UBER SNEAK PAST MAYOR TO TFL’S BACK DOOR
FOI’S REVEAL TFL GAVE TEAM UBER VIP TREATMENT, PERSONAL ESCORT, PRIVATE ROOM, ISOLATED LIFT AND TFL RECEIVED GIFT IN RETURN
TRADE

Graham Robinson, Interim General Manager of Taxi and Private Hire Transport for London has advised licensees to follow NHS advice to slow the spread of the virus following the outbreak in Wuhan, China of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

‘Notice 02/20 - Transport for London - London Taxi and Private Hire’, firstly advises licensees to follow “…largely the same advice to slow the spread of other germs including flu and general coughs and colds.”

The advice recommends:

* Always carrying tissues and using them to catch coughs and sneezes.
* Disposing of used tissues in the bin as soon as possible.
* Washing hands with soap and water, or using sanitiser gel, to kill germs.

Secondly, the TfL notice “…encourages licensees to take sensible and routine precautionary measures such as cleaning surfaces regularly with sanitising wipes or spray to get rid of germs. As ever, Taxi drivers should consider regularly cleaning card payment devices. Licensees who share a taxi or private hire vehicle should consider regularly cleaning the steering wheel and instruments.”

The document informs licensees that they can stay up to date with guidance by visiting the Public Health for England website and requests that drivers “…fully cooperate with any enquiries they may receive from Public Health England or any other relevant agencies.”

“If you are worried about the Coronavirus (COVID-19), have a cough, temperature or shortness of breath and have been in physical contact with someone from an affected area then the NHS advises you to:

* Stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
* Call NHS 111.”

The notice comes in the wake of details reported in Taxi of the first London Coronavirus patient arriving at hospital in an Uber private hire vehicle last month. Public Health England consultant, Dr Rachel Thorn Heathcock deemed the driver not to be at high risk of contracting the infection “…as the journey was less than 15 minutes the driver did not have close sustained contact with the individual…” For those of you wondering what the definition of ‘close and sustained contact’ might be, PHE state that it means being ‘within two meters’ of an infected person ‘for at least fifteen minutes.’ This comfort, seemingly however did not prevent Uber from suspending the drivers private hire license…

In addition to medical staff already in place at all UK airports, teams of clinicians working continuous rotational shift patterns have been established at Heathrow to support any person arriving on flights into the capital who may be feeling unwell.

With confirmed cases of Coronavirus well into treble figures, departments of government are preparing strategies and contingency plans to prevent the spread of the virus. Worst case scenarios may include banning large events, closing schools and dissuading people from using public transport. Current government responses indicate that the ‘phase 1’ plan to ‘contain’ the virus is coming to end and as the UK moves into ‘phase 2’ which focusses on ‘delaying’ the outbreak, a ‘nervous uncertainty’ is also beginning to ‘go viral.’ The phrase, ‘hope for the best but prepare for the worst’ springs to mind.

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But hurry, taxis MUST be ordered and delivered by 31st March 2020 to qualify for this fantastic offer!
I am showing the meeting to be from 515 to 600 pm. Is this not correct? Thank you. We plan on being there around 445 as the advance security element.

On Mon, Jan 20, 2020 at 15:38 Mkrtchyan Ashkhen <mailto: @tfl.gov.uk> wrote:

Good afternoon

Thank you for follow up with us, all good with us.

I will ensure staff have all your passes ready for 6.30pm for you to collect.

Ella Tagg will pop down to escort the VIP guests to 11th floor with you. See you at 6.30pm.

Pointers discussed:

➤ Time of arrival of security staff [ ] and [ ] or [ ] - 16:30. Passes for all attendees will be collected from reception by [ ] and [ ] - 16:15.

➤ Arrival of Dara Khosrowshahi, [ ] - 17:15.

➤ Additional room required in case Dara may need to make personal calls – as discussed one of the two rooms you saw today can be used for this.

➤ If possible, a lift to be isolated for the visitors. Arron Ooi/Simon Burrell to confirm.

➤ Ella Tagg (PA to Commissioner) to assist with escorting visitors in/out of the building as per discussion with ET.

Jacob Gemma

From: [ ]

Sent: 20 January 2020 17:16

To: Mkrtchyan Ashkhen

Subject: Re: Visit

If you are still around, I have something for you as a thank you for all of your help. I need to get it from the car.

On Mon, Jan 20, 2020 at 16:30 Mkrtchyan Ashkhen <mailto: @tfl.gov.uk> wrote:

Popping down now.

Kind regards,

Ashkhen Mkrtchyan

Facilities Coordinator | Estates Management

Phone: [ ] | Mobile: [ ]

1Y2, Palestra, 197 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8NJ | [ ]

I turn out all that was needed to expose divisions at the very top of TFL was a simple Freedom of Information (FOI) request.

The Taxi and Private Hire licensing team at TFL, presumably backed by the Mayor and his team, have made it very clear that they think Uber is a threat to public safety and acted by refusing Uber’s licence. However, it transpires that Vernon Everitt, TFL’s Managing Director of Customers Communications and Technology, and alleged favourite in the race to succeed Mike Brown as Transport Commissioner, was instrumental in the recent secret meeting with Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi.

The FOI’s are shocking in so far as they detail the outrageous demands made by team Uber, and worryingly the servility and obedience shown by TFL in complying with them. From the start, Dara and his team are referred to as ‘VIP’ guests, so it’s only right that the VIP’s would ask for and get, an ‘isolated’ lift for them within Palestra, a room set aside for ‘Dara’ to make personal calls and for the ‘VIP’s’ to be personally escorted by the Transport Commissioners personal secretary!

Having asked for details of what was discussed at the meeting, the information I received came in the form of an email sent by Everitt himself – call me a cynic, but I doubt he’s going to tell us the full story! The notes of the meeting say that there was no discussion of detailed regulatory issues such as their ban from London but why else would VIP Dara be here, if not in some brazen attempt to secure a dodgy backroom deal? What Everitt also failed to explain and which is blatantly obvious from names included in the email chains, is why no one from Taxi and Private Hire was even aware the meeting was taking place, let alone in attendance! Think about that for a minute, the CEO of a Private Hire firm, currently involved in court proceedings against TFL, is invited, presumably by Everitt, into the hallowed halls of TFL and he keeps it a secret from the very people who know everything about Uber and refused to licence them, why?

TFL’s General Legal Counsel, Howard Carter, is smart and respected and there is no way he would have given the go ahead for this meeting to take place without him or someone from his legal team being in attendance. His name and details being missing from the pre-meeting email chains confirm it was kept secret from him as well. So why was Vernon so keen on keeping this a secret even from his own lawyers? I have written to Sadiq, in his capacity as the Chair of the TFL board, asking that he instigates an enquiry into all of the events surrounding this meeting.

It gets worse though, one of the emails even refers to someone from the TFL Estates management staff, ‘Popping down’…to collect ‘something’…from the Uber team as a ‘thank you for all your help’…Perhaps that’s how to get VIP status at Palestra? Next time I am there, I will take flowers or chocolates and get my own lift!

So far, despite the secret meetings, TFL are holding firm and at a preliminary hearing at Westminster Magistrates Court, the LTDA were admitted as an interested party. This means that we will have full access to all the documents and be able to make submissions to the Court, raise anything that is not brought to the Courts attention and hammer home the case against Uber that we have consistently been making. Uber is not a fit and proper operator and the Court must uphold the ban to keep them off London’s streets to protect the safety of ordinary Londoners. Our lawyers will be making this case passionately over the coming months, and will leave the Court in no doubt of just how badly this dodgy outfit has compromised passenger safety, failed to comply with regulations and put the safety of Londoners at risk in the pursuit of a quick buck.

Steve McNamara is the LTDA’s General Secretary

FOI’s reveal secret Uber meeting involved personal escort to private room, isolated lift, and thank you gift
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Private Hire Giants Roll Out New In-App ‘Safety’ Features – But Do They Really Make Passengers Safe Now?

TRADE

Giant app-based providers of transportation services have responded to the mass of safety concerns laid at their door these past months by introducing new ‘in-app features’ – but will these measures really convince Londoners that these companies are becoming safer to use?

Last month, Police revealed that in 2018 they recorded 294 trade related sexual offence allegations against drivers in London. No less than an 81% increase on 2017. Twenty-five of those cases were rapes. Other documented offences included drivers engaging without consent in the intentional sexual touching of another person and attempting to kiss or grope passengers.

Information provided by the Met and CoLP revealed that of the 294 offences recorded, only 17 individual drivers were charged for 21 offences - two drivers being charged for more than one offence each. Fifteen of these were private hire drivers, one was a taxi driver and the other, completely unlicensed. The outcomes to date have resulted in six convictions; six drivers being cleared and a further five awaiting court outcomes.

So what does the response look like from app-based providers of transportation services in their attempts to win back the trust of Londoners? How do vulnerable passengers know that when they book a journey through an app, they are going to be safe? How convincing are some of these, in-app safety features and what does it really mean for passengers?

• Vehicle verification PIN numbers are sent to customers to ensure they are getting in the correct minicab - which they have booked through an app, inclusive of make, model, vehicle registration and driver photo.

• Drivers may be made subject to identity checks in real time whilst working, using ‘selfies’ and movements such as smiling.

• The use of ‘machine learning’ technologies, which automatically detects irregular vehicle activity, such as unexpected stops and significant route deviations. This triggers a real-time response where driver and passenger are both contacted and asked to confirm that they are safe.

• In-app opportunities to message service providers, who in turn can call the driver if the passenger raises an issue and a button to initiate messaging family and friend contacts with GPS location, driver photo and vehicle registration. There’s also an in-app emergency button to call police.

So, where to start? Arguably, the driver identification features may help convict sex offenders after the event, who currently are seemingly evading identification. The ID features also attempt to ensure that the driver is the actual person licensed to drive the vehicle - though is the ‘elephant in the room’ being addressed here?

Did recent victims of minicab driving sexual predators suddenly not have access to their phone (which they just used to book their fare) to call police, family, friends or even the firm they booked in good faith to get them safely to their destination? Of the recently reported convictions of sex-offending minicab drivers who have deviated from route and subjected their passengers to grotesque, unwanted sexual ordeals, they did so in the knowledge that their passengers had a mobile device with them, that might be used to call for help. This seemingly did not sway them from their offending behaviours, nor did the risk that they could be GPS tracked and were driving their own licensed vehicles. Perhaps any attempt to solve the issue via technological means, requires a greater understanding and analysis of sexual offending behaviours and the opportunist offenders being committed.

There seems much of an onus on a vulnerable passenger to not be ‘frozen by fear’ and somehow muster the composure to take control of a horribly developing, intimidating environment. From the crop of in-app safety features and upgrades aforementioned, there is an argument to be made that there appears to be limited understandings of the situations victims have found themselves in and the real time impacts upon them.

Are these ‘app-upgrades’ seriously the best that state of the art tech companies can offer, or just a comparatively low-cost diversion from providing expensive, fit for purpose, stringent surveillance and screening of private hire trade operations? Do we need to be distinguishing between what makes people ‘feel safe’ rather than what actually makes people definitively safer?

Will Transport for London and the London public be at all convinced these new features tackle the real issues?

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Constitutional trial scheme to commence on 18th March

**BEECH STREET CLOSURE**

**THE MASSETT FILE**

The controversial trial scheme to close Beech Street to all but zero emission vehicles is to be implemented on Wednesday 18th March. The restriction will apply between Silk Street and Goswell Road. The scheme is being put in place to reduce the very high levels of air pollution within the tunnel, which can be up to ten times the levels found on other streets within the area. The City of London Corporation has taken the view that it needs to act urgently because of the number of pedestrians who walk through the tunnel, including children going to and from nearby schools. Taxi drivers also experience the worst of London’s poor air quality by having to sit in it all day, every day and should benefit from an improvement in air quality brought about by this and other schemes to reduce on-street emissions.

There has been some confusion over what constitutes a zero-emission vehicle and it doesn’t help that there are ‘low emission’ schemes in different parts of London where the restrictions are not always consistent. Some of these may also be within the Mayor of London’s ‘Ultra Low Emissions Zone’ where again the restrictions may differ. Under the Beech Street scheme, the criteria for a zero-emission vehicle is that it must meet ALL the following requirements:

- Maximum 75g CO2/km
- Minimum 20-mile zero emission range
- Euro 6 equivalent NOx emission standard

So, for the avoidance of any doubt, a Euro 6 Taxi as well as Euro 4 and 5 models DO NOT meet the standard that has been set.

All ZEC and fully electric Taxis DO meet the requirements and will be able to continue to follow routes on Beech Street. Importantly, to ensure that its residents and visitors to the area are not inconvenienced, the City Corporation has excluded any vehicle from the restriction if it is servicing premises located on Beech Street. These are:

- Barbican Centre car park
- Barbican Trade Centre
- Cromwell Tower
- Shakespeare Tower and Defoe House

This means that ALL Taxis can still access these premises to set down passengers or to pick up when booked via an App or other electronic device.

The traffic restrictions will be enforced using ANPR cameras and we are told that the system will be sophisticated enough to be able to establish whether a non-compliant vehicle had a legitimate reason to enter Beech Street.

The LTDA raised all the Trade’s concerns about the scheme, and the City has recognised that some taxi passengers may be disadvantaged by the closure in the form of higher fares and longer journey times. To evaluate the full effects of this, they are carrying out journey time surveys by means of a mystery shopper exercise. They have also requested the data that the LTDA will be gathering, using its GPS equipped vehicle from surveys that we are conducting, before and after the restriction is put in place.

The scheme is being implemented under an experimental traffic order which will run for up to 18 months. During the first six months, consultation will be carried out and any objections should be made during this period. However, the City Corporation confirms this trial scheme will be monitored throughout with any amendments made as and when required. The City Corporation will be holding meetings with residents and other interested parties and will be hosting drop-in sessions for members of the public to attend. The Authority welcomes the views of Taxi drivers as part of this process.

Extensive monitoring of the scheme will take place during the experiment to provide information of the effects on air quality, traffic flows and noise levels on Beech Street and throughout the surrounding area.

For further information www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/beechstreet.

Richard Massett, LTDA Chairman, and Chairman of the London Cab Ranks Committee
ROADS

How many road signs do you know of that need updating, moving, repairing or just throwing into the sea? Here’s your chance to get them sorted…

Transport Focus have launched their new campaign encouraging road users across England to report poor signage on ‘A’ roads and motorways managed by Highways England. Report the problem and they’ll press Highways England to sort it out!

The campaign wants signs reported that:
- You can’t see properly
- Are broken and need fixing
- You find confusing or irrelevant

Road users can report signs via the campaign’s website address when safe to do so: sortmysign.transportfocus.org.uk

‘SORT MY SIGN’ Campaign Launches!

Road Focus website is keen to detail one particular drivers’ frustration:
“l am a taxi driver, my regular journey is mostly Stansted Airport, a four-lane motorway has been changed to a two to three lane motorway and the signs along this journey are awful.”

“The Sort My Sign campaign aims to increase the usefulness and effectiveness of information on roads, including messages on electronic signs. This will allow more road users to make informed decisions in plenty of time, improving safety and reducing stress.” - transportfocus.org.uk.

Drivers tell us about their fuel savings since switching to the electric taxi.

TX drivers gave us feedback on driving – and living with – the TX, after owning the electric taxi for a year. Not only is it the best vehicle most claim to have ever driven, but drivers are also enjoying exceptional cost savings after their first year, with return on investment way above expectations, making the TX more affordable than they ever imagined.

Here’s just a few of the comments about what drivers are saving...

“I am actually saving about £100 a week in fuel costs.”

Although the cab is more expensive than outgoing models, it’s much more economical to run.”

“The savings actually pay for the TX!”

“I used to spend £4,000-£5,000 a year on fuel and now I’m probably spending between £1,500 and £2,000.”

“The savings are absolutely massive for me!”

In addition to fuel savings, drivers have also been impressed with the reduced maintenance, service and repair costs, due to longer service intervals of 25,000 miles and a three-year full vehicle warranty/five-year unlimited mileage battery warranty, making TX the most economical taxi they have ever owned.

Watch the full driver interviews at levcom/1yeartx or book a test drive and see for yourself – find your local TX dealer at levcom/electric-dealer-network

Boxing Cabbie Set to Defend Southern Area Title

London Taxi Driver Dean Richardson makes his first defence of his Southern Area Title against Konrad Stempkowski on 14th March at York Hall, Bethnal Green.

Richardson, from South Ruislip, is returning to the ring for the first time since winning the title back in September, with a second-round knockout of Nathan Graham.

Stempkowski has an impressive record to date, having had 11 bouts with 9 wins and will be his first crack at a professional title which Richardson is keen to hang on to.

If anybody fancies a night out at the Boxing and supporting a fellow cabbie, give Kate a call on 07702 887088.
New ‘Congestion-Cutting’ Tech to be Trialled

TRANSPORT

A variety of new software is being trialled to help solve local transport issues through technology.

Digital innovation firms, ‘Vivacity’, ‘Technology SME IM23’ and ‘Inrix’ will pilot their software, each implementing their tech in one of three geographical areas.

These companies will receive a share of £1.5 million and now have the opportunity to engage in the next stage of the ‘Govtech Challenge’. This opportunity is part of the wider ‘Govtech Catalyst’ project, backed by a £20 million fund - a proportion of which is allocated to seek out modern, innovative solutions to improve driving conditions and reduce congestion.

The new software designs include utilising predictive machine learning to monitor traffic in order to flag incidents in real time. This allows traffic control operators to respond at pace to prevent traffic jams forming and prioritise road space for sustainable transport. Vehicle path tracking software will also be employed, allowing traffic operators to make efficient improvements to both their road networks and traffic signals.

The projects will be managed by the Department of Transport for 12 months. Transport secretary Grant Shapps, expressing support for the project, stated: "Congestion isn’t just bad for our environment, productivity and communities – it also has a huge impact on our national economy. That’s why, as well as our multi-billion-pound investment in rail and buses to improve connectivity, we are opening up city centre, transport and traffic management to new digital innovators."

It is also hoped that both air quality and road safety will be improved in the towns where the software will initially be trialled. The three pilot locations are York, Oxfordshire and Dorset (Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole). It is intended that the lessons learnt from the project will be shared with other local authorities and eventually be implemented nationwide.

The Department for Transport suggests on the government website for the project that the “investment could cut road rage felt by frustrated drivers…” - something many London road users could certainly benefit from.

Erratic Uber Driver Drunk at the Wheel

Alarmed members of the public dialled 999 in order to report to Police that an Uber private hire vehicle was being driven erratically along a stretch of motorway. Operations Patrol Unit Officers were despatched to locate the vehicle and its driver who was found to be almost three times over the legal drink drive limit of 35 micrograms per 100 millilitres of breath.

A Roads Policing spokesperson stated through their official OPU online newsfeed that "...members of the public reported a vehicle being driven erratically on the M5 southbound near J4. It was stopped on Strensham Services."

Police requested a breath specimen from the Uber driver who outright failed the roadside test:

"...driver was found to be drunk. He blew 120ug/100ml at the roadside!! (1417)."

Police arrested the Uber driver who will face a court appearance and await the likely confirmation of the revocation of his private hire driver’s license. Information as to which licensing authority the driver is currently licensed was not disclosed in the Police statement.
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A llications of driving whilst using a mobile phone are becoming an ever more common occurrence for taxi drivers. The law on using a mobile phone whilst driving changed as of 1st March 2017 when harsher penalties were introduced. Anybody caught using their mobile phone whilst driving will now face 6 penalty points and a £100 fine.

We are receiving a high number of calls from members that have either been stopped by the police for allegedly being on their phones or receiving letters from the Police stating they have been given credible evidence from a cyclist or a member of their public that they were on their mobile phone.

The LTDA legal team assess on a case by case basis, interviewing drivers to gather all the evidence e.g. whether they were receiving a call or performing any other interactive communications at the time of the alleged offence. LTDA legal representatives also attend Magistrates Court hearings if they believe a driver can provide evidence to prove they are not guilty of the offence.

The prosecution must prove beyond reasonable doubt that you were actually driving and using the phone. For example, a police officer might give evidence to say that he or she saw you driving whilst holding a mobile phone. To counter this in court our legal team will ask you to obtain your call records from your telephone provider to prove you were not making or receiving a call. However, in some cases where the police think you are being distracted by a device whilst driving but you are not touching the device, you could still be stopped and prosecuted for not being in proper control of your vehicle. This offence carries a lesser penalty of 3 penalty points and a £100 fine.

But this is very controversial argument!

What is an interactive communication function and what if the device wasn’t being actually held?

Basically, it’s operating a phone device whilst driving, you don’t actually have to be making or receiving a call. In fact, texting, e-mailing, using apps or social media, would amount to interactive communication. The new legislation only provides that you can use a mobile phone whilst driving if using a hands-free kit.

Have you got your mobile phone ready for the drive?

From Bluetooth kits to mobile phone holders, the car market is full of gadgets and gizmos that promise to make your driving - and your life - a little bit easier. But what are the best car accessories out there, especially if you’re a taxi driver?

Thankfully, there are plenty of hands-free Bluetooth car phone kits on the market that can help keep you safe and legal on the road. A Bluetooth car kit works by connecting wirelessly to your phone, allowing you to make phone calls or listen to your music without having to pick up your phone, meaning you can talk as you drive safely and legally. (I am trying the ear pods with voice commands I will update you on my thoughts).

In addition to a Bluetooth car kit, a mobile phone holder is also an essential accessory to help keep you safe and legal on the road. Mobile GPS and map applications have become increasingly common over the past few years with many drivers are now using maps on their mobile phone as an alternative to a portable sat nav system. If you are planning on using a mobile map, then it is essential to have a car phone holder to mount your phone at eye level without it causing a distraction.

Ensuring that you can interact with your in-taxi technology will be a key component of every taxi driver’s day in future. To that end we’ve teamed up with a technology partner iSmash to provide LTDA members with a unique offer.

Why iSmash?

They are fundamentally about keeping people connected to the device that they need to keep themselves in business. Whether this means repairing tech damage, providing you with accessories to ensure you get use your device legally and safely, or to keep you connected while on the road.

iSmash is a leading tech repair brand specialising in repairing smartphones including iPhone, iPad and Samsung repairs. They can replace your screen, fix camera issues or give your battery a boost. They also offer liquid damage repair, logic board repair and data recovery. If you’re not sure what’s wrong, then their technicians can run a diagnostic as well.

Having experienced it myself, they are also very hot on while-you-wait turnaround times meaning you’re not missing fares. They offer a lifetime warranty and guarantee the security of your private data. Their trained and accredited tech repair specialists can fix the most common device faults within 30 minutes. They also stock a wide range of accessories for drivers. They currently have 31 branches across town so you’re never too far away.

Anthony Street is an LTDA Executive Support Officer

iSmash has put together a package for LTDA Members. To take advantage of these benefits, just show your LTDA membership card at one of the 31 iSmash stores.

**Cab Pack.**
With this package you can get 20% off any audio product* and Free Car holder * (excludes Apple branded accessories)

**Protection Pack.**
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EXMOUTH MARKET  Red zone
BERKLEY STREET J/W PICCADILLY  Yellow box cameras
JOHN ISLIP STREET  No right turn into Ponsonby Terrace
FULHAM BROADWAY/BARCLAY ROAD  Yellow box
CAMDEN  20mph limit
SELFRIDGES  Over ranking
LUDGATE HILL  Zig-Zags
ISLINGTON  20mph limit
RED ROUTES  TfL is actively enforcing yellow box restrictions
TOWER BRIDGE  20 mph speed limit – average speed cameras
LIMEHOUSE LINK  30mph speed limit
SMITHFIELD  Do not park in loading boxes, they are enforced by camera
A13  Average speed cameras in operation
THE CITY  20mph limit
KILLICK STREET  Pedestrian zone
WESTMINSTER PARK PLAZA  No right turn into Addington Street
VERNON PLACE  No left turn into Southampton Row

♦ HOTSPOT 1
Devonshire Place Mews
– no right turn

♦ HOTSPOT 2
Binfield Road
– 24hr pedestrian zone

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*Business users only. Finance illustration relates to Personal Contract Purchase. 7.3% APR Representative figures based on TX Vista at £57,099 OTR (OTR figure is net of OLEV Plug in Taxi Grant which is up to £7,500 and is subject to European Whole Vehicle Type Approval and European Commission state aid notification) with a customer deposit of £3,750, followed by 60 monthly payments of £791.09 (equivalent weekly payments of £182.56 – it is not possible to pay by week, balance is paid monthly via direct debit) plus an optional final payment of £19,258 and £10 Purchase Fee. Based upon an annual contracted mileage of 30,000. You have the option at the end of the agreement to 1. return the vehicle and not pay the optional final payment. If the vehicle has exceeded the maximum agreed mileage a charge per excess mile will apply. In this example, 6p plus VAT per excess mile. If the vehicle is in good condition (fair wear and tear accepted) and has not exceeded the maximum agreed mileage you will have nothing further to pay. 2. Pay the optional final payment and keep the vehicle. Or 3. Part exchange the vehicle subject to settlement of your existing finance agreement; new finance agreements are subject to status. All prices inclusive of VAT. Two, three or four year plans are also available. Finance is provided by Black Horse Taxi Finance a trading style of Black Horse Ltd, St William House, Tresillian Terrace, Cardiff CF10 5BH. Credit is subject to status and is only available to UK residents aged 18 and over. All prices and promotions are valid for vehicles ordered and delivered before 31 March 2020.
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TRUSTED TO DO RIGHT BY DRIVERS
University College London Are Asking London Cabbies to Step Up and Help Fight Dementia

Your brain is unique! More than a decade ago, research showed that a part of the taxi driver’s brain called the hippocampus is larger than in well, y’know – regular folk.

The reason for this is that the hippocampus is the centre for memory and spatial navigation, and taxi drivers use it on a daily basis to remember places, plan and navigate routes between points in London.

Similar to a muscle it seems, you can train the hippocampus and in turn, it will create more brain cells. Unfortunately, for people with Alzheimer’s disease the hippocampus is deteriorating and that is why they have problems remembering things and finding their way.

Now, UCL is running a new study to understand the hippocampus better and what it can tell us about developing dementia. To do that, our team at UCL want to scan the brains of taxi drivers to see the activity in the hippocampus whilst cabbies are planning a series of runs and then play a navigation game on a computer.

Following the scan and the gaming, researchers will chat with the drivers and ask them a few questions over some, well… lots, of tea, coffee and biscuits.

The whole experiment takes about 3 hours, but cabbies will be compensated for taking part, receiving £10 per hour and hopefully leave with a feeling of having contributed to a study, that could significantly influence the lives of those who in the future are diagnosed with this cruel condition.

If you’re interested in taking part, please email spierslab@ucl.ac.uk or give them a call on 07765321216.

You can also follow on Twitter @taxibrains or check out their website: https://spierslab.com/taxi-brains-project/

‘Taxi’ is in direct contact with Spiers Lab and will be following the progress of the study, bringing regular updates throughout its duration.

TFL ARE OFFERING UP TO £8,000 FOR TAXI DRIVERS DELICENSEING THEIR EURO 3, 4 AND 5 VEHICLES*

That’s up to £8,000 towards the purchase of a new TX. Find out more at www.levc.com/tflfund

Alternatively speak to us about a part exchange on your new TX – we are offering up to £3,500 more on part ex valuations of selected TX4 models.**

www.levc.com/valuemytaxi or call 0203 912 6214

*The TfL delicensing fund is available for taxi drivers who want to delicense their Euro 3, 4 or 5 vehicles. For more details on scheme eligibility please note: https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/taxis-and-private-hire/taxi-delicensing-scheme **Inflated offer prices are typically available on late Euro 5 and Euro 6 TX4 models in good condition and with full service history. All used vehicle offers are made at the discretion of the LEVC Brewery Team. Terms and conditions apply.

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levc.com
2p/Mile! Slash The Cost Of Your Taxi Charging In Two Easy Steps.

You’ve made the leap to electric and already experiencing the benefits, however are you getting the lowest costs per mileage?

For many drivers, their state-of-the-art taxis are being charged with low-tech charging cables and standard electricity tariffs. The result is simple, a higher cost per mile and therefore lost fare margin.

Our quick guide steps through the canniest way to reduce your cost per mile by up to 2/3 by using an Ohme smart charger which takes advantage of the increasing range of time-of-use energy tariffs.

Ohme Charger + Octopus Go 1.9p/mile
Dumb Charger + Standard Tariff 5.7p/mile

STEP 1
Choosing the right charger is the gateway to lowering your cost per mile. We have partnered exclusively with Ohme, the smartest home charger on the market.

Ohme’s Smart Home Charger takes advantage of time-of-use electricity tariffs. Choose a compatible tariff and the Smart Charger automatically charges your taxi at the cheapest rates. What’s more, if you already have a standard charger installed at home, Ohme’s Portable Charger plugs straight in, transforming it to a truly smart charging point.

The Charger is controlled by a simple App which is compatible from your Apple or Android phone.

STEP 2
Now choose an electricity tariff that best suits your work pattern.

Ohme recommends:
• Octopus Agile tariff which is great if you charge during off-peak time (peak = 4pm - 8pm for example).
• Octopus GO is great if you charge every night (5p for four hours every night).

Other utilities such as EDF Energy, British Gas, OVO, Scottish Power and Bulb offer time of use tariffs or specific EV tariffs and are fully compatible with Ohme.

Do your research to get the best energy deal.

“I’m saving £93 per month using Ohme Smart Charger + Octopus Go tariff which is 5p/kw between 12.30 & 4.30 am.”
Gavin – LTDA Member

To find out more about smart charging and how to enter our amazing £10,000 competition head to Ohme-EV.com/ohme-competition

Charge Smarter - Start Saving Today
ON POINT

As the sales of electric taxis accelerate, there’s no denying the increasing pace of change. With over 2000 electric cabs in operation around London, the trade is leading the way to a greener London.

And whilst a greener London is admirable, from a financial perspective, the question is, how on a day to day basis do you lower the operational cost and increase your fare margin?

Making the leap to electric and getting the lowest costs per mile, needs new tactics. It’s now a different game than just checking the local garage price board for the lowest diesel prices. Your ‘new game’ involves navigating numerous energy companies and charging points.

However, for many drivers, their state-of-the-art taxis are being charged with low-tech charging cables and standard electricity tariffs. The result is simple, a higher cost per mile and therefore lost fare margin.

The good news is, to help electric vehicle drivers lower their cost per mile, I have a little hack… that’s Smart Charging. This is the canny way can reduce your cost per mile by up to 2/3rds. Smart charging takes advantage of the increasing range of time-of-use energy tariffs.

Now, to be absolutely clear, there are a plethora of smart charging options on the market. Here at the LTDA, we’ve teamed up exclusively with one of them to bring our members smart charging offers and the chance of winning big.

Ohme are a company leading the smart charging revolution with a state-of-the-art wall mounted and portable cable that works seamlessly with multiple power providers and their agile tariffs. The result - the lowest cost per mile.

Even if you already have a standard charger installed at home, Ohme’s Portable Charger plugs straight in, transforming it to a truly smart charging point.

The charger is controlled via a simple App, which is compatible with Apple or Android phones. The key to lowering your cost per mile is research, the right smart charger + the right energy tariff will slash your per mile cost.

The pace of change is incredible, just think, no more looking at cost per litre but watching the cost per kWh - knowing it will increase your margin!

£10,000 PRIZE DRAW

To enter you must:
• Be an existing or new LTDA member
• Purchase an Ohme charger

Enter via this link: ohme-ev.com/ohme-competition

Prizes

FIRST PRIZE: £5,000
3 X RUNNER UP PRIZE: £500 EACH
NEXT 25 WILL WIN: £25 EACH

Additionally, there will be a further £1,000 prize for the cab that shows the lowest cost-per-mile using the App.

The first 50 buyers will receive a discount of £100 off the price.

T&Cs here.
I\'t\'s funny how the powers that be always think we have a climate emergency when it suits them or their agenda and of course costs them nothing, yet only pay lip service to it when it calls on them for some action.

I\'ve written previously about councils like Camden who preach one thing i.e. \'we need to clean up the environment and have liveable streets because our children are suffering\', whilst practicing another i.e. narrowing & closing streets, causing more congestion and increased pollution - which in turn, means children are suffering.

Now of course, they have a new plan, one that will allow only ZEC vehicles into certain areas, yet, they\'re not installing anywhere near the required amount of charging points or infrastructure that would allow or encourage people to change to electric vehicles, despite their claims that they want us to go electric. I say they want \'us\' to deliberately, because as shown by a recent Auto Express freedom of information request, London councils\' own fleet of vehicles are still 89% diesel.

Now don\'t for one second think I don\'t agree pollution in our city is well beyond being safe, of course it is, we know it is, after all we sit in it all day. Don\'t also for one second think I don\'t believe we need to clean up the fleet, I do, so do thousands of cabbies - that\'s why despite all the drawbacks, the London Taxi trade has invested hundreds of millions of pounds in buying ZEC capable Cabs. But, unfortunately, yet again we\'re being let down by the \"do as I say, not as I do brigade\". At a recent meeting that I attended with TfL, the subject of access and availability of rapid charge points was raised. Those members of staff in attendance are well aware of the problems and what is needed to resolve them, but they themselves are powerless to act. The old saying \"it\'s well above my pay grade\", is very apt here, trouble is those that can act are not prepared to come and meet us, so almost every question or proposal that was put to those in attendance by me and other trade reps present, was met with the response \"we were thinking of doing that\" or \we are thinking of doing that\". It\'s a Pity they\'re not still \"thinking\" of making the trade being allowed to only buy ZEC taxis, but of course they are not \"thinking\", they HAVE already done so. Whilst TfL are \"thinking\" of ways to improve the infrastructure the many drivers who want to join the ZEC revolution will have no option other than to just continue \"thinking\" about it rather than doing it.

It used to be that when a cabbie went out on to the streets of London, the only thing he was cruising for was a job, now many drivers find themselves not cruising for the next job but for an available, fully working rapid charger. This search is made even more difficult due to abuse by both private and private hire drivers, who ignore the \"Taxi only\" charging signs & plug in their cars - it\’s outrageous and so is the pathetic number of PCN\’s issued to the offenders. It\’s also quite scandalous that only 8% of chargers in London are rapid chargers? To the laymen, that means getting a near full charge in about an hour, compared to 8 hours or more for non-rapid.

We are told of a utopia were London will be awash with rapid charging hubs with multiple charge points for all to use and enjoy and you think \"wow a \‘hub\', I wonder how many charge points that will be?\" After all, my local Sainsbury\’s petrol station has 24 pumps and they don\'t call that a \‘hub\', that\’s just a petrol station. I began to get a little excited about these new \‘hubs\' that could soon be coming our way, I was picturing 50+ charging points perhaps with toilet facilities, hell maybe even a canteen!! Well that dream came to an abrupt end when I was told a \‘hub\' is about 6 or so chargers. Call me petty, call me greedy but I don\’t think 6 constitutes a \‘hub\'. When I hear the word \‘hub\' I think of a busy lively hub of activity, unfortunately once again our vision and TfL\’s are at polar opposites. Personally, I think what TfL picture as a \‘hub\' would be hard pressed to be considered even an intimate gathering.

Of course, eventually the clock that is the cabs life span will tick away and whether you want to or not, you will have to upgrade your sherbet and join those cabbies cruising for an available rapid charging point. Let\’s hope sooner rather than later, TfL & London\’s local councils actually play their part in cleaning up London\’s air rather than introduce ill-conceived and badly implemented road \‘improvement\' schemes, but I won\’t hold my breath, after all the airs too dirty.

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020 3897 3722 www.levcwestlondon.co.uk

TX Vista Representative Example
Weekly Equivalent £184.92 • 60 Monthly Payments £183.92 • Customer Deposit £3,750 • Council Tax £2,000 • APR 7.30% • On The Road Price £64,599 • Amount of Credit £53,349 • Interest Charges £13,178.88
Total Amount Payable £77,787.88 • Optional Final Payment £19,486 • Duration of Agreement 60 months • Mileage per annum 30,000 • Excess mileage charge 6ppm

*Business users only. Finance illustration refers to Personal Contract Purchase 7.3% APR Representative; figures based on TX Vista with a customer deposit of £3,750, followed by 60 monthly payments plus an optional final payment. Based upon an annual contracted mileage of 15,000 0-25,000 miles (plus terms. All figures inclusive of OLEV Plug in Taxi Grant which is up to £7,500 and is subject to European Whole Vehicle Type Approval and European Commission state aid notification. All prices are subject to change and are exclusive of VAT. £0 deposits may be available. Two, three and five years vehicle contracts are also available. Three years 30,000 miles, comprehensive vehicle + five years unlimited mileage drive battery warranties included. You have the option at the end of the agreement to return the vehicle and not pay the Final Payment. If the vehicle is not returned the vehicle may be sold at the discretion of the Lender. Credit is subject to status, available to UK residents aged 18 and over. ©2019 LEVC Group Limited. Black Horse Tax Finance is provided by Black Horse Finance Limited. St. William House, Tresillian Terrace, Caerphilly CF10 5BH. Excludes Meter, credit card equipment and any local authority fees. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer. OLEV figure is net of OLEV Plug in Taxi Grant which is up to £7,500 and is subject to European Whole Vehicle Type Approval and European Commission state aid notification. All prices and promotions are valid for vehicles ordered and delivered before 31st March 2020.
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WWII Veterans Visit HMS Queen Elizabeth

On 28 February a group of veterans enjoyed a private visit to the Royal Navy’s largest aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, as special guests of the Captain and Commodore

A fleet of six London Licensed Taxis escorted the group of nonagenarian veterans from London for this VIP visit to tour HMS Queen Elizabeth in Portsmouth Harbour.

Following an overnight stay at the Royal Maritime Club, the black cabs escorted the seven veterans to Portsmouth Harbour where they were joined for the visit by Taxi Charity Patron, Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns KCB, CBE, DL. The group of veterans included five WWII veterans, two, who served on aircraft carriers, one, who was part of the Russian Convoy, one who served in the in the Royal Navy and a WREN who was stationed at Fort Southwick on D Day.

The tour of the ship included, a walk through the aircraft hangar, refreshments in the Captain’s cabin and a tour of The Bridge. From The Bridge, WWII veteran WREN Marie Scott, pictured, who transmitted messages to and from the beaches on D Day, had the honour of transmitting a short message over 75 years after she sent messages to those coordinating Operation Neptune.

Marie Scott, WWII D Day Veteran, said, “It was a real honour that The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans arranged for me to transmit a message today, 75 years after I transmitted messages to and from the beaches on D Day.”

Commander Charles Guy RN – HMS Queen Elizabeth’s Commander and Second in Command, “We are always delighted to host our Naval Veterans but especially so in this important anniversary year for the Victory in Europe. We are grateful for the support of the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans; it is a remarkable organisation.”

HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH is one of two 65,000 tonne aircraft carriers in service with the Royal Navy. The ship is currently alongside in her homeport of Portsmouth, enhancing her capabilities as she gets ready for further training with her F35 Lightning jets and Strike Group off the South coast this summer. This represents the final steps as she prepares for her global Carrier Strike Group deployment in 2021.

About the Taxi Charity
The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans was formed in Fulham in 1948, to work for the benefit, comfort and enjoyment of military veterans and arranges many trips every year for veterans from all conflicts.

The charity offers international trips to Holland, Belgium and France, UK day trips to concerts or museums, transport to attend fundraising events, as well as special days out to catch up with friends and comrades.

To fund and facilitate these outings, the charity is wholly reliant on generous donations from members of the public, businesses and trusts and the amazing group of London licensed taxi drivers who offer their time and vehicles free.

www.taxicharity.org

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I intended this article to be a light-hearted piece... but things have moved quickly

IDENTITY CRISIS

CHRIS ACKRILL

ON THE ROAD

Transport for London’s re-licensing rejection of Uber highlighted the practice of their drivers swapping ID. Passengers were being driven by people who pretended to be someone else – 14,000 of them. Turning this on its head, taxi or minicab drivers rarely know who their passengers are either. We could be picking up terrorists, serial killers, gangsters – or people with infectious diseases.

In England it’d be considered too rude to ask someone outright if they have a contagious disease, or if they’re contemplating killing you. A London taxi partition offers some protection against a gunman annoyed at the roadworks slowing his journey, and possibly some protection against disease, but it’d be nice to be aware of the dangers in advance.

Disease-wise, I can recall BSE, Swine Flu, Bird Flu and SARS. Now we have a Coronavirus called COVID-19 (some older folks might remember the Bubonic Plague outbreak of 1665). We can amuse ourselves with the story of the Uber driver who refused someone wearing a face mask, or who’s sneezing? Spare a thought for the coach drivers who picked up the Brits when they arrived back from China. It was considered impractical for them to wear protective clothing. They must have been worrying about it for weeks afterwards. If you are on wages, you’d probably be paid to take a couple of weeks off, but for the self-employed that’s impossible. Perhaps Uber drivers can test their status as employees by demanding paid quarantine? Or make a retro claim once an appeal is practicable give notice of the fact to the local authority for the district in which the vehicle is usually kept and shall cause the taxi to be disinfected before permitting any other person to enter it” (Penalty Level 1).

Interestingly, if an infectious person is carried without the driver’s knowledge, “the local authority if so requested by an owner or driver of a taxi in which a person suffering from a notifiable disease has been carried shall provide for the vehicle’s disinfection at no charge except where the owner or driver carried such a person with knowledge of his condition”.

One of the notifiable diseases listed is measles. I understand this disease, traditionally vaccinated against in childhood, is making a comeback due to a generation of “I know my rights” - type modern parents who refuse to vaccinate their kids before sending them to school.

We have a duty to inform the authorities if we pick up anybody with a notifiable disease, and our cab must be disinfected afterwards: “Any owner or driver of a taxi who conveys in it any person suffering from a notifiable disease, shall as soon as practicable give notice of the fact to the local authority for the district in which the vehicle is usually kept and shall cause the vehicle to be disinfected before permitting any other person to enter it.”

There are people flying in from all corners of the world every day. They’re cramming into airport express trains, rubbing up against each other on the Piccadilly Line; and are catching taxis and minicabs. As a ‘Com cab’ subscriber, I’m offered hospital treatment for free. Every one of my kids caught a notifiable disease when they arrived back from China. It was considered impractical for them to wear protective clothing. They must have been worrying about it for weeks afterwards: “Any owner or driver of a taxi in which a person suffering from a notifiable disease has been carried shall provide for the vehicle’s disinfection at no charge except where the owner or driver carried such a person with knowledge of his condition”.

Chris Ackrill is a taxi driver and former Knowledge examiner

CHECKLIST

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- Insurance certificate (not a copy) - properly affixed in the luggage compartment
- Valid MoT certificate (issued 13 days or less before inspection)
- If vehicle is less than one year old an MoT is not required
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- Exemption certificate (where applicable)
- Modification approval (where applicable)
- Tool to release ramps
- Tyres - must conform to manufacturer’s specification (see table below)

VEHICLE MAKE / MODEL

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3. ONE YEAR FREE METER AND FREE INSTALLATION - SAVING £224.00
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Are ‘not so smart’ motorways putting drivers’ lives at risk?

‘NOT SO SMART’ MOTORWAYS

A MAN IN BLACK

The UK has some of the safest roads in Europe according to Department for Transport data. This ‘sceptred isle’ sits 3rd among 28 European nations in relation to the number of road deaths per million inhabitants - the most recent figures are dated up to the end of 2018.

Statistically, Britain’s motorways are the safest roads to drive on compared with urban and country roads, with just 6% of all road fatalities occurring on the network. This equates to a figure of 107 deaths in the year ending 2018. However, this also equates to an 8% increase on the previous year.

So, what could be causing the increase in the motorway death toll?

A recent BBC Panorama documentary investigating smart motorways revealed some shocking statistics regarding the safety of these roads, including the claim that in the 5 years prior to the M25 becoming a partial smart motorway, there were 75 near misses - however in the 5 years after becoming a smart motorway, (and having some of the hard shoulder removed) there were an astonishing 1485 near misses.

A smart motorway is not a new phenomenon, formerly what was termed a ‘managed motorway, it’s a section of road that uses active traffic management (ATM) techniques to increase capacity by the use of variable speed limits, as well as exploiting the hard shoulder.

In 2010, the then Secretary of State for Transport, Mike Penning, authorised the roll out of smart motorways after what was seen to be a successful trial on the M42. Mr Penning has now become one of a number of influential chiefs knowing as ‘Transport’.

J ust as a result of the rising number of deaths, the current Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps, has taken the drastic step of halting the continued rollout of smart motorways until a full assessment is carried out pertaining to their safety.

Mr Shapps suggested in the House of Commons recently that sections of the scheme could be permanently halted after stating that the current system is “far too complicated” for drivers.

This announcement came on the back of ‘The Telegraph’ obtaining an internal Highways England report, revealing that transport chiefs knew as far back as 2016 that smart motorways were likely to cost lives.

The announcement also coincides with Highways England facing a criminal investigation after allegations of corporate manslaughter, following the death of Jason Mercer, who was tragically killed on a smart section of the M1 near Sheffield in June 2019.

So, what should you do if you break down on a smart motorway?

Although worryingly unconvincing, should there be a question mark developing over the notion that traffic collisions are being reduced. Recent statistics revealed that 38 drivers have been killed on smart motorways in the past five years, with the majority of those killed being struck by other vehicles after breaking down and finding nowhere safe to stop due to the absence of the hard shoulder.

As a result of the rising number of deaths, the current Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps, has taken the drastic step of halting the continued rollout of smart motorways until a full assessment is carried out pertaining to their safety.

Mr Shapps suggested in the House of Commons recently that sections of the scheme could be permanently halted after stating that the current system is “far too complicated” for drivers.

The agency also says that if you cannot pull into an ERA, then try to pull as close to the nearside boundary/verge as possible. Despite conventional wisdom dictating that you should exit your vehicle via your nearside door and wait on the verge or behind a barrier, away from the vehicle - this action may well be impossible. You are therefore potentially trapped in your vehicle until help arrives and this ‘help’ can take anything up to and beyond 30 minutes to do so. At this point you then arguably become a static target.

Other advice offered by the Highways Agency states that should your car be stranded in a live lane, call 999 for emergency help, then contact your breakdown cover provider. Stay in your car, keep your seatbelt on and switch on your hazard warning lights and sidelights.

One simple breakdown now puts your life at risk, other drivers lives at risk, the emergency services lives at risk and the breakdown driver’s life at risk... and with 19,000 breakdowns in lanes every year, it is surely only a matter of time before others are killed.

Even the police are contradicting Highways Agency advice, with one police officer telling BBC’s Panorama that should you blow a tyre on a smart motorway, you should continue driving on the rim until you can pull into a refuge.

Addressing police students at a University recently, Northants Chief Constable Nick Adderley said: “I wouldn’t want to see smart motorways. This county is the fastest growing in terms of population and it will continue to be. We’ve got to find a different way of keeping the traffic moving but I don’t think smart motorways are the answer. Nearly 50 people have been killed in roads in this county alone this year and that’s a statistic that does not sit well with me. I’m not a fan of smart motorways.”

As a professional licensed London taxi driver with 30 years’ experience, smart motorways terrify me.

Knowing that one is at the mercy of their vehicle and its ability to operate is a consideration that every professional driver has to deal with on a daily basis. Whilst driving on urban roads is extremely stressful, motorway driving should be less so, with everybody travelling at a similar speed in the same direction - also safe in the knowledge that if you do break-down, you have the safety of the hard shoulder.

Taking that hard shoulder away is tantamount to playing “Russian Roulette”, with people’s lives and with limited clear and sensible guidance as to what to do on these roads in the event of emergency, the problem is exacerbated.

Steve Kenton is a Licensed Taxi driver of 30 years
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Concerns over our mental health and wellbeing have certainly crept back into the media spotlight of late, following more than one high profile tragedy.

So apparently we all need to talk more – especially blokes, as apparently they don’t do that enough – y’know, about feelings and stuff…

Commentators have been highlighting the importance of ‘reaching out,’ rather than hiding our feelings, in a bid to focus on protecting mental health. We are being encouraged to talk to friends and family about our problems, worries and stresses, especially when they become overwhelming, insurmountable or daily life is simply a bit of a mental struggle.

However, outside of friendship groups and family members, there are some professions who end up being accidental counsellors, for example, hairdressers, barbers and . . . yeah, taxi drivers.

There’s clearly something about being captive in a taxi with a stranger that can often compel people into making small talk…

Because if you don’t ask one of the following…

“Going anywhere nice?”
“Had a good day?”
“Got your next holiday booked?”
“Been busy?”
“What time did you start?”
“What time you on ‘til?”

Questions I’m sure you wish you had a fiver for every time you’ve asked or been asked.

But such seemingly innocuous enquiries could in fact be potentially life saving. In today’s world it can often seem that everyone is battling or dealing with problems and stresses of some kind or another. So for the person at risk there is a tendency to internalise feelings through a fear of being a burden and adding to someone else’s difficulties. And without being sexist, men (and in particular middle-aged men) are renowned for struggling to share more than a passing comment, which let’s be honest is usually hidden under sarcasm or bloke style banter – so it’s not surprising to learn that UK men are three times as likely to die by suicide than women.

Yet having the opportunity to have a conversation or share seemingly small details about something that’s not going well with someone that they are unlikely to see or meet again could make all the difference.

Put simply, small talk saves lives.

In this day and age, there’s so many reasons and factors that can contribute to a decline in our general well-being, for example, a relationship breakdown, harmful or offensive comments (online or face to face), loneliness, inequality, alcohol, drugs, poverty, financial difficulties, stress at work, problems at home, illness, threat of violence, grief, loss – let’s be honest the list is almost limitless – it’s no wonder that the Samaritans respond to calls for help every six seconds.

So, a ‘pat on the back’ is certainly due to drivers who lend a friendly ear and provide a safe, comfy therapy seat.

And if hearing everyone else’s problems is getting you down . . . share the load, reach out or go and get a haircut via a taxi ride - there are some great listeners out there.
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For the third time in the month of February, Uber drivers demonstrated in front of the securely closed entrance of the Uber Europe HQ in Amsterdam. This time, they were not alone. Taxi drivers from Amsterdam’s authorized taxi organisations (TTO’s) joined the noisy protest. Both groups of drivers believe Uber is destroying the Dutch capital’s taxi market.

Unlike three weeks ago, the protest didn’t erupt in violence and was limited to lots of rotten eggs and smoke bombs being thrown. There was a lot of screaming too. “**F*** Uber” proved most popular with both sets of drivers.

The Amsterdam Uber drivers and taxi drivers are fed up. They are frustrated and angry because they can’t gain a decent income, however long they work. The pouring rain didn’t dampen their anger and resentment. This just another in a series of demonstrations campaigning for a better income and improved working conditions.

Uber manager Maurits Schönfeld told Dutch TV news, “…that Uber does not recognize itself in the picture that the drivers paint…” and that it is quite possible to earn 24 euros (£ 20.60) an hour driving an Uber. Uber invited a delegation of the drivers in - but whereas last week they had hinted at the possibility of a slight raise of the fares, there were no promises this time.

The demo’s are well rehearsed:
• Assemble at a large parking area.
• Drive in a long queue to Uber HQ
• Protest noisily for two hours.

The rallies commence around 2 p.m. and around 4 p.m. drivers start their cars again – when it’s time for the evening rush hour. Older taxi drivers are familiar with the procedure from days gone by, when they protested the effects of deregulation. For younger drivers it’s become practically part of the job. A year ago, the Dutch taxi industry demonstrated in the political capital, The Hague, half a year later, they were at Uber HQ headquarters. For the taxi drivers, it makes no difference that nobody seems interested in their trade being systematically destroyed by a company who undercuts realistic fares, is stuffed full of venture capital, but has not made a profit since it started.

Although they hesitated before, this time official taxi drivers joined with Uber drivers to protest the absurdly low Uber fares, making it impossible for any driver to make a decent income in Amsterdam. Taxi drivers here, warn Uber-users that eventually there will be an end to cheap fares. When that moment comes, there won’t be any real taxis to fall back on.

‘Zombie weeks’
One after the other, drivers show how many trips they make and how much - after deduction of costs, taxes and especially the high Uber commission (25%) - is left: 11 hours for 60 euros (£ 52). Many Uber drivers complain about ‘zombie weeks’ of 60 to 80 hours to make ends meet. No wonder they drive like morons – not just in London, but in Amsterdam too.

Uber drivers want to see a raise in the current fare of £1.10 (£ 0.95) per kilometer. What makes the driver’s position even more problematic, is that many of them are stuck with Uber through car leases. And through the app, of course. No app, no customers. ‘But just over 5 euros (£4.30) an hour, that’s the slave trade…’, said an angry, Ruud Lagerwaard from taxi company, ‘Taxistad’. He told the local media that fares need to be raised. ‘If the government can set a maximum rate for fares, they can also set a minimum rate. As it is, we are facing the end of the taxi trade in the Netherlands.’
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A brief history of taxi trade relations with Heathrow’s Feeder Park

CABBIES BOYCOTTED THE HAL FEEDER PARK

ALF TOWNSEND

TAXI TALK

It was patently obvious to HAL, Heathrow Airport Limited, now in sole charge of the daily running of Heathrow, that the present taxi system was a no-no. How could you possibly have gangs and cartels manipulating the taxi requirements? As an example, one of our mates who played golf with us a couple of times a week, was a well-known Heathrow ‘face’ and told us he had done THREE rides in the morning. That made our morning’s takings almost miniscule!

Finally, after the opening of T5 in 1961 for long-haul flights and the opening of the now T1 in 1969, for short-haul UK airline services, HAL needed to get their act together because hundreds of taxis were arriving to rank up. Firstly, they attempted to use the former Bus Depot in the centre of the airport as a taxi feeder park. This was initially an improvement on the old system, but eventually it turned out to be too small for all the cabs arriving! They finally utilised some spare space out on The Northern Perimeter Road, bang opposite the Heathrow ‘Nick’ and adjacent to the old Nissen Huts. It took them quite a few years to develop the new Taxi Feeder Park capable of holding some 400 cabs – then, in the mid-sixties we were told that we were going to move. However, that’s when all the trouble and the boycott started. HAL, out of the blue, suddenly informed the trade reps that they would be telling HAL, in no uncertain terms that taxis supplied a service to THEIR passengers who had already paid an exorbitant landing charge for the ‘privilege’ of arriving at Heathrow! Many of the wise old heads realised that a nominal charge of just 50p might be the thin edge of the wedge – with the distinct possibility of an increase every year! How right they were, the entry charge to-day has risen to a whopping £3.60! The cabbies could recover part of this charge with a fare within The Met; by putting £2.80 on the meter as extras. So the poor old Heathrow passengers pay yet again!

The battle lines were drawn with neither side willing to compromise or negotiate. The cabbies were adamant, ‘withdraw the charge at once, or we’ll withdraw our labour’. So the boycott began, with various union volunteers pickinget the entrance to the Feeder Park and massive drive-ins around Parliament and Whitehall. The support from the cabbies was total, with not a single cab in the Feeder Park! After some thirteen weeks and with a Judicial Review about to be heard- and a possible result going the cabbies way, they received a body blow from within. The head honcho of one of the trade’s biggest organisations – for reasons best known to himself, stated that he would be instructing his members to use the new Feeder Park facility WHATEVER the outcome of the Judicial Review! That was enough to make many cabbies to think long and hard over their endeavour. What was the point of continuing the boycott if loads of cabs were going to drive through the picket lines? The boycott crumbled and after more than three months, HAL had won. Again, with the benefit of hindsight, I honestly believe we could have won if we had held out for another couple of weeks. The BAA had been receiving bundles of complaints from influential passengers about the continuing lack of taxis at Heathrow and questions were even being asked in Parliament. The BAA was definitely wobbling and they might have decided to cut and run within a short space of time! The new Feeder Park was a vast improvement on previous ones, but not yet good enough to beat the skallywags!

In 1998 we were informed that we were on the move again to our fully-computerised new site, complete with a new canteen, new toilets and two feeder parks with a capacity of almost 500 cabs. But who would pay the costs for the brand-new computer, the extra traffic wardens needed and the extra staff required? That’s only meant to be a rhetorical question, because certainly The BAA wasn’t going to cough up and it simply meant yet another increase on the entry charge!!

‘Many Thanks ‘Chichester’ Dave!’

I was leaving my house a while back and bumped into two guys walking down the lane. I recognised one of them as Dave a cabbie and he introduced me to his bearded son, a Cameraman who lives nearby. Dave told me that he lives in Chichester and stays three nights a week with his son. He then asked me where I was going and when I replied, ‘Morrison’s in Chalk Farm Road’, he said he could give me a lift because they were heading for Camden Town.

So we walked around the corner to Templewood Gardens where his shiny-black Vito, with Com/Cab Logos was parked. He even took me up the steep hill behind the petrol station, right to the main entrance! Many thanks ‘Chichester’ Dave, much appreciated!!

“The support from the cabbies was total, with not a single cab in the Feeder Park”
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I have a severe case of… no not that, thank goodness, but the post weddings blues. Yes, weddings. Plural. Two of my Mini Megas got married in the last six weeks.

There are several clues to the fact that I have just celebrated two sets of nuptials in the family.

One is that my debit card was declined in Sainsburys yesterday. It just couldn’t take the strain. The big hit was getting 100 people drunk. Twice in six weeks.

Another giveaway that something major has gone on in and around Meg Towers is my current ‘look’. If you came up close to the cab window and took a good gawp at me you would know that I am, in beauty-speak, still glammed up. This is not my natural state.

I have plastic nails that need to be chemically removed by a specialist nail ripper-offer, when I finally make it to an appointment with her. I’ve tried twice to get these painted pink claws off, but traffic jams made me too late both times.

Blame roadworks around Kings Cross and Marylebone for the fact that I can currently scratch the middle of my back without even stretching.

Also, my eyelashes - well technically they aren’t MY eyelashes - they started life in a plastics lab somewhere in China. These have been superglued on and I can’t take them off without removing all my own natural lashes and several layers of eyelid skin. Again, I need specialist intervention.

They are so long that if I blinked really fast, I could start a cyclone. Let’s call it Storm Meg.

A couple of these lashes have worked their way off and landed on my bosom area, giving rise to panic attacks.

Yesterday I had a businessman from Ohio in the back of the cab when a section of eyelash went rogue. I was at the Elephant and Castle and screamed and swerved (just a little) when I saw what I thought was a tarantula on my décolleté. My fare asked me if I was OK. Unwilling to admit that I was fake eyelash shedding and hallucinating and had almost killed us both, I told him instead that the new layout of the Elephant and Castle roundabout system is just too splendid. And that sometimes it makes me cry out and shake in sheer admiration.

Back to the weddings and getting 100 people piddled. Twice. I made a good job of that.

The best man for one of the grooms is a squillionaire. He went to a state school in Orpington and made ££££ in Silicon Valley. These days he lives like a Lord. Which is why I could not believe my eyes when I saw him sat on the floor outside a stranger’s hotel room, dribbling drunk, and eating their leftover mac and cheese from under a silver dome on a tray. I took a photo of him, and we are currently in blackmail talks.

Both my beautiful girls travelled to their wedding venues in white taxis, of course, accompanied by Mr Meg who looked very dishy indeed in his wedding suit(s).

On both journeys he held his daughter’s hand all the way. All you need is love.
In the world of the dealers and traders, 2020 has started pretty much as 2019 ended. Low mileage, one owner Euro VI diesels are holding their prices. Although common sense dictates that as EV sales continue to grow, demand must drop and with it the prices. Equally if the EU V to EU VI conversion system being designed by the LTDA is approved and the market is boosted by another 4000 plus EU VI cabs, this extra supply will impact on these residuals.

Conversely, the value of the converted EU V cabs will increase significantly as they become sought after outside of London where many licensing authorities now insist on a minimum EU VI standard for any newly licensed taxis.

We now know that 2019 saw 1916 New cab’s registered and that is despite the lack of supply of TXEs in January and February, leading many to believe that this year could see close to 3000 sales! December and January once again saw sales in excess of 130 vehicles with Dynamo accounting for 13 of these and reported orders for over 500 already on their books. Last March recorded over 190 sales with the new registration, I am prepared to bet we will see well over 200 this year, especially if Dynamo are getting up to speed.

Current Fleet Breakdown as 1st February below.

- By Steve McNamara, General Secretary of the LTDA

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**ELECTRIC TAXI SALES CONTINUE TO GROW**

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- **DYNAMO** 16
- **LEVC** 3,170
- **METROCAB** 3
- **TX1** 26
- **TX2** 2,968
- **TX4** 9,526
- **VITO** 3,398

**TOTAL** 19,107

**LEVC** 81 102 130 188 156 121 231 211 243 136 132

**DYNAMO** 16 3 6 7 16 13

**LTI** 1 2 1

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The government’s clever. First, they put up the price of alcohol and then they drive us all to drink. I’ve a cousin, Henry, with a drink problem since he was a kid. He used to play Hopscotch with real Scotch.

He’s in the Guinness Book Of Records for drinking the most Guinness. It’s addled his brain. He once met Jedward and said he was seeing double. They explained they were twins. He said “What? All four of you?” Henry wanted to be a composer but had to give it up. He couldn’t get passed the first few bars. I talked him into joining Alcoholics Anonymous. He now drinks under an assumed name. He says he only drinks to forget and so far all he’s forgotten is how to stop drinking. He claims he now only drinks on special occasions. Like when someone else is paying.

I tried to help Henry by pointing out alcohol’s a slow poison. He says he’s not in a hurry. Mind you, there are times when he doesn’t drink at all, like when he’s asleep. Actually, he sleeps like a baby. Every three hours he wakes up looking for a bottle. There isn’t a day go by when he doesn’t have a hangover, which is what they call the moaning after the night before. Drink causes Henry to do all sorts of strange things. Like yesterday he went tearing round town honking his horn and running through red lights. It’s a good thing he wasn’t in his car at the time. He’s easily recognisable because he wears dark glasses. He has to. They shade his eyes him from the glare of his nose. I hear there’s a plan afoot to start a new group called Teetotallers Anonymous. The way it works is, if you want to give up boozing, they send two drunks over to try to talk you out of it. Though I chastise Henry for being an alcoholic, I confess to having my own faults too. I lack exercise. I used to go to the gym and work all out till I was all in. Nowadays, whenever I feel like exercising, I lay down till the feeling passes. I’m not only conserving energy, I’m hoarding it.

People urged me to exercise to keep in shape, but to be honest, the shape I’m in I don’t want to keep. I used to do exercises to work off the fat from my stomach. But that’s all behind me now. The six-pack I had is now protected by a layer of fat. Don’t get me wrong, I do honestly believe that exercise is good for one, as long as I’m not that one. I’ve put my rowing machine into dry dock and my exercise bike’s programmed to only go downhill. Now and then I still do some sit-ups, because they’re easy. Half of it is laying down. Despite my lack of enthusiasm for exercise, I would encourage all my readers to take part in the London Marathon. It’ll be good for you in the long run.
Meet the LTDA legal team

Driving a taxi for many hours of the day in one of the world’s most congested cities is a challenging task. Cabbies often fall victim to complaints and false accusations from police, passengers and other road users (especially cyclists and PHV drivers). When these events arise it’s comforting for LTDA members to know that they have the immediate support of the best specialist in-house legal team in the business. The success rate of the LTDA Legal Team is second to none. In fact, according to Criminal Justice Statistics, LTDA members defended by our team are FOUR times more likely than the national average to be acquitted of allegations made against them.

Tom Poulson
I joined the LTDA when I first got my badge and it turned out to be the best thing I ever did. Due to an unfortunate set of circumstances I ended up getting my licence revoked by TfL. I turned to John Luckhurst, one of the LTDA’s legal eagles, for assistance. John went to great lengths to prepare a detailed appeal against TfL’s decision and briefed a brilliant barrister to represent me in court. The appeal was successful and saved my livelihood. LTDA subscriptions are only four quid a week, which is less than a pint, and three pounds can be claimed against tax. I can’t believe that every cabbie in town is not a member.

Farouk Merdjane
I was involved in an accident whilst driving my cab in Shepherd’s Bush. I wasn’t too worried about it because I was confident that it wasn’t my fault and the insurance would sort it out. A short while later I received a summons for driving without due care and attention. I had no witnesses to help me, but the other driver had produced “independent” witnesses out of thin air! I quickly contacted the LTDA’s legal department and they immediately visited the scene of the incident and arranged for professional photographs to be recorded. I later appeared before magistrates at Lavender Hill Court, where the LTDA barrister tied the witnesses up in knots and demonstrated they could not have seen what they said they had. Thank you, LTDA legal department; you gave me an excellent service.

“FOUR times more likely than the NATIONAL average to get an acquittal”

Ken Jackson
The LTDA’s solicitors and support team, could not have been more helpful when I first informed them that an allegation had been made against me. The LTDA was quick to check all the CCTV cameras in the area and arrange for plans of the location to be drawn up. Witness statements were also obtained and Mr Demidecki was successful in getting the Crown Prosecution Service to drop the case against me. Thanks LTDA - an all-round brilliant service!

Paul Baxter
I was filled with confidence the very first time I contacted the LTDA’s legal team and as it turned out, I certainly wasn’t disappointed. They did a great job in sorting out my problem with TfL. They’ve got to be the best in the business!

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- Coney Allen, Dunbridge Street, E1
- CP Beehive Service Station, Beehive Lane, Gants Hill
- Cricklewood Carriers, Cricklewood
- Dial A Cab, City Road, N1
- Edgeware Station Rank
- Euston Station Rank
- G & N Taxis, Crayford Road, N7
- Globe Transmissions, Cudworth Street, E1
- The Ham, Brentford
- Heathrow Airport Canteen
- Hexagon Garage, Lutkin 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, E3 and Stanmore
- 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, W9
- Taxi & Private Hire, Blackfriars Rd, SE1
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£59.90 per month
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To join, call Paula today on 020 7286 1046 or email paula@ltda.co.uk

Alternatively, call in at Taxi House and pick up an application form or download it from: www.ltda.co.uk

POLICY CONDITIONS: Claims for Back/Depression related illnesses have a reduced benefit of £30 per week. 14 day deferment period before claim payments start. Maximum period for which weekly benefit is payable to 26 weeks. The age limit for joining Platinum is 49 years and for the Gold is 54 years. You are covered up to your 65th Birthday. (subject to terms & conditions).

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*Inflated offer prices are typically available on late Euro 5 and Euro 6 TX4 models in good condition and with full service history. All used vehicle offers are made at the discretion of the LEVC Brewery Road team. Terms and conditions apply.
15 Years in Insurance Broking

This year, we’re celebrating our fifteenth anniversary! Since 2004, we at Quotax have kept a steady momentum to become a leader for Commercial Vehicle Insurance in the UK.

2004
John originally had the idea of establishing an insurance broker for London taxi drivers at Ascotts, with ambitions to reproduce the same high-quality levels of customer service.

2009 - 2010
John’s two sons, Daniel and Paul Fosker joined the business after graduating from University. Their added drive and determination alongside an ambitious team around them only helped the company grow.

2013
Quotax made the decision to grow their product range adding a number of other niche motor products. We have now become one of the UK’s leading insurance brokers for London Taxi drivers and other specialist vehicles.

2018
Quotax invests considerable resources into growing our presence online. John retired in September 2018 and has passed the business to Daniel and Paul, expanding even more by opening a second office in Dartford.

2019
Under their control, the business remains true to its core beliefs of being supportive, professional and delivering exceptional customer service to all of our clients.

Getting Established
Quotax was started by John Fosker. As a London Green Badge Taxi driver he built up a relationship with Ascott Cab Company, a well-respected family-run London Taxi garage.

We do our very best to answer any questions you may have regarding your insurance needs. Check out our site today for more information!