THE FIELD OF BROKEN DREAMS

'Picture paints a thousand words' as world's media shift spotlight onto taxi trade plight
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Putting more work into Black Cabs
Inside...

01:12:20

3 | News
5 | Steve McNamara
6 | Richard Massett
8 | Paul Brennan
11 | Lloyd Baldwin
12 | Feature: TIL E-Scooter
   Rental Tender
15 | Wim Faber
16 | Steve Kenton
18 | Rob Lordon
20 | Exclusive: Health Q&A
22 | Phil Brown
23 | Chris Ackrill
24 | Al Fresco
27 | Puzzler
29 | Exclusive: Taxi Charity
30 | Musher Meg
   Puzzler Answers

LTDA Lottery

You’ve probably heard of the LTDA Lottery. What you probably don’t know is that since it started in 1986, there have been over 360 winners. That’s over £1,800,000 million paid out in prize money.

Lotto Winner!

Congratulations Mr Jason Wood!

Jason joined the LTDA seven years ago and has been doing the lottery since signing up... Jason said upon receiving his cheque for five grand, “I got a call from ‘The LTDA’ letting me know I’d won the lottery - but I thought it was one of my mates playing a joke! I quickly realised this was not the case and was shocked to find out I had actually won - this money will come in very handy.”

LTD lottery

The first prize in our lottery is £5000 - every month! But you won’t win if you’re not in it.

Tickets cost £5 each per month.

And even if you don’t win, you’ll know that proceeds from the lottery contribute towards LTDA trade promotion campaigns.

Transport Focus COVID-19

Taxi Survey Published

The Transport Focus ‘Public Perceptions of Taxi Travel During Covid-19 - Survey’ was published last week. In conducting the research, Transport Focus surveyed in excess of 2000 people in order to learn what is important to them when considering travelling by taxi - and what helps them feel safe making a journey. Participants were asked what would be most important to them when considering travelling by taxi. More than half of those said that the driver wearing a mask is most important. Around half said that a screen between the driver and passenger is important. Other ‘top asks’ included the ability to make a contactless payment, having hand sanitiser available and being able to open the windows. When passengers were asked about how their recent taxi journeys were, the survey found that almost nine in ten of those who travelled by taxi felt safe doing so.

“Everything was fine. Both myself and the driver wore masks and there was a screen between me and the driver.”

The taxi journey was as normal a journey. I just had to wear a face mask and made sure I used hand sanitiser afterwards.”

On the other hand, among those who haven’t used a taxi in the last four weeks, just less than half said that they would feel safe to do so. This is a similar story to bus and rail where Transport Focus research has highlighted a gap between the views and experience of those people actually using public transport and the perceptions of those who aren’t.

The key findings of the research were:

• 9 in 10 of those who have recently travelled by taxi felt safe doing so.
• More than half said that the driver wearing a face covering was a top priority.
• Half of the participants said that a screen separating the driver and passenger is very important.
• 23% of all respondents said they would not consider travelling by taxi at the moment.

To view the full findings, inclusive of research methods (sample sizes and regional breakdowns), please visit: https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/
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A Picture Paints a Thousand Words

Over the next few months, the LTDA will be working with the Central London Alliance (CLA), an organisation established by the London Chamber of Commerce as an official supporter, to push for a faster and more sustainable recovery of the capital city.

Steve’s comment

For months, we have been telling anyone who will listen that the future of the black cab trade is at risk and that we need targeted support, but it’s not until we were able to find a powerful image, to drive this message home and really show the scale of the problem, that anyone wanted to actually listen.

The field of broken dreams

The LTDA launched our campaign, Taxi Drivers Can’t Work from Home last month and have been discussing the challenges with ministers, MPs, AMs and anyone else we could find to listen, to try and get drivers some more help. We had some initial media interest, but once we tracked down what we’ve coined “the field of broken dreams” – a field with more than 200 cabs sitting abandoned, we were able to really make an impact.

The plight of taxi drivers has now covered by all the major media outlets across the UK and by most of the national and local newspapers too. In fact, we are still getting enquiries from UK TV journalists looking for a different angle or wanting to interview drivers. Last week, the story also went global, with interest from around the world. I’ve been interviewed by networks and newspapers from the Middle East, Australia, France, and the USA amongst others and we’ve seen coverage in everything from the Bangkok Post to the Epping Forest Guardian.

Building momentum

You might be thinking how does all of this help us? Well firstly, it shows just how ironic and important the black cab is, as a symbol and part of London, recognised worldwide. This is helping to put pressure on the Mayor of London and government to do something to help and ensure this icon is not lost. It also means they can no longer ignore the struggles many are facing, as they are now able to see in black and white and it is not just us telling them there is a problem.

It has definitely made a difference, as since we started getting all this media coverage we have also started to get long overdue responses to our letters and pleas for help, and we know that people at all levels are finally paying attention and looking at how they might be able to help. Let’s hope they will come up with some answers.

Additional financial support has now been provided for taxi drivers in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Barnsley, and Liverpool City Region amongst others. Leaders in these areas have recognised the challenges facing the trade and stepped up to support them. In Wales, the government has not introduced a scheme directly targeting taxi drivers, but they have created a fund to support the self-employed falling through the cracks in Government support. We are simply asking for the same support that these drivers are being offered. Earlier this month, the Mayor of London held a press conference and pledged his support for the 3 million self-employed people who are excluded from government support, but we are still waiting to see if he will specifically speak up for taxi drivers and put his money where his mouth is.

“...they can no longer ignore the struggles many are facing, as they are now plain to see in black and white and it is not just us telling them there is a problem.”

Taking TFL to task in court

We continue the fight to ensure taxis have the same access as buses to London’s roads and to regain access to areas like Bishopsgate. Lawyers acting on behalf of the LTDA and UTAG were in court last week, mounting the legal challenge on the Bishopsgate Corridor and the Streetspace Plan more generally. They highlighted the vital role taxis play in London, as the only door-to-door, accessible form of public transport, demonstrated the negative impact of these schemes and TILs failure to properly assess them. At the time of writing, we don’t know the outcome, but we are confident that our lawyers made the strongest possible case and demonstrated that from day one, TIL hadn’t done their due diligence and properly considered the implications of the scheme or consulted the interested parties. Now all we can do is wait to hear from the Court.

Meanwhile, the Royal Parks are consulting on whether to make their timed road closures on park roads, such as North Carriage Drive permanent. TIL and local authorities across the country have also been given more money from the government to make some of their Streetspace schemes permanent.

We will be fighting to ensure that any schemes they propose keeping in place or new schemes they look to introduce, do not exclude taxis and are properly thought out and designed, so that they don’t bring London to a permanent halt.

Getting London moving

With the end of lockdown approaching and some easing of restrictions, we should start to see people coming back into London. Last week, we saw people campaigning for London to be placed in tier one, as Covid cases were falling across the majority of the London boroughs, others thought we should be in the top tier three to keep cases under control, but whatever tier we are in, there will still be challenges and demand for taxi will still be limited by the restrictions. All I know is, we desperately need to start looking at ways to safely get people back into central London and get our economy going again.

Over the next few months, the LTDA will be working with the Central London Alliance (CLA), an organisation established by the London Chamber of Commerce, which the LTDA is a member of. The CLA is a collection of London businesses large and small, communities, charities, associations, and authorities working together to push for a faster and more sustainable recovery of the capital city. The CLA have also used the LTDA as an official supporter to feed into this work, get London the support it needs to recover and to help our members get back to work.
I t’s Wednesday 25th November and the LTDA/UTAG joint challenge to TFL’s Streetspace scheme, involving, in particular the A10 Bishopsgate Bus Gate scheme commenced in the High Court this morning. I say in the High Court - which is where it is technically, but of course nothing is normal these days and the Hearing is being conducted remotely as so many other things are at this moment in time. Unfortunately, I can only really set the scene in this report because printing schedules for Taxi mean that I must submit my article following the conclusion of the Hearing’s day one claimant opening arguments. The Hearing is programmed to run for two days and usually a Judge will take what time is necessary after that before issuing their Judgement.

Consultation concerns
The Hearing commenced with the Barrister for the joint trade group, David Matthias QC, presenting his case. TFL is represented by Ben Jaffrey QC and the Judge is Mrs Justice Lang. The claimants Barrister, Mr Matthias, has presented the Court with an enormous bundle of papers, setting out the trade’s objections to both the current scheme in Bishopsgate as well as any other Streetspace schemes which TFL may bring forward.

Mr Matthias referred to all the considerations that the legal team and those of us from the trade had been going over in painstaking detail over the past months. He referred to, amongst other things, consultation or the lack of it prior to the scheme going in and even though TFL holds numerous regular meetings with the trade, it seems that TFL only informed affected parties of the detail of the scheme just one day before it was advertised in the less than widely read publication, the Islington Tribune. This timeframe rendered it almost impossible for the trade to make any worthwhile comments.

TFL’s shift in position on taxis’?
The Mayor and TFL’s polices on taxis and their use of bus lanes was referred to in great detail. The Court was advised of the historic regulation of taxis in London since its inception by Royal Proclamation in 1635, taking us all the way through to the well-known ‘Eventech’ proceedings in 2012 in which Addison Lee sought to either be able to use bus lanes or to have prevented taxis from being able to use them. In this case, TFL had mounted a forthright defence of its policy to permit taxis. Even more recently the Mayor and TFL had defended the decision to require PHVs to pay the Congestion Charge and to make ULEZ low emission payments. This was all to reconfirm the standing of Hackney Carriages as Public Transport contrary to ‘Private Hire’ - which as the name suggests is private transport.

The question then posed to the court, “How was it that TFL could divert so dramatically from these policies so as to treat taxis - which hitherto had been considered an essential part of ‘London’s public transport provision’ without any attempt to consult with the trade or its users?”

2004 Traffic Management Act
TFL’s interpretation of its requirements under the 2004 Traffic Management Act to secure the expeditious and safe movement of traffic on the road network, was also questioned, as to whether its powers to make orders under the 1984 Traffic Management Act had been enacted correctly.

An imbalance in COVID-19 related emergency decision making?
A major plank of the challenge was, of course, TFL’s lack of consideration for disabled passengers who extensively use London’s taxi services to provide the door-to-door service that they need to be able to travel around independently. This was gone into in great detail and while TFL claimed that it has made provision for taxis carrying disabled passengers to most parts but not all ofGracechurch St and Bishopsgate, it did not on the other hand want to acknowledge the much longer routes that would have to be taken or the inflated costs and increased time taken over journeys. Many of the passengers that taxis carry are people that are known legally to have protected characteristics and it is these people that the law dictates should not be disadvantaged because of schemes like Streetspace. The trade’s barrister was able to refer to the failure of TFL to correctly interpret its ‘Equality Surveys’. TFL’s assertion that the scheme was put in under COVID-19 emergency regulations, and was designed to primarily keep people safe when walking, cycling or using public transport failed to take account that taxis are public transport and that taxis are probably the safest form of public transport that there is under the current circumstances.

The case continued in far more detail than I am able to report here and when the claimants have finished giving evidence it will be turn of TFL’s legal team to present their own. After this, Judge Mrs Justice Lang, will no doubt go off to consider her verdict. Clearly, the trade and its legal representative have put forward a very detailed and compelling case and we await the decision of the Judge, which will be so important to London’s taxi trade as we go forward into the era which will follow the current pandemic.

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The North v South Mayoral Divide

“…the north will rally behind their ‘Kings’ following their ability to demonstrate how to actually serve the needs of those who have provided them with the opportunity and privilege of office.”

Top rank

We’ve all heard of the north south divide, but let’s be honest - for us here in the south, it’s not really meant anything because we’ve traditionally been on the better side of that divide. Well, we were but that’s certainly not the case now...

Kings of the north

Recently, we have seen what a real contrast there is between the north and south, which is especially prevalent when it comes to our large metropolitan areas and how ‘the people at the top’ view ‘the people they serve’. For a start, northern mayors actually realise it’s them who serve at the will of the people and that they are there to serve - not to dictate.

Metro Mayor for the Liverpool City Region, Steve Rotheram (Labour) has quite rightly found some money to help support their taxi fleet and the drivers that keep it going. In Manchester, Labour Mayor Andy Burnham is fighting tooth and nail for the taxi trade and the people he serves (which is probably the reason why he is often referred to by those people as the ‘King of the North’).

Unworthy of a kingdom

In London, we also have a Labour mayor, but this fellow is certainly not seen as a king - he’s not even seen as a lowly duke right now. Let’s be honest though, anybody who requires a literal army of PR personal to spin their stories and hoodwink the public are arguably unworthy of a kingdom. Mayor Khan and his style of leadership is exactly in my opinion why Labour were trounced at the last election. Due to his style of dictatorship and similarly that of some Labour councils in London, I suspect we will likely see a shift away from ‘red London’ - just like the north did. However, it will be a hollow victory for Boris and co, because whilst the south may turn against Labour, the north will rally behind their ‘Kings’ following their ability to demonstrate how to actually serve the needs of those who have provided them with the opportunity and privilege of office.

Narcissism politics

It’s no secret in political circles that both Khan & Burnham have always had aspirations of leading Labour to power and whilst Khan has put his eggs firmly in the Islington Labour dictatorship basket and follows their party line, Mayor Burnham has done what every Labour politician should be doing. He has listened to the real people he serves and not solely the lobbyists from small protest groups (that account for around four percent of the people) and he has fought for what’s actually right - and not what lobbyists or media types have told him is right.

How can this Conservative Government and some Labour authorities be getting things so wrong? It’s perhaps because for lots of advisors in Government and Local Authorities up and down the country, it’s no longer a case of ‘what’s best for all’ or ‘what works for all’ or even ‘what’s fair for all’. They are now seemingly driven by their own utopia (it’s how they want to live and so believe everyone else should also live as such), what’s just and fair for all is irrelevant. If one’s mindset is always ‘it’s us, against them’, and the most important thing is the agenda representative of the four percent rather than the remaining ninety-six, then all we are left with is narcissism politics, pure and simple.

Working from home – a brief fling...

Back in the midst of the first lockdown some anti-taxi types were gleefully saying our days were numbered because in the future everyone would be working from home. Employers loved it, employees loved it, everyone loved it and I said that love affair would be short lived because people need human contact and being isolated would soon become a nightmare for most. Well, I didn’t think I was wrong then and still don’t now... Sure, some lucky ones will have a home office but for the hundreds of thousands who don’t and now need to share domestic workspaces like kitchens or dining rooms with a partner or other household residents, it’s a different story. What was once both a domestic and personal life space has now transitioned into a full-time life-container where work, rest and play is vacuum packed into a sealed residential unit. Reality for many is firmly setting in, and a return or escape to the office eagerly longed for.

Despite what some will tell you, in my opinion, meetings via video hosting platforms are nowhere near as good as a face to face meetings. In the last week alone, with the half dozen online meetings I’ve had which have ranged from conversing with staff from large organisations to fellow trade reps, there have been multiple drop-outs due to technical issues. I’ve heard babies crying, drills drilling, chainsaws sawing and even a housemate swear like a trooper as he played ‘Call of Duty’ in the same room...

I called it...

I also wrote that we can expect plans to be put in place to tax the ‘work from home brigade’ and got told I was being ridiculous. Well, not wanting to be the one to say, ‘I told you so’, we have now seen multiple reports - most notably from Deutsche Bank, stating this is being planned. An average worker may be expected to pay an additional six to seven pounds a day in tax - and that people shouldn’t moan because it’s only the same as a meal deal from Pret and would raise £7 billion for UK coffers! For me, I don’t think our days are numbered. The new normal will be more like the old normal than not.
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Over the last few days, it’s been good to hear some decent news and so it looks like we might be ending the year on a slightly more positive note, as the “scientific cavalry” of vaccines and testing finally ramp up and ride to our rescue. Boris said recently that this will eventually, “make lockdowns redundant” and this can’t come soon enough.

The good news is that London is now transitioning into a new set of lesser restrictions... Will this be the catalyst to open things up enough to get people back into the City and using taxis again?

Sadly, the rules in the three tiers are being strengthened and even in tier one, people will now still be advised to work from home - so the City and commuter stations are likely to remain largely deserted for the foreseeable future. The dreaded hospitality curfew also remains in place, but last orders will now be at 10, with venues closing at 11, which might help encourage more people to come into central London in the evenings. We can only hope so. Non-essential shops opening should also help things pick up in central shopping areas and maybe at stations on weekends - that’s if everyone hasn’t already turned to on-line retail in a panic about getting their Christmas shopping done.

Christmas spirit
Most cabbies probably aren’t feeling particularly festive this year, as things are still tough, and money is tight, but it seems like Christmas could be the boost we need to get some passengers back in cabs. I know that lots of cabbies are already looking to capitalise on this by offering Christmas lights tours and hopefully there will be other opportunities to make some money! Fingers crossed, we are in for an influx of Christmas shoppers, drinkers (with a substantial meal) and even panto goers (rules allowing). I will definitely be heading to the pub for a substantial drink, sorry, I mean meal.”

Marylebone Police Glory Tweet
I’m no fan of Twitter, in my view it can be a platform for people who think they’re being smart to make themselves look silly and this incident is no different. At a time when our anxiety levels are at an all-time high and our work levels are at an all-time low - we do not need to be wound up any more than we already are... but someone managing the Marylebone Police Twitter Feed had other ideas and we have been victims of a cheap shot (albeit possibly unintentionally). Marylebone Police put out a glory Tweet giving themselves a huge pat on the back after moving cabs on from a street, after cabbies committed the hideous crime of waiting outside a supermarket in the hope of getting a fare. Do they seriously have nothing better to do? The most annoying part of this ridiculous cheap shot is the hashtag that accompanied it: #noblackcabsatoday which turned out in the end to be more of an own goal...

This tweet led to the largest amount of responses Marylebone Police twitter feed has ever had - to any Tweet they have posted, 247 to be exact. The LTDA responded on Twitter questioning the use of this completely inappropriate hashtag, particularly at a time when the trade is struggling and needs all the support it can get. On receiving calls on Monday morning from our members, regarding this matter, I immediately contacted the Police and lodged a complaint. To be fair, they called back almost immediately and gave me opportunity to explain how unprofessional they had been and how damaging the tweet could be to the historic and excellent relationship between the London Cab Trade and the Police, notwithstanding the fact that many cab drivers are themselves ex-police. I pointed out how regularly they ask for help from the cab trade. I also suggested to him he read the replies to the Tweet from cabbies which ranged from, “you should be doing proper police work” to “where were you when cabbies were being targeted and attacked for their takings on a daily basis at Lisson Grove Estate last year.” I added how Tweets like the LTDA put out should maybe have had the hashtag #NohelpforPlodtoday. I told them in no uncertain terms that their Tweet should never have gone out on an official Police platform. To be truthful, I think he understood our point but didn’t go as far as to condemn the tweet. He did however state that he would pass on my complaint to the relevant department and the individual will be taking in the department responsible for the Tweet. I have since been called by the Manager of the department responsible for the Tweet. They have spoken to the author and both the department and the individual will be taking care in the future as to how they represent the cab trade. They did acknowledge the impact, though insisted that the authors intentions were not to intentionally cause damage or harm – more to represent the successful police resolution to the issue. I again pointed out that although misguided and unintentional, the hashtag was ignorant and unprofessional... although I think he knew that as he then went on to tell me that the rest of his day was going to be spent phoning up individual Cabbies who had also registered their complaints...
TfL Scooter Rental Tender Goes Live…

“Would TfL conceivably sign up for ‘more of the same’?”

Steve’s feature

Just when you thought it could not get any worse, it does, as TfL seek approved suppliers to rent electric scooters on the street - and if that’s not bad enough, guess who is partnering one of the front runners? Yep, it’s that bastion of public safety, our old mates at Uber!

Uber & Lime
Uber invested over $170 million dollars in Lime and offloaded their Jump bike rental business back in May. The story caused a stir then when former employees claimed between 20,000 and 30,000 of the Jump bikes were scrapped, making a mockery of their claims of being an environmentally friendly travel option.

TfL connections?
At around the same time, Lime appointed a new Chief Executive Officer, Wayne Ting - who had previously worked at Uber as chief of staff to Uber boss Dara Khosrowshahi. That’s the same Dara that demanded, and got, his own private lift when meeting TfL Transport Commissioner Mike Brown, just after Uber were refused a private hire licence in London.

A predictable safety record...
A quick look at Lime’s safety record around the world shows striking similarities with that of its main investor, Uber. In Australia, Lime failed to disclose over 50 crashes that resulted in injuries to riders that included broken bones and damaged teeth - many of which were accredited to a faulty braking issue with its Gen 2 scooters. Sound familiar? In London, Uber failed to notify TfL of data breaches, report serious crimes to the police and thousands of instances of unlicensed uninsured drivers using the Uber app...

Greyball software scandal
The similarities however don’t stop with safety, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) also criticised Lime for applying firmware updates to its scooters without notifying them first. Again, Uber faced similar criticism worldwide for use of its ‘Greyball’ software that was installed to systematically deceive law enforcement agencies and regulators from carrying out safety checks.

Would TfL conceivably sign up for more of the same?
It is believed there are at least five serious players involved in bidding for the prestigious London scooter rental market. Out of an estimated 15 bidders in total, most have no record of dealing with TfL and none that have the chequered history that Lime/Uber has. It seems almost inconceivable that after the court cases, problems and safety issues TfL have had with Uber’s Private Hire Licence, that anyone at TfL would want any further ties or dealings with such a tainted company. But, as we know all too well, Uber’s lobbying and influence can never be underestimated and the rumours and allegations of ‘friends at the top’ have never really gone away or been disproved, so it will come as no surprise to the taxi trade, or anyone else, if they emerge as one of the three successful bidders.

“A quick look at Lime’s safety record around the world shows striking similarities with that of its main investor, Uber.”
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Large Quantities of Egg

“Joe Biden and vice-president Kamala Harris are no Uber supporters. In the Harris-family though, this is awkward – as Harris’ brother-in-law (Tony West) is Uber’s chief legal officer...”

The same authorities who often proudly label the taxi trade as part of public transport, run for the hills when that label threatens to cost money.”

This morning I woke up in a sweat. No, not from that, you one-track minders. I’m talking about (even) higher things, as I had promised myself (and you) to write an Uber-free column, dropping in some good clean fun and entertaining taxi stories.

But with the London taxi trade under threat, fun seems uncalled for.

Taxis: public transport only in name

Many governments and local regulators have an uncanny knack to overlook the taxi trade when it comes to financial support in times of trouble. London is a good example. Cab drivers in Liverpool and Manchester may be luckier, with more understanding mayors, but many other colleagues in the UK and elsewhere lack getting income support and compensation for the costs of financing or leasing their vehicles. If it makes you feel better (and I hope it does), squeezing money for the taxi trade out of rock-hard authorities is difficult in almost every country I know. In many countries, as German cab drivers – for instance - can testify, support is tailored tightly so that drivers – for instance - can testify, suggesting the drivers should be employees or properly self-employed.

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All traditional taxi customers. The same authorities who often proudly label the taxi trade as part of public transport, run for the hills when that label threatens to cost money.

Uber and cheap labour

Where was I? Oh yes, I was going to write an Uber-free column, as there are so many nicer and more palatable things to write about. But then this wonderful ‘How-Uber-Shot-Itself-In-The-Foot-In-Flanders’ story broke. I just had to tell you. Bear with me, that’ll come shortly.

Meanwhile since my last column, the battle has raged on in California - whilst the new AB5 law is in place, Proposition 22 ‘somehow’ got through with one newspaper commenting that companies managed to ‘buy’ a ‘yes’ vote - which will exclude Uber workers from being classed as employees under the AB5 law. This battle however will, no doubt be continued (and not just in the USA), but particularly as president-elect Joe Biden and vice-president Kamala Harris are no Uber-supporters. In the Harris-family though this is awkward, as Harris’ brother-in-law (Tony West) is Uber’s chief legal officer.

More court cases

In the meantime, it’s getting busier in the Amsterdam courts. With two court cases to be heard in December, brought by British ex-Uber drivers, the biggest Dutch trade union FNV is threatening to add another. The first cases deal with the secretive nature of Uber’s algorithm which goes against Europe’s strict privacy rules (GDPR), whereas the Dutch union insists on a proper statute (really self-employed), decent pay and the normal social benefits for Uber-drivers, which are now supposedly self-employed. If national unions, who usually do battle on a national scale, would share their intelligence, join forces and finances, the opposition would be far more formidable and the odds would be more in the union’s (and driver’s) favour.

December is a busy month in Amsterdam and in Brussels, local taxi drivers are waiting for their Christmas present on December 18th: a conviction of Uber in their illegal use of private hire vehicles in Brussels.

Large quantities of egg

On November 1st only a handful of private hire vehicles, eager for work, arrived from Brussels. Each Uber was snapped up by journalists, eager to test Uber. Soon there were no Ubers left and waiting times lengthened dramatically for other customers waiting for the scarce Ubers. Hundreds of private hire drivers were hoping for fresh income in Flanders. But Uber had missed the fact that private hire vehicles from Brussels or Wallonia cannot work in Flanders without a Flanders licence. So, not enough properly licensed drivers and vehicles for the ‘Big Conquest of Flanders’. Egg everywhere. Ubers glorious plans fizzled out, duly noticed by all the journalists which were there to see a wholly different inauguration. Now the wait is for the Uber-fleet to be increased with properly licensed drivers. That will take some time.

Ubers’ Flanders adventure

Now we get to the incredible story of Uber in Flanders. And how the company fell flat on its face and got egg all over it, because they arrogantly omitted to carry out proper due diligence. In Belgium there are three regions, and each has its own taxi regulations – including licensing variations. So in comes the big maaamash from San Francisco and says “Tadaaa… (Big drumroll). We’re going to start serving Flanders. To start with Antwerp, Ghent and Leuven. On November 1st.” The Flemish government had already paved the way for them by deregulating its taxi regulation, or, as the Belgian taxi association put it: “The Flemish government has gone on its belly to please Uber.”

Apart from a Barcelona-style 15-minute delay for taxis and Ubers before starting a trip ordered by app, there was nothing to stop Uber. With unseemly haste the Flemish politicians removed this last blemish at the last moment, not wanting to hold up the arrival of the Mighty One. Unions had already declared that the arrival of Uber in Flanders in times of corona “would be the death of the taxi industry.”

So that was settled. Nothing to worry about.

Columnist | Wim Faber

TAXI

Large Quantities of Egg

“Joe Biden and vice-president Kamala Harris are no Uber supporters. In the Harris-family though, this is awkward – as Harris’ brother-in-law (Tony West) is Uber’s chief legal officer...”

TAXI
**A Sorry Tale of Woe**

“The reality is that the villain of this sorry tale of woe is the government, primarily because of the lack of targeted support for the taxi industry in both London and the wider UK.”

**A man in black**

*S* o, with Dominic Cummings relinquishing the country’s leadership to become the curator of Barnard Castle and Boris Johnson having to take a two week leave of absence after the strings on his limbs snapped, just who is running the country right now?

*Bert The Spanner*

The last couple of weeks have seen some rather glib statements emanating from both Number 10 and TfL. Towers. After the revelation that hundreds of taxis were being stored in a field in Essex (and no, I’m not giving the exact location given that Bert The Spanner might actually be reading this column and think oooh taxi equals catalytic converters equals dosh) due to drivers handing back their vehicles to fleet owners after finding that there is more chance of them making a fiver by selling an organ than there is of finding any work. A spokesperson for TfL said that they have: ‘…provided drivers with practical advice on a number of issues during the crisis’ and insisted black cabs remain an integral part of the transport network’. Oh, deep joy!

However, this situation is really not entirely down to TfL, they aren’t responsible for the pandemic. They aren’t responsible for the lack of support from the Mayor’s office or government either and they are virtually bankrupt anyway.

**Spacehoppers & Sinclair C5s**

Prior to writing this article, I had every intention of asking for a direct quote from the Mayor, however I decided not to bother on the basis that I have a pretty good idea how Sadiq Khan might respond… ‘We cannot have a car-led recovery on the basis that a mere 0.37% increase in traffic will lead to 8.3 million Christmas shoppers in Hackney Road alone (figures courtesy of Cllr Jon Burke, leader of the imperial command in Hackney). We have the best and cleanest tube and bus network on the planet because Jake and Richard say so in their adverts on the radio, but we cannot encourage the public to use it, so we ask that those who wish to travel anywhere in London, use bikes, stilts, spacehoppers and Sinclair C5s, or walk. If you are in a wheelchair, we will still expect you to walk - and to facilitate this we are going to block all of the kerb downramps with barriers so that you cannot wheel yourselves anywhere - because we believe in inclusivity. We recognise that we have the finest taxi fleet in the world and as such we will happily oversee the renaissance of the taxi industry by seeing it collapse like a ‘Fanny Craddock Baked Alaska’. (Please note, neither the Mayor nor Cllr Burke actually said any of the above and this is just a satirical hypothesis - so please don’t sue me chaps).

I then considered the option of contacting Heidi Alexander, however after toying with the notion that she may respond by saying ‘Ooh, taxis, erm - do they have two wheels, I love cycles, me’, I gave up on the idea.

**Here in England, a number of local councils are also offering the industry specific support - yet in London, the taxi industry is waiting in anticipation like a wallflower on the last dance of prom night.”**

**A sorry tale of woe**

The reality is that the villain of this sorry tale of woe is the Government, primarily because of the lack of targeted support for the taxi industry in both London and the wider UK.

There are around 70,000 taxi drivers in the UK out of a combined taxi and private hire vehicle figure of 291,800 according to the latest government data. Interestingly, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland are all receiving targeted support from the devolved governments. Here in England, a number of local councils are also offering the industry specific support – yet in London, the taxi industry is waiting in anticipation like a wallflower on the last dance of prom night.

The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme really didn’t touch the sides where many drivers are concerned because of the running costs required for those who own or are still renting a taxi. This in turn has impacted severely on fleet owners, finance houses and insurers alike. More worryingly, if you are registered as a limited company or don’t have a number of years accounts, you aren’t eligible for SEISS. It has reached the stage where bounce-back loans have disappeared on living costs, as has money saved for the tax liabilities which we all incur as self employed individuals twice a year. It is feared that those who work for themselves will never be able to financially catch up.

Chancellor and knight in pin-striped armour, Rishi Sunak, stated that not every business could be saved, this was not an unreasonable comment to make given the current situation however, if you have over 2 million people falling through the cracks then you have to get the Polyfilla out and fill those cracks. It also has to be acknowledged that the Prime Ministers handling of the crisis from a business perspective has been utterly shambolic with the opening and closing of various businesses ad-infinitum.

**Darling Facist Bully Boy**

With the government’s latest wheeze being “let loose for 5 days over Christmas” and their science body SAGE saying that the country will need to lock-down for at least another 25 days if the shackles are taken off, many businesses, including those who operate in the taxi industry, are now slamming their head into the wall – only an ace buffoon would even consider doing that.

With numerous religious holiday celebrations cancelled, the logical step would be to do the same for Christmas and revert to the tier system which operated prior to lock-down.

Given that the taxi industry is in such a bad way at the moment, here is my open letter to Boris - and I am directly quoting Neil Pye from The Young Ones...

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Learn Rob’s Banksy art London history to increase your tips!

Rob’s history tips

While on the Knowledge I became fascinated by the hidden stories associated with London’s countless streets and points. I’ve been passionate about the city’s history ever since – and have discovered that sharing these tales with the public often results in a nice tip!

‘Banksy’ is one of the most mysterious figures of our age. Believed to be approximately 48 years old and originally from the Bristol area he (or she — although one journalist writing in 2003 claimed the artist bore a resemblance to Jimmy Nail) has painted many humorous, thought provoking and sometimes controversial graffiti-style murals across the world, including plenty in London. Yet, despite the artistry involved, very few people have actually witnessed Banksy in the process of spraying one of his (or her) creations.

Around the time of Prince William and Kate Middleton’s wedding in 2011, I was flagged down by a German journalist who’d heard a rumour that Banksy had daubed a mural of the royal couple in the Leake Street graffiti tunnel, located deep beneath Waterloo Station. Sadly, we didn’t find it... although I was more than happy to show her a number of other Banksy’s which exist around the capital. Here are some runs linking the anonymous artist’s work...

We’ll start near the Roundhouse, on the junction of Chalk Farm Road and Regent’s Park Road, which was once the site of a very prominent Banksy: a painting of a maid sweeping the pavement and seemingly lifting the wall up to brush the dust beneath. Sadly, this has long since been painted over.

**Run it from there to Essex Road** where, just opposite River Place, you’ll see the ‘Very Little Helps’ mural. This painting has been heavily vandalised over the years: it originally showed a group of children saluting a flag which, on closer inspection, turned out to be a Tesco carrier bag!

Next let’s head up to Stoke Newington Church Street where, in 2001, Banksy painted a group of clownish figures on a balcony which were labelled as being the Royal Family (despite bearing no resemblance). In 2009, the local council had the mural painted over – they clearly didn’t realise how much the piece could have been potentially worth.

**We’ll take this run out into the suburbs - how would you get from Stoke Newington to the IKEA in Croydon?** Not far from the huge store, in around 2009, Banksy painted a mural on a derelict wall which depicted a punk attempting to decipher a set of IKEA instructions. Unlike Stoke Newington Council, two men - Bradley Ridge and Nick Loizou, realised that this piece was worth a pretty penny and forked out some £30,000 to have the section of wall upon which it was daubed removed and placed into storage. They then took the slab on the Channel 4 show, Four Rooms where they hoped to punt the huge collectible for a cool £500,000. The most they were offered for the Banksy was £240,000... which they refused.

My own personal favourite Banksy was once visible on Old Street where it remained from 2002-2007. It showed John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson as the gangsters, Vincent Vega and Jules Winnfield from the Quentin Tarantino film, Pulp Fiction - although instead of brandishing menacing handguns, the pair were waving non-threatening bananas! Despite being a lost Banksy, limited prints of this image can fetch thousands of pounds.

**Run it from Old Street to Pollard Street.** Here, in the heart of Bethnal Green, a huge yellow flower was painted by Banksy on a wall in 2007, which cleverly ran off from double yellow parking lines on the road. Crouched beside the flower is a painting of a man in a grey hooded top which some people have speculated may be a cheeky self portrait of the artist...

**Next up, we’ll visit Clipstone Street** where, in the shadow of the BT Tower, one of Banksy’s more recent pieces appeared: one of his signature rat figures alongside a painted, red slogan: “If Graffiti changed anything - it would be illegal.” This is believed to be paraphrasing an old Ken Livingstone quote; “If voting changed anything, they’d abolish it.”

**What route would you take from Clipstone Street to Cambridge Gardens?** Here, Banksy once painted his name in pure graffiti style... alongside a traditional artist, complete with a palette and easel!

One of Banksy’s more disturbing pieces was once located on Junction Road, close to the Archway gyratory. It depicted the grinning, notorious American criminal and cult leader, Charles Manson hitch-hiking. His destination, according to the sign he clutched, was ‘anywhere’...

**How would you call it from Junction Road to Falleden Way** where, at the junction with the North Circular, a brick hut once was once adorned with a Banksy - in this case, a child painting the slogan “Last graffiti before motorway?"
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Prostate Cancer UK Specialist Nurse Grace Salliss takes calls every day from men and their loved ones, offering confidential support and information about prostate cancer. Her Dad, Gary is a Licensed London Cabbie who seems to have been roped into the article...
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.

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!

“LTDA subscriptions cost less than four quid a week”

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!

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”

John Luckhurst
Senior Partner

Charlotte Collet
Solicitor Advocate

“LTDA subscriptions cost less than four quid a week”

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Footprints & foundations

The Jews of England have a tainted history, which includes expulsions and re-admissions. Brought over to England by King William I (1066-1087) and expelled by King Edward I (1272-1307) at the end of the 13th century, the Jews were finally allowed to settle back in England by Oliver Cromwell in 1656. Many laid their foundations around the Aldgate area. They built a synagogue in Bevis Marks, which is still in use and now Britain’s oldest surviving synagogue.

Their emancipation into English society was sometimes tested. Anti-Semitism fuelled by a long history of being moneylenders, often led to religious intolerance. However, the Jews adopted English as the first language and respected the country that had given them new beginnings. By the 1880s the winds of change were blowing in from eastern Europe, which impeded the first settlers from the re-admission. The pogroms (an organised massacre of a particular ethnic group) took place in Russia and Poland and forced a mass exodus of ‘the people of the book’ to leave and seek a safe haven. England and America beckoned for Europe’s poverty-stricken migrants whose plight was likened to the children of the wilderness. The East End was about to experience a deluge of new refugees, whose attire, characteristics and customs, were viewed as being from strange faraway lands.

Escape from tyranny

Italy was the first country to construct a walled gated Ghetto, located in Venice in the early 1500s. Although this district was not a tangible Ghetto, it had all the hallmarks of one. The Jewish East End was situated in the neighbourhoods of Whitechapel, Aldgate, Spittlefields and Mile End. Without a national homeland for the Jews, outsiders viewed Whitechapel as the New Jerusalem. The point of arrival was at the docksise of the River Thames. The weary travellers disembarked at Irongate Stairs and made their way to the heartlands of London’s eastern quarter. Escaping tyrannical regimes, the East End was perceived as the promised land. These mindful thoughts were far from the truth. Jewish philanthropy was mobilised into action. The Rothschild’s and Montefiore’s financed shelters, soup kitchens and schools. Some of the refugees had relatives who took them into already overcrowded lodgings.

The common ground was that even though the new arrivals had come from different countries, they all spoke the dialect of Yiddish (a corruption of the German Language). Commentators who focused on the East End created social awareness, through their observations. The poverty map of London created by social reformer Charles Booth, outlined the area around Whitechapel as the most disadvantaged in London.

Boxing out of the ghetto

Traditional employment for the Jewish community was in trades, mostly as tailors, cabinet makers, shoemakers, cigarette makers and costermongers. The conditions they worked in were atrocious. The term ‘sweated labour’ was attributed to the makeshift workplaces, particularly in the clothing trade. Small basements in run-down houses were turned into workshops and the clatter of sewing machines could be continuously heard as they were worked on tirelessly through day and night. Long shifts for menial pay, whilst breathing in obnoxious fumes from the textiles, caused respiratory illnesses. As new health and safety regulations came into force, workers conditions improved. From the basement workshops, a few businesses moved into purpose-built factories. One such success story was Moses Brothers who moved to Covent Garden and changed their name to Moss Bros. The long working week was broken by the Sabbath. Saturday was sabbatic as it was not only a day of rest from exhaustive work, but also, an opportunity for contemplation in the synagogue. After praying, families gathered around polished dining room tables to be served a traditional Jewish meal and catch up on the latest gossip. Entertainment was provided by Yiddish theatres, who staged Shakespearian plays and musicals with songs from the old country, full of memories and tears of past lives left behind. The meek, hardworking Jew probably would not rise above his position - expectations were almost non-existent. However, some would literally fight their way out of the ghetto. In the boxing ring, Ted Kid Lewis and Jack Berg became world champions. The arts also lifted many humble souls out of poverty. There were talented boys from the backstreets of Whitechapel, who had ambition and wanted to escape the playground of their youths.

Many creative minds emerged from Whitechapel library, self-taught and eager to display their talents. Writers, artists, poets, playwrights and actors climbed the ladder of success. Harold Pinter, Steven Berkoff, Siegfried Sassoon, Peter Sellers, Jonathan Miller and Mark Gertler all captured the imagination of the British people.

Legacy

By the late 1980s the Jewish East End had faded away. Synagogues, theatres, shops and street markets that once formed the heartlands of Jewish life, are now ghosts of the past. The Jewish population departed and took the passage to the leafy suburbs of London. They had climbed their way out of poverty and improved their position in society. The first generation had started as tailors and costermongers - however, their grandchildren would aspire to the professions as doctors, lawyers and accountants. A few remanences still remain as a reminder of a vibrant Jewish community that lived in Whitechapel and its environs. The popular Beigel Bake in Brick Lane offering a Jewish delicacy, to salvaging Londoners. A few synagogues with dwindling memberships still exist. Many buildings still have Jewish signage on their facades, in particular the Jewish Soup Kitchen in Brick Street. The Yiddish dialect has left a variety of words that feature in the Cockney vernacular, gelt - money, shlep - to drag or pull and chutzpah - self-confidence. The Jewish East End may not have been the Garden of Eden or a land flowing with milk and honey. However, this domain provided a refuge that was inclusive of faith, hope and charity.
The Fifteen-Minute Village

“At present it’s just an idea. Wishful thinking. It’s unlikely to become law, but just for fun, let’s look at how things could work out…”

On the road

Some folk are floating the concept of the “15-minute village”. With travel demonised, there’s growing support for people to stay at home and travel no further than fifteen minutes’ walk away. The Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, supports the idea. As in London, the Parisian authorities have put in cycle lanes and jogged around with car parking in order to make the environment as hostile as possible for drivers. I’m unsure whether the movement has the support of London’s mayor, but none of us would be surprised should he jump on the fifteen-minute eco-friendly village bandwagon in the near future. The fifteen-minute rule would phase out motor vehicles, but of course allow cycles. At present it’s just an idea. Wishful thinking. It’s unlikely to become law, but just for fun, let’s look at how things could work out...

If forced to stay within fifteen minutes’ walk from my home, there’s no way I’d be allowed to drive a cab in and out of London like I used to. It also rules out a dramatic return to the life of a Knowledge examiner (I always hold out for the call, but it never comes). If no-one was allowed to travel more than fifteen minutes from their home, Central London would be dead, especially for cab-driving purposes. From Piccadilly Circus you’d have a catchment area extending to a few blocks of flats in Curzon Street.

Employment

In a fifteen-minute walk I can just about be in Leighton Buzzard town centre. In order to stay in compliance of any new laws there are a handful of local jobs I could apply for, if anyone was hiring. I could work behind the bar of one of my favourite pubs, become an Indian waiter, be a shop assistant, a market trader (Tuesday & Saturday only), or work in a bank. I’m afraid that doesn’t really do it for me. The model railway shop might be interesting, but I shouldn’t think it’d pay well. The Post Office might be a bit nicer than a bank, but I failed the counter clerk aptitude test back in 1979 and I’m not at all confident I’d pass it now. I never fully got to grips with maths and I can only think in twenty pence increments. As for pub work, I’m only suited to the role of a customer. Like many people, in moments of weakness I fantasise about running a country inn, but I’m off the scale for introversion, and definitely no socialite. Twenty minutes in a cab with a stranger is enough to bear. I couldn’t take a whole evening of it! There’s Leighton Buzzard Brewery, but I suspect there’d be stiff competition to find a job there. I had little success with my home-brewed Lockdown Ale earlier in the year, and if asked about converting enzymes I’d quickly be found out to be a chance...

Six quid jobs...

There’s one obvious job I could do in my own town - taxi driver. The train station would be just outside the exclusion zone, but if Extinction Rebellion Stormtroopers on penny farthings allowed me to put on the station rank, I could queue an hour or more for a £6 job (you can go anywhere in my town for six quid). No, this doesn’t do it for me either: £6 an hour under Covid might sound acceptable, but I’m sure it was often like that for local drivers before the lockdown. Anyway, Central Bedfordshire taxi licensing aren’t hiring - the Knowledge test and driving assessments have been stopped, and new applications for licences are suspended until further notice. I was surprised there was such a thing as a Knowledge test in Central Bedfordshire, but there is. It seems to be a one-off written test, where you have to use ‘A roads’ to find your way between towns and villages such as Leighton Buzzard, Woburn Toddington, Shefford and Flitwick (Luton and Bedford have separate licensing. Don’t get me started on Luton Airport; they sold out to Addison Lee years ago). You also have to identify points of interest. Should you prove unsuccessful, you can take the test again a month later. There’s also a driving assessment. It costs £80 and takes forty minutes. The medical sounds the same as it does for London drivers and I’d recommend having your medical done outside London where it’s cheaper.

A hundred percent of the Xmas meter?

Driving a local cab doesn’t really interest me, but drivers in other areas, including Central Bedfordshire, can charge 100% of the meter over Christmas and New Year. No, cab driving’s not just for Christmas. Interestingly, in the unlikely event you took a passenger to London you could pass on any congestion charge. But with pubs, restaurants, and all the interesting shops closed, there’s not much reason to walk fifteen minutes in any direction at the moment. Things will have changed by Christmas, just you see. Roll on the kipper season.
L
ike everybody in their respective bubbles - just like me - I am sure you have become safe enough to erase 'Covid' and 'lockdown' from my memory banks, the dire, apocalyptical stance of the planet's worsening medical situation manifested in front of me, on my laptop, in stark reality. It was time for a 'new normal' cabble medical experience.

Dr. H.D.P
Sprawled on my bed, I took a short, sharp intake of breath as my attention was drawn to my 12-inch (monitor as the video call came in). On the flickering screen, was the instantly recognisable face of my local doctor... Dr. H. D. P - a.k.a. Doctor Higgle-D-Piggledee as he is known to his patients.

Doctor Higgle-D-Piggledee, is a tall, bespectacled, stooped man, with thinning hair and the definitive air of a solicitor or headmaster even. He has a warm, yet grave demeanour. If I had a pound for every cab medical I’ve had since earning my ‘bill’ in 1966, I still wouldn’t have had enough money to pay the medical charge circa 2020, but whatever the cost this was to be a valuable investment. I was mystified, however, as to how he was going to carry out an exhaustive, personal examination via video link.

Apprehensive
You know what it’s like, when a couple of motorcycle police slot in behind you… well it feels just like that when I have to undergo a medical examination. Even though I’m certain there’s nothing wrong with me, I anticipate feeling the synchronicity of hot eyes, cruel thin lips, stony hearts, dark minds and Elvis sneers upon me. Doctor Higgle-D-Piggledee, however is nothing like this. His bedside manner and powers of prognosis are almost legendary - the ill and infirmed drawn to him by his clinical mind and warm hands. In normal circumstances, I would have expected a full, hands-on examination, but such actions are limited when you’re in lockdown, three miles away from the surgery.

The examination...
His first question came as a surprise. “What” he asked, “is your address?” I pondered a while. I didn’t want to be caught out by any trick questions. I was aware that he was ‘clocking’ my eyes - that were squinting, shifting backwards and forwards in concentration. I ran the address past him all the way through to the postal code. He nodded gravely in affirmation. He followed up with a plethora of teasing testing questions – “What day is it today? What date is it? What is one hundred minus seven? And what is that minus seven? Now, what is seven, plus seven, plus seven from a hundred…” I hid my fingers from the vision of the laptop camera. "Er", I faltered, "sixty-nine?" Doctor Higgle-D-Piggledee raised a bushy grey eyebrow. His spectacles tilted, "Mmm! Who’s on the phone?" “We are” I replied with the millisecond response of ‘Fugaku’ - the world’s fastest super-computer. Dr H D P laughed, “Actually Alan, I asked who’s on THE THRONE.” I swallowed hard, “Elizabeth.” He countered, “Which one?” By my correct response, I appeared (for the purpose of Doctor Higgle-D-Piggledee’s examination), to be dementia free.

How was the doc gonna be able to gather essential information - such as pulse rate and blood pressure? I needed not worry. As luck would have it, I’d only had a mini check-up a couple of weeks before the current lockdown, and all my stats and info were stored on the surgery’s computer. With a satisfied shrug, Doctor Higgle, added the necessary info from my on-screen details to my TFL medical sheet. My daughter-in-law, Joanne, was filming the interview for medical science and sniggered throughout the next set of instructions which I found unhelpful. “Now, Alan,” said the Doc, “I want you to walk in a straight line, heel to toe, heel to toe”. I thought he might yell, ‘Yee haa!’ and break into a chorus of ‘Achy Breaky Heart’, but the hoedown’s lyrical connection passed him by. Doctor H D P was fortunately satisfied. "E r," Dr H.D.P laughed, "Does that prove my co-ordination?"

Now, Alan” I enquired, tentatively. "Ah, my dear young man, this is not an advertisement, Alan, it’s good medical common sense".

Higgle-D-Piggledee Humour
I sensed my examination was over, but I was asked one final question “By the way,” said Doctor Higgle-D-Piggledee, “if you ever swallowed a spoon, what should you do?” I pondered a moment but his reply to his own question came quickly “You should sit still, and not stir.” The laptop screen then went blank.

www.ltda.co.uk
©TheLTDA
What does it mean to be a professional in 2020? 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 4G 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 Professionals’ – What sets those with ‘The Knowledge’ apart from the rest?

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

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address _________________________________________________________ Postcode ____________________________

Telephone ____________________________ Mobile ____________________________

Email ___________________________________________________________

Date of Birth ____________________________ Badge No. ____________________________

Badge colour (Please state whether green or yellow) ____________________________ Year badge obtained ____________________________

Suburban badge sector number ____________________________

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

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

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

Signed ___________________________________________ Date ___________

LTDA Basic Direct Debit Instructions

Instructions to your Bank/Building Society to pay Direct Debits:

Please complete parts 1 to 5 to instruct your branch to make direct payments from your account. Then return the form to the LTDA, FREEPOST, (PAM 2005), London W9 2BR

To the Manager of ___________________________________________

Address _________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

1 Please write the name and full postal address of your branch in the box (left)

2 Name of account holder ____________________________

3 Account number ____________

4 Bank Sort Code ____________ — ____________ — ____________ — ____________ — ____________

Banks/Building Societies may not accept instructions to pay Direct Debit from some types of account.

5 Signature(s) ____________________________ Date ___________

The Direct Debit Guarantee

• This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
• If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Eden Springs UK Ltd will notify you (10 working days) in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Eden Springs UK Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
• If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by Eden Springs UK Ltd, or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.

- If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Eden Springs UK Ltd asks you to.
• You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.
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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACROSS</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Highlighted, put the stress on</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Put cargo into (a lorry)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Create a commotion</td>
<td>(3,2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Spur</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Animal said to be lucky if it crosses your path</td>
<td>(5,3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Deadlock, standstill</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Crockery item</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Natural, innate</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dam</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Small four-stringed Hawaiian guitar</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Piece of lean or bony meat</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td><strong>Rider</strong>, Peter Fonda film</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sardonic, incisive</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Back of the neck</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fit for consumption</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Of sight</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Main screen display on a PC</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Group of similar animals</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Structure preventing access</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Time free from employment</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Zigzag badge</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Confine in a camp during wartime</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Periods of time</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Rascal</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Title first used by Ivan the Terrible</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

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

**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.

```
> > > >
> > > >
>  > > >
```

**Predictive text**

Starting with the highlighted box, try to make a word adding one word part from each layer as you go. Then return to the second layer and use the letters in the unused box to start another word and so on, until you've used all the boxes and created six words of decreasing length.

```
CO
RE
NS
EA
AS
EN
```

All answers to puzzler on p30

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A CAB TO SUIT ALL BUDGETS
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• JIWORK • OVERHAULS • OWNER DRIVERS WELCOME
• TX1 & TX4 ENGINE SPECIALISTS
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E16 RENTALS
07957 465423
e16-taxirentals.co.uk

CABS FOR SALE

APPROVED USED EURO 6 TX4’S, AND
APPROVED USED TX VISTA’S NOW AVAILABLE
Manufacturer approved. Quality tested vehicles with a 1 year warranty and 1 year roadside assistance included.
View our current stock at levc.com/used

CABS FOR SALE


CABS WANTED

• VNK Motors - TXIIs & TX4s for rent, from £90 upwards per week. Full back up, Caledonia Road, North London area, breakdown service, overhauls, running repairs & body work. (020) 700 1045 or 07951 661430 – Nick. Looking for a taxi mechanic.

CABS WANTED

• Wanted White TX4 elegance. 60 plate onwards. De-commissioned or non-runner considered. Cash Waiting. 07947 822745

CABS WANTED

• All de-commissioned good quality TX4s wanted. Instant decision, cash paid. We come to you. 07973 335739 or 01233 407500

CABS WANTED

• ALL LONDON TX4’S WANTED, Euro 4, 5, & 6. Immediate payment. Finance, Lease, and HP settled. We collect. No fuss. 07428 545400

CABS WANTED

• All cabs wanted, we come to you, top prices paid, cash/ bank transfer, instant decision, finance settled, non-runners or sell & rent back, Taxi’s available to rent. call 07956 317300

CABS WANTED

• All de-commissioned TX4s & de-commissioned cabs required. Top prices guaranteed. 07566 225156, 07787 513629

CABS WANTED

• All cabs wanted. We come to you, any condition, very quick decision. cash paid instantly. 07712 554934

CABS WANTED

• De-commissioned your tx4’s and Euro 5’s? Earn more by selling outside London. We pay cash, collect and drive away. John 07712 554934

CABS WANTED

• All cabs wanted. We come to you. Any condition quick decision. Instant cash paid. 07763 699767

CABS WANTED

• De-commissioned your tx4’s and Euro 5’s? Earn more by selling outside London. We pay cash, collect and drive away. John 07712 554934

CABS WANTED

• All cabs wanted. We come to you, any condition, very quick decision. cash paid instantly. 07712 554934

CABS WANTED

• De-commissioned your tx4’s and Euro 5’s? Earn more by selling outside London. We pay cash, collect and drive away. John 07712 554934

CABS WANTED

• All cabs wanted. We come to you. Any condition quick decision. Instant cash paid. 07763 699767

CABS WANTED


CABS FOR SALE

• Cabs for sale. Main Dealer service history. Non-fleet cabs. New stock daily. De-commissioned cabs also wanted. 07957 465423

CABS FOR SALE

• Cabs for sale. Main Dealer service history. Non-fleet cabs. New stock daily. De-commissioned cabs also wanted. 07957 465423

BUSINESS FOR SALE


BUSINESS FOR SALE


MISCELLANEOUS

• EARN FLEXIBLY FROM HOME Call Rob 0792819229 or Email roberto.marenghi@uwpartners
Exclusice | Taxi Charity

Taxi Charity Volunteer Susy Goodwin talks to TAXI!

**Taxi**: Hi Susy! How long have you been volunteering for the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans?

**Susy**: I began volunteering in 2008 and the charity has become a real passion and I can’t imagine not being involved. I love spending time with the veterans and hearing their amazing stories. As a keen photographer, I have taken thousands of pictures during trips with the Charity across the UK and the Continent.

**Taxi**: What does your volunteering entail?

**Susy**: My background is in graphic design and I create printed material for the charity including cards, posters, brochures, newsletters, and postcards. I also designed a taxi wrap for one of our trips to the continent. When I started, I thought I might offer a few hours a week, but the charity is such a magical combination of volunteer London Cab drivers and veterans, that I volunteer as much time as I can, and it is now probably the equivalent of a full time role.

**Taxi**: How has this year affected the charity?

**Susy**: This year has been particularly difficult for the charity. My husband, Dick, is a Vice President of the charity, and we would normally pay regular visits to veterans across London and the south East which we haven’t been able to do. When the first lockdown was announced, the charity knew that with so many restrictions on travel and social distancing, we would not be able to have our usual calendar of events for the veterans but needed to ensure that we could keep in regular contact with them. Many of our veterans do not have access to computers or mobile phones and many are hard of hearing, so emails, texts, or phone calls don’t work for everyone. To allow the charity to keep in regular contact, I designed a card or gift for each month which marked an event or date that might be important them. Since March, the veterans have received cards, gifts or commemorative booklets to coincide with Easter, St Georges Day, The Battle of Waterloo, The Battle of Rorke’s Drift, For VE Day and VJ Day we sent commemorative tins filled with goodies and on the anniversary of Operation Market Garden, messages from members of the Dutch government thanking veterans for their service were made into a card that the veterans could keep. Remembrance Week is an important time for our veterans, so we sent out cards to coincide with that. We also send out a regular charity newsletter. The cards are posted but where possible volunteer cabbies hand deliver the gifts and we have been delighted to receive so many calls and messages thanking the charity for their kindness in thinking of them during this difficult year.

**Taxi**: What do you have planned for Christmas?

**Susy**: We always have a huge Christmas party for our veterans, but of course this had to be cancelled - so for the last few weeks I have been very busy hand making 200 Christmas stockings that we can fill with treats and send to them. Our friends in France and Holland will also be sending us cards and messages for us to deliver to our veterans.

**Taxi**: What is planned for the new year?

**Susy**: In January, the veterans will be receiving a card to mark the anniversary of Rorke’s Drift. We knew that Frederick Hitch who was awarded a Victoria Cross at the Battle of Rorke’s Drift became a London horse drawn Hackney Carriage driver and later drove a motorised cab. A Fred Hitch Gallantry Award for Cabbies was created to honour his memory, and this seemed a perfect card, as our volunteer cabbies who show such care and respect are heroes to our veterans.

**Taxi**: What else do you do?

**Susy**: I send the veterans a birthday card from the charity and decorate cakes for major milestones like reaching 100. When we take our veterans on trips, every veteran receives a set of postcards with a picture of him or her as young service personnel. On the continent these cards have become very much treasured and the people we meet in The Netherlands and France want to collect as many as they can - ideally with autographs!

**Taxi**: What is your proudest achievement for the charity?

**Susy**: About a year before he died, WWII veteran Frank Pendergast asked me if I would do him a favour. He asked that when the time came, if I might make a regimental coffin cover. It was an honour to fulfil that promise by ordering velvets and making and hand sewing his Parachute regimental badge on to a cover for his coffin. Although we had to have a socially distanced funeral, I was delighted that I had been able to carry out his wish and dress his coffin in the way he had wanted. I am always proud to be associated with such a unique charity, our extraordinary veterans and the wonderful London Taxi drivers who make it all possible.

---

Virtual Bucket Collection to raise funds for the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans

Our wonderful veterans have not been able to collect for us since March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Their empty buckets have resulted in a drastic reduction in much-needed donations. Please help us to continue our work by making a donation.

https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/TaxiCharity-VirtualBucketCollection
A woman of words

I have a lot more time on my hands than ever before now that Coronavirus has temporarily crushed the taxi trade. What to do with all the hours is the big question for me. Us cabbies are in the category of ‘can’t work from home’ and ‘can’t work much outside the home.’

Home improvements are not the way to go

Mr Meg and his 5-year-old Screwfix catalogue have a stranglehold on home improvements. In Meg Towers, he is ‘DIY Top Dog’! He even has a special pair of workman’s trousers with lots of pockets in to hold his tools. Only he keeps polo mints in his.

The other day I decided to descale the kettle, the iron and around the bathroom bath and basin taps with some fizzy powder that I bought online. Mr Meg inspected my descaling powder and decided to read all the small print. To do this he got out his head torch, and his magnifier and sat down at the kitchen table to study. After 20 minutes of him reading and him saying “SSshhh!” every time I asked him if he was finished, he finally delivered his judgement.

“This is not the right stuff”

I pointed at the label on the bottle that stated, in capital letters, DESCALING POWDER.

“Mmmmm” mused Mr Meg before sliding in the clincher question, “How much was it?”

It was £1.19, but no way was I going to tell him that. He thinks anything that you don’t get for free is too expensive and that anything that you could get for free is a con. We’ve been married a long time and I know exactly how to manage the man. “£3.99” I lied. “What!” he shouted, “£3.99!” “But it was on special offer…” “How much?” “Black Friday deal £1.99.”

Mr Meg turned the container over and pretended to read the back again before saying, “Good stuff this, actually.”

Simplejob.com

The other DIY job that we were too busy to tackle when out working was adding a security turnkey to one of the downstairs doors. Simplejob.com.

“You will do it straight, won’t you?” I asked. “What do you mean?” demanded Mr Meg. “I mean that for more than 30 years you have never fixed anything straight in this house” - as I spoke, I was looking over his shoulder at the roller blind in the kitchen which if you placed a spirit level on top, it would simply slide off…

Newsflash - he did fit the security lock straight on the door. The hole was central and the key cover straight. Success. But - the hole in the door frame is just low enough to the ground to ensure the key can’t turn around in the lock.

PUZZLER ANSWERS

Sudoku

Futoshiki

Predictive Text

Constitutional Reverential Assimilate Postbox Fallow Ton

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PCP finance illustration refers to Personal Contract Purchase and is subject to qualification and approval. Available at participating dealers only. Business users only. 6.6% APR Representative; figures based on TX Vista at £57,795. (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). For illustration purposes the deposit contribution has been deducted from an upfront cashback of £5,000. 80 monthly payments of £813.14 (equivalent weekly payments of £187 – it is not possible to pay by week, balance is paid monthly via direct debit) plus an optional final payment of £18,883; the customer will be responsible for making their regular monthly payments. 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
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