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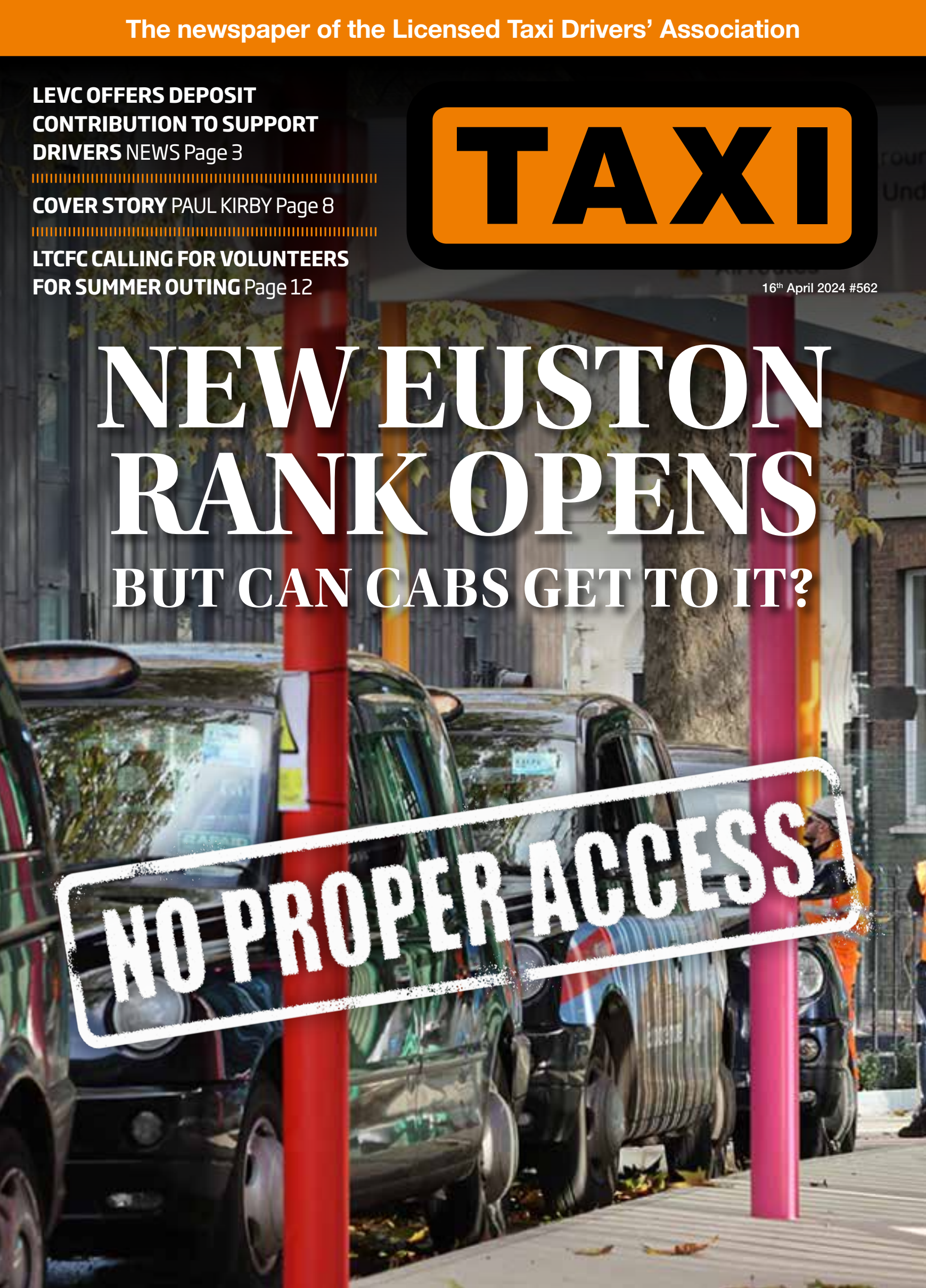
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**TAXI**

16<sup>th</sup> April 2024 #562

# NEW EUSTON RANK OPENS BUT CAN CABS GET TO IT?

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## EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL DISMISSES KNOWLEDGE EXAMINER'S CLAIM

A former Knowledge examiner has had his claim of unfair dismissal against TFL dismissed by an employment tribunal. Mr Harvey had alleged unfair treatment linked to a supposed unethical scoring quota in the Knowledge of London (KoL), which he was instructed to enforce as an examiner.

The issue arose in March 2018, when, Mr Harvey's manager, Knowledge of London Manager, Katie Chennells, raised with him that the scores he was awarding were 'noticeably higher' than those of his colleagues and well above the Department's average of 51%. Ms Chennells later suggested that the claimant could be 'inflating his scores' by repeating the questions he was asking candidates, which was enabling them to 'rehearse his questions and give perfect answers'.

As the issue continued over a number of years, Harvey claimed that he had been attempting to deliver a 'modern Knowledge of London', in which he 'penalised hesitation fairly in relation to which stage each candidate is on'. Mr Harvey added that he was 'open to reward candidates for more than one valid route from A to B'. He argued that he considered his 'style' of examination to be 'relevant to driving a taxi in 2022'. He also argued that he didn't believe 'statistics alone' should determine how an exam is delivered and raised concerns about a lack of consistency and quality control.

Mr Harvey's claim of unfair dismissal was dismissed, with the Tribunal finding that Ms Chennells had 'run out of options' after attempting to address the situation multiple times. It found that Mr Harvey had 'convinced himself' that the only way he could achieve what was required by his manager was by 'doctoring' his results and 'deliberately failing' 30 per cent of candidates.



## JFK TAXI DISPATCHERS CHARGED WITH TAKING BRIBES

Nine taxi dispatchers at John F. Kennedy airport have been charged for their participation in a "reprehensible" bribery scheme, which saw them taking thousands of dollars in bribes from cabbies who

wanted to cut the passenger pick-up line. The Port Authority began receiving complaints in 2022 that some of the dispatchers were accepting cash from drivers who wanted to skip the queue in the central holding area so that they could pick up fares quicker.

Dispatchers at JFK oversee how taxis move from a central holding area to the different terminal pickup areas. The dispatchers are expected to ensure yellow cabs leave the holding area in the order in which they arrive, whilst avoiding congestion and making sure that every passenger can get a cab.

The defendants allegedly pocketed more than \$12,000 in bribes total between January 2022 and February 2024. Four of them accepted more than \$1,000 in bribes each, and are now facing first-degree felony charges of commercial bribe receiving brought by the Queens District Attorney.

PHOTO CREDIT HISTORIC ENGLAND



## ST JOHN'S WOOD CABMEN'S SHELTER LISTED

Historic England has announced that the St John's Wood Cabmen's Shelter has been awarded Grade II status by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on their advice. This was the last of the 13 remaining green huts to be given protected status in view of their historical significance.

## LEVC OFFERS £1,500 FINANCE DEPOSIT CONTRIBUTION

LEVC, manufacturer of the zero-emission capable, electric TX taxi has announced that it will be offering a £1500 deposit contribution to support drivers looking to purchase a new vehicle. The contribution is available on all new TX taxi models across all finance types offered by LEVC Financial Services, with zero customer deposit and at a subsidised finance rate of 10.51% APR representative. This contribution offsets the recent reduction in the Plug-In Taxi Grant which came into effect in early April, with the grant reduced from £7500 to £6000.



## UBER BACK IN COURT IN AUSTRALIA AMID CLAIMS IT SOUGHT TO "DESTROY" RIVAL

An Australian Court has heard how Uber allegedly sought to "destroy" an Australian taxi app using corporate espionage. The company behind GoCatch, an Australian Taxi Operator, is suing Uber in the supreme court of Victoria, claiming the rideshare giant knowingly launched UberX illegally in Australia with the intention of harming GoCatch.

The company, named Taxi Apps, has also accused Uber of serious misconduct, including corporate espionage and hacking competitor systems. The Court heard Uber developed a spyware tool called "Surfcam" to steal GoCatch drivers' data, including their names and phone numbers, with Uber's then boss in Australia, David Rohrsheim, telling a colleague on 31st July 2013: "We are aggressively cold-calling [without disclosing how we got their number] and won 56 of [GoCatch's] drivers." Uber has denied claims it harmed GoCatch's business and has said it would defend the matter "vigorously".



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# Mayoral Contest in Full Swing

If the last three years have shown us anything, it's the current Mayor and his team's contempt for drivers and single-minded agenda, which is driven by two wheels, not four.

## Steve's comment

**W**e do irony big time here at the LTDA! As the cab trade suffers one of its quietest Easters for a good few years, almost certainly down to a combination of a long school holiday and Ramadan coinciding, which meant far fewer people at work, and a dearth of middle eastern visitors, here at the LTDA we have still been even busier than normal.

### Busier than ever

It's not just the astronomical number of PCNs, Conditional Offers and Summonses for a variety of alleged motoring offences we are dealing with. The biggest increase in calls and visits from members right now relates to licence suspensions from TfL. It's almost as if they are having some sort of purge and for a variety of reasons. The highest number are for points, and failing to notify them when you receive them. We are also seeing a large number of suspensions on medical grounds as TfL

seem to be interpreting DVLA group 2 licence requirements in increasingly weird ways.

Please remember, if you get anything from TfL, relating to your 'fitness to be licensed' do NOT reply, call us first, we will advise you on what to say, and increasingly importantly, what NOT to say.

Equally, if you receive a complaint, which are also increasing in number, along with the stupidity of the reasons, a Single Justice Procedure Notice (SJPN) or anything you are unsure of, call us first. It's what we are here for, we have your back and your best interests in everything we do.

### Uber Denial

Rather unusually for Uber they have gone public on a denial that their attempts to recruit cabbies onto their platform has anything to do with the Bulit21 claim, which is in the process of being launched. Say what you want about them, but their marketing and PR teams are very busy people, and for them to take the time to deny what is in reality just another cab trade rumour, makes me just a bit suspicious.

Incidentally, I still advise any cabbies who have yet to sign up to

the claim or sign the appropriate paperwork, to do so ASAP. There's nothing to lose, everything to gain and the fact that Uber are showing an interest suggests to me that they are concerned.



### Mayoral election

The latest polls I've seen at the time of writing this still suggest that the incumbent Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, is firmly on track for re-election, with a 13-point lead over his closest rival, Conservative Candidate, Susan Hall AM.

Khan and Labour are currently on 43%, with Susan Hall on 30% and next and perhaps surprisingly the Green candidate, Zoe Garbett on 10%, followed by Liberal Democrat candidate, Rob Blackie on 8%, Howard Cox for Reform UK on 7% and 'Another candidate' on 2%. A former Lib Dem London mayoral candidate, Siobhan Benita, has even now endorsed Khan.

As the campaign steps up, Susan Hall is hitting all the points I would have expected might help her cause. She is highlighting at every chance she gets that she would scrap the ULEZ expansion on Day 1, making public the current Mayor's previous support for a pay-per-mile road user charging scheme and talking about crime and her plans to recruit more police officers to make London safer, but it just doesn't seem to be cutting through.

Meanwhile, Sadiq Khan is committing to furthering the walking and cycling 'revolution' and is determined to press ahead with capital's 2030 net zero target, however unrealistic it might be in view of cost-of-living pressures, the ongoing lack of affordable electric vehicles and unreliable and expensive charging infrastructure. None of which bodes well for us.

### Project Detroit

As I am writing this, I am seeing a spread in the Daily Mail on 'Project Detroit' through which TfL and the current Mayor have been exploring the feasibility of a pay-per-mile road user charging scheme and how it would work in practice, with £21 million



09:02 · 12/04/2024 From Earth · 113K Views

reportedly spent on the project to date. The Evening Standard suggests that a social media post highlighting this from Susan Hall's campaign was "misleading", as the project is looking at other things not just pay-per mile. The Standard shared a TfL statement which said that "As of January 2024, approximately £3m had been spent on elements of the Future RUC (road user charging) project and it is now closed." Meanwhile, Khan has recently said such a system is not being developed and is off the table. You can see Hall's response to the criticism above.

Whatever you believe here (and I know what I think) the fact is, he's previously described some kind of pay-per mile scheme as being inevitable. If the last three years have shown us anything, it's the current Mayor and his team's contempt for drivers and single-minded agenda, which is driven by two wheels, not four.

### Support for drivers

Once we know who we are dealing with post 2<sup>nd</sup> May, we will be pushing hard to get our trade the support it needs and to ensure that the policies of whoever it is, don't put the trade under even greater pressure and place all the burden to deliver a net zero London on cabbies. We are doing our part, and its time that this was recognised by our Mayor, whoever that may be. **LTDA**





# Give Us a Sign

The difference in Scotland was that the signs there flashed brightly between the restriction times to make drivers fully aware.



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## On Point

**D**rivers are still getting caught out by cameras and new road restrictions all over London in increasing numbers. There are a million things that we now have to consider when entering any road, or pulling out at a junction. Is it a school street with a speed restriction in place? Has the speed limit recently been reduced? If I enter that yellow box, am I going to get stuck and receive a hefty fine? The worst part is the confusing signage which makes it that bit harder to work out. I often find myself thinking there must be a better way...

### A better way

I was in Scotland last week and noticed quite a few 20mph school street speed limits in place.

The difference was that the signs there flashed brightly between

the restriction times to make drivers fully aware. You couldn't miss them and every driver I saw respected them. I found myself wondering why these signs are not in place around London, as they are much easier to spot and would help ensure drivers don't make mistakes. As I say, they seem to work perfectly and have the desired effect.

At certain junctions in London (Bath Street and Old Street for example) there are approximately ten signs, five on either side of the road. You have to be able to compute all of these and work out what you can and can't do before proceeding and the school restriction signs are just one, amongst many.

I would hate to think the London councils are more interested in fining car drivers than children's safety...

### Lower Belgrave street school restriction

Over the last few weeks, I have seen a rise in the amount of PCNs issued by Westminster Council for entering Lower

Belgrave Street. There is a new camera that has been put in place and it is filming you as you go across Ebury Street into it. Please be aware and try to pass this on to fellow cabbies. The sign in place is below.

### Harrods zigzags

Whilst we are talking PCNs, by far and away the biggest PCN issuing location is still outside Harrods on the Brompton Road for being stopped on the zig zags. Cabbies tell me you



can look and see what way the camera on the opposite side of the road is facing but £80 a pop to TfL's coffers is, in my opinion, certainly not worth the risk.

### Failure to launch?

Whilst working in the cab last Sunday, I had a fare in who asked me if I had joined up to the American mini cab app that I refuse to name. My first reaction was to take offence, but I took the view it was a genuine question (I have had plenty of customers over the years who have enjoyed telling me how good they thought they were). I explained that I would never join them and went on to explain why, you all know the many reasons so I won't elaborate.

The passenger then said the reason they had asked was because they had found that they could order a black cab on it earlier in the week and so had a go. They were given a wait time of 20 minutes for the cab to arrive. Unfortunately for them and wholly predictably, they were cancelled shortly before the end of that 20-minute wait. The passenger went on to explain that they ended up walking outside his flat and managed to hail a cab within a couple of minutes.

The mini cab app has gone out of its way to promote that they are launching Black Cabs on their app and there are lots of theories as to why. Some say they are taking on FREENOW and Gett, because they offer both mini cabs and proper taxis, and they can't. Some think it may be something to do with the *Bulit21* legal action. Who really knows, but what I do know is, is that not one cabbie I have spoken to is even considering signing up to it. As when they tried this previously a few did sign up and maybe a FEW may do so again, but it will never be enough to offer any sort of decent coverage or real service.

I know as a trade it can be very difficult to get us all on the same page, but this is a subject the vast majority of us agree on. ■ LTDA







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# Euston Taxi Rank

It's great...when you finally get there! And while the rank is very nice to look at, actually getting to it from the West is a total nightmare.



The New Euston Taxi Rank.



## Kirby's PCN Hotspots

The enforcement camera 'hotspots' that I am hearing about all the time from drivers who've been caught out are the following:

### YELLOW BOX CAMERAS

- Upper Woburn Place/ Endsleigh Gardens
- Eversholt Street/ Churchway
- All along Piccadilly
- Park Street/Green St W1
- Vauxhall Cross
- Shepherds Bush Green (Westfield)
- Hans Road (Rear of Harrods)
- Victoria Street/Palace Street
- Bayswater Road/Westbourne Street
- Bayswater Road/Brook Street
- Bayswater Road/Hyde Park Street

### CAMERA PCN ENFORCEMENT

- Harrods (Brompton Road) Over-ranking/Zig-Zags
- Tottenham Court Road
- Sopwith Way (Chelsea Bridge) Do Not Enter
- Cornhill (coming from Leadenhall Street)
- Bath Street EC1 No Motor Vehicles 24/7
- Wilton Road, Victoria Station Over-ranking
- Edgware Road W2 Red Route
- Borough High Street Red Route
- Tower Bridge Road Red Route
- Park Plaza Westminster Bridge Hotel, No Right Turn
- Lower Belgrave Street AM/PM Timed School Restrictions

### 20MPH MOBILE CAMERAS

- Vauxhall Bridge Road/ Neathouse Place
- Harrow Road/Hermitage Street
- Bayswater Road

### \*CHANGE OF SPEED LIMIT\*

- Bath Road Hounslow reduced from 40mph to 30mph

- Aldwych, No U-Turn across the solid white line. This is police enforced and endorsable with 3 points.

LTDA

## Knowledge is power

As most drivers will now be aware, the new Euston Station Taxi Rank, which is located in the Eastern Gardens (we were previously in the Western Gardens), opened on 7<sup>th</sup> April.

### New facilities

This official opening was on the back of an open day a few days earlier that was attended by many drivers, all wanting to get an early look at it. They were the first to see the brand-new rank facility, which has a similar number of rank spaces as before, and with a separate drop-off area.

The new rank has under tarmac sensors which, if they work as described, will monitor the number of taxis on the rank and can send the live information to the matrix screens outside the station to assist drivers by notification, whether the rank is full or not. This is obviously reliant on the technology working as it should,

so maybe do not hold your breath. Exiting the rank is via a left or right onto Euston Road.

### Access issues

Although the rank is very nice to look at, getting to it from the West is a total nightmare. This concern was brought to the attention of all the bodies involved in the development of the rank at every stage, but obviously it fell on deaf ears.

From the North, access into the rank from Eversholt Street is fine. From the South, from Upper Woburn Place is also OK, as is from the East via right into Churchway.

It's from the West that there is a major issue, as we cannot turn left into Eversholt street or Churchway. This we are told, is due to previous accidents at these junctions, which by the way, did not involve taxis.

### Ridiculous detours

When you take either of the two totally ridiculous detours required, your passengers will either see the station on the left as you queue to turn right into Upper Woburn Place and then

drive AWAY from the destination, only to return sometime later at the exact same junction, or they will see the station in the distance, straight ahead of them, while you turn right at UCH and into Gower Street, before weaving your way up to the station through Tavistock Square and Upper Woburn Place. Then, with potentially angry passengers at the extra time it has taken and also with an unnecessary extra cost to them.

As it's still early days, let's hope that common sense prevails and easier access from the West is given to taxis, but again, don't hold your breath.

### Yellow box enforcement

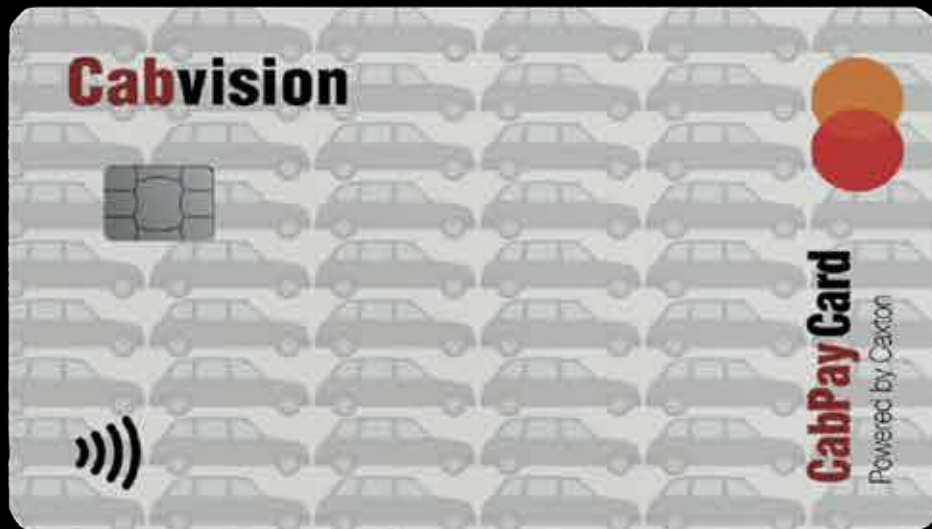
Also, and very importantly, the yellow box junctions both in Upper Woburn Place/Endsleigh Gardens and Eversholt Street/Station entrance are camera enforced and are live with PCN enforcement active, so please do not enter them unless your exit is clear.

For disabled passengers and others with accessibility needs, we can still use the old taxi rank where they can meet the station staff for help and assistance.



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# Al Fresco 1943-2024

Alan Fisher pays tribute to former *TAXI* columnist, long standing taxi trade face, prolific writer and editor, Alan 'Al' Fresco.

If you read *TAXI* regularly, you'll be familiar with the entertaining tales of Al Fresco. His time with this newspaper went way back to the days of Janet Gordon's editorship. Sadly, Alan passed away on 4<sup>th</sup> April following a fairly long illness.

As the vernacular goes, Al had been around the block a few times, with our lives running in an amazingly similar crooked line.

## Early life

We both arrived in this world as Alan F, both had roots in East London's Mile End, and both went to Davenant Grammar School – which in those days was based next door to the Sally Army's soup kitchen in Whitechapel.

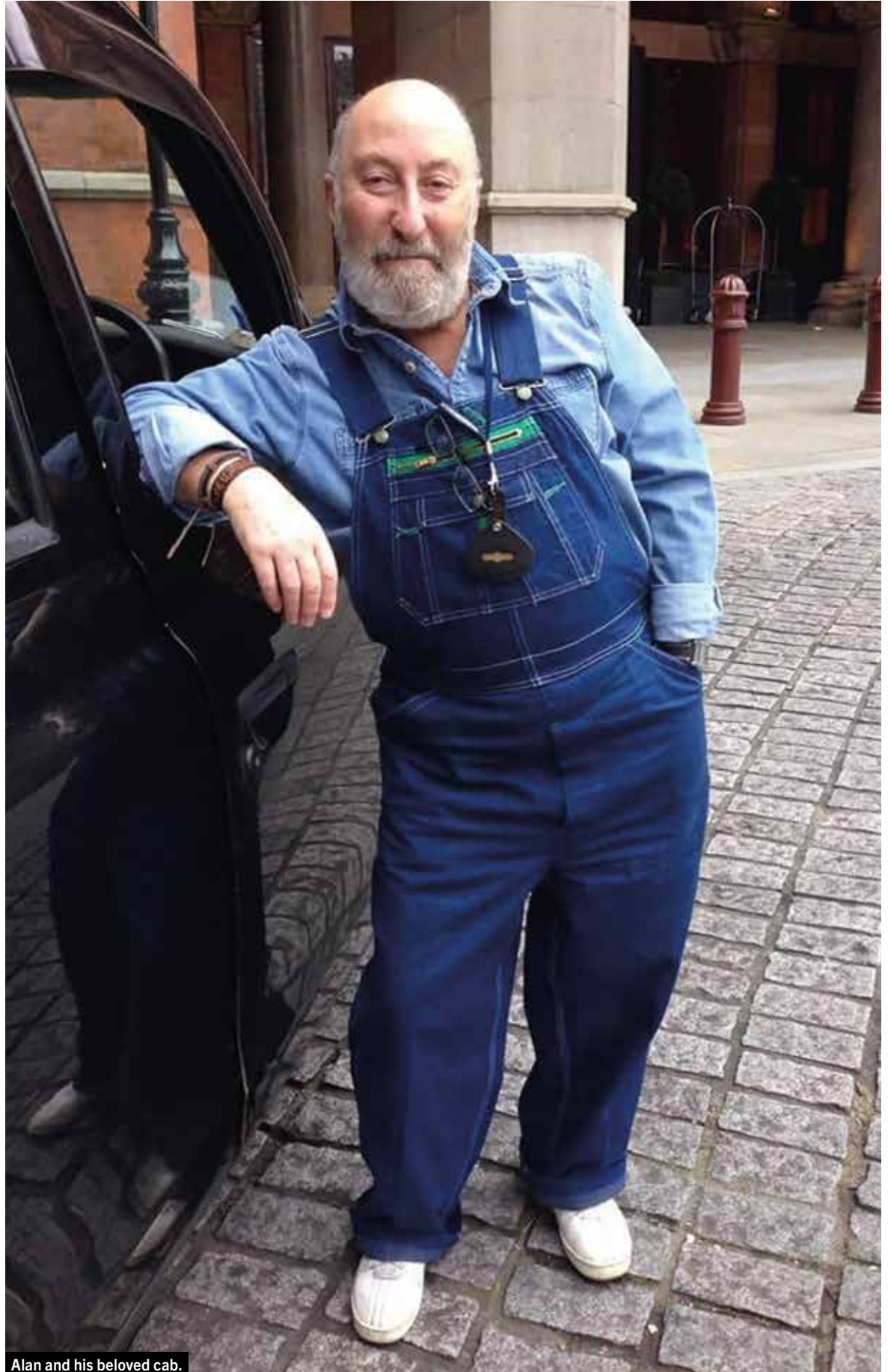
With the SA basement backing onto the school playground, even we hardy young males knew enough about pungent odours not to venture down their dark staircase to get our ball back after an errant kick sent it over the railings – at least not if you wanted to avoid fellow bus travellers holding their noses on the 2d bus fare home after the bell had sounded!

Although going to a grammar school at that time was described as being somewhat "poncy", by the East End locals, it taught us how to put a few words together. We both independently decided to go on the Knowledge... It was either that or risk becoming a future Prime Minister.

## Joining the ranks

Al got his Green Badge in 1966 and I rolled up four years later. As the 1970s progressed, we were both pushing our droshkies around town – I looking as normal as I could, whereas Al decided to make a statement by wearing white glasses almost half the size of his face and completed the exercise by sporting a ponytail!

However, that Davenant-taught ability to put a few life-changing sentences together became another part of our lives and certainly made a statement for me that overtook Al's fashion sense, when I began writing a regular column in *Taxi Globe*, as the sex-mad Lana Sheriff,



Alan and his beloved cab.



followed soon after by the mysterious pro-wrestling guru, Mr X. A ponytail looked quite sensible compared to me!

### Editor Al

Meanwhile, Al edited *Taxi Trade Times*, *London Taxi Times* as well as becoming the Editor of *Steering Wheel* - which he and his Assistant Editor, Ernie Keates, later renamed *The Cab Driver*. He also headed Radio Taxis' *Mountview News* for many years, whereas I went to Dial-a-Cab's *Call Sign*.

During our total time at the radio circuit mags, Spurs won now! Coincidence? I think not! But we did keep one secret from the radio circuit world in that Al occasionally wrote for me in *Call Sign* using a moniker that we shared, for as and when we wanted a news story, with a different named writer - J.P.Duval. DaC never minded but *Mountview* were fussy and didn't want to be seen as being involved with Dial-a-Cab in any way. And so J.P.Duval was born.

As time went on, I started to get lazy and cut down my cab driving hours whilst doing more writing. Al on the other hand was a grafter and thought nothing of putting in long days in his manual cab. A manual taxi in central London for a day man!

### Work and family life

There was the occasion when his darling wife Carole arranged to meet him in Oxford Street so that they could go out for dinner. He was in his taxi and turned his light off, but then his radio offered him a trip to Heathrow just 30 minutes before they were due to meet! "I couldn't turn it down", he explained later. What Carole said in response is unknown but apparently, he didn't do it again!

But as we get older, we tire more easily and at one point, on doctor's advice, he gave the cab a rest and moved into another field. He couldn't bring himself to leave the trade altogether, because one of his biggest loves was speaking to other drivers and believe me there was no one around more interesting to listen to than Al Fresco. He could make the folding of a newspaper sound interesting. So he combined his cab knowledge with his cab chat and went out onto the ranks doing market research and insurance sales on behalf of Cabsurance.

He spent so much time talking about the cab trade to drivers, that the selling part seemed to fall by the wayside! So as he began to feel better, he eventually went



Alan and his family.

"We both independently decided to go on the Knowledge... It was either that or risk becoming a future Prime Minister."

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back onto the cab. But his health slowly deteriorated until his sad death earlier this month.

### A legacy continued

Alan's taxi legacy continues through his son Danny, who earned his Green Badge in 2000 but also got himself involved in the magazine side of the trade. In Danny's case it wasn't so much in the writing side but more with the layout. He helped his dad with *Taxi Trade Times*, *Halt*, *Mountview News* and others. He was also the layout man for *Call Sign* and did that for 20 years! So the Fresco name continues to be aligned with the taxi trade. Alan would be so proud.

I will miss our chats so much, but if we do go elsewhere after departing this place, then they have a lovely man and amazing raconteur heading their way.

**Rest in peace my friend.**  
Alan Fisher

Thanks to Alan Fisher and Danny Fresco for sharing their memories and photos of Alan. Our thoughts are with all who knew and loved Alan at this difficult time. We know he will be missed by many. **TAXI**





# Spring Update from London Taxi Drivers' Charity for Children

The latest events, celebrating a silver award win, call for volunteers and funding appeals.

**T**he LTCFC were thrilled to be shortlisted for the Smiley Film Awards. They went on to win a silver award, coming second in the People's Choice Awards. They would like to say a big thank you to all who voted for and supported them.

The Charity also recently funded a day of entertainment at the Stephen Hawking School in East London for the children at the school, with more severe disabilities, who were unable to attend their Mad Hatter's Party. The Committee decided to bring the party to them! The day was filled with fun activities like making

slime, creating giant bubbles, and an interactive experience with animals and reptiles.

### Funding appeals

LTCFC's dedicated volunteer drivers play a crucial role in supporting the charity's mission to help children with special needs. In addition to organising children's outings, LTCFC also funds appeals for support to meet essential needs. If you are aware of any children in London who require funding for medical equipment, learning devices, educational toys, or necessary accessible equipment, they encourage you to bring these

cases to their attention.

To qualify for funding, the child must be under 18 years old and reside in London. Please note, they do not fund appeals for holidays or cash payments. Each appeal will be reviewed and voted upon by the Committee. Your assistance in identifying families who could benefit from support

would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Honorary Secretary, Malcolm Shaffron, on [m.shaffron@ltdcfc.org.uk](mailto:m.shaffron@ltdcfc.org.uk), with any potential cases. **TAXI**

### Calling all taxi heroes

The LTCFC needs your wheels for their epic summer trip to Hertfordshire Zoo, taking place on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July. The more drivers they have, the more children get to enjoy the zoo-tastic adventure, so it's really important we get your names down ASAP. Please email John on [j.godfrey@ltdcfc.org.uk](mailto:j.godfrey@ltdcfc.org.uk) or WhatsApp Claire on 07956612307 to be added to the LTCFC drivers' WhatsApp group.



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## LOTTO WINNER!

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# European News Round-up



Wim recaps news from the past month, including Russian backlash, the EU's PWD, and more...

## International correspondent

### Power of persuasion

'Ein Meinungsmultiplikator,' a keen spreader and multiplier of opinions, is what an old Berlin taxi-colleague, Heinz Peter, longstanding veteran in the German and European taxi industry, warned politicians when it came to taxi drivers' opinions.

He also noted how devastating these opinions could be for some politicians, especially at election time. With voting periods approaching – most notably London and the UK as a whole – taxi drivers traditionally don't keep their light under a bushel, happily sharing their (political) opinions with customers. As Heinz Peter advised his political friends - at election time many of the cleverest politicians should include taxi drivers in their campaigns.



### "If you're a Tajik, I won't go with you"

In Russia the opposite seems to happen. Public opinion is turning on cab drivers, who in Russia don't usually give their opinion on local or national politics for obvious reasons. After the dreadful events at the Crocus City Hall near Moscow, where 140 people were killed in a terrorist attack on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, Russian public opinion has turned against migrants, of which there are at least 10 million in the country.

After it became known that the perpetrators of the terrorist attack were citizens of Tajikistan,

a former Soviet state and the poorest country in Central Asia, reports of racist hostility against Tajiks and people from other Central Asian countries has increased. Most Tajiks move to Russia to work, where they hope for better job opportunities than in their home country. Most taxi drivers in Moscow are non-Russians and often from Central Asian countries.

Not long after the event, Moscow taxi drivers posted chats on social media with customers asking them if they were Tajik. "If you're Tajik, I won't go with you," customers wrote the day after the attack.

### Once more: the EU's Platform Work Directive

Once more I need to regale you with stories from the EU, this time it's Strasbourg (France), where, on 24<sup>th</sup> April, the European Parliament will ratify the deal between that institution, the EU Council and the EU Commission to rubberstamp the vote (on 11th March) for the EU-wide Platform Work Directive (PWD).

Some crafty wheeling and dealing by the Belgian EU presidency – the country's EU-representatives are masters at this - left Germany (vote undecided) and France (voted against) out in the cold. Estonia (home of the Bolt



platform) and Greece, initially against the PWD, surprisingly changed their minds on the Directive and suddenly voted in favour, thereby creating the right number of EU-countries to pass the emaciated PWD, which had some of its teeth pulled. Like the automatic presumption of employment when working for a platform.

### Nations to water down PWD?

In two years time, the EU Directive will have to be turned into national law. But with what vigour the EU-countries do that is the question. Some EU countries may get strong anti-platform legislation (with an automatic presumption of employment for platform workers), while others will aim at a weaker version. But the article containing "pioneering provisions regulating automated monitoring and decision-making systems powered by algorithms," stays in. A potentially powerful article, as many platforms like to leave human relations (including automatic dismissal of drivers) to robotic algorithms. According to the European trade unions, this will "further safeguard the dignity, privacy and working conditions of platform workers."

Uber and co. will have to lobby

each EU member state, having nearly scuppered the vote for the PWD with their millions of lobby Euros. How the Belgians swung this sudden change in the votes remains a mystery. Leading European and Uber friendly countries Germany and France were extremely unhappy to be left out in the EU cold. Perhaps – as the vote was before Easter – the Belgians shipped huge loads of chocolate eggs to Greece and Estonia.

Speaking of Belgium, the Brussels Court of Appeal considered Uber's activities (under UberX from 2015 to 2022) illegal. The Belgian taxi trade is mulling over suing Uber for compensation, as the Australian taxi trade did, netting almost £142 million. And as BULit21 gets underway in London, these cases may be the start of a large number of similar demands worldwide. TAXI





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# Challenges Across the Map

If it's clear the trade is still not ready, during a cost-of-living crisis and with escalating operating costs, should a policy still be pushed through to the detriment of local people and businesses?



## National Correspondent

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**Y**ou sometimes hear drivers in London say they have it worse than any other taxi driver. The reality is that the taxi industry is largely facing similar issues across all regions. Outside of London, drivers are finding the cost of new taxis, especially in cities like Glasgow, Manchester or Liverpool to name but a few. This is making it extremely difficult to move into electric or zero emission capable alternatives. As a result, many are simply leaving the trade.



### Support for drivers in Oxford

Some councils are listening to drivers. Oxford City Council recently agreed to postpone the introduction of new emission standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles by a year. Yes, representatives in the area wanted a three-year extension, but the dialogue was had and a compromise was achieved.

The initial strategy made public in January 2019, aimed to significantly lower the city's air pollution levels by enforcing

stricter emissions criteria for taxis. Sound familiar? The plan was to mandate all new and renewal taxi licences to meet Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle (ULEV) standards by January 2025. The phased approach intended to upgrade the fleet gradually, beginning with a minimum Euro 4 standard for renewals from 2020 and escalating to full ULEV compliance for all applications by the 2025 deadline.

Things don't always go to plan though. A devastating pandemic, war in Ukraine and a cost-of-living crisis, has quite rightly prompted a re-think.

### Disappearing cabs in Glasgow

Unfortunately, not all authorities continue to be forgiving. In Glasgow, it has long been reported that the black cab industry is on the brink of a significant crisis, with a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) deadline of 1st June poised to force a substantial number of taxis off the road there. Earlier this year, I spoke with a seasoned cabbie from the area who had been in the job for 25 years. He was concerned that hundreds of the city's hackneys could disappear, signalling a situation that would affect the black cabs of Glasgow now, and other UK cities facing similar challenges later.

Under LEZ rules, older petrol and diesel taxis were restricted

from entering Glasgow's city centre from 1st June 2023. However, many taxi operators applied for a 12-month exemption to 31st May 2024, to provide them more time to finance or find a new black cab or retrofit their existing cab. More than 600 black cabs were handed an exemption from the 1,383 registered in the city at the time.

Some might say the 12-month extension granted last year mirrors the support offered by Oxford City Council recently. However, if it remains clear that the trade is still not ready, during a cost-of-living crisis and with escalating operating costs, should a policy still be pushed through to the detriment of local people and businesses?



## Why is Uber expanding again into new regions and cities?

Uber has recently received licences to operate in several new cities, but what is prompting the shift in gears to expand again in the UK? This year, we have already seen Uber's strategic growth plan, which includes securing operating licences in Swansea and Stockton-on-Tees, and with plans afoot to break new ground in Hull and Aberdeen. The licence in Swansea marked its first new city venture since 2017.

### What's changed?

Uber's recent licensing victories mark a strategic shift, especially after ending its partnership with Autocab's iGo network last year. The company's expansion strategy appears to target areas with a declining number of taxi drivers or where local authorities have raised concerns about taxi shortages.

There has been debate sparked from some within the industry about whether Uber is leveraging demand insights from the now-defunct 'Local Cab' service to support its expansion strategy. However, given the recent launches include areas outside of previous 'Local Cab' operation, it would seem the latest expansion program has a broader thinking behind it.

### Future proofing?

The impending election and potential changes to cross-border working rules, as hinted by senior Labour figures, add another layer of strategic planning for Uber. The company's expansion into these areas could safeguard uninterrupted service coverage across the UK, should these regulatory changes come into effect.

Taxi driver recruitment remains a big hurdle for many authorities, not least here in London. But is a heavy focus on private hire services, ever the answer to encouraging more people to become hackney carriage licence holder.

■ TAXI



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## InstaVolt supports black cab drivers in VAT fight

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InstaVolt, the UK's largest public rapid EV charging network, has just launched its largest ultra-rapid EV charging superhub in the capital at historic Syon Park in Brentford. The new 14-charger hub supports EV drivers and drivers of electric black cabs in London when needing to charge, saving time by offering a reliable, fast and convenient charge.

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# What's On? West End

Charlotte reviews some of London's top shows that you can check out yourself or recommend to passengers.

## Under the spotlight



### SIX The Musical – Vaudeville Theatre

Having first premiered at Edinburgh Fringe in 2017, after being written by two history-obsessed students from Cambridge University, this beloved show has come a long way to becoming a West End staple with a hugely devoted following. Running just shy of 90 minutes, therefore being one of the shortest durations you'll have in a theatre, once the show gets going it really doesn't stop. It's a high energy rollercoaster musical about the six wives of King Henry VIII, but it's not a period drama. Instead it's a modern retelling, with each of the wives being a composite of several real-life pop stars. For example, Catherine of Arago is modelled on a mixture of Beyoncé, Jennifer Lopez, and Jennifer Hudson, while Anne Boleyn has elements of Miley Cyrus, Avril Lavigne, and Lily Allen.

The premise is that the six wives are competing to see who drew the shortest straw and had the worst time, each performing a musical number that tells their story and reflects their persona. There are beautiful ballads, powerful pop-rock anthems, and everything in between. The greatest thing about the show is how accessible it is, suitable for all the family, this is a glitzy, high-energy romp that should not be missed!



SIX The Musical is booking until November 2024.

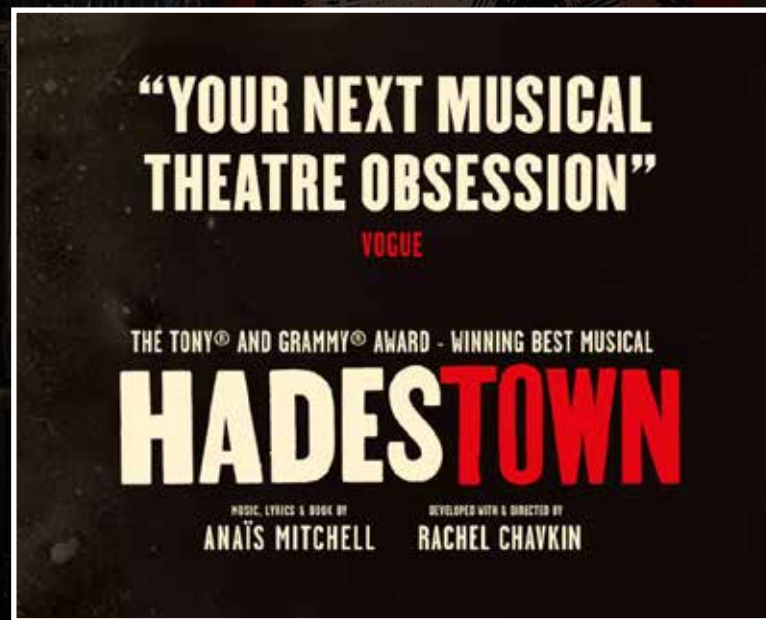
### Hadestown – Lyric Theatre

It's been six years since *Hadestown* premiered in London at the National Theatre. Since then, the show has taken over Broadway – and now it's back to do the same here. The story is a retelling of Greek mythology, blending the stories of Orpheus and Eurydice (a talented musician so distracted by his art that he forgets his beloved), and Hades and Persephone (the God of the Underworld and the woman he may (or may not) have trapped there). A sung-through musical, created by American singer-songwriter Anaïs Mitchell, the songs are a beautiful blend of folk, pop and rock. The set is a bar on the cusp of Hadestown itself, where the band are on stage for the entire show, creating a party atmosphere. A joyful celebration of what it means to be human, showcasing love, loss, desire, and the unwavering power of hope.

The cast of this run are all phenomenal, but it's Melanie La Barrie as Hermes who is the MVP. In her silver accented suit, she dominates the stage. Constantly moving, dancing, guiding and reacting, she's impossible not to focus on, which is a reflection of the show itself – a barnstorming good time!



Hadestown is booking until December 2024.



## What else is on?

### ■ MJ The Musical - Prince Edward Theatre (until 7th December)

A biographical jukebox show about the late Michael Jackson, based on the stormy creation of his legendary 1992 Dangerous World Tour, this thrilling production includes over 25 of the King of Pop's biggest hits.

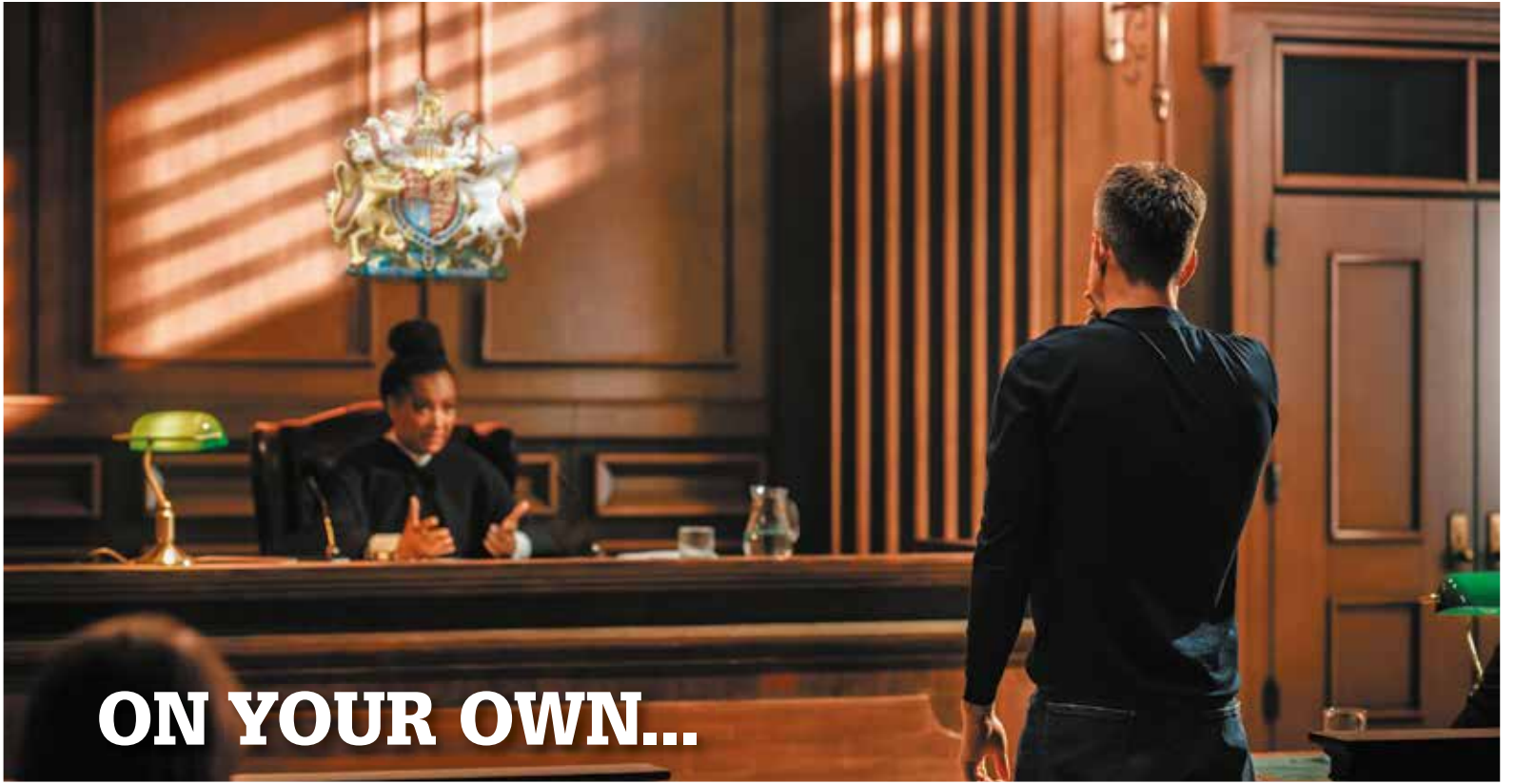
### ■ Red Pitch - Soho Place (until 4th May)

What happens when your football pitch, a place where you've laughed, fought, and forged friendships – the very existence of your close knit community – is threatened by impending demolition? Can three lifelong friends continue to dream of stardom, or will their goals be torn down alongside their homes?

### ■ Whodunnit [Unrehearsed] 3 – Park Theatre (until 4th May)

Whodunnit [Unrehearsed] 3 not only features the voice of Sir Ian McKellen, but also a different celebrity in each performance stepping in as the Inspector, without any rehearsal or ever having seen the script. Previous unsuspecting leads include Gillian Anderson, Brian Cox, Benedict Cumberbatch and Jodie Whittaker.





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# A Passage Through Time: Soho And Its Unpleasant Class Divisions

Amid plenty of wonder and decadence in the affluent area lay the other side of society's inequality and destitution.

## Footprints and Foundations

I hope you are enjoying our passage through Soho's colourful past. London is such a diverse city; it encompasses all of human life. Walking the streets of the capital has given me a deep connection with its inhabitants. As with most other areas of London, Soho has its disparity which presents affluence and decadence in all its various forms. Grand houses, fine dining and bespoke retailers can be found in abundance in the thoroughfares of Soho.

At the other end of the spectrum, one cannot fail to notice a visual presence of the homeless and hungry, a body of people that remain in this district. In the early morning, whilst I am carrying out my research, I find those without shelter in the greenery of Golden and Soho Squares. These misrepresented people have been sleeping through the dark night and are wrapped in insulation, mostly blankets and cardboard to protect themselves from the weather. They are people just like us, whose lives have taken an unfortunate turn.

Let's continue our visitation through Soho and reveal its social history.

## Social welfare

Where there is money there is also penury. For centuries, mendicants have arrived in the streets of Soho as a large collective of lost wanderers. All seeking sustenance to maintain mere existence. A plethora of charities were set up to alleviate the suffering of the destitute who had no means of supporting themselves. Soho was fortunate to have religious institutions and philanthropic individuals who stepped forward to alleviate those in wanton need. A main benefactor was the National Philanthropic Association located in Leicester Square (the Odeon Cinema now occupies the site). This building was truly a place of salvation for the desperate souls who begged for survival on the



cobblestone streets. Built in the early 1800s as *The Poor Man's Guardian Society (PMGS)*, this organisation was a sanctuary for the impoverished.

## The soup kitchen

In 1847, a soup kitchen was installed on the ground floor of the PMGS, which enticed the hungry to form large queues outside the entrance. A large, wooden door with a notice saying, 'Soup kitchen for the hungry, those without sustenance

**"Where there is money there is also penury. For centuries, mendicants have arrived in the streets of Soho as a large collective of lost wanderers."**

let them come in.' It seemed that all of London's poor had travelled to this part of Soho. Most were on the brink of starvation. Young children with sullen faces, dressed in ragged clothes and mostly barefoot, waiting patiently with their mothers who were suckling young babies.

These Dickensian scenes were ever present throughout the London region. A man with a social conscience was Prince Albert (1819-1861), who visited the soup kitchen on numerous occasions. He even tasted the soup and commented "*it is hot and wholesome and will provide nourishment for the needy.*" This was the reality of Victorian London in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Once inside the soup kitchen, the deprived were met by a large group of volunteers advising them of the strict rules in place. Large tables with steaming tureens of hot soup were placed into bowls and handed out to the salivating visitors. Two pieces of bread were added to the rations, which filled the hungry stomachs of the famished. These small portions of food made the difference between life and death, a cruel reminder of the capital's unassuming past.

## St Barnabas House

Another prominent building, which provided charity in Soho is St Barnabas House. This place of refuge is located on the corner of Soho Square and Frith Street. The building has a long and interesting history and seen many changes throughout its longevity. The original house was built in 1679 for the aristocracy to reside in the fashionable area of Soho, before being demolished and rebuilt in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. From an elaborate residence,

the house served many uses including the commissioners of sewers. Renowned engineer, Sir Joseph Bazalgette, had his office here. In 1846, the residence became known as 'The House of Charity'. From this period, the house was a sanctuary for the homeless and hungry. Unusually whole families were taken in, instead of having to go to the notorious workhouse, where the family unit would have been broken up. The homeless of the capital converged on Soho Square hoping a place could be found in this house of charity. A chapel at the rear of the building offered spiritual salvation to those in need of guidance.

## The penny chute

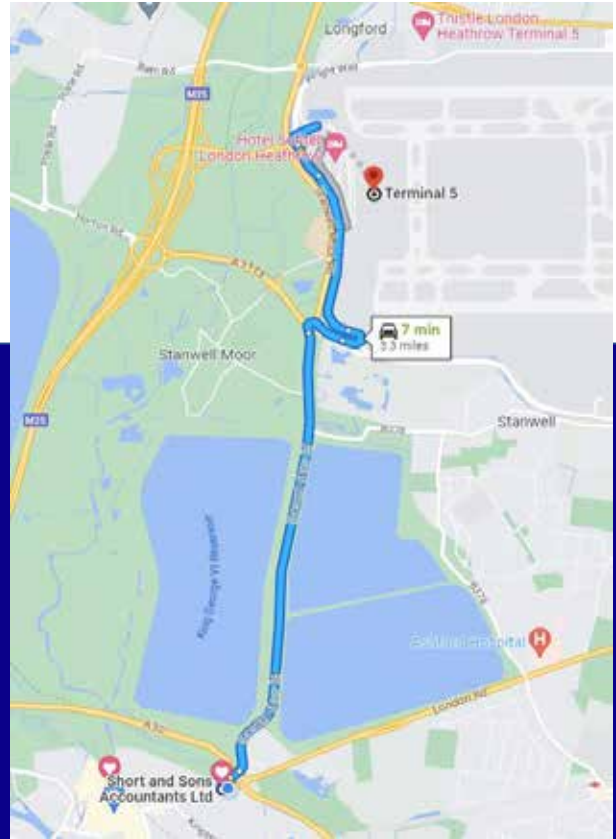
On the northside of St Barnabas House is a penny chute on the railings. This is a real London peculiarity and one I have not seen anywhere else in the capital. There is a slot where coins travel down a narrow black pipe to the alms box in the kitchen basement, leaving passersby bemused by this strange way to make a donation. In 2013, the St Barnabas Club was formed to encourage celebrities to provide assistance for its charitable causes. **TAXI**

If you are contemplating a guiding course or have questions about London, please contact [journeythroughtime@hotmail.com](mailto:journeythroughtime@hotmail.com)





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# Taxi Charity's Ambassador

**TAXI** spoke to the charity's Ambassador and Advisor, Frans Ammerlaan, about the well-deserved

**TAXI** Congratulations on receiving an MBE from King Charles, how did it feel to hear the good news?

**Frans:** Firstly, I'm over the moon to receive this honour and, to be honest, it all feels a bit much! However my friends keep reminding me that it is a wonderful reward for more than 30 years, keeping the memories alive of those who participated in Operation Market Garden and to never forget that peace came at a price.

**TAXI** When did you start the Market Garden Foundation and can you tell us more about it?

**Frans:** I started it back in 1996 (at

www.marketgarden.com). I felt it was important to keep alive its memory and draw attention to the consequences of the operation. The aims of the Foundation are to honour, to remember and to learn. We are trying to realise this by reaching as large a number of people as possible worldwide.

**TAXI** How long have you been supporting the Taxi Charity?

**Frans:** My association began in 2010, when Dick Goodwin (Honorary Secretary of the Taxi Charity) asked me to help him bring some veterans to the Netherlands. The trip took place

in 2012 and was a huge success, involving 85 taxis and 120 British veterans. We have had a great relationship ever since and I am delighted to be not only their Dutch advisor but one of their Ambassadors too.

**TAXI** What plans do you have for the Taxi Charity trip in May, for Dutch Liberation?

**Frans:** We are excited that the Taxi Charity will be in the Netherlands for Dutch Liberation between 3rd and 6th May. Joining the British veterans on this trip will be Canadian Spitfire Pilot George Brewster, who will be

flying in from Canada for the commemorations.

As we no longer have the numbers that travelled to the Netherlands in the past as the veterans are now much older, we will take it easy and not include too much in the programme. After arriving at the Hook of Holland, a police escort will take us to Bronbeek, a Dutch equivalent of the Royal Chelsea Hospital, where we will be welcomed by the Commander and have lunch. Such is the respect for these veterans that Dutch police escort ensures the motorway route is closed to other traffic for the taxis to travel in convoy.

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Frans Ammerlaan with veterans.



Frans Ammerlaan driving veterans in the Wandeltocht parade.



Micky Harris, Bill Larder, his two daughters and Taxi Charity Advisor Frans Ammerlaan.



# Recognised With MBE

achievement and plans to celebrate Dutch Liberation.

**TAXI** Have you a detailed itinerary planned for the trip?

**Frans:** On 4th May, we will make a poignant visit to the Commonwealth War Graves Arnhem Oosterbeek cemetery and at midnight some of the drivers may go into the centre of Wageningen, the Dutch city of Liberation where the well-known flame of liberation ceremony will take place.

On 5th May, the highlight of the trip is when veterans take part in the military parade. Held in the town of Wageningen, thousands of people line the streets to clap and cheer as veterans lead the parade in golf carts. Following

this wonderful event, we will then enjoy a farewell dinner.

The following morning, the Dutch police motorcycle escort will ensure the cabs have an easy journey back to Rotterdam for the ferry to Harwich.

**TAXI** What do the veterans mean to the Dutch people?

**Frans:** They welcome them every time with warm feelings and great enthusiasm. Everyone learns about the stories from the 1940-45 period and what the veterans did to liberate the Netherlands. We will never forget what we owe to them.



Director of the Hartenstein Museum talking to WWII veteran Alec Hall and Dutch Advisor Frans Ammerlaan.



Frans Ammerlaan MBE - Taxi Charity Ambassador.

## About the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans

The Taxi Charity is run by volunteer London black taxi drivers and has been supporting thousands of veterans since 1948. It is the only Forces charity that focuses on providing fun and entertainment and arranges free trips (for veterans from all conflicts) to the Netherlands and France for acts of commemoration and days out to museums, concerts, or social events across the UK.

The charity received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2021 and celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023, a remarkable milestone for a small, niche charity peopled by enthusiastic volunteers.

To fund and facilitate their work, the charity is wholly reliant on donations, grants and sponsorship.

[www.taxicharity.org](http://www.taxicharity.org)

Fancy a limited edition D-Day 80 badge or windscreen sticker? Our special badges and stickers will raise funds to allow the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans to take up to 15 WWII veterans and their carers to Normandy this June, for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day.

Please email [info@taxicharity.org](mailto:info@taxicharity.org) to reserve your badges or stickers.

To find out more about the support the Taxi Charity offers to veterans or to donate, visit [www.taxicharity.org](http://www.taxicharity.org)





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26

## **The LTDA goes to bat for its members**

Our expert officers and dedicated, in-house legal team will help keep you in the game. Don't get knocked out, scan here to join the LTDA today or call 0207 286 1046 to request an application form.



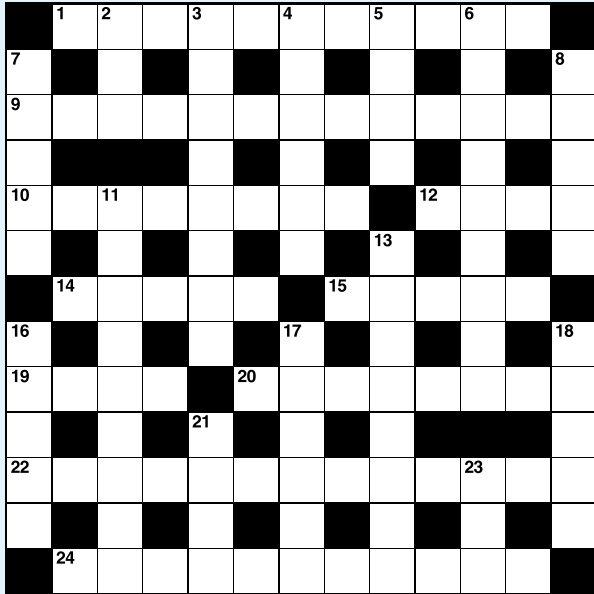
[www.ltda.co.uk](http://www.ltda.co.uk)





# Puzzler Page

## Crossword



### ACROSS

- 1 (Of two businesses) combined (11)  
 9 Not helpful or willing (13)  
 10 Old bronze coin, familiarly (8)  
 12 Molecule component (4)  
 14 Pilot (5)  
 15 Smack (5)  
 19 Command to a horse (4)  
 20 Nationality if from Beirut (8)  
 22 Vehicle for carrying loads (4-4,5)  
 24 \_\_\_ man, spicy biscuit (11)

### DOWN

- 2 Raincoat (3)  
 3 Made slack (8)  
 4 Discerning perception (6)  
 5 Member of a Semitic people (4)  
 6 Living (9)  
 7 Glazier's sealant (5)  
 8 Criminal's crowbar (5)  
 11 Dried petals for perfuming a room (3-6)  
 13 Soil with blobs of liquid (8)  
 16 Gulliver's Travels author (5)  
 17 Cow that has not yet calved (6)  
 18 Dorks, nerds (5)  
 21 Slimy garden pest (4)  
 23 Per \_\_\_, M&S fashion label (3)

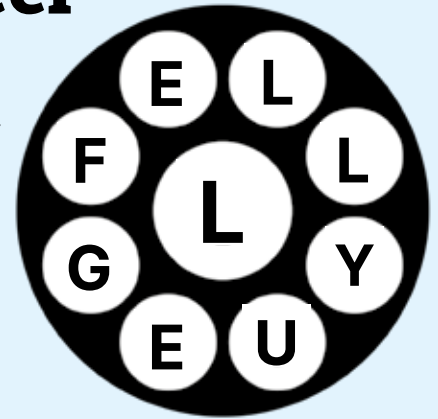
## Sudoku

Have a go at this medium level Sudoku puzzle. Fill the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 just once.

			6					
			7	4				1
					9	7	2	
5	3				7	8		2
	9				6		3	
		8	5	2		4		
		2	9		4			
		5		6				3
	4		1				9	

## Wordwheel

How many words of four letters or more can you make from this Wordwheel? Each word must use the central letter, and each letter may be used once only. At least one nine-letter word can be found. We found 13 words - can you do better?



## Futoshiki

Fill in the blank squares so that each row and column contains all the numbers 1 - 5. Use any given numbers and the symbols that tell you if the number in the square is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

				3	
4				<	
		<			
		>			<
		<			

All answers to puzzler on p30

**CABS FOR RENT**



**07957 465423**  
[e16-taxirentals.co.uk](http://e16-taxirentals.co.uk)

**TX4s TO RENT**

- Ascott's maintained.
- Pay by cash/bank/online.
- Mercs also available



**SERVICES & REPAIRS**

**De-commissioned your TX4's and Euro 5's?**

**Earn more by selling outside London.**

**We pay cash, collect and drive away.**

**John**  
**07702 554934**

**LINAGE**

**CABS WANTED**

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- **Euro 5 about to be decommissioned**, Cabs wanted, TX4's and Vito's. Top Price paid. Call John 07702 554 934
- **All cabs wanted. Tx4, euro 4, 5 & 6** also TXE wanted We come to you, any condition, very quick decision. Cash paid instantly. 07702 554 934
- **De-commissioned your tx4's and Euro 5's?** Earn more by selling outside London. We pay cash, collect, and drive away. Definitely still buying. John 07702 554 934

● **Looking to sell your TX4? Too old to replat?** Call James London based buyer for quick and easy sale – 07931 964 857

**CABS FOR RENT**

- **TX4 15 plate for rent, cabpay credit card system(cabvision)** Hornchurch area. £240-£260 per week Call David - 07437748270
- **TXE Vista Plus 22 Plate, rent** from £340 per week call Krupali - 07929360081
- **TXE comfort plus models no ads** from £320 a week full back up .Based in E17. Ring Michael 07968623209
- **TXE's available for rent, from £320** per week. Call Wax 07951 843 663
- **TXE's to rent, black no ads, 68-73** Reg. Ring Steve - 07976729033

● **Rent Taxis, Euro 6 and also LEVC** Cabs from £250 - £345. We also do repairs on cabs, call Nick 020 7700 1045 / 07951 661 430

● **TX4s for rent, full backup available** from £240 per week - 07824630247

● **Tx4's for rent full back up phone** Paul at Bermondsey Taxi Rentals on 07831 371016

● **TXEs, TX4s and Vitos available** from £260 per week contact Sabri – 07958973944

● **Euro5&6 vitos for rent, full backup**, prices starting from £230 please call – 07956211478

● **Vitos 113 & 114, also tx4s for rent** 07872 504 604

● **TXEs for hire, loan cab available**, no ads – 07980288333

● **Available immediately, 23 plate, 3 weeks holiday, black no advert.** Best rate. Dave - 07956232290

**CABS FOR SALE**

- **67 Plate, very low mileage, 1 owner**, TX4 Euro 6, £28,000, Call Ellen - 07940 924 338
- **Vista Comfort+, black, 120k miles** 18 months warranty left, £42,000. Call Darren - 07944982709
- **Cabs for sale. Main Dealer service history.** Non-fleet cabs. New stock daily. Cabs also wanted. Finance Paid 07957 465423

**London based, well maintained TX4's for rent**

**Call**  
**07738 162 518**

**TXE's TO RENT JD TAXI COMPANY**

**TXE's available to rent now inc brand new 24 plates**

- Different payment options available
- 3 weeks payment holidays
- Breakdown cover
- Best rates

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[info@jdtaxico.com](mailto:info@jdtaxico.com)

**Get in touch**

 James Martin  
 [james.martin@cplone.co.uk](mailto:james.martin@cplone.co.uk)  
 01727 739 197



# LTDA APPLICATION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Twitter \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Badge No. \_\_\_\_\_

Badge colour (please state whether green or yellow) \_\_\_\_\_ Year badge obtained \_\_\_\_\_

Suburban badge sector numbers \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been a member of the LTDA before? (please tick) Yes  No

Do you currently have points on your DVLA driving license? (please tick) Yes  No

If Yes how many points do you have?

Do you have any motoring or other prosecutions pending? Yes  No

Please note: We do not provide assistance for any matters that have occurred prior to you joining the LTDA.

Please tick if you **DO NOT** wish to receive information from the LTDA and other related organisations in the future

I understand that my application for membership of the Association must be approved by the Council of Management and that until this is confirmed I am not eligible to vote in relation to any form of Association matters. I agree that all benefits prior to approval of membership shall be at the discretion of the Council of Management.

**Please note: We do not provide assistance for any matters that have occurred prior to you joining LTDA.**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## LTDA Basic Direct Debit Instructions Instructions to your Bank/Building Society to pay Direct Debits:

Please complete parts 1 to 5 to instruct your branch to make direct payments from your account. Then return the form to LTDA, FREEPOST, London, SE1 1PP

To the Manager of \_\_\_\_\_

Bank/Building Society Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Service User Number

9 1 4 4 2 8

### For Office use only

1. Please write the name and full postal address of your branch in the box (left)
2. Name of account holder \_\_\_\_\_
3. Account Number
4. Bank Sort Code --  
Banks/Building Societies may not accept instructions to pay Direct Debit from some types of account.
5. Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_



This guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer

### The Direct Debit Guarantee



- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit LTDA will notify you (10 working days) in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request LTDA to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by LTDA, or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.
  - If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when LTDA asks you to.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

You can now also apply to join the LTDA online, simply scan here to complete an online application:





# Wet, Wet, Wet

Last weekend I hung up the cab keys for a day and decided to take a long walk to work off all the Easter eggs I'd gobbled.

## A woman of words

**I**t was the sort of walk that requires a backpack, sandwiches and a big flask of piping hot coffee for sustenance. An out-all-day sort of walk.

Mr Meg got his orders to join me, as I needed him to carry the backpack.

It's hard to shift him from his shed at this time of year because Wickes bring out their new catalogue, and he likes to sit for days (even weeks) memorising it.

Yes, it was inevitably raining but as it had been peeing down for what felt like 40 days and 40 nights, I couldn't let that stop us.

It wasn't long before I discovered the waterproof jacket and trousers I bought in the sale from a huntin' /fishin' /shootin'

style shop years ago were about as useful as a bikini against the driving rain. And, to make matters worse, the outfit made me look even shorter and fatter than I am. At least, that's what Mr Meg said when he saw me emerge from the house.

The plan was to persevere, despite the weather, and walk along the Thames from Westminster until our legs gave way.

Other than me getting a soaking, what could possibly go wrong? Well, a few small things: the coffee flask leaked and flooded our cheese and pickle sandwiches, meaning the bananas slid to the bottom of the bag and turned to mush.

But the main event was Mr Meg falling into the river. And I swear I didn't push him.

Near the Surrey Quays farm café, he noticed an object in the water that got him all excited. "I think that's a 1950s spirit level!" he cried

out. He dashed down some steps to the water's edge to take a look in such a hurry, to retrieve said pointless, worthless object, that he tripped over himself. And ended up face down in the water.

The good news is that his waterproofs were...waterproof. His feet got wet where the water entered at the top of his shoes but other than that a quick doggy-like shake, and he was good to go. A crowd of other walkers watching on the promenade applauded him like he was a hero. I described him somewhat differently.

When we made it home, I had to wring out every item of clothing I had been wearing. The soaking made my hair frizz like you wouldn't believe. My bum cheeks dimpled and my teeth chattered for hours like a pair of those wind-up dentures you get in seaside joke shops.

Mr Meg sat by the woodburner,

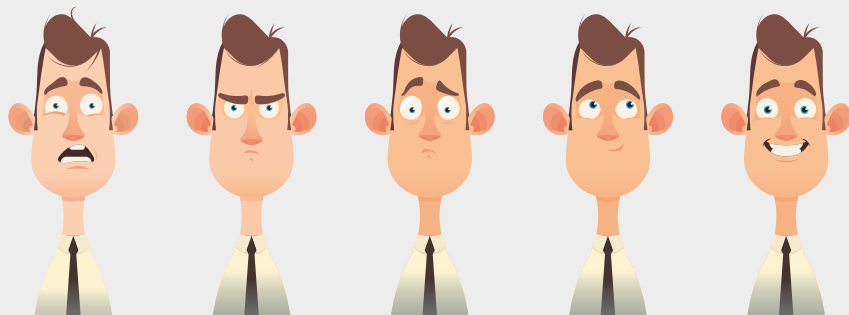


finally warm and dry, enjoying his Wickes catalogue once more. He claimed to have trench foot, then demanded egg and chips for his tea.

Our next walk is scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup> of never.

**TAXI**

## PUZZLER ANSWERS



A	M	A	L	G	A	M	A	T	E	D		
P	A	O	P	R	X	J						
U	N	C	O	O	P	E	R	A	T	I	V	E
T		S	R	B	S	M						
T	U	P	P	E	N	C	E	A	T	O	M	
Y	O	N	U	S	E	Y						
	S	T	E	E	R	S	P	A	N	K		
S	P	D	H	L	C	G						
W	H	O	A	L	E	B	A	N	E	S	E	
I	U	S	I	T	E							
F	O	R	K	L	I	F	T	T	R	U	C	K
T	R	U	E	E	N	S						
G	I	N	G	E	R	B	R	E	A	D		

## Crossword

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### Sudoku

3	2	7	6	5	1	9	8	4
8	6	9	7	4	2	3	5	1
4	5	1	3	8	9	7	2	6
5	3	6	4	9	7	8	1	2
2	9	4	8	1	6	5	3	7
7	1	8	5	2	3	4	6	9
1	8	2	9	3	4	6	7	5
9	7	5	2	6	8	1	4	3
6	4	3	1	7	5	2	9	8

### Futoshiki

1	5	2	4	3
4	1	3	2	< 5
			∨	
3	4	< 5	1	2
			∧	
5	2	> 1	3	< 4
			∨	
2	3	< 4	5	1

### Wordwheel

**SOLUTION:** GLEEFULLY

**All words:** Elegy, feel, fell, flee, flue, fuel, full, fully, glee, gleeful, glue, gluey, gulf, gull, gulley, gully, luge, lull, ugly, yell, GLEEFULLY.

**Word targets:** Excellent: 18, Good: 15, Target: 11, Kids: 6





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