

COVER STORY

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THE ATLANTIC** **Page 33**



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6th September 2022 #524

HIGHWAY ROBBERY

**LTDA LOBBYING CITY HALL TO REDUCE
COST OF ON-STREET CHARGING**



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*Must be new to Gett or inactive for 2022

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FUELGENIE APP HELPING DRIVERS FIND CHEAPEST FUEL

A new app from fuel card provider fuelGenie lists prices for every Tesco, Morrisons and Sainsbury's fuel station across the UK allowing drivers to find the best price in their local area. The app allows a driver to enter their location by town or postcode to find the station owned by one of the three supermarkets, offering the best price nearby. Prices displayed on the app are updated in real-time and based on the most recent purchases by fuelGenie customers at each location. The app is available for Apple and Android smart phones and PCs.

UBER PARTNERS WITH MOOVE TO INCREASE NUMBER OF EVS

Uber is working with Nigerian fintech platform, Moove, to supposedly bring 10,000 new electric vehicles to London. Uber is attempting to become an all-electric platform by 2025. They claim this partnership will make that possible, by helping drivers access financing to allow them to switch to EVs. Moove offers drivers access to EVs on a flat weekly fee using a rent-to-buy model. The company boasts an easy sign-up process, with no credit checks, upfront costs, or deposit needed. It was designed specifically for gig economy workers, who may previously have struggled to access credit.

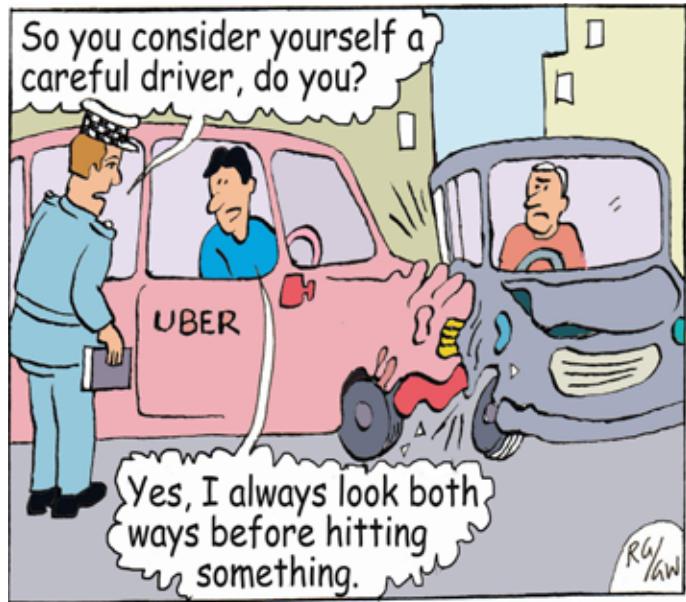


TFL AND GOVERNMENT AGREE LONG-TERM FUNDING SETTLEMENT

Transport for London (TfL) has finally reached an agreement with the government, which will support almost £3.6 billion worth of projects and secure the long-term future of London's transport network. The hard-fought deal comes after two years of difficult negotiations and short-term emergency agreements to keep TfL afloat. The settlement includes just under £1.2 billion of upfront funding up to March 2024. The deal came with a number of strings attached, which the Mayor will now have to deliver on. These include a commitment to submit proposals for controversial pensions reform by the end of September and working towards the introduction of driverless trains on the London Underground. The funding will also enable much-needed upgrades to parts of the Tube network. It also sets aside a whooping £80 million a year for active travel schemes to expand walking and cycling in the capital.

MOPED ATTACKS ON THE RISE IN LONDON

A series of attacks by thieves on mopeds in the Chelsea and Mayfair areas has raised serious concerns for locals. In some cases, the thieves have been disguised as Deliveroo drivers and have been reportedly targeting people for their expensive watches. Speaking about one such attack, on LBC, Greg Hands MP for Chelsea said, "I am absolutely horrified, but it isn't the first of these attacks, there's been a whole series going on most of this summer." He went on to say, "there's obviously a real problem with moped-enabled people attacking in broad daylight in Chelsea." Cab drivers operating in the area have reported seeing these gangs riding aggressively, with no regard for the rules of the road or other road users. Cabbies are encouraged to be on the lookout and not to confront them as they are known to carry weapons.



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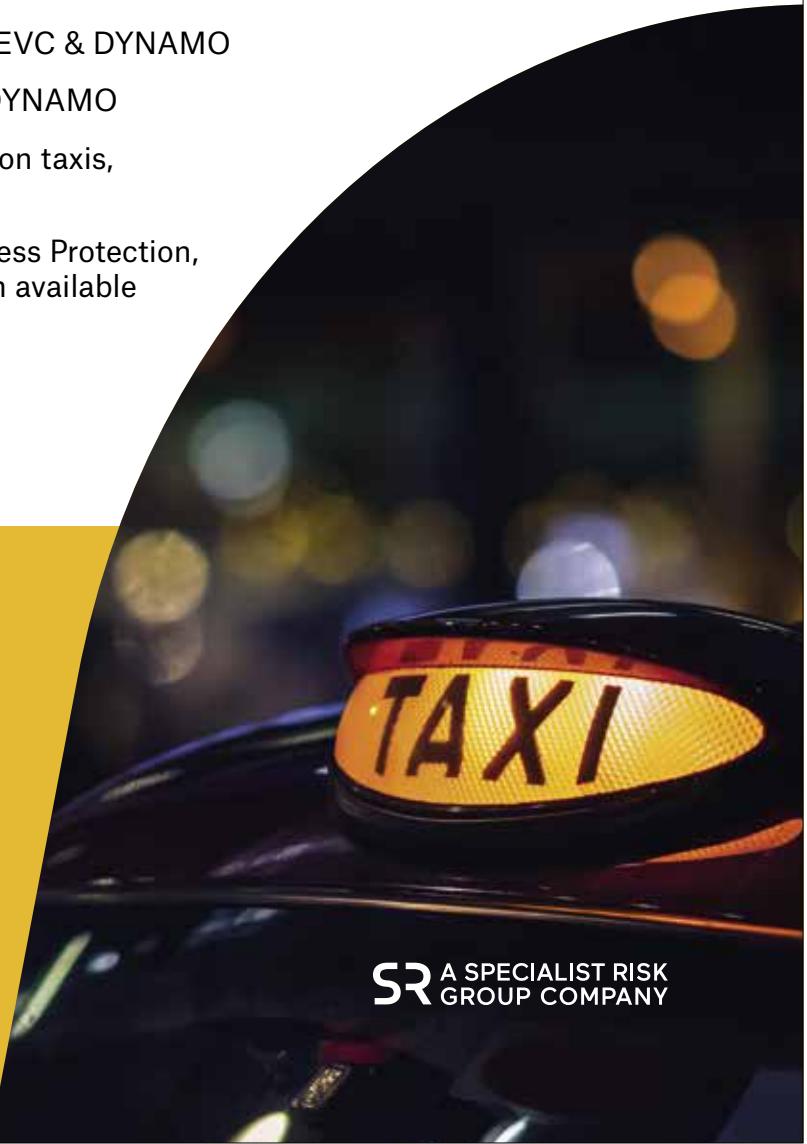
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Points Policy and Charging Costs Start to Bite

The first batch of members to have their licences suspended under this policy are currently being advised and represented, through the initial 'appeal to TfL process'.

Steve's comment

It's been a busy summer for drivers and for all of us here at the LTDA. The positive period of growth we are seeing in the cab trade shows no signs of slowing down in September. That's the good news. The bad news is that inflation and the cost of living are through the roof and it feels like no one is likely to get through the winter, completely unscathed. For now, my advice is, get out there and make hay while the sun still shines, safe in the knowledge that the LTDA has got your back!

One of the key reasons that so many cabbies join the LTDA, is to get the protection of our legal team. It's all too easy to make a mistake these days, with more and more speed cameras popping up, invariably on the new 20mph limit roads, many of which used to be 30 or 40mph. There is also an army, of what I can only assume, are very sad and probably lonely individuals, who have taken to riding bicycles, filming and reporting every motoring transgression, to a police force with seemingly little else to do. As far as I can tell, they certainly are not dealing with crime, in our increasingly lawless metropolis. But to cap it all, without any consultation at all, TfL introduced their 'Six points and you are out' policy, and our lawyers and legal team, have gone from being busy, to working flat out.

The first batch of members to have their licences suspended under this policy are currently being advised and represented, through the initial 'appeal to TfL process', otherwise known as a reconsideration hearing. If any of our members are refused a licence at this stage, we will automatically appeal to a magistrate, and if necessary, to the higher courts. The policy is draconian, undemocratic, and possibly unlawful. All of

The newspaper of the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association

TAXI

HIGHWAY ROBBERY
LTDA LOBBYING CITY HALL TO REDUCE COST OF ON-STREET CHARGING

"The price of on-street rapid charging has nearly doubled over the last two years."

our members will be expertly represented and fully funded at every stage.

Charging costs

Cabbies with electric taxis have been spared the worst of the rising costs of diesel in recent months, but along with the cost of just about everything, the price of on-street rapid charging has been slowly increasing. It has nearly doubled over the last two years. What was 25p per kW only 18 months ago, is now up to 55p per kW, if you are a subscriber, or 65p per kW, if you pay as you go.

We are now approaching 40% of our fleet being clean and green, with just under 6000 TXEs now on the road. These vehicles were almost entirely funded by small

businesses and individual drivers, to the tune of roughly £390 million. This represents a huge investment in the future of our trade and our great city. These clean, green vehicles are saving hundreds of thousands of tonnes of NOx, particulate matter, and CO₂, from entering the air Londoners breathe. Taxi drivers are leading the way in cleaning up London's air. If you ask me, it's time we were given a bit more support.

Calling for support

TfL has just reached a new £3.6 billion funding deal with the government, with some of that money earmarked for reducing congestion and pollution. With the Mayor's Taxi Delicensing scheme now closed, there are fewer incentives for cabbies considering making the

switch to a ZEC taxi. Without the delicensing payment, the vehicle has become even more expensive for cabbies looking to switch. Now, with charging costs spiralling, the cost savings associated with driving the ZEC taxi will also reduce, making it less appealing to drivers.

I have written to the Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy, Shirley Rodrigues, asking that she looks at capping the cost of charging at 40p per kw on all Taxi-only dedicated charging points across London. This would help to incentivise more take up of ZEC taxis – speeding up the transition to an all-ZEC fleet. It would also encourage cabbies to top-up mid-shift and operate their vehicles, as cleanly and greenly as possible.



One Rule for Them, Another for Us



Regent's Park is basically like a racing track, with the pedal heads racing two or three cyclists abreast, like their lives depend on winning.

Streets ahead

Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps MP, recently spoke out, saying that cyclists should follow the same rules of the road as everyone else. This generated a lot of debate and discussion around how it would be possible to hold cyclists to account for their actions. A civil servant noted that cyclists would likely need some kind of identifying mark, similar to a number plate on a car, and that they would also need to have some kind of insurance to allow for proper regulation.

Common sense

As far as I am concerned, these are all very reasonable suggestions. Surely, what we all want is for Londoners (and everyone else) to be able to walk on the footway safely, without getting a sore neck, looking at what's mounting the pavement or racing over the next crossing at high speed. It's especially important for electric scooters and e-bikes, as they have the ability to reach considerable speeds and can cause particularly serious injuries, if they hit someone.

I remember going to a meeting seven years ago, representing the LTDA, pushing the London councils to make it compulsory for helmets to be worn, some sort of number plate recognition, high vis jackets and other measures, designed to make cyclist accountable for their actions. The main priority was for cyclists to protect themselves, as well as pedestrians and other motorists. Unsurprisingly, our suggestions were frowned upon at the time, but now perhaps some people are starting to see sense.

Royal Parks

Since that meeting, the problems have only become worse. I have seen particular issues in the Royal Parks. For example, Regent's Park is basically like a racing track, with the pedal heads racing two or three cyclists abreast, like their lives depend on winning.



Cyclists in the Regent's Park area

Regent's Park is a popular tourist attraction, with many visiting it, to take in the lovely gardens and views it offers, and of course to visit London Zoo. They should be able to do this, without the worry of getting seriously injured.

In Richmond Park, there have also been complaints of cyclists demonstrating inconsiderate behaviour towards visitors trying to take advantage of the scenery on a lovely summer's day. These places, just like the streets of

London, should be for everyone. They are not a playground to ride around in – jumping red lights and mounting footways. If the rules of the road are simply ignored, they will quickly become a hazardous and unappealing place to visit. The government must make cyclists think twice about jumping red lights and not only putting their own life in danger, but that of members of the public. Those who want to run roughshod over the law should be held accountable for their actions.

"If a cyclist is involved in an accident and causes damage to a car, such as smashing a wing mirror, they get away scot-free."

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Proper insurance

Another issue that proper regulation for cyclists could help to address, is the fact that

currently, if a cyclist is involved in an accident and causes damage to a car, such as smashing a wing mirror, they get away scot-free, leaving the driver paying for costly repairs. This doesn't seem right to me. If we hit a cyclist and they get injured, they can claim thousands off our insurance companies, which in turn costs us when we renew the policy. If cyclists had their own insurance, drivers would have somewhere to turn, if their vehicle was damaged

measures, Ms Harrison, a junior Minister in Mr Shapp's own department said the following: *"We have previously considered the possibility of introducing a compulsory insurance system for everyone who cycles on the highway, but this would be likely to lead to a reduction in the number of people cycling."* If you ask me, this is a shocking statement to make. The implication is, that we should all simply turn a blind eye to dangerous cycling by some, to encourage more people to cycle.

Ms Harrison also suggested that, *"to be effective, such a requirement would also need to be introduced alongside a mandatory licensing and registration system to allow those cycling to be identified and insurance details to be exchanged at the scene of any incident, which would be costly and complex."* Well, it's not like we motorists have any choice in the matter, so why should this be any different?

Let's be honest most of us don't like change, for example I don't agree with all the lower speed limits popping up all over the place, but we have no choice but to adapt to new laws and requirements once they are in place. Why should the cyclists be given special treatment and never subjected to any new laws or new ways of doing things? Let's hope the changes we've been calling for are finally coming.

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The Best of Times, The Worst of Times

I've seen a few recessions whilst I've been a cabbie. By rights, we should all be struggling badly at the moment, yet trade remains buoyant.

On point

We are living in difficult times. Diesel is nearing £2 a litre, our energy bills are going through the roof, and food prices are getting ridiculous. So, is it just me who finds it's a bit odd that the taxi trade is as buoyant, as it is at the moment?

I've seen a few recessions whilst I've been a cabbie. By rights we should be struggling badly at the moment. I accept that I am speaking about this moment in time, and there are no guarantees that this situation will continue. There are plenty of doom and gloom merchants on social media, who will be bleating 'yeah but wait till winter,' blah, blah, blah. You know the same ones who said, 'let's wait for August, we will be on our knees then.' Well that never happened, did it?

The last year or so has been a god send for us. It was desperately needed after the devastating impact that Covid had on our trade. I'm not a financial expert, nor arrogant enough to predict the future, as some in the trade seem to be, but I think there are a few reasons we are doing ok. One is definitely the lack of cabs. The shortage is in part due to the outrageous drop in the age limit bought in by the Mayor, and in part because quite a few cabbies gave up during the pandemic. It could also be down to the fact that the public still feel a lot safer, hygiene wise in the back of one of our cabs. Who knows what the future will bring, but let's enjoy it while it lasts.

The shortage isn't just in the cab trade. The private hire sector is losing drivers due to the rather amusing situation in which they are now being made to prove that they are registered to pay tax. We are required to do the same, but it has not generally caused our members problems. I understand that around 7,000 PHV drivers have not been able to renew their licence because of this new check.



20mph speed cameras

As the old saying goes, if I had a £1 for every time that I was called about a 20mph speeding ticket, I'd be a rich man. Myself and my colleagues at the LTDA are dealing with many speeding tickets issued to members, in newly created 20mph zones. We are seeing the odd one for as little as 23mph. With the outrageous new licensing measures recently announced by TfL, we really need to be careful. I understand it's not easy. I have written in *TAXI* before about how I find it difficult to drive at 20mph. I'm sure by now that you are all aware of where the cameras are, but please note Park Lane, Bayswater Road and Finchley Road, are where the vast majority of tickets are being dished out.

Mobile phones

We are still receiving calls from members who are getting caught with their mobile phones in their hands whilst driving. The cabbie is often filmed by a cyclist, who is only too happy to pass it onto the Police, who in turn are only too happy to give

you six points and a £200 fine. This is even more concerning now with TfL's new licensing rules meaning that you could also be at risk of losing your bill.

In my cab, I used to have my phone in a cradle on the windscreen, to the right of my steering wheel. I have now moved the cradle to down by my left knee. I have also bought a new set of headphones, which allow me to accept calls from

my wife, asking me to pop into the shops on my way home (ring a bell with anybody?), without even touching the phone. I have to ask, apart from a one touch movement to accept an app job, what else do we need to touch the phone for? The one touch for the app job is the equivalent of turning your radio down or switching on your heated rear screen. Please be careful.

Expired licenses

I had a few calls over the last few months from cabbies, who for one reason or another, have let their license expire. Many have heard about the work levels and want to come back to the trade. Some cabbies took jobs in other industries and then found for one reason or another that it wasn't for them, and now want to drive a cab again. A few of them have been honest enough to say how they regret it. They admit that they were reeled in by the doom and gloom merchants.

You need to apply to renew your license within three months of the expiry date. If it goes beyond that, you have to apply as a new driver. If you apply within two years of expiry, you will not have to do any Knowledge appearances. If you exceed the two years, you will be required to complete a topographical test. The application forms you need to complete will be for a new driver, and you will end up being given a new badge number. Please pass this information on to any friends, who may be thinking about returning to our ranks and if they need advice, get them to call me.

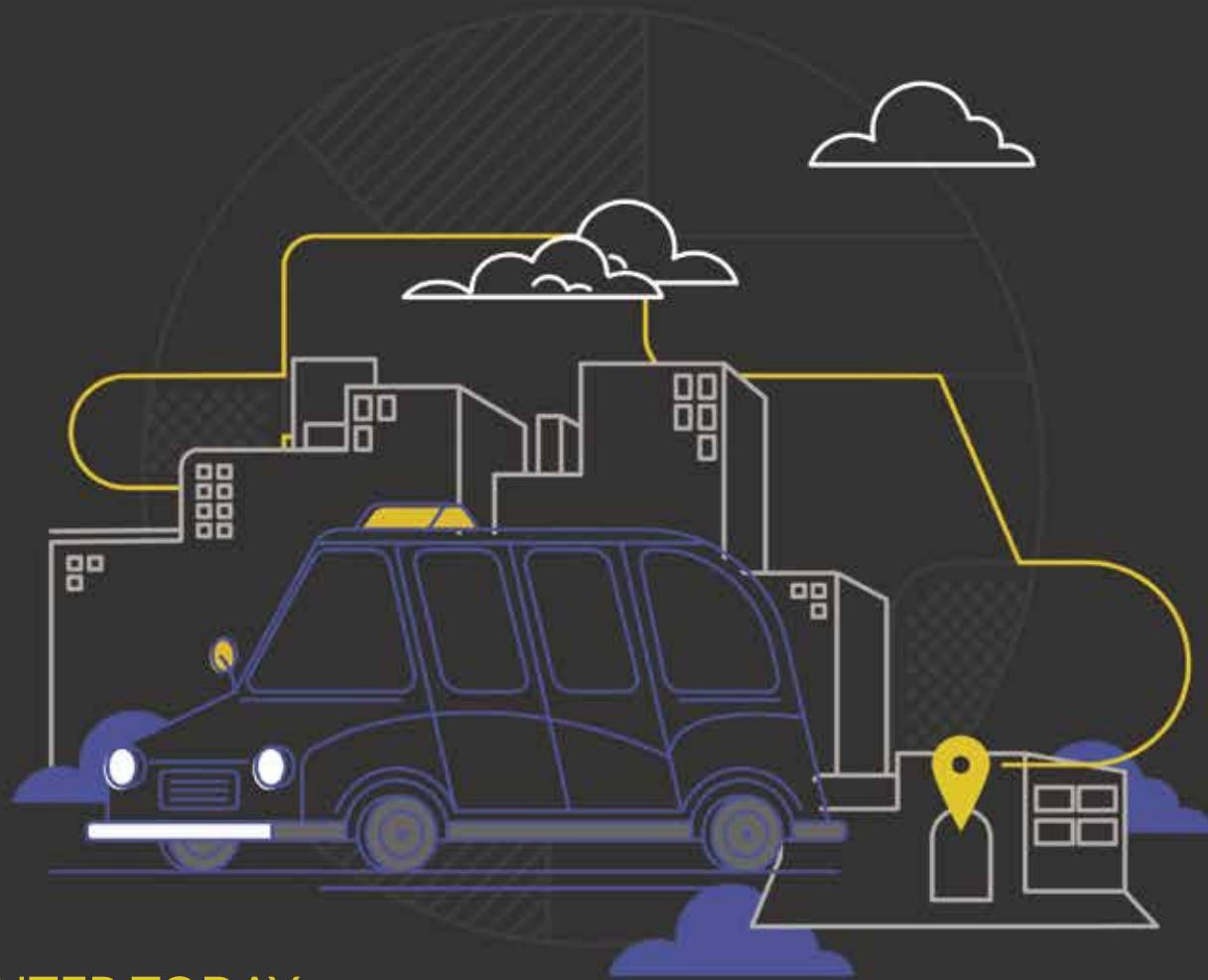
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Supporting the Next Generation of Cabbies

I'm sure we can all remember how it felt – the desire and excitement to work – back when we were all bright-eyed and bushy tailed, new cabbies

Airports & beyond

It's been four months now since I broke my ankle and I'm still not fully recovered. I wrote about this before, but again I would urge all drivers – if you haven't got insurance for such incidents that prevent you from working, please consider taking out cover.

Paula at the LTDA manages the accident and sickness cover scheme. She can explain in more detail what is on offer and the different packages. I have now made sure I have all the cover of this kind that I can get, as so far, I've had a third of a year (and counting) out, not earning money. Learn from my mistakes!

Behind the scenes

As a result of having a lot of time on my hands, I've been able to help drivers with more enquiries. I have been grateful for that, as it has kept my mind active. It has also kept me in touch with my trade. I've also spent more time at TAXI House and have been so impressed with everything that goes on there to support and help drivers. I have obviously been involved with the LTDA, as an airport rep, for a while, but I must say, I had no idea how much work actually goes on behind the scenes.

From the very top, to the lovely ladies on reception. Paula, Janet, Gemma and Kanize (who deals with membership). They are always so helpful and go out of their way to accommodate drivers. Anytime I've spent there, I've been impressed with the number of queries they deal with. The executives are also working tirelessly to fight the cause behind the scenes, to do the best by our trade. Everyone is so hard working and dedicated. I feel proud to be part of it.

Common problems

From dealing more with members, I have come across many different issues, but there were a few which kept rearing their ugly heads. I would like



to take the opportunity to remind you about these. One, was drivers getting PCNs in bus lanes, even though taxis are allowed to use them. This is more common with Vitos and the Dynamo electric taxi, as the vehicles are not always recognised as cabs. If this is something you experience and you appeal, make sure you send a copy of your cab licence as clear evidence that you are a London licensed taxi driver.

Another common problem is dropping off on a red route. TfL state that "*taxis and private vehicles can only stop as long as is necessary for the customer to get in or out of the vehicle.*" That does not mean that you can sit and wait on a red route,

"The students keep me humble and remind me of how desperate I was to get my badge and how precious it was, and still is, to me."

double or single yellow line, indefinitely. Even five minutes is too long, unless you have an issue with payment. Even then, you will most likely still receive a PCN. You will then need to provide evidence as to why you were stopped for longer than a few minutes. If you know the passenger will be a while, please park up and don't take the risk.

Heathrow tag update

The issue with tags at Heathrow is ongoing. Drivers are obviously increasingly frustrated as we enter the busy month of September. We are constantly asking for updates and will keep drivers informed accordingly. The new tags are still on order, however, a priority 100 as replacements for damaged tags held by existing Heathrow drivers have now been received. From now on, if you damage your tag, you need to put your name down on a separate list and as soon as more tags are received, they will be re-issued.

■ LTDA

Supporting Knowledge students

I have recently been involved with helping Knowledge students with their applications, once they have their req. It's been a pleasure dealing with them, as they are often very grateful and are super keen to get out there. I'm sure we can all remember how it felt – the desire and excitement to work – back when we were all bright-eyed and bushy tailed, new cabbies. I'm sure none of us would want to go through the Knowledge again, but I love speaking to the students and get lots of energy from all of their enthusiasm.

I am now part of a big WhatsApp group of Knowledge students. They keep me humble and remind me of how desperate I was to get my badge and how precious it was, and still is, to me. At the end of the day, it's crucial that the LTDA and everyone in the trade does everything that they can to support those undertaking the Knowledge. They are our future, and we need more students to keep London's finest alive and kicking!

With London the way it is, we all need to remember to keep our side of the street clean and do our job, as professionally as we can. As always, the LTDA will always support and defend drivers to the best of our ability and champion the trade we all love.

Be lucky.

■ LTDA



DID YOU CATCH THE CABSURANCE TEAM AT LONDON TAXI RANKS IN JULY?

CABSURANCE

On Thursday 21st July, our team went to taxi ranks across London, handing out bags of goodies to taxi drivers to launch our new brand and claims proposition, including our recently launched Claims App which is one of a kind in the market.

"IT WAS GREAT TO CATCH UP WITH CLIENTS OLD AND NEW, THE RESPONSE WE RECEIVED FROM TAXI DRIVERS WAS BRILLIANT. WE HOPE YOU'LL SEE THE DIFFERENCE IN WORKING WITH A TEAM THAT HAVE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE TO HANDLE YOUR INSURANCE AND CLAIMS, TAKING ALL THE STRESS AWAY FROM YOU."

Gary Rose
Director at Cabsurance

Reporting a claim has never been easier

In recent years, motor insurance costs have risen due to a number of factors. However, one of the biggest costs to the insurance industry stems from delayed and incomplete claims reporting.

As a specialist insurance broker, we know that your taxi is your livelihood and when things go wrong, you're not earning money. Therefore, we knew we had to make reporting a claim easier than ever for taxi drivers. If an incident occurs, your drivers can use the Cabsurance Claims App to collect as much information as possible, including GPS location data and images from the scene, which in turn helps our in-house claims team settle your claim as promptly as possible.

Keep your eyes peeled for us on the taxi ranks again soon!

Don't forget to get in touch with our experts two weeks before your insurance is due for renewal to receive a competitive quote:

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Waze to Protect Yourself

More and more drivers are getting caught out by new speed limits, but there are steps that you can take that might help you avoid getting a ticket.

Membership matters

I wish I had a pound for every driver, who has recently said to me, "I was only doing 24mph." I am currently booking in upwards of 25 to 30 members a month to complete an online speed awareness course at TAXI House, to avoid getting points on their licence.

If you have received a Notice of Intended Prosecution and have the option to complete a speed awareness course, remember that you can take the course here. We can then help you with the set up and if you have any problems during the course. Please do check with me at the LTDA, BEFORE you book onto a course with DriveTec, to ensure that we have a room available. You also need to remember to choose a course, which starts after 9am and before 2pm, Monday to Thursday.

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Take extra precautions
We can't change all the 20mph speed limits, which have sprung up on our roads, in some very inappropriate places. Like those on dual carriage ways which were designed to keep our city moving, but we are doing all we can to demonstrate to decisionmakers how silly some of these are. For example, there are a number of consultations currently underway on whether to make some of these limits, such as the one on Park Lane, permanent. Colleagues here will be responding to these in the strongest possible terms.

In the meantime, there are steps that you can take, which might help you to avoid getting a ticket. I wrote recently in *TAXI* about how useful the *Waze* app can be to help you avoid breaking the speed limit and to be aware of new lower limits. Since then, I have helped a number of members to set it up on their phones. I thought that the following guide might be useful to help readers set it up for themselves.

If you need further help, please feel free to get in touch with me.

How to Put an Alert on if you Exceed the Speed Limit

Step 1 – Open up 'Waze'
Step 2 – Click on 'My Waze'
Step 3 – Click on the 'Settings' button

Step 4 – Go to 'Alerts & Reports'
Step 5 – click on the 'Speedometer' button

Step 6 – Click on 'Alert' when speeding

You don't have to listen to the navigation, just switch your settings to 'Alerts Only' as opposed to 'Sound On' or 'Sound Off'

On the 'Settings' page you can also set your 'Vehicle Details' to 'Taxi'. This will then show you the best way to your destination factoring in the use of bus lanes

London

COMCAB LONDON FAMILY

ComCab London talks about who they are, and what they have to offer their drivers. Read below to find out more:



Who are ComCab London Limited?

ComCab London is the last original radio taxi company still in operation, established in 1974 and has one of the largest fleets of black taxis in London.

Offering unrivalled coverage and flexibility to London's business community and valued private clients within the city and surrounding areas.

ComCab London is incredibly proud of its association with London Taxicard, a relationship which has spanned 25 years.

What makes ComCab London different?

ComCab London are not just another faceless app on your phone, we have a large team of experienced staff to support drivers and customers. ComCab London does not do gimmicks; we like to keep things straightforward and understandable for the drivers.

What are ComCab London doing for their drivers?

ComCab London believe drivers are their number one customer and that is why they are currently rewarding their existing drivers with a £30 weekly bonus to those who complete 10 or more jobs in a week. This offer is available for a limited period.

ComCab London strive to give as much as possible to their drivers and have partnered with some fantastic organisations to offer driver rewards such as:

Accounting services

In keeping with ComCab London's personal touch ethos EaziTax work with ComCab London drivers to take the stress out of all their accounting needs.

EaziTax have more than 25 years of experience providing tax advice and tax returns for drivers and the best part is they will work with drivers in the best way to suit their needs – whether that means working from a bag of receipts, a spreadsheet, or an app!



Discounted store card

TOTUM Pro is one of the UK's leading discount cards for members of professional bodies. By being part of ComCab London's fleet drivers can purchase a TOTUM PRO membership directly and instantly get access to over 200 amazing UK discounts.

In store and online, TOTUM puts all the best discounts right into ComCab London drivers' pockets.

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ComCab London have partnered with not just one but two fuel card providers, giving their drivers the choice between UK fuels and the Shell Fleet App. Drivers will benefit from discounted standard diesel and unleaded fuel with a zero monthly card fee.

Where are ComCab London based?

ComCab London have recently moved to new premises conveniently placed in Central

London, making it even more accessible for their drivers. Based at William Road, NW1 drivers can receive support from the technical team, recruitment and training and driver support who are available over the phone, via WhatsApp, email, or face to face.

What are ComCab London doing for new drivers?

As if ComCab London did not offer enough they are currently running a limited time offer for new drivers. Drivers joining ComCab London will pay only 5% commission and receive a £25 weekly bonus if they complete 10 account jobs or more in a week. Drivers have the choice of fully fitted equipment or the ability to download an app onto their own android device. A free device can be provided if required.

Joining ComCab London

It has never been easier to join ComCab London. Once you have registered that you would like to join, you will be sent an application form. Once you have sent it back, you will be signed up by the next working day! You can start maximising your earnings in no time.

Already on the ComCab London Circuit and interested in referring a friend? ComCab London have some great incentives available if you refer a friend to join! You can receive £50 if you recommend a friend to ComCab London and they complete 100 trips. This offer is also available to drivers who are referred to join the ComCab London App with a referral bonus of £50.

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Chaise-Longues, Bourbon Biscuits and the Traffic Enforcement

Many borough councils across London, as well as the rest of the UK, outsource moving traffic violation and parking enforcement to outside companies.

A man in black

There I was, sitting on my luxurious chaise-longue imbibing on a sweet sherry while devouring a packet of Bourbon biscuits. I attempted to stream *Match of the Day* on iPlayer, but disaster struck. The wifi had gone on the wonk so summoned my other half to give the router "*a damn good thrashing*", before asking her to jump-start the wifi so, while waiting for iPlayer to spring back to life, I entered the cesspit that is social media. And that was the end of my night as football took a back seat.

Social media minefields

After perusing various taxi sites, I noticed a common occurrence in relation to a number of posts. For once, it wasn't drivers having the proverbial shootouts at high noon over any given subject. Nor was it the common enemy that unites us all in grim indignation, Uber. What I had spotted was a number of drivers receiving PCNs for alighting at bus stops.

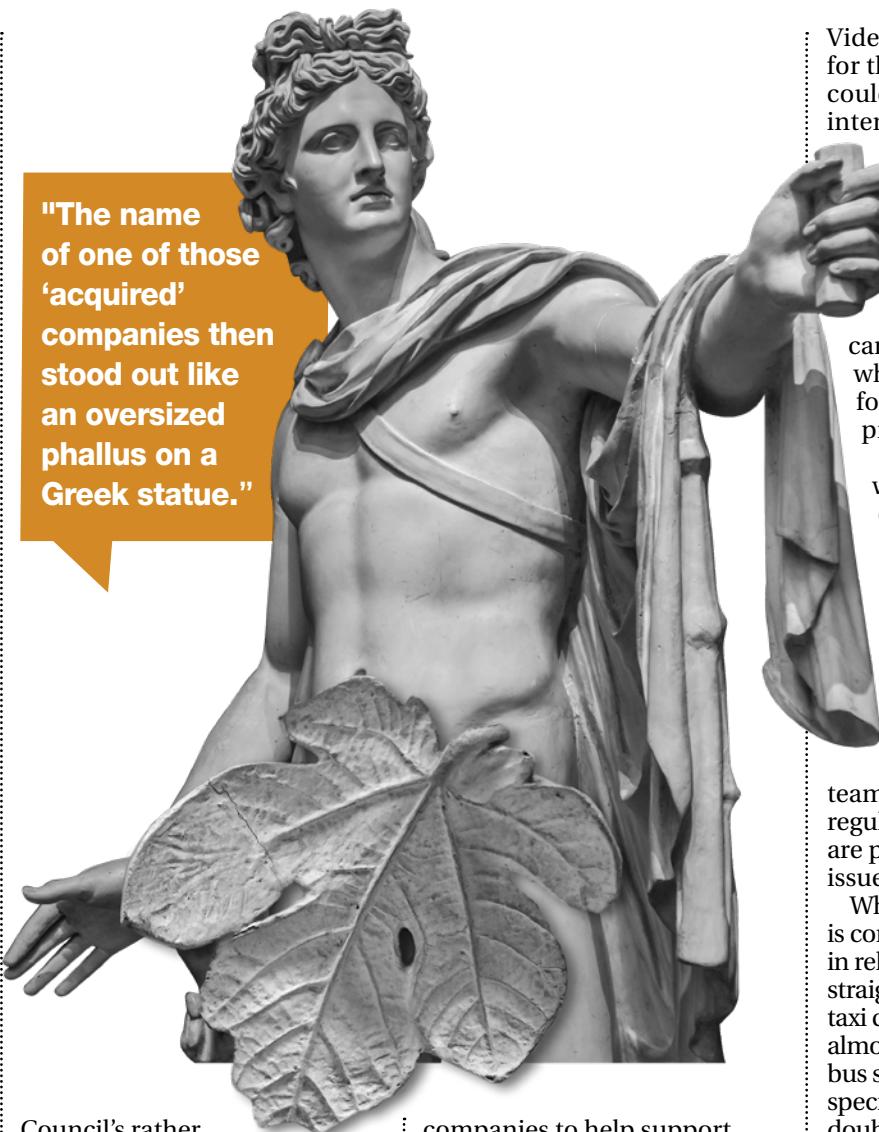
The 33 fiefdoms

Now, with 33 fiefdoms in London (whoops, I mean borough councils, including the City of London, which is not a borough council), you'd think they would all be singing from the same hymn sheet, especially when they involve the taxi industry. This is, however, not the case. And part of the reason for this is the wonderful world of outsourcing.

Many borough councils across London, as well as the rest of the UK, outsource the above to outside companies. As a result of this there are a number of PCNs which should never have been issued, covering a range of alleged contraventions.

Last year, I committed the heinous crime of entering the bus lane on River Road, Barking. I received a PCN for my foul deed and was informed via Barking and Dagenham

"The name of one of those 'acquired' companies then stood out like an oversized phallus on a Greek statue."



Council's rather clunky website that my appeal would fail. There was just one problem: as a licensed cabbie I was legally allowed to drive in it. This was supported by both road signage and the traffic management order attributed to that bus lane. The PCN was subsequently cancelled and I received an apology from the complaints team. However, here is where the problem may lie: Barking and Dagenham council outsource their traffic and parking violation enforcement to Videalert, who are an arm of Marston Holdings, therefore the council may not be directly responsible.

The rise of Marstons

Marston Holdings began life nearly 40 years ago, enforcing court orders. Since then, they have acquired a number of

companies to help support the implementation of public policy and harvested over £850 million each year on behalf of its clients. The name of one of those 'acquired' companies then stood out like an oversized phallus on a Greek statue: The Project Centre.

TPC was steeped in controversy last year when it was discovered that their data analysis was wrong in relation to air pollution statistics in the borough of Islington. They claimed air pollution had fallen since the implementation of eight low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) schemes in the Highbury area. However, an audit completed by The Project Centre's successor, Systra, debunked it. They found pollution had actually risen 26%. Another company under the Marston umbrella is NSL. Along with

Videalert, they are responsible for those cameras and there could arguably be a conflict of interest.

Training Day

According to Islington Council's own website, enforcement of parking and moving traffic regulations have been carried out by NSL Services; who were selected in 2007 following a procurement process.

According to the same website, NSL Services carry out parking enforcement as well as providing civil enforcement officers and CCTV operators. It is claimed that they undergo rigorous training before starting enforcement duties. It is also claimed that their contract monitoring teams closely monitor and regulate their performance and are penalised for any wrongly issued tickets.

Where the taxi industry is concerned, enforcement in relation to alighting is straightforward. A licensed taxi can pick up and drop off almost anywhere, including bus stops, unless there is a specific restriction such as a double width red line (signifying a TfL restriction) or the usual prohibitions such as zig-zag lines and zebra crossings. However, these exemptions afforded to the taxi industry are being routinely ignored by operatives all over London, leaving taxi drivers scratching their heads as to why they've been 'ticketed'.

It's reasonable to assume camera operatives simply do not have a clue as to whether a driver, or more specifically a cabbie, may be acting legally. If this is the case then it is a strong indication that any given operative is just badly trained.

Whatever the reason, it may be time for the Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps, to look at the possibility of drivers being compensated by councils and enforcement agencies for wrongly issued tickets. but I won't hold my breath. ■ **TAXI**

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A Passage Through Time

Here, we focus on the subject of the written word. The influence of language is an indestructible force; it is an attribute that defines the human race.

Footprints & foundations

Technological advances of the 21st Century have been immense. The Digital Age has completely altered the technique of how the written word is processed. From the pen, typewriter and touch screen innovation, we can access and research information instantly. Email, WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook are platforms we communicate daily with each other.

The more mature cab drivers amongst us would have used a pen and paper whilst in education. When TfL began to place most of their communications online, the change caused the cab trade huge problems. However, in the present day most cab drivers are now accustomed with the transformation. As a mature cab driver, the pencil and, later on, pen were the only writing tools available in my formative years. To have one foot in the old world and one in the new has been advantageous. Although I use my PC extensively, I still make notes for my research in pen, perhaps out of habit. The attribute of reading has many positive effects on our state of mind. It helps us escape from the routine world of repetitiveness. Let us resume our journey into the past and discover the renowned wordsmiths who left a lasting legacy.

It's only Words

Popular songs have classified the power of words. The Bee Gees penned the lyrics in their 1967 hit song *Words*. The Beatles also had a hit song in 1970 called *Let It Be*, where a line in the song reads: 'Speaking words of wisdom.' The study of the origin of words is called etymology. Books have always been a source of knowledge that empower our minds and improve our capabilities. For centuries, storytellers have captivated our imaginations through their narratives. The doyens of English literature William Shakespeare (1564-1616) and Charles Dickens (1812-70) created characters that have become a figment of our imaginations. The City of London has been a forcing-house and the birthplace of English literature. The



list of these luminaries is long, so here's a reminder of some revered writers.

Founding father

Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) was the author of *The Canterbury Tales*. This narrative is a collection of stories, where a group of 31 pilgrims travel from London to Canterbury to see the shrine of Thomas Becket. Each pilgrim documents a story that fantasised society in the 14th Century. The book was written over a period of 13 years. *The Canterbury Tales* has been popularised in numerous contemporary plays, films and television adaptations. Chaucer was the son of a vintner (wine seller), who entered the family business at a young age. In later years, he served as the controller of customs in the Port of London. Here, he would have observed the hustle and bustle of the docks. The daily happenings beside the River Thames formed the backdrop to the narrative of his famous book. Chaucer's use of the 'East Midland' dialect of English commonly used in the capital helped establish its claim to become the basis of 'Standard English.'

The next time you are passing through Aldgate, opposite Old Jewry, mounted above a low retaining wall, there is an information blue plaque. It quotes, in the central roadway, there was a former gatehouse known as the Aldgate. This was the eastern gate into the former Roman wall built in 250 A.D. In the 14th Century, the writer Geoffrey Chaucer lived in chambers above the gatehouse.

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731)

Daniel Defoe was born in Fore Street and was the son of a London butcher and was one of the most charismatic



personalities to enter the literary world. He had a varied career but some bad choices led to numerous incarcerations. The family did not belong to the regular Anglican church, they followed the doctrine of Presbyterianism and were known as dissenters or non-conformists. Excommunicated by the Church of England, the dissenters had their own churches and schools. Defoe's early education took place in Dorking, Surrey, at the Pixham Lane boarding school. At 14, he was sent to Charles Morton's dissenting academy in Stoke Newington.

Defoe was an expert in public relations, his family name was Foe, by adding the 'De' in front of his surname he gave it an aristocratic sound. In his early childhood, he experienced the city's most catastrophic events: The Great Fire of London and The Great Plague. Watching the lives of Londoners extinguished in such numbers was an unforgettable experience for him. His mother had also died at the age of ten, however, he used these traumatic incidents to positive effect, where he challenged himself to accomplish a multitude of achievements.

The entrepreneur

Defoe's employment was remarkable and varied. He was a general merchant in Cornhill, where he also sold hosiery, woollen goods and wine. From humble beginnings, he was able to buy a country estate and a ship. Rarely out of debt, Defoe seized his chance to become solvent. He married Mary Tuffley at St. Botolph Bishopsgate. She was the daughter of a London merchant, receiving a dowry of £3,700, which was an enormous amount for this period. It lasted 47 years and produced eight children, despite its troubles. In his hectic schedule, Defoe was politically attached to the Tories where he was involved in espionage. In his lifetime he claimed he made and lost a fortune more than a dozen times.

The prolific writer

Defoe had accomplished so much, however, it was as a writer that the general public came to know him. At 60, he embarked on a literary career that would bring him some fame but also notoriety. Defoe was a renowned observer of human life in his younger years, where he wrote extensively about social injustice. In his written works, Defoe was not fearful to confront Parliament or the Sovereign; always confrontational and outspoken. Throughout his life, Defoe was arrested for his political agitation and also his insolvency. He knew the inside of many debtors' prisons besides Newgate.

Defoe was a prolific writer of many books. *Robinson Crusoe* is without doubt his most popular book the general public identify with him. Whilst studying at the dissenter's academy, he met a fellow student, Timothy Crusoe, whose surname became the protagonist in his book. Published in 1719, it's an adventure based on a man washed up on an uninhabited island in the Pacific Ocean. The book has since been turned into films, stage plays and television adaptations and I encourage you to read it. There is, I feel, a Robinson Crusoe in everyone. When our resolve is tested, we somehow find the tenacity to survive and carry on with life's hardships.

Defoe died in lodgings in Ropemaker Alley (now Street), Moorfields and is buried in Bunhill Fields, the Dissenter's Westminster Abbey.

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'The Spy with Two Mothers' Part 1

Everything was not as it seems when people began to acquaint themselves with a charming Dutch server.

Rob's history tips

Had you dined at the Hilton, Park Lane's rooftop restaurant at any point during the late 1970s or early 1980s, chances are you were served by a Dutch waiter named Erwin van Haarlem.

Dark-haired and blessed with charm and good looks, Erwin had worked at various high-end establishments across Europe, but although his waiting skills had been honed to perfection, his career in hospitality was nothing more than a sham.

For this waiter wasn't Dutch nor was his real name Erwin.

He was, in fact, one Vaclav Jelinek; a deep cover spy from Czechoslovakia.

Born in Modrany near Prague in 1944, Vaclav demonstrated exceptional intelligence from an early age (he test scored his IQ at 138) and he developed a passion for languages, eventually becoming fluent in German, Russian, Hebrew, Polish and English.

Spy games

During his compulsory army service in the 1960s, Vaclav also proved himself to be a natural soldier; a man who was more than capable of looking after himself. He was also highly trusted; so much so that he was granted clearance to work on a secret chemical weapons programme.

It was this impressive combination of traits which led the Státní bezpečnost (aka the StB, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia's secret police) to approach Vaclav in 1967, with a view to recruiting him as an agent.

As a committed communist, Vaclav readily accepted the challenge and his training in espionage began. This involved developing evasion tactics, along with more technical aspects of spy-craft, such as the use of invisible ink and covert photography, as well as being schooled in how to beat lie detector tests.

Vaclav proved his true mettle in one particular exercise, when he was instructed to make illicit contact with technicians at a Czechoslovakian nuclear power station. Deciding to go one better, the trainee-spy obtained a set of worker's overalls and infiltrated the plant itself, photographing a series of sensitive documents in the process. As such, the StB were convinced Vaclav was the perfect man to send into the field: he was off to London.

Naturally, as a deep cover agent, Vaclav couldn't use his real name. A completely new identity was required and so, as with other operatives, a name was selected from the old files of a children's home in Prague; the assumption being that the youngsters listed had been adopted and were now living under a different family name.

The new name assigned to Vaclav was Erwin van Haarlem, a supposedly Dutch orphan whose birthday was recorded as 24th August, 1944, which was just one day after Vaclav's, making them practically identical in age.

Over the next few months, Vaclav put a huge amount of effort into creating a detailed past for his alter-ego, including making up a backstory for his imaginary parents and details of his schooling, complete with an array of invented friends.

Only a handful of StB agents knew of 'Erwin's' existence, and



"Vaclav began to infiltrate Jewish activist groups, garnering nuggets of information which could be of use to the Soviets."

and preparation, Vaclav finally arrived in London via a Liverpool Street boat train in June of 1975.

His experience of working at fancy restaurants paid off, and was able to secure a job at the Hilton, along with a small apartment on Queen's Gate Gardens.

Initially, the StB ordered Vaclav to spy on the Royal Family: this was the reason he'd approached the Hilton, as the rooftop restaurant offered good views over Buckingham Palace.

However, they'd also wanted listening devices planted amongst the Queen's furniture, which was just daft. 'Erwin' was a good spy, but there was no way a waiter was going to be able to get that close to royalty. His mission objective therefore was changed to spying on politicians, especially those involved with Jewish organisations because, at the time, the USSR was refusing to allow Jews to leave the Soviet Bloc; a situation that was the cause of much political wrangling between East and West.

Vaclav began to infiltrate Jewish activist groups, garnering nuggets of information that could be of use to the Soviets. It appeared that 'Erwin van Haarlem's' spying career in London had gotten off to a good start, yet little did he know that a major stumbling block lay around the corner.

For at around the same time Vaclav had established himself in the capital, a woman in The Netherlands named Johanna Haarlem had begun the process of looking for her long lost son: a baby boy she'd named Erwin, and who'd she'd abandoned at a Prague orphanage in 1944.

To be continued...

TAXI



the Czech spy certainly couldn't let his loved ones know about his work. As such, Vaclav was required to ditch his girlfriend, and told his real parents that he was moving to the Soviet Union for work.

A simple plan

Vaclav finally embarked upon his new life in 1971, first moving to Vienna where his covert career in hospitality commenced. Whilst in Austria, it was decided he needed to cement his credentials, so he wrote a bold letter to the Queen of The Netherlands, explaining he was a Dutch orphan who'd grown up in Czechoslovakia, and who now desired Dutch citizenship.

The ruse worked, and 'Erwin' was invited to the Dutch embassy in Vienna where he was subjected to a gruelling cross-examination. These multiple sessions were overseen by individuals who Vaclav suspected of being American CIA. This was the height of the Cold War after all, and a young Czech man looking to secure citizenship of a Western nation was bound to arouse suspicion.

Nevertheless, thanks to the effort he'd put into crafting his alter-ego, Vaclav was able to convince the panel, and was granted a Dutch passport, thus making a move to Britain far easier.

And so, after years of training



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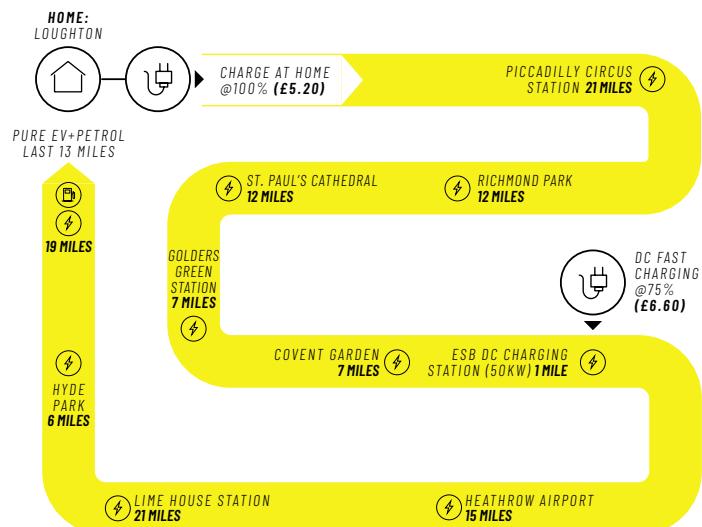
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Rikky Smith - TAXI Talks to

"London taxi drivers are the elite, the best of the best. We are like the group of 300 Spartans, and everything we do should reflect this."

Before he started driving a cab in 2017, Richard Smith, or 'Rikky' as most people call him, had always worked in roles teaching and training adults. Now, he uses his unique skill set to help other cabbies to be the best that they can be. He does this through his unique fitness and training programme, bringing together skills and knowledge from his work as a doorman, a health and safety trainer, practicing martial arts and competing at a high level.

A man of many talents

Rikky is a man of many talents. After speaking to him and hearing about everything he has done, it's a wonder he ever finds the time to sleep. By day, Rikky used to be a health and safety instructor, teaching courses to adult learners in college. At night, he was a part-time door supervisor, working the door at South-West London night spots, between 1997 and 2013, including the Clapham Grand and Sand Bar, where he rose to Head Doorman.

During this time, Rikky, who is a former kickboxing champion, was also coaching martial arts at Roehampton University. He has trained in just about every martial art going, from Muay Thai (Thai boxing) to Greko Roman Wrestling and Jiu-Jitsu to Kali (the national martial art of the Philippines). In 2000, he was the World Association of Kickboxing Organisation's British Super Heavyweight Champion. He then retired from professional kickboxing undefeated. *"I did a Rocky Marciano,"* he tells me.

Today, he trains in marital arts by day and works in the cab by night – well, he generally works a mid-shift, usually finishing up late evening. Rikky joined the cab trade because many of his friends had become cab drivers and it looked like a good way to earn a living and work for yourself. He also recognised that he had a real opportunity *"to cross-pollinate"* and use his skills from previous roles in the cab. He had always worked in jobs that involved *"unsociable hours and that were customer facing,"* and he enjoyed these aspects.

Seen it all

Rikky believes that working as a doorman and training others, prepared him for life driving a cab. He previously worked as a trainer for the Security Industry Association (SIA), which regulates the industry and licences door supervisors. The course he taught included reviewing the roles and responsibilities of a doorman, the relevant criminal and civil law, health and safety issues, aggression diffusion techniques, arrest procedures and safe use of physical intervention, amongst other things. These are all elements that he believes have relevance to cab drivers today. They are all covered by the course he has developed specifically for cabbies.

Rikky explained that after working doors, he has pretty much *"seen it all and worse."* He says that the situations that he and his fellow cabbies encounter are *"about what he expected."* He tells me that in the cab most



Rikky also works as a ring announcer at the Clapham Grand



of the difficult customers fall into one of two types. At night-time, it's the drunkards, and in the day, it's those who might have some kind of issue, or agenda, and simply don't react as you would expect a customer to. As Rikky generally does a mid-shift, he tells me that he *"gets the best, or perhaps it should be the worst, of both worlds."*

Driver training

After a few years in the cab trade, Rikky started to notice that some cabbies didn't always have the best attitude and that they were too often getting

The Kickboxing Cabbie

that is almost impossible to defeat, better trained and far superior to any other force,

into arguments with passengers and other road users, in some cases, giving the cab trade a bad name. He recognised that a lot of times this kind of attitude, and what looked like bad behaviour, actually came from a cabbie not knowing how to handle something or saying the wrong thing, and accidentally making a situation worse.

He wanted to find a way to take some of the stress out of driving a cab, encourage professionalism and improve the experience for everyone, including both the drivers and passengers. As Rikky sees it, "*London taxi drivers are the elite, the best of the best.*" Using the film 300 as an analogy, Rikky likens London cabbies to the highly trained group of 300 Spartans, who are almost impossible to defeat, better trained and far superior to any other force. He believes that everything cabbies do and say should reflect this, even how they handle a customer who may be totally out of line or being abusive.

Rikky met Steve McNamara from the LTDA one day and had a chat with him about his experience and how he thought he could use it to help cabbies. He decided to develop a handbook of sorts for drivers, providing advice and guidance on how to do the job effectively and handle different situations. He worked on this with the team at the LTDA, including Paul Brennan, who helped him to fine tune it all, and advised him on what to include.

The book then became the basis for an 8-week self-defence and conflict management course, which the LTDA offers to members, led by Rikky. The course is based primarily around physical fitness and martial arts training. It combines boxing, wrestling, Jiu-Jitsu, Thai boxing, self-defence, and legal knowledge. Anyone can do it, but Rikky says that "*it does require some real effort, as the fitness level it works towards is based on the British Army and Police entrance requirements.*" He tells me that "*drivers do need to commit and do some homework, if they are going to get the most out of it.*"

Key skills for cabbies

There are a number of key skills and bits of knowledge, which Rikky believes would benefit everyone in the trade. The first, is knowing the letter of the law and being able to communicate this clearly to passengers. He says that this can help to shut down situations, which can otherwise quickly become negative and have serious consequences for a driver, such as a formal complaint being made against them. Rikky says "*It can also take the stress out of the situation for a driver, if they feel confident that they know their rights and responsibilities under the law and when the passenger is out of line.*" He gives the example of a punter trying to get a driver to overload their cab saying 'oh no go on you can squeeze this in' to which a driver could point out that by doing so they would be in breach of the 1988 Road Traffic Act, which limits what they can carry. Rikky says that "*nine times out of ten, this can be enough to get the passenger to accept what you are saying.*"

Through his course, he also wants to help ensure that cabbies feel prepared and know what to do in an emergency. He referenced the London Bridge terrorist attack in 2017, as an example of a situation that cabbies might encounter. He said his training isn't about being able to take down a knife wielding maniac, although he does teach self-defence techniques, but it is more about knowing how to react and not to panic.

Rikky also teaches cabbies some behaviour identifiers and aspects of psychology, which he explains can help them to predetermine a passenger's likely behaviour and how best to interact with them. He said that when someone gets into his cab, he can use this to see what they are thinking and "*by asking certain questions, can quickly get the measure of them.*" He explains that this can be useful to help a driver gauge whether the person wants to chat or simply get where they are going. It can also help them "*to spot a potential bilker or difficult customer and to be on their guard.*"

The course also gives practical advice on how to deal with bilking. Rikky tries to give drivers the information and tools they need to speak the police, in a language that they understand. If drivers can do this, he says that "*the Police are more likely to listen and take them seriously.*"

Finally the course covers conflict management and communication skills to help cabbies resolve disputes with customers and prevent escalation. Rikky says that in these kinds of situations, he would "*always advise drivers*

that it is best to offer something, give the passenger options and let them choose." In Rikky's experience, issues that get cabbies in trouble with TfL and the law, often start out as silly, minor things, which could easily be resolved at the time, if handled properly. Rikky strongly believes that no matter what happens, "*if you can communicate in the right language*" a situation can be resolved effectively.

Positive feedback

I asked Rikky how his fellow cabbies respond to his views and ideas about how to improve the trade. He says they often have their own systems for dealing with these types of situations, which he suggests generally work fine, "*until one day it doesn't and things go south.*" Or they keep doing it their way, whether it is working or not, "*until they are on their last legs and at risk of losing their Bill.*" Then they panic and look for a new way, and he is of course there to help!

Cabbies who complete his course always respond positively and give great feedback. He tells me that people often come back to him saying, 'It actually works!' and they are really surprised how slight changes can make a huge difference. At the end of the course, Rikky tells me that drivers report "*being better at dealing with customers and building rapport, can understand who is reacting to who and how to remove 'triggers' and know how to build a congruent resolution.*"

What Rikky loves most about teaching his course, is that it is all about "*learning off each other's mistakes.*" He tells me that in martial arts the saying goes, "*sometimes the teacher, always the student.*" He is always learning just as much from the other drivers and adapting the course and his teaching style to those in the room.



LTDA members are invited to sign up for Rikky's next course, which will start at the end of September and run for eight weeks. The course is completely free to members. Sessions will take place on Tuesdays 10am-12pm at Fitness First in Clapham Junction. If you are interested in signing up and can commit to an eight-week programme, please email info@ltda.co.uk or call TAXI House on 0207 286 1046 to register your interest.



Rikky and some previous course participants



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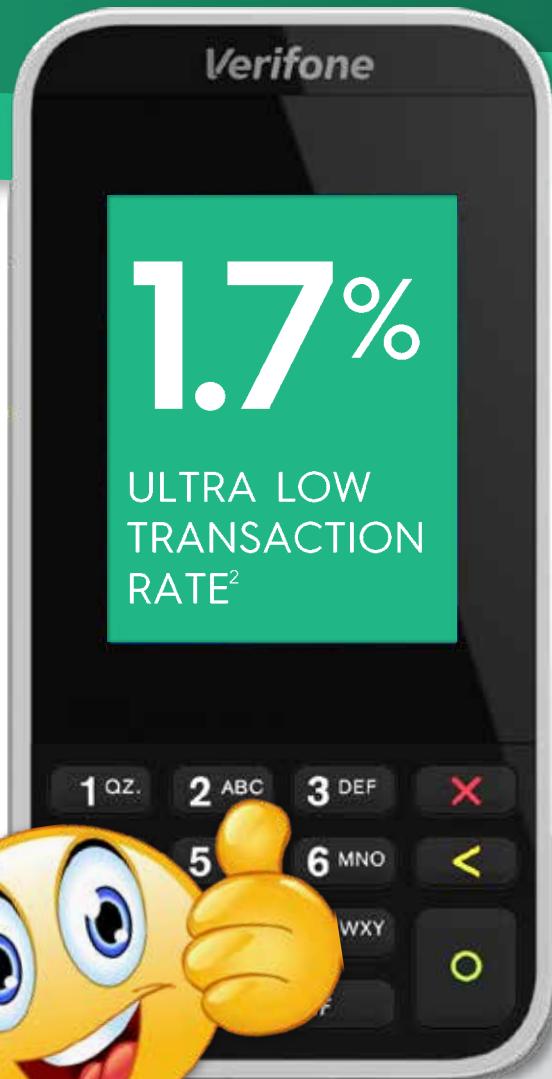
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'The Professionals'

- What sets those with 'The Knowledge' apart from the rest?

What does it mean to be a professional in 2022? When does an occupation or a job become professionalised? What makes those with 'The Knowledge' different from other "... suppliers of transportation services...?"

A brief background search produces suggestions as to what the make-up of a 'professional activity' might involve. Modern definitions include notions of 'accountability; integrity; competency; knowledge and qualifications' - deprive a Knowledge Boy or Girl of a 5G network and these skills would still exist, though some other 'suppliers of transportation services' might well struggle!

Some of the key ingredients of 'professionalism' involve:

'The deployment of formal certified learning'

Can other 'suppliers of transportation services' really claim to be engaged in doing this? Possibly, though that might depend on the depth and quality of learning involved in order to be accredited. In what world can those that pass 'The Knowledge' be compared to the learning involved to obtain other road-based transportation service operator licenses?

A professional owns the power, skills and freedom to problem solve.'

It's pretty certain that an individual having the means to purchase and blindly follow a mobile device with a sat-nav app doesn't meet this threshold. 'Knowledge Boys & Girls' have in-built 'chips and processors' that deploy real knowledge, in real time. Out on the roads, real professionalism isn't dependent on the battery life of a mobile device or if that device knows that the football kicked off late or is going to penalties - which will impact on both journey time and route choice.

A professional possesses the ability to make decisions in the best interests of others.'

We know that this level of responsibility is based on the use of specific, localised, operational expertise - rather than hoping a digital device can provide an AA graded Knowledge rating of a route selection in line with

traffic conditions, whilst ensuring a disabled passenger arrives at the entrance to their hotel which has suitable wheelchair access and porter assistance.

Those who possess 'The Knowledge' and have responded to the strength of the calling to the highest standards of the profession don't just know the optimum route within an ever-changing landscape, they know its history too. If the formation of a professional identity is also about '**providing a specialised service to society**', those professionals with the ability to share that learning with their passengers are actually, inter-generational custodians of present-day and historical London knowledge. Black cab drivers are trusted 'old school influencers' in relation to the sites, attractions, facilities, services and cultural traditions of the capital - including being ambassadors of a historic trade, which is known as the best taxi service in the world.

All this, whilst transporting passengers in the most direct and safest manner, in accordance with codes, ethics and the standards of a professional community of operators.

Those with 'The Knowledge' have often picked up and are moving before a passenger has informed them of their destination - professionals are not sat around backing up traffic, typing postcodes into gadgets, in the hope a device can professionalise their practice and make them what they are not.

When people are lost - a professional finds them and gets them where they need to go. When they are too tired to go on - a professional takes the reins and when they are late for what's important to them, professional road craft and knowledge get them to their destination safely and quickly.

So how are those with 'The Knowledge' valued and whose responsibility should it be to promote the identities and activities of such professionals, in turn separating them from other "suppliers of transportation services...?"

You are professionals. We know it.

Let's ensure everybody else knows it and values it too.

The LTDA are here to represent, protect and ensure recognition of the professional practice, identity and standards of our members.



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The Ladies Bridge

Waterloo Bridge has a rich and well documented history. It has featured in numerous films and songs over the decades, but did you know that for many years it was known as 'The Ladies Bridge'?

Designed between 1807 and 1810 by John Rennie, the first bridge on the site opened as a toll one in 1817. Gaining a grim reputation as a popular suicide spot around the 1840s, Thomas Hood wrote the poem *The Bridge of Sighs*, which recounted the suicide of a sex worker at the location.

By the late 1930s, Waterloo Bridge was deemed to be of major strategic importance to the army, however, it was in a state of dilapidation. An architect, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, was then commissioned to design a new structure. By 1939, work was well underway to construct the 1,230 foot build.

Although the new bridge was officially opened in September of 1942, it wasn't fully completed until 1945. This was due to the bomb damage that it suffered after being targeted by German bombers.

The bridge itself was often referred to as 'The Ladies Bridge' on account of the fact that it is frequently asserted the workforce was largely women. It is believed that Thames riverboat pilots gave the bridge this moniker as it was believed that up to 65% of the construction workforce responsible for building it were indeed women. However, there is also a view that the number quoted may be an exaggeration, due to very few individuals having any recollection of seeing women building it during the war.

Whatever the truth is, to any Thames riverboat pilot, Waterloo Bridge will always be known as The Ladies Bridge.

26



It's illegal to die in the Houses of Parliament (or is it?)

Many bizarre laws have been passed via an act of Parliament or royal ascent over the centuries. For example, carrying a plank along a pavement is illegal under Section 54 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839. Other offences covered by this Act include flying kites, playing annoying games and sliding on ice or snow in the street. Another strange Act is a 1313 statute forbidding the wearing of armour in Parliament. However, one of the strangest that allegedly exists is the criminal act of dying in Parliament, but is it true or false?

The issue of dying in Parliament is a spurious one at best. It appears to arise from the belief that anyone who dies in a Royal Palace is eligible for a state funeral. Curiously, there seems to be no trace of any such law on the statute books. In fact, under the Coroners Act 1988, the coroner of the Queen's household has jurisdiction over an inquest into a death in a royal palace. However, state funerals are not a mandatory requirement upon dying there.

There have been at least five deaths in the grounds of the Palace of Westminster: Guy Fawkes and Sir Walter Raleigh were both executed in the Old Palace yard, Spencer Perceval, the only British Prime Minister to be

assassinated, was shot and died in the lobby of the House of Commons in 1812, and Sir Alfred Billson collapsed and died in the House of Commons 'Aye' lobby in 1907, while casting his vote on a sugar duty bill. Most recently, PC Keith Palmer was also killed in the line of duty at the Houses of Parliament in 2017. None of these men received a state funeral, in fact Spencer Perceval's funeral was a private affair at his widow's request.

So it would seem that folklore has usurped fact and you are allowed to die in the Houses of Parliament without facing any legal sanctions.

SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW

LONDON?

The Mayor has to Grant Permission to The Queen to Enter the City of London

You would think that The Queen, being of royal descent, could pretty much do as she pleases, but you would be wrong. Despite being afforded privileges such as being allowed to drive on the UK's roads without a licence (primarily because driving licences are actually issued in her name), Her Majesty is actually excluded from quite a few things.

The Queen is never allowed out in public without five armed guards. She is also not allowed to drive herself to public engagements. However one of the more bizarre exclusions that she has to encounter is the fact that she is not allowed to enter the City of London without the Mayor's permission.

This does not mean that she has to seek Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan's, permission. She does however require permission from the Mayor of the City of London via a formal request which requires a ceremony held at Temple Bar.

The City of London operated separately from the rest of the country, much in the same way as The Vatican, where its autonomy is concerned. Therefore, whenever The Queen wishes to enter the City of London, the City's police service puts up a red cord and an extravagant ceremony follows. Several officials assist, including someone called The Remembrancer, who is charged with maintaining and enhancing the City's status and ensuring that its established rights are safeguarded. So, along with other City of London officials, The Remembrancer (via the Mayor) is responsible for giving The Queen permission to enter the city.

It is believed that this tradition dates back to the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, so if the Mayor refuses permission then it's 'no entry' for Her Majesty.



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Movie Corner

Critic Amon Warmann guides us through the latest film releases, including Marvel's new and extended web-slinging adventure.

Reel Talk



A24 Productions

Bodies Bodies Bodies (15) ⚪

Normally when you think of the term 'whodunnit', a super smart and quirky detective comes to mind. *Bodies Bodies Bodies* certainly has some mystery elements to it, but director Halina Reijn's slasher comedy doesn't have a Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot or Benoit Blanc figure at its centre. Instead, the focus is on a bunch of rich and horny 20-somethings who get stuck in a remote mansion during a hurricane. When an ill-advised party game ends with a power cut and a dead body, the bickering and finger-pointing to find the culprit ensues.

Each member of the group has their own irritable and problematic qualities – Alice (Rachel Sennott) is a narcissist with an awful-sounding podcast, David (Pete Davidson) is a casual misogynist who only gets more hostile as the film progresses, and so on and so forth. The prospect of spending any time with them would normally be unbearable, but the committed performances ensure the movie is entertaining without ever overstaying its welcome; and the smart, satirical script yields laughs and perceptive insights into online culture in equal measure. Whether it will age well remains to be seen (the film is loaded with Gen Z slang), but as a unique whodunnit that keeps you guessing, it's a winner.



Bodies Bodies Bodies is in cinemas now.



Disney/Marvel Studios

Spider-Man: No Way Home – More Fun Stuff (12a) ⚪

We're still a couple months away from *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* hopefully closing out Phase 4 of the MCU in style. But if we were handing out 'Best Of' awards for Marvel's post-*Avengers: Endgame* offerings today, *Spider-Man: No Way Home* would take the #1 spot. The multiversal story saw Tom Holland's Peter Parker join forces with past Spider-Men played by Andrew Garfield and Tobey Maguire, combining the old with the new in ways that were both predictable and unexpected, but almost always thrilling and emotional.

So, while *More Fun Stuff* – which reportedly has 11 additional minutes – is absolutely a move by Sony to see if Spidey's latest outing can earn some more money and reach the \$2 billion worldwide milestone (it's only \$100 million away), it's still exciting to consider spending more time in this world. The fact that much of that additional footage will just be the three Spideys exchanging banter with each other is further cause to get hyped. Their onscreen meeting was historic, and made watching *No Way Home* in cinemas for the first time an incredible experience. Here's hoping this can recapture that magic!



Spider-Man: No Way Home – More Fun Stuff is in cinemas now.

Crimes of the Future (18) ⚪

You can always count on a certain amount of weirdness from a David Cronenberg movie, and *Crimes of the Future* definitely fits that bill. Set in a dystopian future, it stars Viggo Mortensen and Léa Seydoux as Saul Tenser and Caprice, celebrity performance artists who publicly showcase the evolution of human organs in live (and queasy!) performances. Throw in Kristen Stewart as Timlin – an obsessed investigator for the National Organ Registry – and you have three of the best actors working today who are all at the top of their game. What unfolds is a slow-paced but thematically dense journey that asks thought-provoking questions on where we're headed as a species. Your mileage on that may vary, but *Crimes of the Future*'s technical aspects are above reproach. An atmospheric score by frequent Cronenberg collaborator Howard Shore is an effective mood setter, while the mix of eerie production design and VFX convinces in showcasing a world which is both very different and similar to the one we currently inhabit.



Crimes of the Future is in cinemas 9th September.



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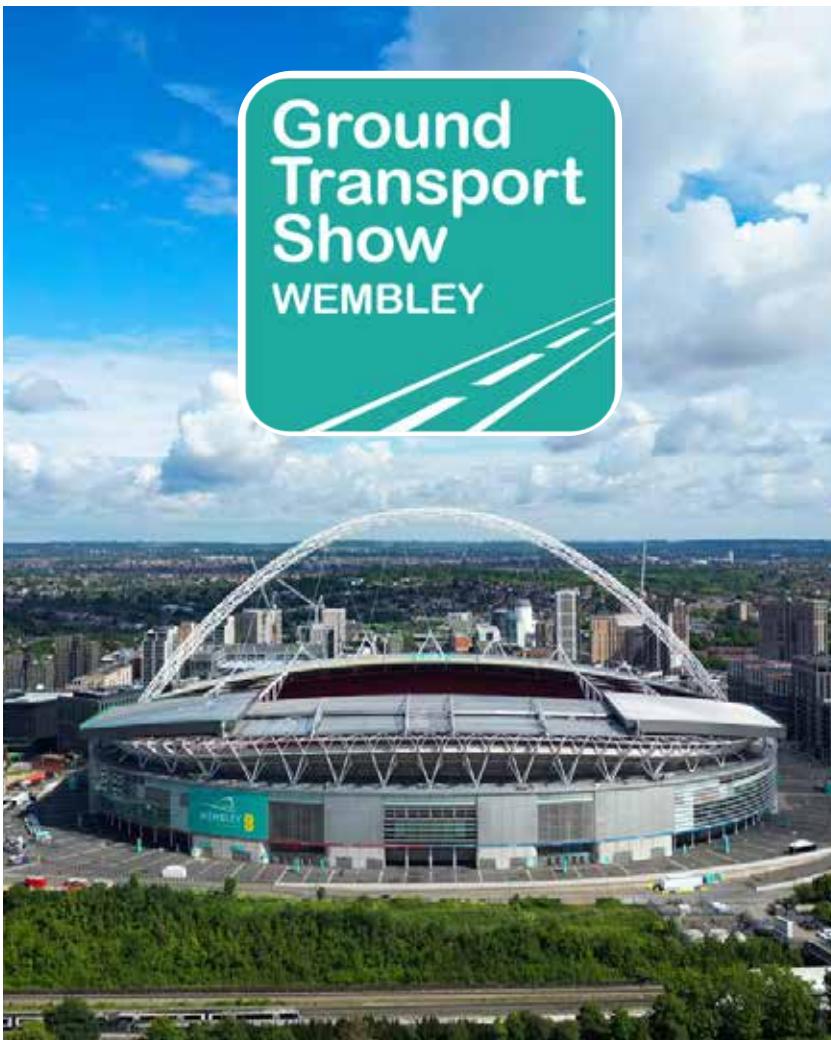
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Do you currently have points on your DVLA driving license? (please tick) Yes No

If Yes how many points do you have?

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

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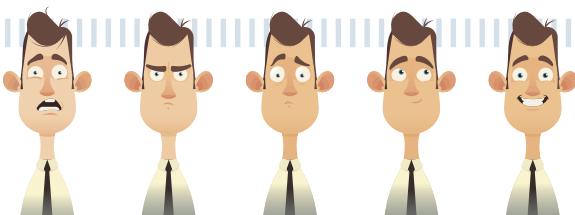


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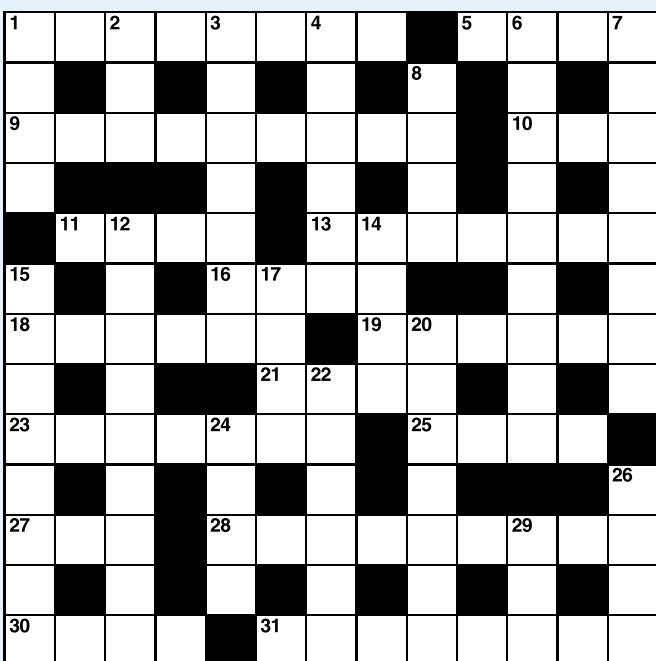
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Puzzler Page

So you know every street and every run between two points in London? Let's now see how your knowledge stands up to these brain twisters...

Crossword



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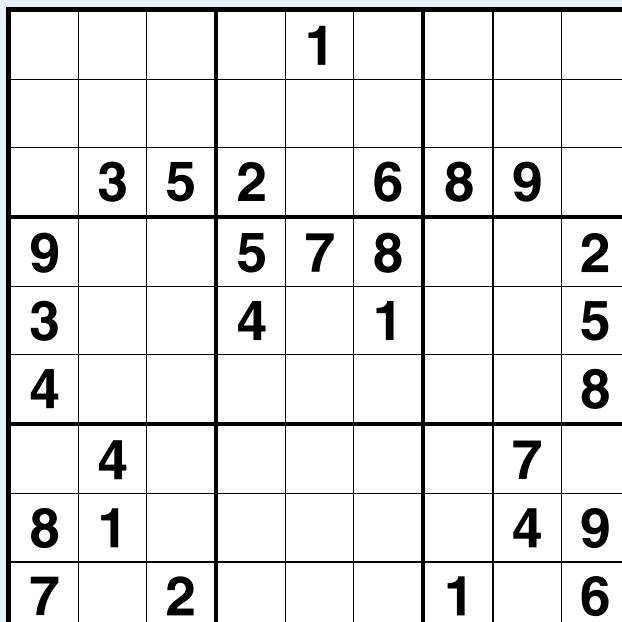
- 1 Tennis set decider (3-5)
- 5 Performs a role (4)
- 9 Remiss (9)
- 10 Atmosphere (3)
- 11 Front of a boat (4)
- 13 Staunched (7)
- 16 Assert (4)
- 18 Large subtropical fruit (6)
- 19 Exact retribution for (6)
- 21 Tibetan monk (4)
- 23 Welsh ___, item of furniture (7)
- 25 Bloodthirsty (4)
- 27 British honorary award (inits) (3)
- 28 Care for (4,5)
- 30 Name in court (4)
- 31 Draw out (8)

DOWN

- 1 Fish, often canned (4)
- 2 More familiar word for 'ovum' (3)
- 3 Locomotive system (7)
- 4 Unwilling (6)
- 6 Pit worker (9)
- 7 Device used to destroy documents (8)
- 8 Eyelid infection (4)
- 12 Embody (9)
- 14 Streetcar (4)
- 15 Widespread outbreak of a disease (8)
- 17 Ebbw ___, South Wales town (4)
- 20 Itinerant drifter (7)
- 22 Warmth of feeling (6)
- 24 Fine fabric that originated in China (4)
- 26 Ghastly child (4)
- 29 Common hot beverage (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.



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 39 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.

□ < □ > □	□ > □			
□	□	□	□	□
^				
□	□	□	□	□
v				
3 < □	□	□	□	□
□ < □ > □	□	□	□	□

All answers to puzzler on p30

Puzzler

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● White tx4 64 reg. VGC. 104.000 miles £18.000. Contact only whatsap 07397513634 MARK.

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London Cab Drivers Attempt to Row the Atlantic

Taxi caught up with Stuart Lockhart, one of the London Cab Drivers who is planning to row the Atlantic, to raise funds for the Taxi Charity.

TAXI Hi Stuart, great to meet you. We spoke to your challenge teammate, Daren Parr, about this ambitious row a couple of months ago, so how is it going?

Stuart: Probably the most important thing to tell you is that we have now been in a boat. When you spoke to Daren none of us had rowed before! The Fulham Rowing Club has been helping us with the basics of keeping the boat upright and rowing in straight lines. It really was that bad! But we are slowly getting the hang of it.

TAXI So, what rowing prep have you done?

Stuart: We have just completed our first 24-hour row on The Solent, with a second booked for 6th September. We set off from the Avon Marina in Christchurch at 8am on 9th August and were incredibly lucky that the weather was perfect and the water was flat. I loved it and was quite lucky that my training on a rowing machine had possibly toughened up my hands, so I didn't suffer too much with blisters. But sitting in the rowing seat for two hours on and two hours off, across 24 hours, did leave my derriere feeling very tender, my arms and back hurting and my hamstrings very tight!

The row showed us just how much we have to learn, and we are booked on a five-day sea survival course which will show us exactly what might happen and how to deal with different scenarios. On this row we practised throwing a rope out for a man overboard and had a go at cooking the food we will eat for the two months it will take to cross the Atlantic. When I say cooking, we actually just need to boil water to rehydrate the sealed packets of food like you would prepare a Pot Noodle. But the boat is narrow, with very little space to move and in the middle of the Atlantic we might be trying to cook in horrendous storm conditions.

We were guided throughout our 24 hours by Billy Taylor from Monkey Fist Adventures, who began doing Atlantic rowing in 2014. He has been incredibly supportive and is preparing us so well for the unknowns of this mammoth challenge.

TAXI How far did you row?

Stuart: In the 24-hour period we rowed 31 miles up and down



Cabbies prepare for Atlantic Row

First 24-hour row

The Solent. The distance we need to row across the Atlantic from Lanzarote to Antigua in 2023 is 3,200 miles with an average target of 50 miles per day. If you consider that we won't have many days with the weather as perfect as it was on this row, we will definitely need to up our game.

TAXI How are you physically preparing for this?

Stuart: Fitness is going to be so important. I was about four stone overweight a couple of years ago and was spurred to do something when I saw some pictures from a friend's 21st party in Malta and was shocked at just how big I looked. A friend recommended the Six Pack Revolution and I decided that I'd give it a go. I looked at the costs and reckoned that the 75-day programme was probably only the same cost as a few personal training sessions, so I signed up. It certainly worked for me, and I have kept the weight off. Daren is training four times a week in the gym, concentrating mainly on his legs as 80% of

rowing is with the legs, plus he is using a rowing machine and Bob is on the rower three times a week and also getting out on his mountain bike.

TAXI Rowing the Atlantic is not cheap, and I know you want to raise money for the Taxi Charity, so we are guessing you are looking for sponsorship?

Stuart: We certainly are! Rowing the Atlantic is a very expensive challenge, and we are so grateful to Avon Marina for loaning us the boat. We have several sponsors on



Bob and Stuart

board already, but we would love to have some more support from the cab trade including the apps, insurance companies, garages, and trade organisations.

TAXI If our readers want to know more, where can they find information?

Stuart: Our website is www.cabbiesdoatlanticrow.com or you can email us on cabbiesdoatlanticrow@gmail.com. If anyone can help by introducing us to potential sponsors, we would also be grateful.

About the Taxi Charity

The Taxi Charity is run by volunteer London black taxi drivers and has been supporting thousands of veterans of all ages since 1948. The charity arranges free trips to Belgium, France and The Netherlands for acts of commemoration and days out to museums, concerts, or fundraising events across the UK, to catch up with friends and comrades.

The charity was awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in June, 2021.

In 2023, the charity will be celebrating its 75th anniversary.

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

www.taxicharity.org





Metro Man

The only thing that is metropolitan about Mr. Meg is the 9.34 from Wembley Park to Finchley Road.

A woman of words

It's been a long, hot summer. And, now it is coming to a close, I want to make a plea to whoever ends up as our next Prime Minister. Next year, please make it law that the men of London dress and groom better when the sun is shining.

Us women style it out all summer long. Driving anywhere in London, you'll see wavy frocks, palazzo trousers in lightweight linen, flippy floral skirts and pretty sandals. Let's be honest, we look great.

But what do the fellas do when it's hot? They undress for the season.

I picked up a fare yesterday. He was going from Kensington to North End Road, and wearing a baggy-legged pair of football shorts and a string vest. His huge

nipples were poking through the vest and getting a good airing. Then, I glanced in the mirror and saw he was sitting in the middle of my back seat, legs akimbo. I got such an eyeful of him down there I felt like I'd broken my marriage vows.

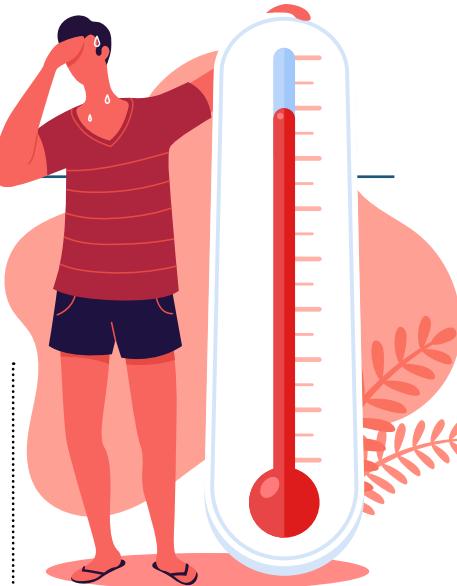
Men who parade in the streets looking like their next stop is a nudist beach are almost always in the company of other blokes. Likely because most women would yell at their other half, "I'm not going out with you undressed like that! Put some bloomin' clothes on!"

Do women stop grooming themselves because it is summer, and the living is easy? No, they don't. Actually, they up their game. Here at Meg Towers, hours are dedicated to hair removal, skin smoothing, toenail painting and the application of heel balm and my foot egg. For the uninitiated, a foot egg sands

off hard skin on heels, so my lady feet look perdy in fit flops. At least, my egg used to do that until Mr. Meg decided to experiment and use it to sand wood knots on the new skirting. My egg is now dead.

Mr. Meg pooh poohs hair removal, feet softening, pore unblocking, monobrow pruning or fingernail management. When I tell him that his toenails look like they belong to a goat and that there's more hard skin on his heels than on the cheese counter at Sainsbury's he laughs and tells me he is 'all man.' He thinks he is overdoing the grooming thing by changing his boxers and brushing his teeth every day.

I love picking up men in Soho. Let me rephrase that. I love picking up metropolitan men in central London who know their way around a tub of moisturiser and an exfoliating scrub. These guys have hair trimmers and



aren't afraid to use them.

When the sun is high in the sky, a Soho man faces the world cool, in a crisp white t-shirt and several pumps of a posh cologne. These guys leave the back of my cab smelling sensational.

The only thing that is metropolitan about Mr. Meg is the 9.34 from Wembley Park to Finchley Road today. He's on it because he's got an early bird invite to the Robert Dyas sale and wants a new garden strimmer. I hope it's got an ear and nose hair attachment.

TAXI

LTDA A selection of our numerous Distribution Points

- ◆ A1 Taxis, Melody Lane, Highbury, N5
- ◆ Abacus Accounts, Southbrook Road, Lee, SE12
- ◆ Astral Café, Regency Place, SW1
- ◆ Bubbles Car Wash, E2
- ◆ C & S Taxis, Dunbridge Street, E2
- ◆ Cabsurance, Seven Kings
- ◆ Camberfield Taxi Services
- ◆ Computer Cab, Mitre Way, W12
- ◆ Coney Allen, Dunbridge Street, E1
- ◆ CP Beehive Service Station, Beehive Lane, Gants Hill
- ◆ Cricklewood Carriers, Cricklewood
- ◆ Dial A Cab, City Road, N1
- ◆ Edgware Station Rank
- ◆ Euston Station Rank
- ◆ G & L Taxis, Crayford Road, N7
- ◆ Globe Transmissions, Cudworth Street, E1
- ◆ The Ham, Brentford
- ◆ Heathrow Airport Canteen
- ◆ Hexagon Garage, Lukin Street, E1
- ◆ Jet Garage, Clipstone Street, W1
- ◆ Knowledge Centre, Caledonian Road
- ◆ KPM, Hemming Street, E1
- ◆ London City Airport Canteen
- ◆ LP Motors, Dunbridge Street, E2
- ◆ Martin Cordell, Thomas Road, E14
- ◆ Paddington Station Rank
- ◆ Putney Bridge Taxis, The Arches, Putney Bridge Station, SW6
- ◆ Richmond Road Taxi Centre, E8
- ◆ Safewise Supermarket, Harrow
- ◆ South Bank Service Station, Great Suffolk Street, SE1
- ◆ TAXI HOUSE, Great Suffolk Street, SE1
- ◆ Taxi & Private Hire, Blackfriars Rd, SE1
- ◆ Temple Place Shelter
- ◆ Turbo Accessories, ThreeColtsLane, E2
- ◆ Ubiquitous Ltd, E1
- ◆ Waterloo Station
- ◆ Wimbledon Station Rank
- ◆ WizAnn Knowledge School, Watts Grove, E3

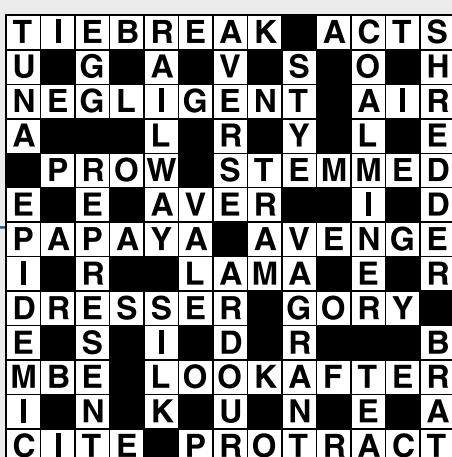
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Crossword

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SUDOKU

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

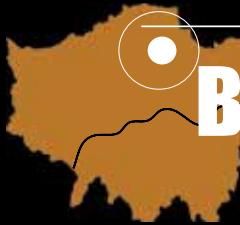
SOLUTION: FORFEITED

All words: Diet, differ, dire, dirt, drift, edit, editor, eider, fetid, fief, fife, fiord, fire, fired, foetid, forfeit, fried, refit, retied, ride, rife, riff, rift, riot, rioted, rite, tide, tied, tier, tiered, tiff, tire, tired, tried, trio, FORFEITED.

Word targets: Excellent: 38, Good: 32, Target: 23, Kids: 18

Futoshiki

1	<	4	>	3	5	>	2
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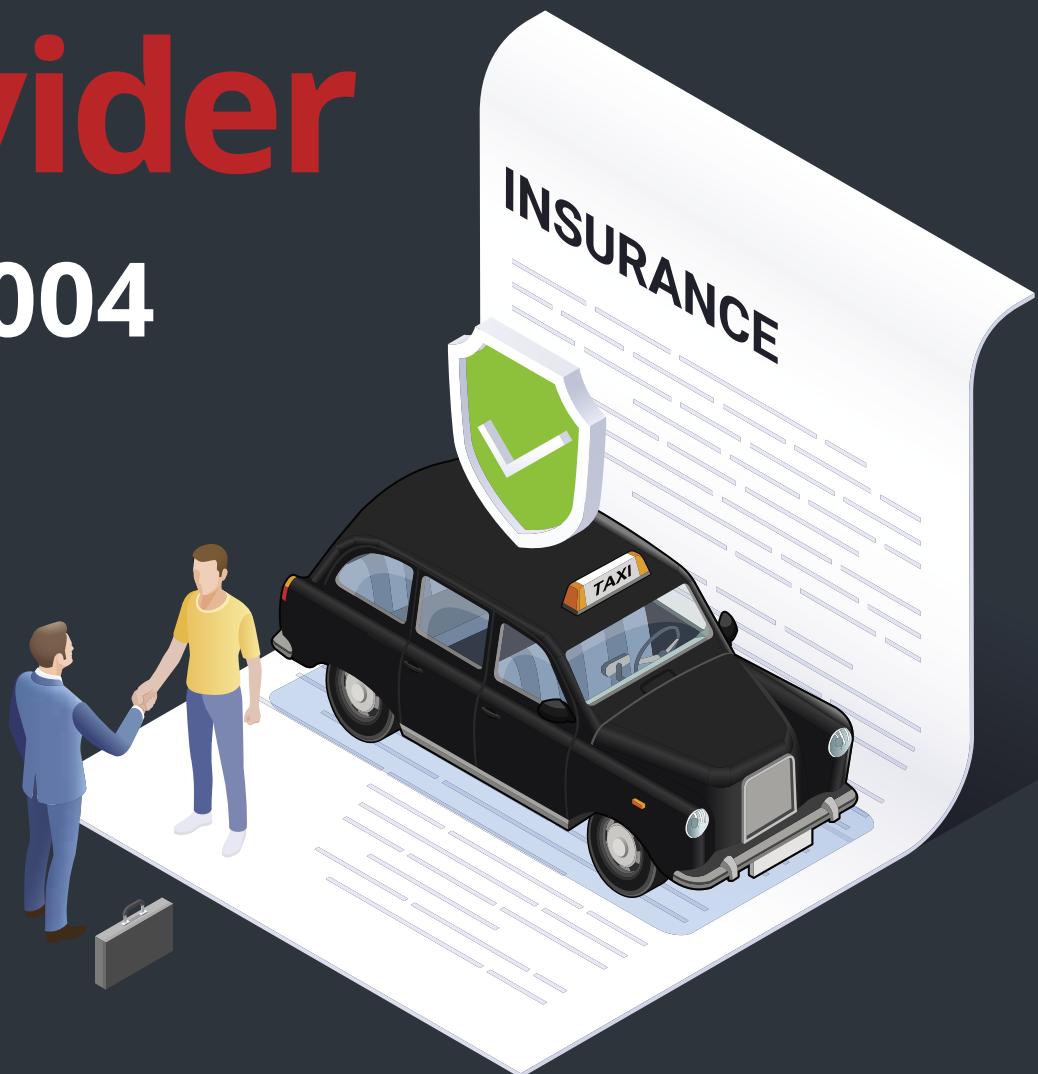


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