO PRIVATE HIRE OPERATING MODEL

START DATE
- 27 June 2016 for new applicants
- Existing licensees are expected to comply by 11 July 2016

From 27 June 2016, private hire operators must inform us of any changes to the operating model of their business before they are made.

What this means for you:
Operators are already required to inform us of a number of changes to their operating model which relate to the size or location of their business. Examples include, but not limited to, the introduction or removal of an app based booking service, or booking method, or the introduction of ride sharing. Information should be emailed to: tph.operators@tfl.gov.uk or sent to Taxi & Private Hire Operator Licensing, PO Box 177, Sheffield, S98 1JY.
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

BASIC DISCLOSURE CHECK FOR (SOME) STAFF

START DATE
- 27 June 2016 for new applicants
- Existing licensees are expected to comply by 1 October 2016

Operators must ensure that all staff who have face-to-face contact with the public (for example, in a minicab office with public access) have - or have proof they have applied for - a Basic Disclosure check, which is available through Disclosure Scotland. This is in addition to the requirement for private hire drivers to have enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service check.

What this means for you:
Operators must produce evidence they have complied with this obligation upon request by us, as part of the standard inspection process. We recommend that all affected employees apply for their Basic Disclosure check as soon as possible.

We will issue guidance for operators to assess Basic Disclosures that they receive; however it is ultimately the operator’s responsibility to ensure that their employees are fit and proper to undertake their duties. Failure to do this or to give appropriate consideration to the results on the disclosure may raise questions about an operator’s fitness to hold a licence.

UPLOADING DRIVER AND VEHICLE DETAILS TO TFL

START DATE
- 11 July 2016 for new applicants
- Existing licensees expected to comply by the same date

All operators will be required to email TfL details of their drivers and vehicles they have used to fulfil bookings or have had available to them to fulfil bookings. We will contact each operator directly to confirm how this information should be provided, in what format and when.

RECORD KEEPING

START DATE
- 27 June for new applicants
- Existing licensees expected to comply by 11 July 2016

Operators must keep records for a minimum of 12 months.

This includes records for bookings, complaints and lost property, as well as PHV driver and vehicle records.

What this means for you:
This is a small change from the existing regulations, which requires some records to be kept for six months and others for 12 months.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

START DATE
The following requirements will need to be met by new operators from 27 June 2016 and existing licensees are expected to comply from 1 October 2016.

- Operators must provide their customer with an accurate fare estimate before the journey starts (unless the fare has been pre-agreed).
- Operators must record the main destination of the customer’s journey before the journey starts. Where a journey has multiple drop-off points, a main destination must be provided.
- Operators will be limited to having no more than five business names attached to their operator’s licence.

From 1 October 2016, both new and existing operators will be required to provide us with their relevant National Insurance number when applying for or renewing their licence.

This information will be shared with the relevant government departments such as the Department for Work & Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs.

PHC POINT OF VIEW

The London private hire trade has not seen such changes to the working practices of the industry since parliament passed the 1998 Private Hire Vehicle (London) Act. Transport for London, under pressure from taxi drivers, has brought in a range of ‘stop Uber’ proposals that will also affect minicab operators and drivers in the capital and for some, the results could be quite damaging.
A LICENSED PRIVATE hire driver has been given a suspended prison sentence after he was found guilty of sexually assaulting a 28 year old female passenger.

Sothisundaram Soorriyakumaran (50) of Varley Parade, Barnet, received a 15 month sentence suspended for two years at Woolwich Crown Court after an investigation by the Metropolitan Police’s Roads & Transport Policing Command (RTPC).

He was also given 100 hours unpaid voluntary work, a 60-day rehabilitation order and placed on the sex offenders’ programme for 100 days.

Soorriyakumaran will also have to; wear an electronic tag between the hours of 7am and 7pm for 60 days, given a sexual harm prevention order to stop him working as a minicab driver and fined £3,500 court costs. He must also pay £1,000 compensation to the victim.

The RTPC’s cab enforcement unit investigated Soorriyakumaran after he was accused of touching a 28 year old passenger on 31 July 2015 after picking her up from a pub in Pimlico.

The woman sat in the front seat of the PHV after she asked the defendant to play her music through the vehicle’s stereo and was assaulted on arrival at the Surrey Canal Road.

Soorriyakumaran was arrested after the woman reported the incident to the police.

Detective superintendent Adnan Qureshi of the RTPC said: “I urge anyone who experiences any kind of assault or unwanted sexual behaviour to report it to police immediately.

“If you commit an offence on London’s transport network, we will pursue and arrest you. We will get those responsible.”
Would they? Could they? Should they, remove the Congestion Charge exemption for licensed private hire vehicles in London? PHC looks at the potential threat to every private hire driver in the capital.

BACKGROUND
The Central London Congestion Charge - currently £11.50 a day on vehicles entering the Zone between 07:00 and 18:00 - was the brain-child of former London mayor Ken Livingstone who first put forward his proposal to levy a fee on traffic in the capital in 2000.

The original charge of £5 a day went live in February 2003 and although taxis got their exemption without any fuss, the private hire trade had to fight tooth and nail for theirs.

The London minicab trade was in the middle of being licensed for the first time in its history - after the 1998 Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act - and the industry lobbied hard to argue that its disabled and elderly passengers should not have to bear the brunt of the new charge.

Steve Wright, chairman of the Licensed Private Hire Car Association (LPHCA) told Private Hire & Courier: “If there is an exemption for licensed taxis, then there should be one for the private hire trade as well. Common sense suggests that this needs to be rectified.”

Mr Wright argued the case for private hire Congestion Charge exemption at a meeting of Greater London Authority (GLA) members and on the LBC radio station.

Members of the GLA also warned Mr Livingstone that his suggested charge would be a double whammy on Londoners who were being forced out of their cars - because of the proposed daily fee - and yet being penalised for switching to private hire vehicles.

The London mayor came under intense pressure to act and after national newspapers picked up on the story he offered to undertake a review on the possibility of exemption for private hire vehicles.

The private hire vehicle exemption was duly granted in December 2002 and although there were reports that some PHV drivers did receive Congestion Charge fines in the first weeks, the exemption was a success and has been ever since.

BACK TO THE FUTURE
Fast forward to January 2016 and Boris Johnson wants to make the capital’s private hire trade pay the daily £11.50 fee to drive into the centre of the capital.

Never mind that Mr Johnson made no mention of forcing the PHV trade to pay the daily fee in his Air Quality Strategy paper, the mayor was under pressure from the black cab trade to do something about Uber and this seemed like a good idea.

On January 20, a spokesman for Mr Johnson said: “In discussions with Central Government, the mayor has been pushing for legislation to enable TfL to restrict the overall number of private hire drivers and vehicles.

“TfL estimates that the number of private hire vehicles in the Congestion Charge Zone has increased by over 50 per cent in the last two years.”

And in a statement released on the same day, Mr Johnson said: “New technology has revolutionised the private hire industry, bringing with it quantum leaps in terms of faster, better and cheaper services for customers.

“However, it has also meant a rapid increase in the number of private hire vehicles on our streets, an increase that is responsible for causing congestion and has the potential to worsen air quality in London.

“Private hire vehicles now represent over ten per cent of vehicles entering the Congestion Charging Zone on a daily basis and I have asked TfL to investigate the impact and feasibility of removing the Congestion Charge exemption for private hire vehicles.”
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ARE PHVS TO BLAME FOR CONGESTION RISE?
No, according to a report published last month in the June edition of PHC. A survey carried out by transport experts INRIX said that travel within London by car - taxis, PHVs and private vehicles - had actually fallen by 2.4 per cent.

The study said quite specifically that licensed cabs made up only three per cent of the vehicles in the capital and that private hire vehicles and hackney carriage taxis were not to blame for the rise in congestion in London.

Instead, INRIX pointed the finger of blame at traffic light phasing, the cycle Super Highway and an increase in e-commerce activity.

Transport experts have commented before on the length of time that traffic lights stay red in the centre of London and the INRIX study confirmed that roadworks, planned and unplanned had led to a 362 per cent rise in congestion since 2012.

The survey also said a rise in e-commerce activity had increased the number of delivery vehicles on the road and resulted in a 7.7 per cent hike in light goods vehicles in the Congestion Charge zone.

INRIX’s study was also backed up by Robert Munster, a transport expert writing in The Evening Standard newspaper, who said: “Department for Transport figures show that overall traffic levels in London have fallen by up to 28 per cent in central and inner London. The elephant in the room is the explosion of traffic lights, traffic calming and 20mph speed limits.”

SO, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
The removal of the PHV Congestion Charge exemption has found favour with politicians who say that “something must be done” even though, as seen above, private hire in general and Uber in particular are not to blame for the increase in congestion and journey times.

So it looks like once again, the London minicab industry will have to stiffen its resolve and get ready to fight. Licensing, Red Route and Bus Lane access are all battles that have been fought and won, but a daily £11.50 charge on every driver coming into Central London could be the biggest fight yet.

GET READY TO FIGHT
LPHCA chairman Steve Wright, who helped fight for the original exemption, said: “There are many things that cause congestion and the private hire trade certainly isn’t one of them.

“Private hire reduces congestion and it is madness to say that PHVs are causing congestion in London.

“The effects of the introduction of congestion charging for the private hire industry will be felt at every level of the trade and that is why we have engaged a top parliamentary lobbying company who will guide us on how we can fight this.

“This is a really serious threat and we cannot say silent any longer.

“Every single PHV company that has vehicles in Central London has to wake up and support this campaign, because this is not going to go away.”

IS REMOVING THE PHV EXEMPTION LEGAL?
In a submission to Transport for London, a spokesman for Addison Lee asked if it was legal for TfL to remove the Congestion Charge exemption from the capital’s private hire trade.

“The law suggests that this is likely to be problematic. Removing the Congestion Charge from PHVs but not taxis is likely to be an unlawful discrimination between two segments of the London ground transport market.”

VULNERABLE PASSENGERS WILL SUFFER
Steve Garelick, secretary of the professional drivers’ branch of the GMB union says that once again, it will be the passengers who can least afford it who will suffer.

“Operators will be forced to charge a substantially higher amount on journeys to passengers, not only losing business from those who might be willing to pay but also denying customers with physical disabilities, access to a safe and affordable transport option.

“And some individuals who rely on private hire for mobility, where other transport mediums do not exist, will no doubt be unable to afford the extra fee imposed on their journey fare.

“This is not only discriminatory but creates a further impediment to trade. The commercial damage to a profession, already treated with contempt by speculators, TfL and the mayor is a step too far. TfL and the mayor appear to have no respect for the costs, stress and pressures that private hire drivers experience on a daily basis.”

COMETH THE HOUR....
As LPHCA chairman Steve Wright says: “This is an issue that is not going to go away and we have to take it seriously. We have got to come together as an industry and fight this.”
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Old Bailey jury finds ex-Uber jihadist guilty of attempted murder

A 30 YEAR old Islamic State extremist, who drove a PHV for Uber, has been found guilty of attempted murder after he attacked a musician with a knife at Leytonstone underground station.

A jury at the Old Bailey took just four hours to convict Muhiddin Mire (30) of attempting to kill musician Lyle Zimmerman (56) at the Tube station on 5 December 2015 by slicing open his neck and exposing his windpipe.

Mr Zimmerman told the court that he remembered being attacked from behind by a “crazy person” and kicked repeatedly in the head until he lost consciousness.

Mobile phone footage shot by a passer-by showed the musician, mandolin in one hand and amplifier in another, trying to fight off Mire before he was wrestled to the ground with a deep wound to the throat. The former minicab driver, who suffered from paranoid psychosis, then tried to attack four commuters before he was surrounded and restrained by four police officers.

The jury was told that Mire, from Somalia, had photos of murdered soldier Fusilier Lee Rigby and the British Islamic State executioner Jihadi John on his Samsung mobile phone, as well as other extremist material.

Commander Dean Haydon of Scotland Yard’s counter-terrorism command said: “Warped propaganda from Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is aimed at the vulnerable to inspire lone atrocities by so-called spontaneous volatile extremists.

“If you look at some of the propaganda that’s coming out of Syria and elsewhere, part of it is specifically targeted in relation to the vulnerable. We’re not just talking about mental health here, we’re talking about vulnerable individuals within the community.”

Mire’s brother Mohammed said that Muhiddin had worked for Uber until the autumn of last year, when his mental health became worse.

He said: “He went a bit crazy and was saying really odd things. I tried to call the local authority, to at least try and section him, but they could not help him.”

Prosecution counsel Jonathan Rees QC told the jury that Mire’s mental health issues were a mitigating factor but not a legal defence for his intent to try and kill Zimmerman. And that he had previously shown support for the aims of the extremist ISIS organisation.

He said: “He is sympathetic to those who are choosing to pursue jihad against the non-Muslims. It can be no coincidence that he carried out the attack just three days after parliament had voted to extend the bombing campaign against ISIS to territory in Syria.

“And it is no coincidence that his actions mirrored those of ISIS fighters who are seen despatching their prisoners by cutting their throats as they lay face down on the ground.”

After the jury’s guilty verdict, judge Richard Marks QC thanked those who had remained at the train station to warn passers-by of the danger posed by Mire. He said: “There are members of the public who showed remarkable courage and good heartedness.”

Mire is being held at Broadmoor Hospital and will be sentenced on July 27.

Taxi driver honoured for children’s charity work

A 72 YEAR OLD hackney carriage driver is to receive the British Empire Medal from the Queen after 30 years of helping vulnerable and underprivileged children.

 Micheal Son, who qualified as a London taxi driver in 1965, said he thought it “was a joke” when he was told about the award.

Mr Son is a committee member of The London Taxi Drivers Fund for Underprivileged Children charity and has helped to raise thousands of pounds to help socially deprived children and those with mental or physical disabilities.

The charity was founded in 1928 and raises money to provide social activities, days out and funding for projects for disadvantaged children in London.

Mr Son added: “I’m absolutely chuffed and honoured. It was something I was totally unaware of and I am very grateful.

“It represents all the work that everyone has done and I am over the moon to be recognised and excited to receive it. We take underprivileged children to the seaside every year and try to give them a magical day out. And we couldn’t do any of this without the support of our wives, partners and the taxi drivers of London.”
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The Authorised Vehicle Area at Heathrow Airport is now open to licensed cabs. PHC highlights everything you need to know.

WHERE IS THE AVA?
The AVA is located on the Northern Perimeter Road and the postcode is TW6 2RL. The facility has an ‘Authorised Vehicle Area’ sign at the entrance.

IS THE FACILITY OPEN 24 HOURS?
No, the AVA opens at 05:00 and closes at 23:00.

HOW DO I GAIN ENTRANCE TO THE AVA?
Access is for authorised private hire vehicles and authorised users are asked to take a ticket at the barrier. The on-site operational team will be on hand to assist with the rest of the process.

WHAT FACILITIES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE AVA?
The area is staffed and has toilets and a dedicated catering service.

IS THERE ANYWHERE TO DISPOSE OF RUBBISH?
There are specially designed rubbish bins at the facility that discourage bird activity and this in turn ensures the safety of aircraft.

WHERE ARE THE TOILETS LOCATED?
Toilet blocks are located at the East and West end of the facility.

WHAT SORT OF CATERING WILL BE AVAILABLE?
A catering truck will be on site at specific times of the day and there is a cold vending machine in the reception area that is accessible when the AVA is open.

HOW LONG CAN I STAY AT THE AVA?
Vehicles and drivers cannot remain in the Authorised Vehicle Area any longer than 12 hours.

CAN I SMOKE AT THE AVA?
Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking area.

CAN A CUSTOMER MEET THEIR DRIVER AT THE AVA?
No, passengers cannot be picked up or dropped off at the facility.

I NEED TO MEET MY CUSTOMER, WHERE DO I PICK THEM UP FROM?
When picking up customers from the terminals, drivers must use the Short Stay terminal car parks and meet their passenger at an agreed location in the terminal.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS FOR USING THE FACILITY?
It will cost £1 per hour (up to five hours) and after five hours it will be the same rate as the Short Stay car park at Terminal 3 (5-6 hours £26.80 / 6-9 hours £39.10 / 9-12 hours £50.50).

WHAT PAYMENT METHODS ARE ACCEPTED?
Payment can be made by cash or credit / debit cards.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

I HAVE JUST DROPPED OFF MY CUSTOMER, CAN I RETURN TO THE FACILITY?
Yes, you may return to the AVA.

MY VEHICLE HAS BROKEN DOWN IN THE AVA, WHAT DO I DO?
Contact your breakdown recovery service and then advise one of the AVA facility staff, who will be able to assist in arranging access to the area.

CAN I WASH MY VEHICLE IN THE AVA?
Vehicle washing is not permitted.

CAN I PRE-BOOK USE OF THE AVA?
There is no pre-book option.

MY VEHICLE IS DAMAGED WHILST IN THE AVA, WHAT SHOULD I DO?
This should be managed through the insurance policy of the driver.

I APPEAR TO HAVE CAUSED DAMAGE TO A VEHICLE, WHAT SHOULD I DO?
This should be managed through the insurance policy of the driver.

WHilst I AM AWAY FROM THE VEHICLE, I FIND THAT SOMETHING HAS GONE MISSING. WHAT SHOULD I DO?
Vehicles are left in the authorised parking area at the drivers’ own risk.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I SEE ANY SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOUR AT THE FACILITY?
Please advise one of the operational team on site.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I CANNOT PRESENT MY DOCUMENTS?
Failure to produce suitable documentation will result in access to the facility being denied.

CAN I USE THE AVA IF I AM NOT PICKING UP FROM HEATHROW?
The facility is open to licensed private hire drivers from all areas.

IS THE FACILITY OPEN FOR PHVS FROM ALL AREAS?
The facility is open to licensed private hire drivers from all areas.

DO I HAVE TO HAVE A PRE-BOOKED FARE TO USE THE FACILITY?
No, drivers can use the facility while awaiting a job allocation.

IS THERE AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINT?
There are no electric charging points at this time.

WHEN I EXIT, CAN I COLLECT A CUSTOMER DIRECTLY FROM A TERMINAL FORECOURT?
No, when picking up customers from the terminals, drivers must use the Short Stay terminal car parks and meet their passenger at an agreed location within the terminal.

WHAT DO I DO IF I REALISE THAT I DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO EXIT?
Contact a member of the AVA’s operational team.

CAN I BRING MY OWN FOOD?
Yes, as long as any waste is disposed of appropriately.

CAN I BRING ALCOHOL INTO THE AVA?
No, alcohol is not permitted.

WHERE CAN I PRAY?
Multi-faith prayer rooms are available at the following locations:
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Forward into battle

Trade disputes with TfL were highlighted at a LPHCA meeting which issued a call to arms to take on the licensing authority.

**TRANSPORT FOR London’s (TfL) private hire regulations review** may be done, dusted and approved by the Transport for London (TfL) Board but the Licensed Private Hire Car Association (LPHCA) say there are still many outstanding issues.

Association chairman Steve Wright told a recent members’ meeting in Euston: “It is absolutely clear that some of these proposals are discriminatory and we need everyone in our industry to wise up and fight for the future of our trade.”

**INSURANCE**

Commenting on the insurance proposal approved by the TfL Board that - Hire & Reward insurance will be required at the point of vehicle licensing and for it to remain in place for the duration of the vehicle - Mr Wright said: “This was a taxi proposal and the LPHCA lawyers are now looking at it. The whole idea is simply not fit for purpose. What about companies with school run vehicles who don’t need insurance over the summer? “The insurance industry has also got grave concerns about the impact of this and we are vehemently opposed to this proposal. This insurance issue is a massive one and will not go away. It is massively unfair and puts unfair and discriminatory costs on our trade.”

**ONE YEAR LICENCE**

Mr Wright: “This has caused all sorts of problems, this one year licence. As a trade body we don’t expect to find out from a member of staff at TfL about an apparent change of policy. It is a shame and we have to ask what the hell is going on.

“One of our members applied for a five year licence and filled in the form, but TfL sent back a one year licence and said they would send the rest of the money back. This has caused all sorts of stress and we need to get engagement with the licensing authority back on track.”

TfL general manager of taxi and private hire Helen Chapman said: “I apologise for any stress caused, but the letter that went out to the operator was very careful to explain what we had done and why we had done it. I am very sorry this has caused any confusion amongst the trade but it was an admin change and not a serious policy change. But I apologise that you were not notified in advance of the change.”

**VEHICLE SIGNAGE**

Mr Wright: “We have operators saying that the signage on their vehicles sometimes passes a vehicle inspection and sometimes not. And that at other times, they have had passengers in their vehicles and been told by TfL compliance officers to remove the signs.

“So far, we have had four consultations by the Public Carriage Office and TfL on signage and at the end of these consultations, the outcome has never been clear. Hopefully we will now be involved in any dialogue so that we can get it right, because it is important that we do get it right.”

**CONGESTION CHARGE**

Mr Wright: “This is just a tax and has no place at all in the London private hire industry. PHV vehicles have got greener and greener each year, so why aren’t 15 year old taxis being charged?

“We have just engaged a political lobbying company, a top parliamentary firm, who will now guide us and advice us on how best to fight this proposal.

“We are going to be raising our political lobbying profile, simply because we have too. We cannot stay silent on this and we need to get more members into the association because of the need to engage a political lobbyist. This is a really serious threat and believe you me, it is not going to go away.”

**HEATHROW AUTHORISED VEHICLE AREA**

Mr Wright: “We don’t want this just to be a car park for drivers who don’t have bookings. We don’t want people coming from across the country, to park up and hope to get a job. That’s not good for the cab industry or the residents who live near to Heathrow.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24
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“We are very grateful to have cheaper parking and I think you have done a pretty good job so far. But, I think at a later date, the five hour waiting window should be used to filter out those who should not be there.”

FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE
Mr Wright: “The whole basis of this (TfL private hire) consultation was dreamt up by the taxi industry to try and put us out of business. You would have to be a fool not to realise that.

“But, the association managed to stop and moderate some of the more outlandish proposals. Unfortunately it was inevitable that some things that we didn’t want did get through. But, just because something has been approved by the TfL Board, it doesn’t that it cannot be challenged.

“We have done the preparatory legal work on the discrimination faced by our industry and it is absolutely clear that some of those proposals approved by the TfL Board are discriminatory.

“We made our views known about the insurance issue during the consultation but TfL went ahead anyway and did what the taxi trade wanted. But there was no proportionality. They might say they have had a public consultation but the public are not experts on our trade or our industry.

“We are ready as a trade association to up the game and move it forward. But that is going to need extra support and it is going to need everyone in our industry to wise up and fight for the future of our trade.

“Many of these proposals are damaging to our businesses and as far as I am concerned we are on a war footing. Some of these proposals could wipe us out and in my opinion there is a serious possibility that our industry could be very badly damaged by what TfL is going to do. There are a lot of things that need to be addressed and we simply can’t be ignored by everyone.”

CRIME SPREE CAB ROBBER SENT TO PRISON
TWENTY TWO year old Frederick Shelley has been jailed for five years after he was found guilty of robbing a taxi driver, hitting a police officer with a brick and spraying a police car with a fire extinguisher.

Police were called to reports of Shelley riding a motorbike dangerously through the streets of Carshalton, South London on the evening of February 20.

When approached, the 22 year old kicked off a police car’s wing mirror and sprayed the officers with a fire extinguisher before escaping on his motorcycle.

Pursued by a number of police vehicles, Shelley pulled up alongside a police van, raised his helmet visor and said: “This is fun, isn’t it?” before racing off again at speed.

The 22 year old was eventually cornered after a police dog handler caught him as he robbed a taxi driver with a gang of youths in Wrythe Lane.

The thugs smashed the window of the cab and stole money from inside the vehicle before Shelley, in a bid to escape, hit a police officer over the head with a brick and in the face with a plank of wood.

Shelley, of Keverne Road, Dulwich was sentenced at Croydon Crown Court to five years in prison for causing actual bodily harm to a police officer, assault by beating, robbery, criminal damage to two vehicles and dangerous driving.

He was also disqualified from driving for 54 months and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £120.
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The family of a Pakistani chauffeur - killed by a drone strike while driving Afghan Taliban chief Mullah Akhtar Mansour - is set to sue the United States government over the death.

Mohammad Azam was driving Mansour near the Pakistan town of Ahmad Wal and was described by US military officials as the “second male combatant” killed in the strike.

Azam’s brother Mohammad Qasim has since announced he is pressing for anti-terror charges to be laid against the administration of Barack Obama.

Mr Qasim said: “US officials have accepted responsibility in the media for this incident, so I want justice and request legal action against those responsible. My brother was innocent, was very poor and leaves behind four young children. He was the lone breadwinner in the family and my aim is to prove the innocence of my brother as he is being portrayed as a militant. But, he was just a driver.”

PKistani officials say that Azam worked for the Al Habib rental company and that Mansour had rented a vehicle after haggling over the price.

Qasim added: “Who will feed my brother’s children now? I appeal to the civilised world, including all those human rights bodies, to investigate the brutal murder of my brother and compensate his children.”

Kiwi Uber drivers complain of income fall

THE NEW ZEALAND Uber Drivers’ Association (NZUDA) claim that a 20 per cent drop in fares has led to an “increased workload and a marked decline in income”.

NZUDA chairman Ben Wilson said: “Lots of drivers are former taxi drivers who came to Uber because they thought it was a better service. But, with these price cuts, they are having to go back to traditional taxi driving.”

Uber partners in New Zealand are now quitting the business, even though the company has watered down its licence requirement for drivers.

The American app firm has stripped out the requirement for drivers to have a passenger endorsement or passenger service licence, despite concerns from the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) that such a move could be illegal.

NZTA group manager for access Celia Patrick said: “Uber has stated it is now doing its own driver licence checks before deciding if they will allow someone to drive for them.”

“But, these are far less rigorous than the mandatory background checks, medical checks and examination of a range of other risk factors which are carried out by the transport agency before we issue a passenger endorsement to allow drivers to carry passengers for hire or reward.

“NZTA also requires drivers to have a recent medical certificate and information about overseas criminal convictions as part of its passenger endorsement application process.

“We want to make sure that prospective Uber drivers are aware of these requirements and understand the possible consequences of driving without an appropriate licence or providing an unlicensed service, which can result in significant fines.

“As a safety regulator we have no interest in standing in the way of innovation, but we have a responsibility to ensure that people carrying passengers for a living have been properly vetted and understand their responsibilities under the law of New Zealand.”
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Taxi driver killer guilty of manslaughter

A JURY AT the Inner London Crown Court has found Chris Fruen (52) guilty of the manslaughter of black cab driver Patrick Mulroe (52).

Fruen stabbed Mr Mulroe at least six times during a fight in Luxfield Road, Mottingham, South London, in the early hours of Boxing Day last year.

The court heard there had been a long-running dispute between the two neighbours which had resulted in a number of complaints made to Greenwich Council.

On the night of the incident, Chris Fruen and his wife Sandra were helping a friend into an Uber cab in the early hours of December 26 when Mr Mulroe’s wife Tina called out of a window, “It’s alright then when you want to make some noise.”

The row escalated into a full scale argument and the two women were joined by their husbands outside in the street.

The jury heard that Fruen, still holding the knife he used to cut his turkey, was then seen repeatedly hitting into the side of Mr Mulroe as the two men struggled against each other.

The taxi driver, bleeding heavily, was helped back inside his house as his children called for help. Paramedics tried to save Mr Mulroe but he died on the pavement as they took him from the house.

A post-mortem revealed that Mr Mulroe had died from multiple stab wounds to the chest.

Detective chief inspector Cliff Lyons, who led the investigation, said: “Christopher Fruen chose to arm himself with a knife and confront Patrick in the street, bringing what on the face of it seems a dispute about a minor noise issue to a brutal conclusion.

“Fruen claimed he acted in self-defence and initially denied using a knife. I am glad the jury have seen through his attempts to deflect responsibility for his actions and found him guilty.

“This was a senseless attack on a man who had been celebrating Christmas with his family around him. The tragic events of that night means that Patrick’s family will be denied such celebrations in the coming years. I can only hope that Fruen’s conviction can bring some closure to them.”
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PHC takes a look at the stories that have made the headlines over the last two decades.

**All day, every day...**

PHC spent a day with Public Carriage Office (PCO) enforcement officers David Hadley and Richard Hodges as they stopped and inspected private hire and taxi drivers in the streets around City Airport.

Cab-related offences uncovered included; worn tyres, no ID badge on display and a licensed green Ford Mondeo that received an immediate Stop Notice because it was in such a poor state of repair.

Enforcement officer Hadley said that licensed cab drivers could help both the PCO compliance team and themselves by sticking to the rules.

“If they are wearing their badge and their vehicle is in good condition, they will get away quicker and not be held up for long. Technically, we’re here as the regulator solely to help the passenger, but we do also try and look after the drivers who are obeying the regulations.

“Because if there are some people who don’t play by the rules and are seen to be getting away with it, they are just undermining the whole licensing system for everyone else.”

**Private Hire Ball**

Over 300 drivers, operators, regulators and support industry staff gathered at the Cafe Royal on Regent Street for the first ever London Private Hire Ball.

Chairman of the Ball George Walker said the event was, “A new dawn for the London private hire industry,” and added, “Our industry is truly second to none. We have shown that we are an indispensable part of transport in London, so let us all celebrate together.”

PCO project manager Alan Matthews and Lib Dem president Simon Hughes MP were both seen cutting a fine figure on the dance floor. Other well-refreshed Ball attendees may have been more Mr Bean than John Travolta but no one cared and the trade partied away into the early hours of the morning.

Addison Lee boss John Griffin thanked everyone who helped make the first London private hire Ball a success and said that the trade, now fully licensed, could look forward to a bright and prosperous future.

**National Courier Awards**

The Gormon Tower Hotel next to London’s Tower Bridge hosted the 2007 National Courier Awards and were, according to Institute of Couriers (IOC) chairman Carl Lomas, “A reward for the individuals at the top of their profession who have done that little bit extra.” IOC president Lord Falkland said: “This year makes a year which recognises top quality winners. Well done to those who fully deserve the recognition they have received.”

**No tickets here**

Van courier John Vigas was the victor of over 100 parking appeals and in an interview with PHC explained how despatch riders and drivers could use his ‘A Courier’s Guide To Parking’ to fight illegally issued penalty charge notices.
Red Route betrayal

Transport for London came under fire after it failed to give access to private hire drivers to pick up and set down passengers on the capital’s Red Routes from July 6.

In an email sent to PHC, the PCO’s private hire director Ed Thompson wrote: “There has been a suggestion that access may be possible by July 6 but unfortunately this is not the case.

“Please advise your readers not to ‘jump the gun’ until we have changed all of the regulations.”

Victor clamped again!

Seventy one year old Victor Humes - a prominent campaigner in the Door-to-Door Justice Campaign for Red Route access for private hire vehicles - had many scrapes with the authorities over PCNs received while helping elderly and disabled passengers out of his car.

And was forced to borrow £300 off his boss at Station Cars in East London after bailiffs threatened to seize his car over an unpaid fine.

More cab tout officers needed

Deputy chairman of the London Assembly transport committee Roger Evans said that 34 officers in the Met Police Transport Operational Command Unit were not enough to tackle the tidal way of touts plying for hire illegally in Central London.

Mr Evans asked the mayor: “Why are there so few officers specifically dedicated to tackling taxi touts Mr Livingstone?”

Mr Livingstone replied: “Enforcement is only one part of tackling touts and sex assaults. The STaN initiative has been very successful in reducing the number of tout sex assaults.”

Welcome to Bandit Country

PHC bike correspondent Ian Kerr reviewed the all new despatch rider’s workhorse - the Suzuki Bandit - and liked what he saw and rode.

“I could go on and on about how the Bandit manages to combine practicality with an ability to provide a confident swift pace on mixed going, but everyone knows that already. This new version is just the same - only a lot better!

“The price, at just £5,549, is so cheap that you may think there is a catch. But, there is none whatsoever. It is just exceptional value for money and puts man of its direct competitors well and truly in the shade!”
THE NATIONAL Taxi Association (NTA) has given the thumbs up to Plan Insurance Brokers innovative Taxi Insurance Checker (TIC) after inviting the Purley-based company to showcase its solution to widespread cab insurance fraud at its recent annual conference.

Plan Insurance Brokers has been busy lobbying regulators and insurers along with the taxi and private hire industry to promote the need for funds and resources to be allocated to tackling the problem of drivers operating with invalid cover and believe their plans for TIC, an online portal, would provide a quick, low cost and effective solution.

Why is action needed now?
Uninsured taxi and private hire drivers have become a more high profile problem over the last two years due to the emergence of fare booking apps, such as Uber, that have seen driver numbers increase by 62 per cent since 2010.

Flaws in current systems
Outdated systems for detecting uninsured taxi and private hire drivers can seemingly no longer cope with the volume of drivers, prompting Transport for London (TfL) director of road surface transport, Leon Daniels, to describe the current means of detecting drivers without suitable insurance as a “laborious, hopeless manual system.”

There are now over 300,000 drivers licensed to carry passengers on UK roads and a nationwide audit leaked to the BBC in 2011 revealed that up to 93 per cent of drivers might have invalid cover. Due to the volume of drivers now operating the problem is only likely to have escalated.

Plan Insurance director, Grant Georgiades, said: “There are a number of reasons why it is vital that the authorities have the means to check that drivers have the appropriate cover.

“From the public safety concerns of illegal touts targeting vulnerable people and delayed compensation claims for passengers if vehicles are involved in accidents, to the burden of higher motor insurance costs for law abiding drivers who subsidise premiums - it is an issue that affects all of us.”

So, how are uninsured taxi drivers evading detection?

Presenting false insurance documents: Drivers either doctor or duplicate documentation when applying for a taxi or private hire licence.

Operating with expired, cancelled or invalid cover: To avoid their vehicle showing up on police Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) checks as unregistered on the Motor Insurance Database, drivers take out cheaper private car insurance that does not provide cover to drive passengers for the purposes of ‘Hire and Reward.’ This could be up to ten times cheaper than the premiums they should be paying.

Using ‘identity mirroring’ scams: Multiple drivers may be operating under one licence using one vehicle.

How will TIC Work?
TIC will provide authorities access to live information regarding the validity of taxi and private hire drivers’ insurance and crucially whether their policy provides cover for carrying passengers for the purposes of ‘Hire & Reward.’

The portal is similar in concept to the Motor Insurance Database, which has significantly reduced the number of uninsured drivers on the UK’s roads.

All taxi and private hire insurers will need to be registered on a database as approved suppliers. Each cab insurance certificate they issue will have a unique encrypted identifier code printed on it, which can be decrypted by regulators, law enforcement officers, vehicle inspectors and operators via the TIC portal.

Wayne Casey, general secretary of the National Taxi Association, said: “The association believe the thinking behind TIC is beneficial towards not only insurers and operators but more importantly, the safety of the travelling public.”
Cycle couriers’ November date for employment tribunal battle

FOUR LONDON bicycle messengers will get their chance to argue they are not self-employed - giving them an automatic entitlement to the national living wage and holiday pay - at an employment tribunal in November. 

Maggie Dewhurst, Chris Gascoigne, Demille Planmore and Andrew Boxer have launched the claim against CitySprint, Excel, Addison Lee and eCourier and are backed by the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB).

Dewhurst, whose case will be heard first at Holborn’s London Central Tribunal on November 22 said: “There are a lot of couriers who don’t earn the national minimum wage. And if you don’t have the right to something, your employer has no legal obligation to give it to you.”

IWGB President Jason Moyer-Lee said: “This case is more important than just the couriers. The whole economy is going to head in that direction if we’re not careful. If these people really were independent contractors, the couriers would not be able to guarantee a service to their institutional clients. They are just one bad accident away from financial destitution.”

Sarah Fraser Butlin, a barrister at the Cloisters solicitors chamber, which is representing the couriers, said the four cycle couriers are, “Obviously workers and probably employees. This is one of the most important cases this year in terms of ordinary working people.”

Trucker robbed at petrol station

A LORRY DRIVER was left ‘shaken’ after he was robbed at a petrol station in Leatherhead.

The driver was unloading his delivery at the Esso garage in Oxted Road when two men in masks told him to lie on the ground while they took his consignment of cigarettes.

Detective constable Michael Barker said: “This was a serious incident which has left the victim extremely shaken. We are appealing for anyone who may have been on the forecourt at the time of the offence to come forward.”

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Publication of the latest figures for new motorcycle registrations has shown that sales continue to grow. At the time of writing, year-to-date figures for 2016 are up 9.9 per cent over the same period last year. Or, put another way, in April 2015 there were 10,153 new motorcycle registrations, while the same month in 2016 saw 11,500 new bikes registered, which in simple terms is an increase of 13.3 per cent.

All good news, but shortly after the election of London’s new mayor, a petition appeared on the government website quoting another less pleasant set of statistics and calling on Sadiq Khan, the Met Police and Home Secretary Theresa May to take immediate action to tackle an ‘epidemic’ of motorcycle theft in the capital.

The petition cites Home Office figures showing a 44 per cent rise in stolen motorcycles in London between 2012 and 2014. And it calls for motorcycle theft to be made a priority for the Met Police and for more funding to be made available to investigate the crime. It also suggests the need for more ground anchors in motorcycle parking bays and for tougher sentencing of offenders.

The report goes on to request motorcycle theft to be a priority for the Met Police - giving them the proper resources to investigate motorcycle crime and offenders and the ability to chase criminals on stolen bikes without fear of the risk to the criminal.

Lastly, its major recommendation, which it wants applied on a national level, is for sentencing guidelines for motorcycle theft to be changed and minimum sentences increased to act as an effective deterrent to those who are involved in any way with the theft of PTWs.

All good stuff really, as most police force stolen vehicle units have been disbanded and the Met’s motorcycle specialists have been put onto other cases - leaving motorcycle theft a long way down the list of policing priorities.
The petition was started by M Jones after thieves filmed themselves stealing a Ducati Panigale and posted it online showing just how brazen they have become - effectively giving the finger to the police.

In the past couple of years the motorcycle industry as a whole has been working hard to eradicate theft by marking bikes and individual components from new. The idea is to help cut down the resale value of stolen bikes and parts and enable police to identify vehicles that have been broken.

In addition, there has been an increase in on-bike security from new and many firms are now offering alarms and tracking devices, which have resulted in some excellent recovery rates, despite the figures quoted.

Now, while virtually every motorcyclist would agree that bike thieves ought to be shot, someone always goes to the extreme to deal with the problem without necessarily thinking things through.

Enter Yannick Read, the creator of the ‘Bike Mine’, which is claimed to be the world’s loudest bike alarm. Good you might say, something that can be heard and attract attention. But the only problem is that it uses blank shotgun shells!

In simple terms it’s effectively a version of the commercially-available ‘alarm mines’ used by gamekeepers and costing around £15 from gun supply companies, but now being sold to bikers for £50!

In this case, it is a bracket that holds a blank shotgun cartridge with a spring-loaded firing pin held off by a grenade-style pin keeping it armed. When the pin is pulled the cartridge is detonated, causing a loud bang.

The pin is attached by a wire to an immovable object close to the bike, (or to the spokes) but kept out of sight. Provided it is not seen and disconnected by the would-be thief trying to wheel away your pride and joy, it goes off, alerting you and everybody else who will no doubt call the police to report the sound of gun shots!

Technically these are legal, although no doubt without lots of warning signs the thief will be able to sue for hearing damage, blinding and anything else he or she may get whilst trying to steal your wheels. More worrying, what happens when somebody takes things a little too far and inserts a live cartridge instead of the blanks?

So, while many agree what they would like to see happen to bike thieves, the best policy to ensure it is not us that goes to court and make sure our bikes are security marked, locked - preferably to immovable objects - and covered over if possible. And make sure parking places are varied from day-to-day.

Also, if your bike is left for some time in a public place, check that nobody has attached a tracker so they can follow you home and pinch it when you are least expecting it. Lastly, when buying a bike, make all the usual checks and remember the old adage that if the deal seems too good to be true, it probably is!

In an ideal world, what we want to see is regularly increasing sales figures and more people seeing the advantages of two wheels. At the same time we want decreasing theft figures and fewer bikes being used to commit crimes. On a positive note, my police source has just confirmed ‘stingers’ can now be used against two-wheeled vehicles!

One can only hope that somebody may heed the petition. But I fear it is always going to be down to us to take care of our own property. So, lock it or lose it!
A DELIVERY driver in Tasmania managed to make a heartbreaking phone call to his family to say goodbye before being swept away to his presumed death.

Peter Watson, a contract driver and his delivery partner Karen Cassidy, were overcome by floodwaters while delivering Fairfax newspapers.

They both managed to climb onto the roof of their van where 63-year-old Peter called his son, Corey Watson asking him to deliver a message to the rest of his family.

"His biggest thing was to say how much he loved his family, his children Tanita Thynne, Natarsha Bett, Jessica Watson and Matthew Watson, and his stepchildren Claire Flice and Sean Cassidy. "He said he'd watch over us always."

Before a helicopter could get to the pair, they were swept away in the rising water.

Ms Cassidy was found hours later, three miles downstream clinging to a tree and was treated in hospital for mild hypothermia.

Peter has not been found and a Fairfax media spokesman said: "We're relieved the man's partner is safe – however our deep concerns remain for the driver who is still missing. All our support and care is being offered during this truly difficult time."

Tasmania is still recovering from what was one of the state's most devastating floods. Four people remain missing and three people are known to have died.

Aramex launches new app for UAE customers

ARAMEX customers in the UAE can now use the company's newly launched app to track and manage their deliveries.

The company claim the app offers six unique features making the customer experience quicker and easier; phone tracking, package visibility, in-app payment, delivery scheduling, live tracking and a courier rating system.

Hussein Wehbe, the general manager of Aramex in the UAE, said: "We are excited to launch the new app for our customers in the UAE for the first time. As we continue to move towards becoming a technology-based enterprise, we are innovating and adopting new technologies to make our last-mile delivery solutions more efficient and consequently grow and retain a loyal customer base."

"By putting the power in their hands to control their shipments’ delivery, we are taking a major step in further enhancing our international and domestic express delivery solutions."

Following its launch in the UAE, the app will soon be available in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, South Africa, India and Australia.

UPS sued over illegal cigarette shipments

AUTHORITIES in New York have filed a $180 million federal lawsuit accusing UPS of illegally shipping 700,000 cartons of untaxed cigarettes from Native American reservations to consumers and smoke shops, even though they had agreed to stop more than a decade ago.

New York's attorney general and the New York City law department, claim the Atlanta-based shipping giant deprived the state of millions of dollars in taxes by ignoring clear indications that some of its clients were shipping contraband cigarettes.

"UPS policymakers have turned a blind eye to shipments of contraband cigarettes," said John Oleske, senior enforcement counsel for the state attorney general's office. "As long as these shippers said they were shipping cigars, and not cigarettes, UPS would not audit them. UPS just ignored the warning signs."

UPS has denied the allegations. A spokesperson said the company complied with its legal obligations and would continue to vigorously defend itself.

Hermes and Starship test robot deliveries in Germany

HERMES HAS announced plans to run parcel delivery tests using Starship Technology robots in Germany this summer.

Testing of the ground-drone has already started in Greenwich, London.

German media revealed recently that Starship Technologies’ robots had also been used as shopping aids in a pilot test at a Metro Group store in Dusseldorf.
Sue Moore looks ahead to this year's Cycle Messenger World Championships

This year sees the 24th edition of the CMWC - hosted by Paris 'the city of lights' for the first time in the competition's history.

The world's strongest, smartest and fastest cycle couriers are set to converge on the streets of Paris from the 1st - 7th of August for the ultimate urban cycling competition.

A variety of events will test the riders' physical and mental limits, culminating in the main final race which will decide the king and queen of messengers.

The CMWC is not just a championship sporting event, it's a chance for messenger communities from across the globe to converge for a festival of galas, shows, parties and markets.

While most of the competitors are bike couriers, the events are open to all cyclists with many non-messengers enjoying all the challenges of the competition.

It seems that Paris might also be the spiritual home of the championships. From 1900-1950 all of the newspapers in Paris were delivered by bicycle and the competitive nature of the couriers or 'porteurs' who delivered these papers evolved into an annual race. And so, "Criterium des porteurs de journaux" - the oldest bike messenger competition in the world was born.

Unfortunately, pedal power was soon overtaken by the combustion engine and bike messaging died out and cycle couriers were not seen in Paris until 1997.

The city has since seen a recent resurgence of couriers with more than 250 operating within 15 companies. Many full-time couriers are guaranteed a fixed salary with full benefits and meals - unheard of in many cities.

For those wanting to get the party started sooner, 'Chistole Pistole' - the CMWC pre-event will see couriers heading off from Cologne on 31st July for a 330 mile ride to Paris, cycling through the beautiful countryside of Germany, Belgium and France.

And it's certainly a busy time of year for competing couriers!

Copenhagen, the City of Cyclists, will host this year's European Cycle Messenger Championships this month.

In its 21st year, the European championships are the slightly younger sibling of the CMWC. Running from July 21st-24th there is a packed programme of alleycat races, sprint & skid competitions, main races and of course, parties.

So, I wouldn't be at all surprised if cycle couriers on the streets of London become as rare as hen's teeth during August.

Vive la France!
**FTA: Trailblazer funding allocation, "a step in the right direction"**

The Freight Transport Association (FTA) has welcomed the news that a funding cap for the Supply Chain and Logistics LGV Standard has been agreed, saying it was “a step in the right direction.”

The FTA added that the Government allowing the sector to include licence acquisition training within the funding allocation for the Trailblazer LGV Driver Apprenticeship means that “common sense has prevailed.”

Sally Gilson, FTA Skills Policy Manager commented: “Although the funding cap is lower than we hoped for, this is still a positive step by the Government to help the industry grow the HGV drivers of the future. This will enable companies to capture a younger driver and gain funding for the licence acquisition training that will make apprenticeships a viable training solution.”

There had previously been a lack of clarity from ministers which led to considerable lobbying by the logistics sector. The decision has been welcomed by industry, which now has an official funding route.

Ms Gilson added: “Now that businesses have this confirmation, they can prepare for the introduction of the levy and work with training providers to start their Apprenticeship Schemes.

“With the announcement of the Apprenticeship Levy last summer, it was crucial that industry had a usable LGV Driver Apprenticeship. This is excellent news and will finally provide a funded route for driver training.”

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**HGV driver banned for drink driving was delivering BOOZE**

A HGV driver from Manchester has been banned from driving after he was caught behind the wheel of his 26-tonne wagon while over the drink-drive limit.

Brian Dunn (52), who ironically was delivering alcohol at the time of the offence, was pulled over by traffic cops who suspected he was driving illegally.

He blew positive into a breathalyser with 35 microgrammes of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath. The legal limit is 35.

The HGV driver told officers he had been drinking heavily the night before but not on the day in question.

Dunn pleaded guilty to driving over the limit at Manchester Magistrates’ Court and was banned from the road for 14 months.

Chair of the bench Philip Kershaw told him: “This is a very serious offence. We have no alternative but to ban you from driving.”

He was also fined £120 and ordered to pay a £30 victim surcharge and £85 court costs.

Dunn lost his job the day after he was arrested and hasn’t been able to find work since.

The fines will be deducted from his benefits.

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**APC Overnight launches new services for SMEs**

APC Overnight has completed its introduction of four new services it has described as “tailor-made” for small and medium businesses.

The new services include partnerships with InPost, Whistl and Menzies International, to bolster click and collect, second class mail and international delivery options.

The most recent addition was the launch of APC direct, an online booking tool for customers.

Jonathan Smith, the CEO of APC Overnight, said: “We’re proud to offer our new services to SMEs, because we know that SMEs are concerned that their lack of options for delivery services has a direct impact on their growth prospects in the UK.”

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**Delivery van driver robbed at knifepoint**

A DELIVERY driver has been carjacked at knifepoint in Wolverhampton.

In the terrifying raid, a masked thug brandished a long bladed weapon and ordered the driver to hand over the keys to his Renault Trafic van.

Police believe the thief had an accomplice driving a dark blue Ford Fiesta which drove off with the van. The van was later found abandoned.

As the carjacking happened near the end of the day, there were only four parcels left on the van. These were missing along with the driver’s wallet and an Apple iPhone 6s mobile phone.

The suspect was a white man in his 20s, 5ft 8ins tall wearing a black hooded top, dark jeans and dark shoes, with a black scarf over his face.

Det Con Marc Bailey said: “Fortunately, the driver wasn’t injured but this was a frightening ordeal for him.”
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GMB representatives met with Brixton Hill councillor and London Assembly member, Flo Eshalomi, after her election success and appointment to the GLA transport committee.

The branch felt very privileged to be the first private hire trade organisation to have a face-to-face with her. And although it was not a question and answer type engagement, it gave us the chance to discuss our fears regarding the mess we feel the former mayor left London in - especially relating to road transport.

We aired our views on the following:

**Heavy Goods Vehicles:**
These should be restricted from using London’s roads, at least during peak times, as they create gridlock whilst delivering and often block bus lanes. Similar regulations have already been imposed in other busy European cities. We also raised concerns at the increased emissions these vehicles bring and the danger they pose to the safety of the public – especially cyclists and pedestrians.

**Cycle Superhighway:**
Legislation should be passed enforcing that, providing it is safe for them to do so, riders need to stay in their lane and not impede on reduced road space used by vehicular traffic. This needs to be mandatory.

**On the buses:**
Traffic could be improved by running buses on longer routes and perhaps during off-peak periods having smaller buses. Hardly a day goes by when you don’t see a row of near empty buses on Regent Street outside of the rush hour – adding to congestion and pollution.

**Service response vehicles:**
Using the recent Blackwall Tunnel fiasco as an example, we also suggest that London’s main arterial Roads be serviced by a response team who would be responsible for aiding the removal of broken down vehicles and lightly damaged vehicles from the roads.

I experienced the problem myself on the North Circular as a broken down car in the outside lane created gridlock for many miles and was still clogging up road space over two hours later.

**The private hire industry:**
Turning to our trade, we put forward a suggestion to Flo that was made by Eddie Townsend, a well respected industry figure and boss of south-east London firm, Carlton Cars. Eddie feels that rather than imposing the Congestion Charge on PHV drivers in the future, which is currently being mooted, a £1 green levy on all PHV journeys undertaken by the public in central London might be a much better alternative.

The money raised from this measure could be used for a vehicle scrappage scheme to help the public hire trade go green by providing income for low finance deals to help encourage taxi drivers to go electric.

**Consultation fears:**
Despite our numerous communications with the authorities, we informed Flo that many of our observations, outlined in consultation responses, had been ignored, potentially passing a very expensive buck onto the new mayor.

**Impact assessments:**
The suggestion was made that studies need to be implemented on many as yet not commenced projects, as the GMB feels proper assessments have not taken place.

These include changes to Baker Street, the Tottenham Court Road closure and some of the super cycle highways. We feel that work should not start until the impact of all of these projects have been fully explored.

Problems with the A40 were also raised. And, in particular, the Marylebone Flyover, which needs extensive works carried out on it much like the Hammersmith flyover did a couple of years ago.

**Charging points:**
The final point raised, was in relation to the installation of 150 rapid electric charging points, that were promised to Londoners by 2018.

Firstly, 150 is just not enough. Secondly, 90 of these are proposed to be exclusively for the black cab trade – with none allocated for private hire use. A blatant act of favouritism on TfL’s part – and not for the first time.

GMB would like to thank Flo for taking the time to meet with us. We look forward to further discussion in the future.
Briefly explain what Cab Guru is?
Cab Guru is a comparison app which allows users to easily compare local cab companies near them and then book one for a fixed price. Users can choose to book ASAP or pre-book and they can pay by cash or card.

However, Cab Guru has another mission. It is a platform offered by cab companies for creating true partnership and shareholding for the benefit of the cab industry.

It is early days yet but we have much bigger plans to bring as much unity and collaboration to the industry as possible by introducing some novel technologies which make it far more than just an app.

Whose idea was it?
A group of cab company operators were looking for a way to compete against Uber and other cab app disruptors. They decided that by working together in collaboration with one another, they stood a better chance of succeeding.

Individually, they all had their own apps and marketing efforts. However, to compete against Uber and others seemed like a challenge of gargantuan proportions and would need an endless supply of marketing budget.

If you don’t have the money, then you better have damn good ideas to make you more than just another app provider. If anyone can bring unity to this fragmented industry, then you have something unique. Say hello to Cab Guru.

From start to finish (and we appreciate that it is an on-going process) how long did it take to develop and what were the biggest challenges in getting the app done?
The app and technology infrastructure was developed in three years.

Why did you feel there was a need in the marketplace for the Cab Guru aggregator app, given that you already offered APIs to other booking platforms/apps, such as Kabbee, which allowed them access to the Cordic system?
Cab Guru is an aggregator funded and operated by the cab companies for the benefit of the cab industry. This is a step towards cab companies working with one another - true collaboration.
How is Cab Guru different to other cab apps?
Cab Guru is different in that we are:
- UK based
- owned and led by the cab companies
- the first platform/aggregator to have brought unity to the industry
- using the most advanced tech and deepest level of integration with operators despatch systems

In terms of finance, we are obviously aiming to have a sustainable and profitable business but there’s no pressure or demand from financial institutes for a quick return on investment which in turn means we’re not squeezing prices, or putting pressure on operators or drivers for a quick profit.

We have the best and most experienced technology provider as a partner. To the best of our knowledge this unity in the industry has never happened before. We know it will take time for us to build and gain trust with the operators, but this is just the beginning of our journey.

Since the ‘soft-launch’ in December 2015, how many operators have taken up the option of partnering with you?
We currently have just over 150 operators on board as Cab Guru partners and we aim to have over 300 signed up by the end of 2016.

What percentage of each fare do you charge the operator?
There is no cost to sign up, it’s completely free and we don’t have any contracts to tie cab companies in. We charge the operator 10 per cent of each fare they receive through the app.

Is this fixed for any period and is it likely to change?
All charges are agreed by the directors of Cab Guru; the majority of which are cab company owners. Their aim is to reduce this rate to as low as possible over time.

Possibly the biggest single opposition to cab comparison apps/sites is the assertion that they promote the so-called ‘race to the bottom’.
As Cab Guru is only currently available to users of the Cordic despatch system, would a common local area pricing structure based on performance (i.e.: closest vehicle, customer rating etc) rather than cost comparison, have negated any suggestion that it too is just another ‘stack ‘em high sell ‘em cheap’ service that devalues the work done by cab drivers?
On the surface it appears that price comparison is a race to the bottom, but this is not beneficial to any operator or driver. In practice we have observed that consumer needs favour high availability of vehicles and quality of service over low prices.

Using intelligent technology and high availability of vehicles, reduced dead mileage can be achieved which is beneficial to the bottom line earnings of drivers.
Back in March this year when you fully launched the service, you reported that the aim was to have 50,000 taxis and private hire vehicles available on the app. Given that it is only three months since you made that statement, how many vehicles are currently on the system and do you think you will achieve the original target? We are well above our target to achieve these numbers. Currently we have availability in over 60 UK towns and cities and have over 15,000 vehicles in London and over 18,000 vehicles outside of London, which is the fastest ever growth for a cab booking app in the UK.

We can boast availability in more towns and cities in the UK than any other cab app in the market. This growth is down to the support and belief of the cab companies behind Cab Guru. We are receiving hundreds of requests from passenger car services all over the UK wishing to join the partner network and our on-boarding team are adding fleets each week.

It was widely reported that you raised £2 million of initial funding to kick-start the project. In comparison to others in the market place this is not a huge sum. What have those funds been invested in and will you be looking for another round of investment in the near future? From the outset we realised that just over £2 million in available funds is a fraction in comparison to some of the other cab apps out there. The true force behind Cab Guru is the participation and collaboration of each of the Cab Guru partners and shareholders.

Let’s not underestimate the role of good technology for success in this sector. Many app providers consider themselves more as technology companies. So what’s better than to involve the people who were the first in the world to introduce cab despatching via smartphones. The involvement of such a team has been critical to Cab Guru’s success.

We are investing the funds in marketing and further app development. We are working smartly with our budget and are making each penny work well for us.

With regards to any future funding, this would depend on the participating cab companies which hold the majority of shares in Cab Guru. There is no doubt that the existing infrastructure achieved in less than a year has put Cab Guru in a very strong position for further funding if it is required.

Would you consider external/non-Cordic operators to invest? Currently, there is no requirement for further funding but this would be a decision which all the participating cab companies would need to make for the benefit and success of Cab Guru and creating unity within the industry itself.

Whilst we fully appreciate that Cab Guru and Cordic are independent companies, access to Cab Guru is currently limited to Cordic users. Do you envisage the system eventually being opened to cab operators utilising other despatch systems? One of the key elements of Cab Guru’s success which was fundamental in obtaining investment was the technology aspect. Rather than re-inventing the wheel, partnering with a market leader to provide the technology behind the app has been key to Cab Guru’s success.

With regards to non-Cordic despatch systems, yes - Cab Guru wishes to integrate with them ASAP.

You have the booking and despatch capabilities in Cordic and now (albeit independent) a nationwide comparison app. With this in mind, some might suggest that the next stop could be to invest in your own cab company/fleet. Would this ever be considered? And if so, why/why not? It does not make sense to invest in a cab company. The IP of Cab Guru’s app technology belongs to Cab Guru Limited and the majority of its shareholders are cab operators. In the shareholder agreement we stated that obtaining an operator’s license would not be allowed. It’s not what the shareholders wish to do. The structure of this company is different to any other aggregators in the market.

Given the rapidly changing face of the cab trade, where do you envisage the company being in 18 months’ time? In 18 months’ time, we’d like to be the largest aggregator of cabs in the UK and continue to bring more unity to the industry through building trust and introducing some very innovative technology as well as the app.

We want to stop the race to the bottom and work with cab companies to drive up standards and service which will help drivers earn a decent living. Experience in running cab companies helps us achieve our objectives.

We want to attract the drivers, who left the cab companies in favour of Uber, back and help the existing UK local cab companies thrive once again.

Our partners are already seeing the benefits. One owner has recruited 12 new drivers since they went live with Cab Guru in their operating area a few months back and another has had eight new drivers sign up in one week!

As we said previously, we are aiming to have a sustainable and profitable business but there is no pressure or demand from financial institutes for a quick return on investment.

We also have the best and most experienced technology provider as a partner. To the best of our knowledge, such unity has never happened in the industry before. We know it will take time for us to build and gain trust with the operators, but this is just the beginning of our journey.
A TAXI DRIVER has pleaded guilty at Manchester Magistrates’ Court of dumping two bags of rubbish on the streets of Salford.

Basmarat Ahmed (51) also admitted to dumping a further eight bin bags of waste at the same location.

Ahmed originally claimed in court that someone had dumped the bags in front of his vehicle while he was shopping, but the taxi driver was identified by council CCTV footage after a mobile council enforcement patrol saw two heavy duty bin bags blocking a pavement.

The security film showed Mr Ahmed taking two bags of rubbish from the boot of his taxi and “throwing them hard against a fence” before driving away and leaving them there.

When interviewed by council officials, the hackney carriage said that he had found the two bags of rubbish next to his vehicle after he had parked his car on the corner of Sherborne Street before he went shopping for a new mobile phone.

Councillor David Lancaster, cabinet member for the environment and community safety, said: “Mr Ahmed should have done the responsible thing and put the rubbish in a bin, not thrown it into a Salford street. I hope that this makes people think twice before using the streets of Salford as a rubbish bin.”

Mr Ahmed was fined £700 and ordered to pay costs and compensation of £797 with a victim’s surcharge of £70.

Drivers unhappy with misconduct points

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE (PHV) drivers say Leicester City Council should abandon its controversial misconduct scheme after it was revealed that 104 penalty points had been awarded in the last five months.

The East Midlands local authority set up the punishment programme in December 2015, in the face of stiff opposition from the city’s licensed cab trade, which gives points to drivers who are found guilty of committing offences.

Taxi and private hire drivers have to face a council hearing, where their licence could be revoked, if they receive a total of 12 points within three years.

The cab branch of the RMT union has fought the council points scheme “tooth and nail” since it was introduced and have staged a number of demonstrations in protest at what they see as a threat to their members’ livelihoods.

Leicester Council licence officials say that 104 penalty points have so far been issued for 26 offences.

In 28 cases, points were issued to taxi and PHV drivers for parking inappropriately in restricted areas of Jubilee Square, Horsefair Street, Belvoir Street and Highcross Street.

Points were also issued in six cases after vehicles were not presented for their compulsory six month safety check.

In 20 cases, points were issued to taxi and PHV drivers for parking inappropriately in restricted areas of Jubilee Square, Horsefair Street, Belvoir Street and Highcross Street.

Points were also issued in six cases after vehicles were not presented for their compulsory six month safety check.

In 28 cases, the local authority has yet to rule on a number of infringements and in a further five, licensed cab drivers have avoided the issuing of points after they made defence representations to city council officials.

Leicester mayor, sir Peter Soulsby, the architect of the points penalty system, said: “These figures make it clear that while the vast majority of the city’s 2,000 or so licences taxi drivers comply with the reasonable standards we expect from them, there are some who are still falling short of that.

“We brought in the 12-month trial of the penalty point scheme to boost customer confidence and deal with concerns that had been raised about issues, such as illegal parking, road-worthiness of vehicles and ensuring that drivers display the correct identification.

“We are now four months into the 12 month period and I intend to let the pilot scheme run its course before deciding whether or not it should become permanent.”

Leicestershire RMT spokesman Umar Khan said: “We still believe that the points system is deeply flawed and we will be making the case for it to be scrapped when the year long pilot ends.”
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