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## CAB TRADE AGAIN STEPS UP TO MAKE US PROUD - AND GROWING MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN THE TRADE

As you can see from the front page and pages within this edition of *The Badge*, the cab trade has again stepped up and shown society what kind of people we are.

From the amazing D Day ceremony in Normandy to a wet cloudy morning in Hastings, the actions of my fellow taxi drivers make me extremely proud to hang this green badge round my neck. Last week we globally proudly showed everyone our charitable side from 90 year old veterans, to 9 year old children in wheelchairs. Helping those in society less fortunate than ourselves is a very noble trait and I want to personally thank everyone who attended both events, well done 🙌🙌

On a more sour note, on page 3 I highlight the growing mental health problem within the trade as more and more drivers are accumulating 3 / 6 points everyday due to this Mayor's transport strategy. Drivers who have held clean licences for twenty, thirty years are gaining points and the stress of watching where you are going, dealing with the needs of our customers,

plus scouring the roads for street signs is becoming unbearable for many. Londoners had their chance to vote in Susan Hall who said she would scrap the 20 MPH zones on day 1, but for whatever reason, they chose not to and I still find myself wondering how our Mayor got reelected.

I have found work levels a bit hit and miss personally and I had hoped after the Chelsea flower show, levels would rise but let's hope the Euros and Wimbledon kicks off a cracking summer.

I recently spent a day in Glasgow visiting Cab Direct to discuss the new Ford taxi and by now you will see my interview on LCDCTV.

There will be more information in the next Badge, but it certainly looks exciting.

PS. Please make sure you are paying the new subs, as failure to do so may result in not being able to access all the Club's services. 🙌





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We at the LCDC don't often bang our own drum when it comes to helping our members with their legal troubles. A lot of the cases which come our way with members are quite sensitive and we respect their wishes to keep things in house and out of the paper which I can fully appreciate.

However, not only do Payton's Solicitors offer our members a 24 Hour Duty Solicitor 365 days a year, but since getting involved with the Club, our solicitor Keima Payton has the distinction of having a 100% success rate in all her cases which she has handled on behalf of the Club's members.

Keima Payton has a fearsome reputation in court and should ever the need arise you will find no one better able to fight your corner and save your Badge than Keima.

- Grant Davis, LCDC Chairman

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# 20MPH LIMIT CAUSING A HEADACHE

As you see from the story below, our Mayor will not sleep at night unless he can get at least 1 million fines to bolster the coffers - a figure and a strategy I find totally repugnant.

His ULEZ extension was, I believe, a cash grab, no more, no less and his roll out of 20 MPH zones has caused massive mental health issues for the cab trade. I receive calls at the office almost daily from taxi drivers who are struggling mentally to go to work because of the fear of getting points on their licence.

I know drivers like me who have driven with a clean licence for 30 + years and now have either 3,6,9 points for just going 24mph in what used to be a

30mph zone.

A vast majority drove nothing but diesel taxis and so not only could you "feel" the cab accelerate but also hear the engine get louder, but these TXe taxis are silent and ultra fast, so to go between 23 and become a law breaker at 24mph takes just a second and you're done.

I think taxi drivers should have 2 licences - as a taxi driver working 6 days a week at say 8-10 hours accumulates 60 hours a week. You are "on offer" and driving under stress compared to a normal driver who uses his car to get home from the station etc and could total say, 10 hours a week.

Members who have just

acquired a new taxi call me up panicking they have got 6 points in as many months... this is utter madness.

I recently got another 3 points at Grosvenor Road in Pimlico, the road goes from two lanes to just one and I had a lorry right beside me. The only way he never hit me was for me to step on the accelerator so I could pull in front of him and he dropped behind me... the result was 3 points and £100. I would like to think that having a clean licence for nigh on thirty years was a positive thing, but now I drive the cab worrying about cameras and every zone.

I have been shown a speed limiter setting on my TXe, but driving under a 20mph limit has



already resulted in one irate passenger on route to Paddington Station asking me if I was "taking the piss" as he looked at a completely empty

road whilst I crept along at 19mph.

This is no good and drivers' mental health is suffering.

## Sadiq Khan vows to issue 1million speeding fines to London drivers before the end of the year as Mayor's war on motorists goes up a gear

Sadiq Khan has vowed to issue one million speeding fines to London drivers before the end of the year.

The Mayor of London said he wants to crack down on speeding in the capital, issuing strict targets for the Metropolitan Police to increase the capacity to enforce more speeding fines.

Through new cameras rolled out in the city, drivers would be caught and forced to pay the punishment.

If caught breaking the speed limit, drivers could be landed with a £100 fine and three penalty points added to their licence, GB News reported.

Almost one in every four cars registered in the capital got a speeding fine in the past six years, data recently showed.

An estimate 595,000 tickets were issued to drivers by the Metropolitan Police since 2018.

The fines were mainly handed out to drivers who broke the 20mph limit, with charges up 700 per cent since 2018.

In January this year, a study claimed that London is the world's slowest city for drivers, with traffic crawling at an average of just 10mph because of its widespread 20mph speed limits.

Sadiq Khan's London is the slowest city in the world for drivers after spread of LTN's and his Ulez extension

Drivers took 37 minutes and 20 seconds to cover just 6.2 miles (10km) in the city last year - a minute longer than in 2022, according to satellite navigation firm TomTom.

It came amid Khan's extension of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (Ulez) last year and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, which can land drivers with fines.

And TomTom claimed that the 20mph limits, which were also expanded last year, may have led to an increase in greenhouse gases due to the longer journey times.

The world's second slowest city centre is Dublin, with 6.2-mile trips typically taking 29 minutes and 30 seconds. It was followed by Toronto, Canada (29 minutes); Milan, Italy (28 minutes and 50 seconds); and Lima, Peru (28 minutes and 30 seconds).

MailOnline has contacted Sadiq Khan for comment.

Courtesy of MailOnline



**L.C.D.C LEADERS NOT FOLLOWERS**  
**Stop talking about it and JOIN!**

# VETERANS COMMEMORATE 80TH

## The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans was delighted to take a group of veterans to Normandy for the 80 anniversary of Operation Overlord

On 4 June, London Taxi cabs drove; ten Normandy, two WWII, five post war and two Afghanistan veterans, and a team of volunteers, carers, companions and medics across to France for the D Day commemorations.

The five day itinerary included commemoration services at Pegasus Museum, Ranville Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery and the village of Graaugues, as well as visits to the Grand Bunker and Abbey aux Dames de Caen.

The trip was led by London cab driver and Taxi Charity Chairman Colin Mills who said, "What an honour to lead this group of veterans and volunteers as we came together to remember the events of 80 years ago. With us were veterans who had landed on the beaches, protected the channel, taught signalling to the troops and transmitted messages to the beaches, who enjoyed applause and thanks everywhere they went. We



are proud to support veterans from all



conflicts and joining the Normandy Veterans were those who had served after WWII in Korea and Kenya as well as younger vets who had served in Afghanistan."

London Cab driver Daren Parr, who has rowed the Atlantic and climbed Kilimanjaro to raise funds for the Taxi Charity said, "This was my first European trip with the charity and is something I will never forget, creating memories I will cherish forever. It was a real privilege being around these living legends. Getting to sit, talk and hear their stories was a real treat. I was hanging onto every word, asking questions and getting a unique insight into a big part of our history."

WWII veteran Marie Scott, who transmitted messages to the beaches said, "What an amazing experience. I am fortunate to have travelled to Normandy on several occasions and always thoroughly enjoy my time away with this special charity but this really was the best time ever. The Charity has given me so many incredible experiences over the years, but on 5 June this year, I had the honour of speaking at the commemoration service at Pegasus Museum in front of fellow veterans from England Canada and America, as well as personnel representing all the services."

Entrepreneur and Taxi Charity Ambassador, 29 year old Johnny Gallagher who recently raised £135,000 for the charity to take veterans to Europe for acts of commemoration said, "I am shocked to learn that less than half the youth of today know what D-day is. I am truly hoping that my actions will

inspire change to the education system so that more young people can learn and understand the sacrifice these veterans made for our country."

### About the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans

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

The charity received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2021 and celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2023, a remarkable milestone for a small, niche charity peopled by enthusiastic volunteers. In 2024, they will be taking a group of WWII veterans to Normandy for the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

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

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

*Photos:*

*Front cover: Colin Mills, Chairman of the Taxi Charity, with veterans and volunteers on Sword Beach*

*Top: the taxi convoy in northern France*

*Centre: Veterans attend the commemoration service at Ranville GWGC*

*Bottom: Normandy veteran Les Underwood at the British Normandy Memorial*

# ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY



Photos: Top: veterans on the D-Day beaches

Centre left: Johnny Gallagher (centre front) raised over £135,000 in six days to support the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans. Some of the money paid for the Veterans and the support team to travel to Normandy for the 80th Anniversary of D Day and the rest will be used by the charity to fund future events and trips to the continent. [www.justgiving.com/page/johnny-gallagher-1714059136560](http://www.justgiving.com/page/johnny-gallagher-1714059136560)

Centre right: Veteran Don Turrell with his companion Callum Reid

Bottom: charity taxis in France, and D-Day attendees including Nigel Farage - who helped raise £100,000 for the charity to help send veterans to Normandy



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# The Anderson Shelter's TAXI LEAKS

The 6th of June 1944 holds great significance in the history of World War II, as it marks the day of the Allied invasion of Normandy, known as D-Day.

The Allied invasion of Normandy was a massive military operation that involved over 156,000 troops from the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and other Allied nations. The invasion was led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who played a key role in planning and executing the operation. British General Bernard Montgomery, commanded all land forces taking part.

For many, including my uncle Leslie Sharwood, this day was not just a historical event, but a personal milestone. Leslie turned 20 on that fateful day, spent most of it on Sword beach, fighting for our freedom.

His courage and sacrifice, along with that of countless others, played a crucial role in shaping the outcome of the war and securing a better tomorrow for future generations. Our family also commemorate what would have been his 100th birthday on this day.

Four days after landing on Sword beach, Leslie Sharwood wrote a letter to my mother, explaining that he was ok. He asked my mother to let his sisters and brothers know that he was safe. He also asked mum to let his best friend know that he was fine...but unfortunately, his friend was killed by in a V1 rocket attack.

Over 900 of these rockets landed in London between



the 13th of June and the 1st of September 1944...on average, one every two hours for 81 consecutive days.

Growing up, I never fully understood the horror of what he went through, until I watched the opening scenes

of Saving Private Ryan (through a flood of tears).

As a family, we were lucky that of the three Sharwood

brothers who went off to fight, all three came home, albeit that two, Ronald (parachute regiment) and George (8th Army Tank regiment) were wounded and spent time in rehabilitation. Uncle Les would never speak about his time on the beach, or the days that followed... much as his brothers would always change the subject when I brought it up.

The impact of D-Day was profound and far-reaching. The successful invasion of Normandy marked a turning point in the war and paved the way for the eventual defeat of Nazi Germany. The sacrifices made by Allied forces on D-Day were immense, with thousands of troops losing their lives in the initial assault.

However, their bravery and determination ultimately led to the liberation of Western Europe and the end of the war. The legacy of D-Day continues to resonate today, as we honor the memory of those who fought and died for our freedom.

As we remember my uncle Leslie on what would have been his 100th birthday, it is important to reflect on the lessons of D-Day and the sacrifices made by so many. Leslie and his band of brother's willingness to give their todays for our tomorrows is a testament to the bravery and selflessness of all the men and women who fought throughout World War II.

We will never forget. We must never forget their sacrifice and always strive to uphold the values of freedom and democracy for which they fought. Happy heavenly 100th birthday Uncle Les. You will forever live on in the memory of my heart.



## L.C.D.C LEADERS NOT FOLLOWERS

# Stop talking about it and JOIN!

# WORKERS AT BLACK CAB PLANT TO STRIKE OVER PAY

About 100 workers at a black cab manufacturer are set to strike in a pay dispute, a union has said.

Unite the union said its members at the London Electric Vehicle Company (LEVC) in Ansty Park, Coventry, have rejected a 3.5% pay rise and £400 one-off payment for those on lower grades.

The firm, which has made thousands of London's electric licensed taxis, is owned by Geely Holding.

LEVC said it had since made a "competitive updated offer" amounting to an equivalent total of a 5.9% pay rise" from an earlier offer of 5.2%,

adding it was committed to finding a satisfactory solution for both parties.

'Minimise impact'

Workers, who have seen "wages fall by 19.9% in real terms" since 2016, will take an initial day of action on Thursday, followed by an overtime ban, the union added.

Further strike dates are expected to be called if the dispute is not resolved.

Unite said the pay offer was a "real terms pay cut" as the real rate of inflation (RPI) was 4.9% when the increase was to be implemented in January.

It followed "years of below



inflation pay rises", while Geely had made profits of £584m last year, the union said.

LEVC, which said the Ansty

plant had about 400 employees, said it was disappointed Unite members had voted for industrial action following pay negotiations and had updated its pay offer.

"Against the context of external challenges and significant financial pressures, LEVC has made a competitive updated offer, amounting to an equivalent total of 5.9% pay rise in 2024 for our operators," its statement said.

"We are committed to reaching a satisfactory solution for both parties.

"Should industrial action take place we have put in several measures to ensure that the impact, if any, upon our production schedule and ultimately our customers will be minimal."

*Courtesy of BBC*

## Lime, Labour's Hackney councillor and a controversial e-bike tender

Hackney's Labour transport councillor has denied a partnership between his charity and Lime constitutes a conflict of interest, ahead of a looming decision on whether the electric bike firm's contract in the borough should continue.

Mete Coban MBE, Hackney's cabinet member for environment and transport and a close ally of Sadiq Khan, is facing backlash over his charity My Life My Say's formal partnership with Lime, which won a £2m contract to run e-bikes in Hackney in early 2022.

"This is disappointing from Councillor Coban who should be aware that elected officials need to be seen to be beyond reproach in their dealings with contractors," Alastair Binnie-Lubbock, joint head of Hackney Greens, told City A.M.

Micromobility companies compete fiercely for contracts in London's many local authorities and a re-run of the Hackney tender is on the cards given Lime's current contract is set to expire in July.

Hackney is one of the most hotly contested local authorities among e-bike companies due to its cycling infrastructure, demographic and size.

But Lime's prior tender victory left a sour taste in the mouth of some involved.

Correspondence seen by City A.M. shows that at least one of the three rival e-bike operators raised legal concerns over the tender's outcome.

Industry insiders flagged the council's decision to disqualify bidders who had not operated at least 200 bikes for over a 12 month period in the prior three years, effectively leaving only two eligible competitors.

Hackney picked Lime as the sole operator from the final two firms instead of awarding the contract to more than one, as is the case in many other



boroughs. It justified the single concession by arguing there was a wide difference in scoring between the final two companies.

Documents shared with City A.M. show at least one of the two officials working in procurement who conducted the scoring questioned more than once whether it was too harsh against Lime's closest competitor. No adjustments were ultimately made.

One reason the council cited for Lime's victory was that it would introduce technology enabling manual age verification on its platform, but no such process exists.

Instead, all riders are required to agree to a general user agreement that specifies a minimum age of 18 when signing up via the app.

Councillor Coban is the founder and current chief executive of My Life My Say, a charity that works to increase youth participation in elections. In April, Lime entered into a formal partnership with Coban's charity.

During recent local and mayoral elections, it has offered thousands of free minutes and rides for distribution to My Life My Say's network of young adults, tapping into London's youthful Labour electorate as they head to the polls. Around 55 per cent of Hackney's population are under 35 years old. The partnership also means My Life My Say's 'Give an X' campaign adverts are stuck on hundreds of Lime bikes across London.

"These revelations raise important questions about the relationship between Lime and Hackney and its transport lead... We'll be keeping a close eye on the upcoming decision to renew

the contract or open up the tender process," Councillor Binnie-Lubbock told City A.M.

In a statement, Coban said no "formal partnership" between Lime and My Life My Say existed before April 2024 and that he has no role or influence in the procurement process for e-bike operators, which is decided by separate council officials. He told City A.M.: "There is no conflict of interest and my relationship with Lime was declared with Hackney Council. I informed the Council about my relationship with Lime and they confirmed receipt."

"Lime's contract with Hackney Council began in 2022, which was two years before any formal partnership with My Life My Say. I can also confirm that My Life My Say has not received any fees from Lime, so there is no annual payment or expenses."

In a statement, a Hackney Council spokesperson "wholeheartedly" rejected any suggestion the tender in 2022 was unfair.

"The contract – awarded two years ago – was subject to a fair and transparent competitive tender process... The recommendation from council officers was approved by the Council's Cabinet Procurement and Insourcing Committee, of which Councillor Coban was not a member.

"As with all public procurements in Hackney, bidders are scored on a combination of factors, such as cost, quality of service provision and sustainability.

"In this case, we included criteria to make sure operators contributed towards the cost of 70 on-street bike parking bays and would take action on riders who parked bikes on pavements.

"The successful bidder scored significantly higher overall than the unsuccessful bidder. The successful bidder's performance on all parts of the contract – including age verification – is monitored regularly by council officers."

Responding to City A.M., Lime provided a lengthy statement addressing its partnership with Mete Coban's charity and the prior tender victory.

The company said it had taken "additional steps" to ensure full transparency before entering into the agreement with My Life My Say (MLMS). This included Coban formally disclosing the partnership via the Council's register of interest and "confirming in writing that he is not involved in any procurement or commercial partnership decisions with Hackney in relation to Lime's previous tender win, current e-bike operations and/or potential contract renewal. The above steps were all taken and Lime has never provided any money to MLMS," Lime's spokesperson said.

They added: "Lime had no prior relationship with Mete before or during the tender response process. Lime participated in the tender process in accordance with the requirements set by Hackney Council and applicable procurement regulations."

*Courtesy of City AM*





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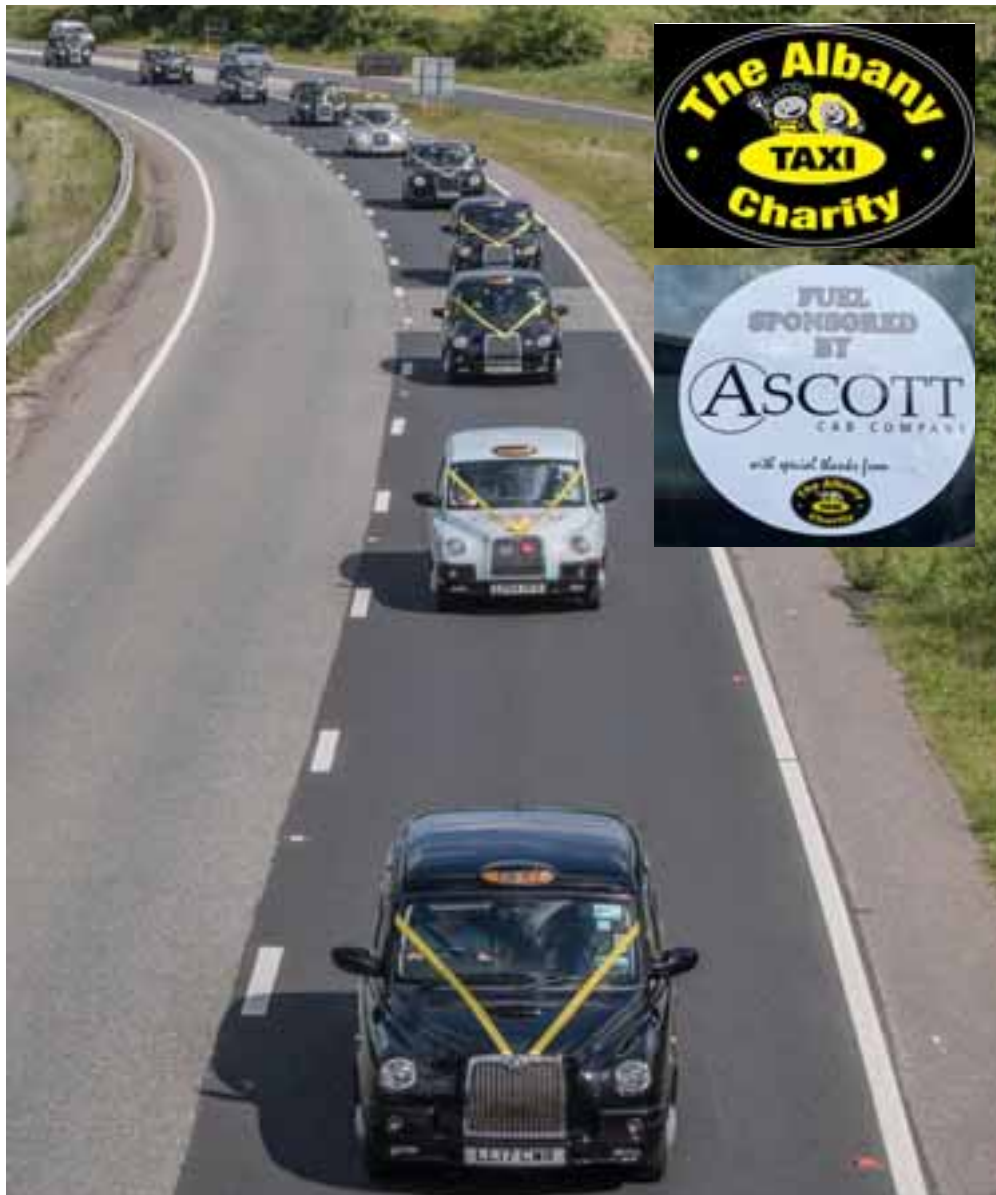
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# Albany Taxi Charity trip to Hastings



**When you normally wake up on a grim, wet Monday morning it's quite easy to feel a bit downhearted. I have found a cure.... it's called the Albany Taxi Charity trip to Hastings.**

Even knowing I had to get to the car park at the Valley (home to Charlton FC) for 6:45am did not dampen my spirits one iota. Grabbing my keys as I finished the last slug of tea before leaving home, I found myself grinning, thinking of the day ahead.

I missed last year due to family commitments but had been looking forward to this day for several weeks. If

you have never done the trip, think about coming next year, it really is good for the soul.

Turning up at the Valley, it's a quick decoration of the Cab, stickers and ribbons, a lovely English breakfast and then wait and chat to fellow cabbies whilst the children arrive and are marshalled into the cabs, went like clockwork.

With a motorbike support convoy, we set off down the A2 towards Hastings.

A quick pitstop on the way (for a you know what) and then we set off for Hastings.

They say the sun shines on the righteous and as we drove into Hastings, the sun shone as bright as some of the kids' smiles, truly fantastic. The children got out and along with drivers walked along the front and had free access to the fun fair... and boy did they have fun 😊.

Several rides and several ice creams later everyone boarded the taxis and we made our way to Powdermill Hotel, what a beautiful place, a hotel set in lovely gardens and a lake.

By this time the children were hungry and once all seated, they had fish and chips, ice cream and all the trimmings.

A visit by the Charity's patron, Ms Jayne Torvill OBE made it even more special, what a day.

Driving home with the children and the careers or parents, you could not but be humbled by their utter gratitude for the drivers (who if truth's known... enjoyed it as much as the kids).

What a fantastic day and if after reading this and looking at the pictures, you fancy coming next year, call them up and get your name in the book.

*Grant*



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**Grant:** Irfan, thank you for the opportunity to break this exclusive story to the taxi Trade, via the Badge.

**Irfan:** No problem Grant, nice to see you again.

**Grant:** Irfan, can you start off by telling the cab trade how this all came about please because I know this will be great news for all concerned owners of TXE taxis.

**Irfan:** Yes of course, at IDTAXIS we were keen to strengthen the cab trade for Vehicles "outside of warranty" and we were aware that was developing in the taxi trade where owners of TXe taxis were becoming very anxious that once out of warranty the cost of keeping a TXe was becoming a major worry and with LEVC recently increasing the cost of their warranties to around £5,500 ( potentially £6,500 with additional costs) many of them said that they were playing " Russian Roulette" in keeping their cab out of warranty. Many drivers I know are scared of not being in warranty especially with the Erad being the major worry. I know this news will make the driver feel a bit more secure and hopefully keep their lovely cab they now have

and not have to go running to the shop to buy a new taxi every 3 years. We had an internal meeting and decided we were going to develop a more affordable solution to help the drivers keep their cabs.

**Grant:** And what is the situation now Irfan?

**Irfan:** I am very happy to say that IDTAXIS have the solution to the trades worries and we are delighted to inform the trade. This has taken months of development and testing and we also fitted our replacement Erads to some working TXE taxis and the results, we are glad to say, have been fantastic

**Grant:** What is the cost Irfan?

**Irfan:** The best news is that we are pleased to announce that the replacement Erad Will be £2,495 + VAT this compares with

between £4k - £5k offered elsewhere. The replacement Erad also comes with a 40k miles / 1 year warranty ( what ever comes first ). Our replacement Erad has been carefully constructed to be as, if not more reliable but at a fraction of the cost. We hope this will resolve the major worries drivers face keeping their TXe Outside of warranty.

**Grant:** This is great news for drivers Irfan, when will the Erads be available?

**Irfan:** We are happy to say that we have stock and are ready to go.

**Grant:** Thank you Irfan

**Irfan:** No, thank you Grant

# MOST DRIVERS HIT WITH £180 ULEZ FINE SINCE EXPANSION FAILED TO PAY IT

Seven in 10 drivers issued with a Ulez penalty charge since the zone expanded have failed to pay the £180 fine, Transport for London revealed on Tuesday.

TfL said almost a million fines were “outstanding” – or unpaid after a month – leaving it owed £218,316,553.

One motorist has clocked up 200 fines and owes TfL £47,682. Drivers who have failed to pay the £12.50-a-day levy have received an average of 12 fines.

The figures, published in a freedom of information response, came as TfL commissioner Andy Lord predicted that the Londonwide Ulez would deliver “very significant” improvements to air quality.

He suggested that the first analysis of the impact of the Ulez expansion on roadside pollution – which is due next month – would justify Sadiq Khan’s decision to widen the zone across Greater London last August.

He also denied that the mayor and TfL were engaged in a “war

on the motorist”, despite the expanded zone having generated more than £160m in levies and fines by April and being seen by some Londoners as a “tax on drivers”.

Speaking to the Transit Unplugged podcast, Mr Lord said: “There will be a report in the next month or so which will show, six months on, what the impacts and benefits have been of the ultra-low emission zone expansion.

“We are expecting it to be very significant. We already know from our own data that the number of compliant vehicles has increased, and therefore by default the air quality should have improved.

“We have seen some congestion improvements as well. Some people will say this is us having a ‘war on the motorist’. It absolutely isn’t. It’s around improving air quality. At the same time, if it delivers some traffic easing, that’s great.”

Prior to giving the go-ahead for the Ulez expansion, Mr Khan had been warned by the

independent consultancy Jacobs that the benefits of the Londonwide zone were likely to be negligible.



Only a “moderate” positive impact on nitrogen dioxide road traffic emissions was predicted, alongside a “minor” positive impact on PM particulate emissions, leading overall to a “minor positive impact” on Londoners’ health, Jacobs said.

TfL revealed it had issued 1,348,938 Ulez fines between September 26 last year and April 26. Of these, 282,448

have been paid, raising £43.8m of income, but that number is expected to increase over time. A total of 974,590 tickets are classed as “outstanding”.

Drivers have 28 days to pay – and get a 50 per cent discount if they pay within 14 days. The bill increases to £270 after 28 days.

Net revenue raised from Ulez levies and fines is reinvested in London’s public transport network. The Ulez is projected to stop making a surplus by 2026/2027 as drivers switch to compliant vehicles.

Prior to the expansion of the zone to the Greater London boundary, 42.8 per cent of Ulez fines went unpaid – more than 1.8m fines.

TfL has yet to update its Ulez vehicle compliance figures for 2024. By last December, an average of 95.8 per cent of vehicles spotted by the zone’s cameras complied with the exhaust emission rules and thus were not liable for the £12.50 levy. This included 96.7 per cent of cars but only 87.8 per cent of vans.

A TfL spokesperson said: “The Ulez is not about making money. It will lead to cleaner air while generating ever smaller net revenues, as has been the case with the previous expansion to inner London where people switched to greener vehicles. We encourage all PCN [penalty charge notice] recipients to engage with us, particularly if they are struggling with any difficulties or hardship. Unpaid PCNs are passed on to our debt recovery services and can lead to further action.”

*Courtesy of The Standard*

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**YouTube**

Two months have passed since I last wrote in the Badge where I told you all about the change of name for the YouTube channel from Cockney Cabbies to Jamie The Cabby and I have to say a massive thank you to everyone who has viewed the videos that I have published and to all the new subscribers.

I have been absolutely blown away by the reception that I have received from everyone, approx. 1000 new subscribers and loads of positive comments and feedback, I would just like to thank you all once again.

I must admit that I have been a little editing my videos over the past month. I have filmed a lot of stuff, but it is the editing that takes a lot of time. It is a lot easier editing audio; video takes at least three times longer to edit.

Also, I still feel a bit self-conscious when out filming stuff, holding a camera and talking into it, you probably don't realise but I can be a bit shy at times. But I do have a lot of stuff recorded already that just needs editing to go out on YouTube, I really need to get my backside into gear!

**Dashcams**

While working in London over the past couple of months I have noticed a sharp increase in pedestrians walking around and crossing the road while gazing at their phones, they seem to cross the road without looking as they are distracted by whatever has caught their attention on their mobile screen.

You also must contend with the food delivery riders on electric cycles and mopeds weaving in and out of traffic, changing lanes without a care for other vehicles around them, showing a blatant disregard for other road users and pedestrians!

If you haven't got a dashcam in your Taxi maybe now is the time that you should consider getting one, it could make a difference if you are involved in a collision, and could be used to prove that you were not in the wrong.



There are several approved dashcams now available to taxi drivers and I personally think the cost of purchase could well repay itself if you are ever involved in an incident.

**My Dilemma**

I have been considering buying a new cab for a few months now but due to the cost of the TXe it is a massive decision to make. There are a number of reasons that I have been considering this purchase but there are also a number of factors that make me hesitant to proceed.

The reasons for upgrading is that I would buy a white TXe which would obviously be good for my wedding work, the panoramic roof would be better for the tours that I do, there is also the cost savings in fuel when running a TXe, plus the comfort of driving a more modern vehicle.

We spend a large part of our lives sitting in our taxis, probably more time sitting in the drivers seat than we do sitting in our armchair or sofa and being comfortable makes doing the job a lot easier, I have always been an advocate of making my working environment as comfortable as possible such as changing the drivers seat to something that makes the seating position better, so upgrading to a newer, more comfortable taxi should be the obvious choice.

But there is also the downside to trading up, currently my taxi costs me nothing other than maintenance and fuel and getting a new one comes with a huge monthly cost. I am also a bit of a traditionalist and like the fact that my stunning TX4 gets a lot of attention and is photographed a lot by tourists, also familiarity plays a big part, I know the TX4 but the TXe is an unknown vehicle to me, I have never worked a TXe.

There are pros and cons for both buying a new taxi and for keeping the one that I have and I cannot decide either way, I find that it is a real dilemma for me. Whenever I bought a new taxi in the past I never really hesitated and just went ahead and bought new, but I suppose it is the cost of a TXe that makes the decision such a huge one to make.

Friends and colleagues have told me that I won't regret getting an electric cab, but there are also those in the trade that would say I am mad even considering it, they are usually the ones like me who have never worked or had experience of owning one.

Maybe by the next issue of the badge I might have made my mind up and will be able to let you what my decision was.

**Cab Chat**

Every time I bump into a driver who listened to Cab Chat they always ask the question "when are you going to start doing the podcast again".

MacTheCab and I have not recorded Cab Chat since December 2022, Mac has not been around a lot and been away on his travels a lot which made it hard for us to get together and sit down to record the show, hence there has not been any new podcasts since 2022.

But I must admit that I do miss recording Cab Chat and do sometimes wonder whether I should start recording the podcast again.

I would be interested to hear your thoughts, let me know if you would like Cab Chat to return, I can tell you now that it will never go back to being a weekly show, but we are fast approaching the 10th anniversary of the show, so I suppose Mac and I should make the effort and at least record a show for such a momentous occasion.

That's all from me this month, lets hope that once the election is done and dusted that the work picks up for us all, until next month be lucky out there and stay safe.

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# HUGE NEW LONDON OLYMPIA ARENA WILL ALSO HAVE BARS, THEATRE, ROOF TERRACE AND BERLIN-STYLE SPEAKEASY IN £1.3BN REDEVELOPMENT

A slew of provisional licences have been approved for bars, a theatre and a 4,000-person music arena as part of a major £1.3 billion West London redevelopment. Over three sessions earlier this week, Hammersmith and Fulham Council approved 10 applications from Olympus Property Holdings Limited as it progresses its revamp of the Olympia Exhibition Centre.

The local authority had previously given the green light for amenities such as hotels and restaurants, ahead of the complex's planned opening next year. The Olympia redevelopment scheme, approved by the council in 2019, will see the site transformed into a new 'cultural landmark', delivering venues from art and entertainment spots to offices.

Split across three Licensing Sub-Committee meetings held on Tuesday and Wednesday this week (May 28 and 29), members resolved to grant



provisional licences for six hospitality spaces, including a champagne terrace and a roof bar; a theatre; a reworking of the former music hall Pillar Hall, to include a restaurant and 'intimate 1920's Berlin feel speakeasy bar'; a gym; and the music arena.

Due to the ongoing construction of the site, Olympus applied for provisional statements for each of the spaces. If approved, these statements provide potential tenants with a means

of establishing whether they will be granted a premises licence once building works are complete.

Potential issues of dispersal, due to the number of people to potentially be drawn to the complex, and noise were debated by committee members over the sessions. Cllr Wesley Harcourt asked specifically about any operational plans, to which he was told an events calendar is to be run so Olympus can stagger departures and

arrivals.

Cllr Harcourt further queried about any discussions Olympus may have been having with Transport for London (TfL) regarding Kensington Olympia Station, due to the volume of people expected.

Dominic Holmes, Director of Development at Yoo Capital, said: "At the moment there are six trains an hour in each direction and we have provisionally agreed with Transport for London to fund the increase to something in the region of 7.6 trains an hour on average."

Questions were also asked about the Roof Garden South Terrace Mezzanine, which Cllr Dominic Stanton put to the applicant appeared to be a 'reimagining' of a temporary pergola previously on the site, a point of concern raised in several objections filed by local residents.

Jon Wallsgrove, solicitor for Incipio, which is to take on a

number of the spaces, said the proposal "is not to have any sort of similar style of premises to the pergola which was there before...which effectively was more of a pop up than a permanent fixture".

Ed Devenport, Chief Executive at Incipio, added: "This will not have semblances to what we did previously on a meanwhile basis. This is a much more premium, refined drinking and dining experience."

On the music venue, Cllr Stanton asked about taxi provisions, estimating as many as 320 could be arriving and leaving for a full-capacity show. Mr Holmes responded saying there would be plans to 'deconflict' clashes with other big events in the complex, with several spaces available for pick up and drop off. The committee was also told signage would be erected to guide people in appropriate directions, with the intention of encouraging dispersal and staggered departures.

*Courtesy of MyLondon*

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Heathrow Area Transport Forum (HATF) is a partnership between organisations in the private and public sectors with a shared goal of improving accessibility and increasing public transport use to and from the airport and the surrounding area. It is funded by HAL.

There is no representation from the Taxi Trade. LCDC raised this previously, but the HAL Rep, Tim Wells was not at the meeting, so LCDC posted a response:

**'The Surface Access Strategy - A Plan that Contradicts Itself.'**

I have read the new version of the Surface Access Strategy and have written my response again and again and again. As the representative of the London Cab Drivers Club, I am baffled by the direction of your Surface Access Strategy, given that I responded at this time last year and even met with Tim Wells and Simi Kullar. To say that my view has been ignored would be an understatement, but the new strategy is completely daft!

It is clear that the strategy contradicts its original concept of reducing private hire trips and undermines the "No More Traffic" pledge, which should guide Heathrow's approach to transport management. The strategy's focus on offering discounts to private hire vehicles (PHVs), especially to Uber, while increasing costs for traditional black cabs, is a gross misjudgment. This leads to a host of issues, from unfair competition to public safety risks, not to mention a deeper environmental impact due to increased traffic congestion and pollution and the exploitation of drivers.

**Regulatory Arbitrage and Externalising Costs**

Private hire operators like Uber have mastered the art of regulatory arbitrage, exploiting loopholes to circumvent the strict regulations that black cabs must follow. This regulatory exploitation allows PHVs to undercut traditional taxis, giving them an unfair competitive advantage while externalising the costs onto the public purse. This approach harms both the city's and UK's revenue and shifts the financial burden



onto local authorities, which are already stretched thin. It's also a significant threat to public safety, as the lack of strict regulations for PHVs increases the risk of accidents and other dangerous situations.

**Impact on Local Authorities and Enforcement**

The externalisation of costs also has implications for local authorities and enforcement agencies. PHVs operating with fewer regulations place additional pressure on Police and TFL Compliance officials, who are already struggling to manage organised crime gangs involved in touting at the airport. By allowing PHVs to operate with fewer constraints and offering them discounts, HAL contributes to the increase in illegal activities, diverting enforcement resources from more serious issues. This regulatory arbitrage not only strains public resources but also raises significant safety concerns.

**The Fallacy of Back-Filling**

One of the key components of your strategy is the concept of back-filling, where PHVs can pick up passengers after dropping others off, supposedly reducing traffic and improving efficiency. However, this is a fallacy that does not stand up to scrutiny.

The concept of back-filling promoted by Uber is dangerous. It suggests that PHVs can seamlessly pick

up new passengers after dropping off others, reducing traffic and increasing efficiency. However, this can only work if Uber is allowed to saturate the market with low-cost, budget vehicles as they do in Central London and other cities. Wherever Uber operate, traffic congestion and the inherent pollution increases as PHV's wait on every street corner.

The inevitable consequence is a flood of PHVs cruising around Heathrow, leading to more congestion, not less. This creates safety risks, disrupts local communities, and adds to environmental pollution—all contrary to your "No More Traffic" pledge. To think that Private Hire Drivers will stop waiting in residential areas is just pure madness. Ever since Uber started the sheer volume of Private Hire and Taxis at Heathrow Airport have increased, not diminished.

There are now more than 100,000 PH Drivers in licensed London and the effect on the Licensed London Taxi trade has seen our numbers drop to less than 18,000 Drivers.

HAL also seem to think that only Uber can operate in this fashion - this is not true. ALL the Apps that offer PH & Taxis can backfill rides - the issue is matching rides with passengers at the right price, which is not quite so easy if fares increase as they probably will, especially if PH operators face a 20% Value Added Tax (VAT) burden and there is less work due to the price increase.

Back-filling will encourage PHVs to aimlessly circle around the airport, leading to more traffic congestion and pollution. This practice will lead to an increase in touting and illegal plying for hire as any vehicle that enters the AVA Car Park will not be able to backfill and will go to the back of the queue.

**Public Safety and Social Inclusion.**

Your strategy also jeopardises public safety and social inclusion. Traditional black cabs are 100% wheelchair accessible, whereas Uber and other PHVs are not. Less than 0.7% of PHV's in London are wheelchair accessible. By supporting Uber's predatory business model, you are implicitly endorsing a reduction in accessibility and inclusion. Additionally, the influx of PHVs with undertrained drivers and poorly maintained vehicles creates significant safety risks for passengers.

**A Deal with Uber?**

It seems highly likely that Uber has offered Heathrow Airport Limited a revenue stream on fares in exchange for reducing competition from traditional black cabs and other Private Hire Operators. If this is true, it's a grave disservice to the public and a blatant violation of fair competition principles. By aligning with Uber, you are essentially helping a company that aims to monopolise the transport industry, which will ultimately lead to higher fares, less

choice, and a degradation of service quality.

However, if HAL allows competition from other Apps then the Airport will be flooded with Private Hire Vehicles all trying to 'backfill' or illegally ply for hire by cheating the system or plotting up on set down points.

**Uber's Market Saturation and Predatory Pricing**

Uber's business model is built on market saturation and predatory pricing. The company relies on offering extremely low fares to undercut traditional taxis, which it can do by avoiding regulatory costs and externalising expenses. HAL's acceptance of this model is alarming and shows a willingness to overlook the long-term consequences for short-term gains. This strategy creates a race to the bottom, leading to a downward spiral in working conditions and safety standards for drivers. The impact on the black cab trade will be severe, as Uber's saturation approach undermines fair competition and threatens the livelihoods of taxi drivers.

**Contradicting the "No More Traffic" Pledge**

Your strategy to offer discounts to PHVs contradicts the "No More Traffic" pledge. By making PHVs cheaper to operate, you are encouraging more trips by private hire vehicles, leading to increased congestion and pollution. This negates the initial goal of reducing PHV trips, which reportedly make up 94% of all journeys in the taxi and PHV market at the airport. The result is an environment where PHVs flood the roads, causing more traffic, pollution, and safety risks, ultimately harming Heathrow's reputation as a responsible airport.

**A Call for Reassessment**

I urge you to reassess your Surface Access Strategy and consider the long-term implications of your partnership with Uber. By favouring a company with a history of regulatory violations and exploitative practices, you are putting the entire transport industry at risk. Instead, you should focus on supporting the traditional black cab service, which has been a reliable and inclusive part of

London's transport network for decades.

**A Balanced Approach**

To address these issues, HAL should focus on reducing PHV saturation and support traditional black cabs. Here are some suggestions for a more balanced approach:

- Increase PHV Prices and Reduce Taxi Costs: Raise costs for PHVs, such as by increasing the price of short-stay parking and drop-off charges. This extra revenue could be used to enforce the drop off points and short stay car parks in order to eliminate the organised crime gangs who tout in every terminal. It will also reduce congestion and pollution caused by the

sheer volume of PHV's entering the Airport and the Short Stay Car Parks. It would also lead to less waiting time in both the Taxi Feeder Park and the Authorised Vehicle Area and increase the use of Public Transport as fares would have to reflect higher prices. Lowering prices only leads to a race to the bottom and the exploitation of Drivers. At the same time, reduce the costs for traditional taxis by lowering the entry fee to the taxi feeder park and reducing the cost of electricity for electric taxis. This would help redress the balance and encourage more taxi trips, reducing PHV congestion.

- Eliminate the Drop-Off Charge for Taxis:

Removing the drop-off charge for traditional taxis would encourage more passengers to use black cabs, reducing the number of PHVs circling the airport. This would align with the sustainability goals and support a more responsible transport system.

- Scrap Discounts to PHVs: Discounts for PHVs will only incentivise more trips by private hire vehicles, leading to increased congestion and pollution. HAL should focus on reducing PHV trips and supporting traditional taxis to maintain a fair competition environment.

**Conclusion**

Your Surface Access Strategy, in its current

form, is a recipe for disaster. It undermines your "No More Traffic" pledge, promotes regulatory arbitrage, and paves the way for Uber's predatory pricing and unsustainable business practices. Your Surface Access Strategy, with its focus on offering discounts to PHVs while increasing costs for black cabs, is a misstep that contradicts your own goals.

This strategy undermines the "No More Traffic" pledge, creates unfair competition, and promotes practices that compromise public safety and sustainability. HAL must reconsider its approach, focusing on supporting traditional black cabs and reducing PHV saturation to

maintain a fair and responsible public transport network.

We urge you to reconsider your approach, prioritise public safety and social inclusion, and support the traditional black cab service. Anything less is an affront to the passengers, drivers, and communities who rely on Heathrow for safe and reliable transport.

We look forward to your response and hope to see significant changes in the strategy to address these concerns.

*Yours sincerely,*

Mark

Mark White (LCDC)

**Police Update on Touting**

• Police were not present at the meeting so no update given at the time. Melissa Young (HAL) has met with Andy Garvey since meeting – Police are addressing taxi touting in all terminals.

Patrols and projects are happening in the background. If you see what you believe is touting in the terminals, please call the non-emergency APOC number: 020 8745 7216

**TDOC Terminal Drop Off Charge**

• APCOA recommendation to change layout of T3 taxi rank – original proposal submitted by APCOA to Heathrow, APCOA now creating 3D walkthrough (making Tensa barrier layout more robust).

**Taxi Desk at Arrivals**

In order to have Taxi Desks the Trade needs to have an entity to manage them. LCDC supplied both a set of rules and Service Level Agreements for all the trade organisations to read, review, debate, discuss and hopefully agree. Sadly, we seem to have reached an impasse as some cannot talk to others.

**Canteen**

Rumours have been going around that the Canteen is



to reduce opening hours rather than extend them as requested. An email from

Eurest's Claire Eldadaa has dispelled these concerns and a meeting is

to be arranged:

"The original contracted hours of opening were 6am to 8pm, some months ago we extended this and it is currently open 5.30am to 10pm. Looking at the sales data for the additional hours of opening, the increase in sales does not equate to what it costs to open it.

"I imagine that is where the rumour mill has come into play on the shortening of hours given we were looking at the sales for those extended periods however, there is not plan to shorten the service time which remains 5.30am to 10pm."

Claire also stated: "On another note, we have offered to move the vending machines currently in the canteen into the entrance corridor, this is currently sitting with Heathrow as the corridor belongs to them."

**Fair Fares**

All trade groups were asked to increase Fair Fares by LCDC Reps. It's been several years since they were last increased and the last two years have seen increases to the Tariff that have increased the meter by over 20%. One Representative refuses to support an increase in these fares, which is ironic since he, himself, couldn't get a taxi home late at night. The LTDA Rep has written an

article in a recent copy of 'Taxi' suggesting the fares are increased having dragged his feet for 3 months. As someone used to say: "You couldn't make it up!"

**Hotel Drop-off Charges**

Sofitel – hotel only validate ticket if the customer is staying, not if visiting.

**Clearway on perimeter roads**

T5 Welcome Roundabout – road markings are unclear for the far left lane from T5 where road markings are worn out. M4 spur issue (from town) and Sofitel exit at T5/MSCP5 exit.

**AOB:**

3 car Road Traffic Accident near E2 car park entrance, on Eastern Perimeter Road. Taxi Drivers were observed moving Traffic Management cones. HAL have asked us to remind Drivers not to interfere with live incidents and any cones or barriers that have been put out.

Sean Taylor from APCOA reported it was the busiest April on record at the Feeder Park.

Feeder Park X account (Twitter) is now up and running.

**Next meetings:**

10th July 2024 1400-1530 hours Room: Hong Kong

# RAC SLAMS HIGHWAY CODE CHANGES AFTER NUMBER OF PEDESTRIANS KILLED UP 6% - WITH MORE THAN 400 DEAD AND NEARLY 19,000 INJURED

Experts have expressed concerns that changes to the Highway Code have led to a 6 per cent increase in the number of pedestrian deaths on the roads in the last year.

Some 407 pedestrians were killed in 2023, up from 385 during the previous 12 months, provisional Department for Transport (DfT) data shows. A further 18,749 were injured last year.

The year-on-year increase in fatalities was driven by a rise in deaths of pedestrians aged under 16 (from 17 to 25 deaths) and 60 and over (from 172 to 194 deaths).

RAC head of policy Simon Williams said: 'It's extremely concerning that these figures have risen in the two years since the Highway Code was changed with a view to making the roads safer for the most vulnerable users.'

He continued: 'We hope there isn't a negative link between



the two, but with RAC research showing a third of drivers think pedestrians now face greater danger at junctions due to the changes, there seem to be questions that need answering.

'Any number of deaths on the road is too many, so we strongly encourage the new government not to take these figures lightly and to make road safety a priority.'

Joyce Hickson, 89, was killed when a car collided with six

pedestrians on a pavement in Church Street, Malvern, Worcestershire, on August 8 last year.

Peter Burrow, 91, of Meadow Walk in Colwall, Herefordshire was charged with causing death by dangerous driving.

Ruth Billingham, head of campaigns at walking charity Living Streets, said: 'We all deserve to be safe on our streets. These incredibly upsetting figures show that

more needs to be done to protect pedestrians.'

'The next UK Government needs to prioritise safer streets if we are to prevent more people dying or having their lives changed irreversibly by losing a loved one.'

Across all road users, a total of 1,645 people were killed in crashes in 2023, a decline of 4 per cent from the 1,711 in 2022.

Nicholas Lyes, director of policy and standards at road safety charity IAM RoadSmart said: 'It's disappointing that such little progress has been made in reducing the number of deaths on our roads in 2023, and alarm bells should also be ringing about the increase in the number of pedestrian fatalities.'

'It is a stark reminder to all parties that an updated road safety plan as well as a national roads renewal programme must be a priority for whomever forms the next

government.'

The DfT have been approached for a comment.

Separate Government figures also published on Thursday show 52 pedestrians were seriously injured in e-scooter crashes in Britain last year, with a further 132 suffering 'slight' injuries. There were no pedestrian fatalities.

A year earlier, one pedestrian was killed and 60 were seriously injured in collisions involving e-scooters.

Six e-scooter users were killed in crashes in 2023, down from 11 in 2022.

Private e-scooters cannot be legally ridden on roads or pavements in the UK, but have become a common sight, particularly in urban areas. Trials of rental e-scooters on roads in dozens of towns and cities across England are ongoing.  
*Courtesy of MailOnline*

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It was the end for Deontay Wilder in the middle of the Saudi Arabian night when he stumbled one last time in a boxing ring.

Wilder turned his back, went down heavily and narrowly beat the count before being rescued on his feet but out of his head; it was an awful end to an extraordinary career in round five against Zhilei Zhang.

The heavyweight fight was the last in the first edition of the 5 vs 5 concept and it meant that Frank Warren's team beat Eddie Hearn's team 5-0 in fights and 10-0 in points; it had been hard six hours earlier to predict a final result. The format was always going to take a toll on any boxer willing to play a part in it – it worked because both promoters and all 10 boxers were prepared to take risks and accept 50-50 fights; the money available was a factor, but men have refused dangerous fights before when there has been a substantial cash offer available.

The boxers in the 5 vs 5 all knew the risks of defeat and agreed to fight.

Wilder was Saturday night's biggest victim, a giant of the ring exposed for the last time. That is, trust me, never an easy sight. Wilder was the heavyweight world champion for three years and one month, making 10 defences. His right hand knocked out 42 of the 43 men he beat. Wilder's numbers will forever be impressive and now, sadly, the timing and reflexes have gone and at 38 it is the end.

The other heavyweight fight between Filip Hrgovic and Daniel Dubois should have come with a violence and blood warning; it finished in round eight when the ringside doctor inspected Hrgovic's cut eyebrows and sensibly waved it off. Hrgovic will probably require plastic surgery to fix his face.

Dubois was repeatedly caught, stunned and hurt in the opening three rounds, but he steadily adjusted his feet, timed his punches and fought his way back into the fight. Hrgovic was cut early and then started to lose his way as Dubois simply refused defeat. The stoppage was right, Hrgovic never complained and was probably saved from a knockout loss.

# STEVE BUNCE SEES DEONTAY WILDER REACH CAREER END



The bonus prize for the winner, in addition to the interim IBF heavyweight belt, is a date in September outdoors at Wembley Stadium against Anthony Joshua; the huge incentive was motivation in a truly attritional brawl. Incidentally, the interim belt will most likely be upgraded to a full belt and that means that Oleksandr Usyk, the undisputed heavyweight champion, will only be defending three belts when he meets Tyson Fury in Riyadh

on 21 December. It is amazing the boxing business can deliver a night like 5 vs 5 and then pull a stunt like that all under one canopy.

Nick Ball won the WBA featherweight title with a deserved but split decision over Ray Ford. Both men entered the ring unbeaten in a fight that would never have been made if Warren and Hearn had continued to ignore each other. It was a bold risk by the boxers

and promoters to deliver the fight. It was exceptional, and the last round was thrilling.

Hamzah Sheeraz and Ammo Williams is another fight that was only possible because of the close working partnership between Hearn and Warren in the last nine months. They were both unbeaten, both young and both world-ranked. The usual spiel is that it would make sense to only make the fight if a world title was on the line; the thinking

is simple, why rush an unbeaten talent for peanuts?

The Saudi investment has changed the dynamic, altered the thinking of boxing veterans and the sport wins. It might sound like a cliché, but it is true.

Sheeraz is 25 and was unbeaten in 19, Williams is 28 and was unbeaten in 16. It finished in the 11th and Sheeraz had dominated. It was, trust me, a rare fight to witness.





# Walker on the March...

## WHAT WAS ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?

Before we received the tariff uplift in April, there was a some concern among drivers about the size of the increase and in particular the increase in R4 (six miles +).

It would appear that it was a lot of concern over nothing. We haven't heard a single complaint from customers via the office or drivers and drivers themselves seem very happy with the increased fares.

It seems that our customers are sensible enough to realise that our costs, like their own, have increased disproportionately over the last few years and have accepted that fares have had to increase.

## SUBSIDY

We have always had fares rise in line with our costs since the Cost Index was introduced in 1984, up until and including 2016. Since then, until this year, the TfL Finance committee (and the TfL Board before them) have never allowed us the full increase of our costs in tariff reviews. They have always shaved something off of our earnings.

One of the major justifications they have put forward for nicking a bit off you has always been the effect on taxi users that are least able to pay. Generally speaking, Taxicard users, the disabled and the aged tend to have a greater reliance on taxis for travel and also are among those least able to pay comfortably.

Is this a valid consideration in awarding tariff increases? I think not. Don't get me wrong. We cab drivers have a proud tradition of helping those less able to help themselves, what with the different cab charities, outings, etc.

If our fare increases are suppressed due to this consideration, it is wrong to do so.

## WHO DO WE SUBSIDISE?

I'm not saying I object to helping out those less able



to help themselves, but.....

It is a silly way of doing so. Let's say, for example, that the Finance Committee knocked 3% off the figure from the cost index. Would you mind giving a 3% discount to the elderly and disabled? I certainly wouldn't.

However, by using this method of subsidy, it doesn't specifically target those that need it. I don't mind giving poor old 92 year old Lumbago-ridden Mrs Jones a 3% discount for running her to the shops.

Nah, but it also means that I give the same discount to Sir Clarence Grabaloadamoney, working in the City for a 7 figure salary and living in the surrey commuter belt in a £5 million house, with off-shore savings, etc. I really do object to giving him a discount because he can't afford the full increase in my fares, as indicated by the rise in my costs.

Why should I give a helping hand to someone that earns more in a month than I earn in 20 years. I have to give him a 3%

discount as well as poor old Mrs Jones.

## THERE IS A BETTER WAY

So, here's a little tip for the Finance Committee in the future. I don't think many of us drivers would object giving a 5% or maybe even 10% discount to those who genuinely find it hard to pay cab fares and yet, are unable to easily use other forms of transport.

We aren't in the business of holding such people to ransom but there are fairer ways of doing this.

The fairest way would be for government, central and/or local, to subsidise the fares of such taxi users and let the whole of society look after its less abled via the tax/benefit system.

Failing that, and if we must pay, put it on our licence fees or something similar. It is a fact that a greater proportion of PH customers than taxi passengers are disable/elderly. Yet, nothing is done by the authorities to make PH adequately accessible to these people, far less offer them subsidized fares.

Surely then, better for the

Finance Committee to ignore such factors when determining taxi fares and rather, perhaps, place a small levy on both taxi and PH licence fees and then use the income to reduce fares for these less fortunate people via the Taxicard scheme or something similar?

## BABY BOXES

I was quite shocked when I first heard of Swiss "Baby Boxes". These are special hatches in or around hospitals so that mothers can abandon their newborn safely. These boxes are heated and mum puts baby into the box and deposits him/her into the hatch and voila, the baby is delivered for the second time.

My first instinct was that this was PC gone mad. Making the dumping of a baby made easy and somewhat guiltless. It is still a fair view. However, whatever way you look at it, it beats leaving the baby in a carrier bag on a station of somewhere where mum probably hoped baby will be found before he/she dies

Take the emotion out of this and it becomes a

reasonable scheme. It came out of a baby being left in a bag to die of hyperthermia. The boxes are in a safe place and are heated. An alarm goes off after giving enough time for mum to leg it, alerting hospital staff that they have a delivery and baby is collected.

Also, a leaflet is left for mum, telling her where to get help and informing her that she has a year to reclaim baby and how to do it.

Nobody wants mums abandoning babies but any mum must be in a pretty desperate situation to do such a thing. I have heard the argument that it encourages women to get pregnant because they know they can just drop and dump and carry on their carefree lives. I guess it's a view.

It won't be catching on because ever since these boxes appeared in Switzerland the UN have been trying to ban them.

## VIVA ESPANA!

I've just returned from a holiday in Spain. I do this every year at the end of May because I can't stand the Andalucian summer heat.

This year, the daytime temp reached 30 + degrees every day and on one occasions it was 40 degrees.

There are still people out there that dispute the earth is warming at an accelerated rate. I'm not one of 'em.

The other thing about where we stay is the taxi fleet. They use a myriad of makes and models, saloons, people carriers, etc. Yet, nobody has any trouble recognizing a taxi. Why? Because they are all white with green stripes.

Refreshingly, there was no sign of Uber until I arrived back at Gatwick. Following the sign to leave the airport, above a wide corridor there were four options to follow, one of which was "UBER PICK-UP"



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