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INSIDE



SHERBERT CEO ASHER MOSES WRITES TO MAYOR
 PAGE 6

NEWS



LCDC PEDICAB SUBMISSION TO TFL
 PAGE 23

NEWS



2025 COULD BE VINTAGE BOXING YEAR
 PAGE 28

TAXI EXAM ON THE WAY



DRIVERS TO FACE SERU ASSESSMENT IN 2025

FULL STORY - SEE PAGE 3

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Differing views over taxi wardens at Heathrow, and fears over a recession

This month's Airport Matters article has raised again the very contentious article about taxi wardens in the feeder park.

It has been reported elsewhere that this was agreed (which it was) at a meeting several months ago at TAXI house, which I attended. At this meeting there was a lot of discussion as you can imagine and expect and I thought I had agreed on a trial for the whole scheme, it subsequently came to light that my agreement on the trial was just at "night times" my mistake it seems. In something such as this, I believe that it should be on a "trial and error" basis to begin with and would be tweaked along the way to make it acceptable to all at the feeder park, something like a "working process".

At Heathrow, two of the Club's Excellent Reps, Bryan "Noodles" and Jamie Hawes both work at the airport and both have differing views on how the warden scheme runs.

Myself and the committee at the Club do not tell our members what views they must hold and neither do

we have any "line to follow" for our Reps at Heathrow.

My own view and everyone will have a different one, is that any scheme that helps the trade work at Heathrow is a good thing, but something like this needs to be discussed and maybe a consensus agreed by the majority of drivers at the FLYERS.

It looks like a recession may be on the way and drivers could face 3/4/5 hours roasting in the feeder park, would they be happy that for a two hour shift the wardens get two rides?

As I say, read the two articles and at least have a think about the pros and cons.

Let us all hope this recession does not materialise and we can all work and earn our money.

Take Care
Grant Davis



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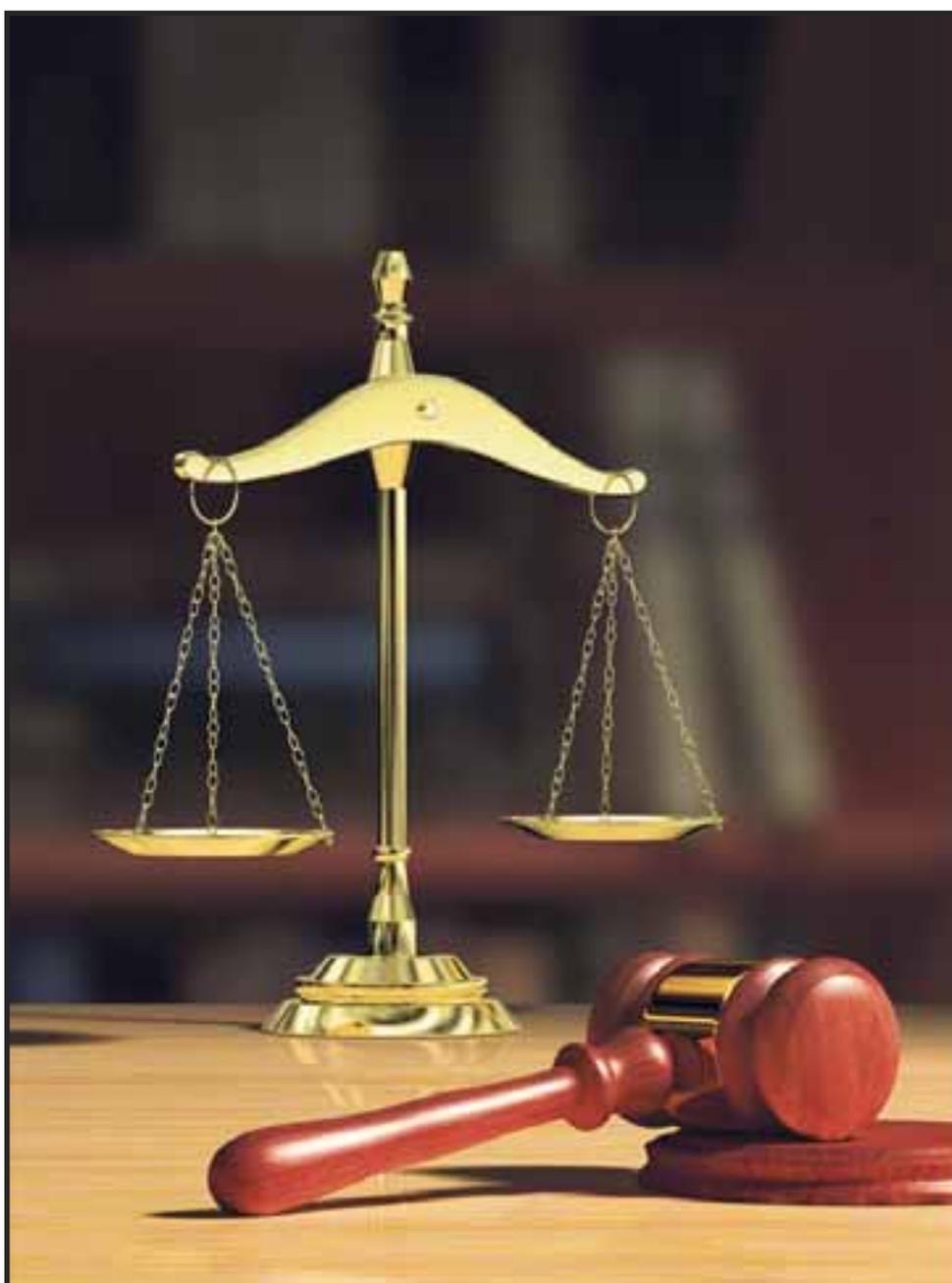
We at the LCDC don't often bang our own drum when it comes to helping our members with their legal troubles. A lot of the cases which come our way with members are quite sensitive and we respect their wishes to keep things in house and out of the paper which I can fully appreciate.

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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DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY: WHAT THE TRADE CAN LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2025

The Mayor's Revised Taxi and Private Hire Action Plan

Although the Club has participated in numerous stakeholder engagement sessions, we have yet to be fully informed of the proposals in the refreshed plan. We broadly agree with some elements that may be included, such as changes to the Knowledge of London that still ensure the gold standard.

One concern we had was the possibility of further or enhanced vehicle licensing requirements. This has been mentioned in the London Net Zero 2030: An Updated Pathway document. We also know that TfL officials have raised the question of how taxi emissions could be further reduced.

With this in mind, the Club sought assurances from TfL Commissioner Andy Lord at December's quarterly meeting. We received a written response from TfL, confirming that—thankfully—they currently have no plans to revisit taxi age limits. For now, our Euro 6s are safe.

Taxi Plug-in Grant (PiTG)

As an incentive to encourage the uptake of purpose-built ULEV taxis, the previous government introduced a grant scheme. Although the grant has been reduced from £7,500, the current award remains a respectable £6,000. Unfortunately, the grant is set to expire in April.

With no choice of vehicle, the possibility in April is that drivers will face a total outlay—factoring in interest—of a staggering £100,000 plus!

How realistic is it to expect the current manufacturer to reduce vehicle costs, given their financial losses? That remains to be seen. Unless the current government reconsiders and extends the grant, the trade will face yet another hit.

Some will argue that the

Mayor could assist, especially since it is his requirement that mandates the current vehicle. We believe that is an entirely valid argument.

demonstrate English language proficiency (oral, reading, and writing).

In response, TfL will implement a Taxi Driver Safety, Equality, and

this handbook. By completing the assessment, a licensee will demonstrate both safeguarding awareness and English reading and writing proficiency.

The oral element has already been satisfied through the Knowledge of London process.

Cross-Border Hiring

In December, the government announced an English Devolution White Paper. The idea is to amalgamate local authorities into larger strategic authorities. There is hope that this may restrict—though not entirely stop—the practice of cross-border hiring. By setting higher standards within these strategic authorities, it would prevent operators and drivers with vehicles from obtaining licences in local authority areas with currently lower standards and fees.

The big question is: How high will those standards be, and what possible detrimental effect will they have on areas that already have high standards? For example, a local authority may currently require an enhanced driving assessment, have a WAV (Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle) policy, or stricter emission standards. Will the new strategic authority adopt those higher standards?

Pedicab Licensing

Last year, Parliament passed a bill regulating pedicabs in public places across Greater London: the Pedicabs (London) Act 2024.

This legislation allows TfL to establish a licensing and regulatory framework. TfL is currently holding a public consultation, which closes on 7 March 2025. We urge all readers to share their views—the consultation can be accessed online at haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/pedicab-regulations.

While calling for a ban would be futile, we hope—and rightly expect—TfL to implement strong regulations

that set clear safety standards, address public nuisance concerns, and ensure that license fees reflect the significant costs of enforcement necessary for compliance.

VAT Treatment of Private Hire Vehicles

Quite frankly, the whole situation is a mess.

In London, operators licensed under the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 are required to enter into a contractual obligation as the principal to provide the journey. This was due to a court ruling in December 2021. Acting as the principal could mean VAT obligations, with the possibility of charging VAT on the full fare.

Outside London, a similar ruling was made for operators licensed under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, but this was overturned on appeal!

Theoretically, we could have a situation where an operator licensed in a London suburb might apply VAT on the full fare, while an operator with a similar service—just half a mile up the road across the county line—does not.

Additionally, some operators are using elaborate VAT avoidance loopholes by classifying themselves as tour operators, allowing them to pay VAT only on the margin rather than the full fare.

Indeed, a mess!

As a result, HMRC opened a consultation in April 2024, which closed in August 2024, inviting views on potential government intervention. We await the findings.

One thing is for sure: if VAT is not applied to the full fare across the board, questions will be asked—especially as the government has made such a song and dance about £22 billion black holes!



Further Licensing Requirements

Due to the scandalous sexual exploitation events that occurred in Rotherham and other northern towns and cities, the Department for Transport introduced new statutory standards in 2020 to help protect children and vulnerable adults.

As part of these statutory standards, all licensing authorities should:

- Provide safeguarding advice and guidance to the trade.
- Require taxi and private hire vehicle drivers to undertake safeguarding training.
- Ensure that licensees

Regulatory Understanding (SERU) Assessment from October 2025 for new and renewing licence applicants.

Although no details of the actual assessment have been released, it will almost certainly be online and similar to the current private hire assessment, which consists of 36 questions, must be completed in 45 minutes, and requires a 60% pass mark. In the unlikely event of failure, a retest will be permitted. The cost is currently unknown.

The assessment questions will be based on a revised Taxi Driver Handbook, which TfL is currently compiling. Drivers will be required to familiarise themselves with

THE LONDON TURNING CIRCLE: ‘DESIRABLE BUT NOT ESSENTIAL’ OR THE OTHER WAY AROUND?

The London Turning Circle - “desirable but not essential” or the other way around?

The LCDC recently met up with Roy McMaster who has been working with Cab Direct on the launch of their new Ford Maxicab.

While the new Maxicab has been making headway getting licensed in cities outside London, with no turning circle (TC), Cab Direct will have an uphill challenge in London. So, the LCDC wanted to understand why Cab Direct believe the TC requirement should be set aside.

Q. Many taxi drivers who support the TC are worried about what they call a van conversion blurring the lines with PHV’s, that we’ll look the same as private hire and it will do away with a London icon. How do you respond to that?

A. Wasn’t the Vito a converted vehicle and when it initially came out in 2008 drivers said it wouldn’t work, looks like one of those chauffeur driven Mercs.

But by the time the Vito Taxi finished we had sold over 4,000 into London, it took 30% of the market in that time and it was loved by airport drivers and customers alike. I think the Maxicab can do even better, it’s more spacious, accessible and it’s zero emission.

But set that aside for a moment, let’s look at the facts about ‘blurring’. Cities outside London - like Edinburgh, Manchester, Glasgow and Liverpool gave up the TC requirement between 2006 and 2013. Drivers in these cities were given a choice between wheelchair accessible cabs like the Vito and E7 that didn’t have the TC or the TX’s that did.



And the result? Have PHV’s taken over, are we nearer a one-tier system? Not at all. The ratio of PHV’s to taxis in these cities has averaged just over 2:1. Whereas in London, where you have kept the TC and now have no choice, the ratio of PHV’s to taxis has grown to 6:1. And don’t forget Uber has been just as competitive in Glasgow or Manchester as it is in London. So, no, I don’t believe allowing a taxi like the Maxicab into London will result in a one tier system.

Q. But isn’t there a risk that doing away with the TC will allow all sorts of competitors and lower quality vehicles to flood the London market?

A. That won’t happen, it hasn’t happened in any of the other big 4 cities. The market for purpose-built taxis, offering side access for DDA specified wheelchairs with a strong centre partition, is just not big enough for new entrants. You need to invest quite a

lot to meet the VCA standards of a Taxi as a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle. It’s a bridge too far for smaller converters.

The reason Cab Direct can do it with the Maxicab is that the Allied Group has around 900 employees, makes 10,000 accessible vehicles a year. So, it has the engineering expertise and other resources to design and manufacture a high quality taxi, at the best possible price but not expect huge volumes. I never found that in-depth strength at either LTI or Penso.

Q. Didn’t the Vito have a rear steering system that enabled a driver to complete a TC U-turn, why can’t you engineer that for the Ford Maxicab?

A. The Vito was an excellent taxi for everything, except for the turning circle. As most drivers know, we just couldn’t get the rear steering system to work

properly. It cost a fortune in warranty, even after several expensive upgrades.

And here’s the thing. The system was not designed for quick manoeuvres. Before you could do a U-turn the system, the driver would have to slow down to less than 3mph or stop, then press a button beneath the steering wheel and only then could he make the manoeuvre at the slow speed of 3 mph. It would have been quicker to make a 3 point turn!

And imagine, that was the system approved by TfL. So much for the turning circle enables drivers to “quickly change direction and easily pick up passengers even when they are on the opposite side of the road”. You’ll see that in one of the Mayor’s Question Time responses, but it was never true on the Vito.

Q. Moving on to TfL, won’t they just tell you that the TC

is essential for London’s narrow streets, that drivers use it all the time and that London is different from all those other cities.

A. There is no hard evidence that the TC is essential for London’s narrow streets. When I was at LTI and Penso I heard the same arguments being used in Edinburgh and Liverpool many years ago, but the TC was abandoned there, and no one talks about it now.

Indeed, you and I sat in a court room in Croydon a couple of years back and heard a senior TfL manager say that the “turning circle is desirable but not essential”. If that’s the case why not let it be a matter of choice, let drivers decide whether they want a cab with the TC or not. With London’s traffic even slower than in 2004, with the huge increase in the number of cycle lanes on both sides of the road, it becomes ever so difficult to justify that the TC is essential.

Q. Finally, why are you really doing this again, why fight to change the rules of the game that have stood so long?

A. If the rules don’t change then there’s a risk to the whole game. Going back over 35 years being involved in the London taxi trade, the best of times for the trade was when there were vehicle alternatives. Like when the old Metrocab came out as a 6-seater and it pushed us in LTI to bring in the Nissan Fairway, the Merc came out and gave drivers the comfort and space they really wanted in a taxi.

So, my last big ambition is to see London drivers have a choice again and benefit from a great wheelchair accessible cab like the Maxicab.

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OPEN LETTER TO MAYOR FROM SHERBET CEO ASHER MOSES

Dear Mayor of London,
Mr Sadiq Khan,

My name is Asher Moses, proud Licensed Black Taxi Driver in the greatest city in the world, London, and Founder and CEO of Sherbet Electric Taxis, London's fastest growing and biggest privately owned EV fleet of more than 500 taxis.

I am writing to you as both a fleet owner and an advocate of all the 17,000+ drivers out there today to ask for support in your upcoming Action Plan so that we can continue to be the world's most iconic and best taxi.

The 'black cab' has been part of London since the 17th century, starting out as a horse drawn carriage, hence the term 'hackney carriage'. Even now, ever wondered why the head room is so high? The taxi design harks back to the olden days when a gentleman had to have enough head room to accommodate his top hat. In fact the small turning circle we have was invented back when we had to be able to turn the cab around outside the Savoy. The word 'cab' comes from the 19thc Cabriolet carriage imported from France which served as one of the earlier iterations of the current iconic black vehicle. Why am I telling you this? Because I want to remind you that we have been part of the fabric of this city for centuries and respected the world over. We're as London as the double-decker bus and the red post box. We've upheld our traditions and standards yet happily modernised ourselves to support London's evolution such as introducing mod cons into our taxis and going fully electric to meet your Net Zero Plan. Since day one, we have been a collective of self-employed, proud and hard-working men and women serving London.

But we see the landscape changing and we worry that we are being forgotten. We see new tech giants come in and drive prices down whilst our costs and restrictions go up. We see our guardians TFL advertise tubes yet never give us a mention. We see access to roads taken away from us in our most critical borough, The City, so our role in transporting City professionals and those needing access becomes increasingly redundant. This is my elevator pitch; 4 things I ask you to do for us to secure the future of the Licensed London Black Taxi.

1. Acknowledging the Knowledge as a vocation to nurture the next generation of drivers. Joining our ranks isn't for the fainthearted, the Knowledge test we

have to pass takes up to 4 years to study for and has been compared to studying for a degree. It's an institution that we are so proud to have worked for. However, it's hugely time consuming and expensive so it's no surprise that the number of qualifying drivers has dipped to its lowest level in 40 years and around 60% of all drivers are 50 years+. It's a great career path for those with a strong work ethic but maybe don't have any academic qualifications and we find single parents do well in the job due to its flexibility. So please introduce a speedier fast-track option that still retains the high standards of the traditional Knowledge



but allows accelerated training. Introduce apprenticeships and sell the career to school leavers. It's a fantastic job!

2. VAT relief on electric taxis to help us continue on the path to Net Zero. We are all on board to ditch diesel for EV. In fact, I bought the first ever LEVC TXE taxi and proud to say my fleet is the fastest to have converted to EV (at a huge financial burden to my business, somewhere in the region of about £30m). Other fleet owners have collectively invested around £200m. Drivers all over London have put their entire life savings into the costly TXE and now we are all finding that the EV dream isn't what it's cracked up to be as our costs are crippling and the amount of work available is being taken by the ever growing PHV sector. Do you know the cost of rapid charge in London has gone up approx. 500% in London over the last 5 years!?! This has priced many of us out. I surveyed drivers this week and found 64% of them can't afford to charge so they depend on the range extender. Something's not right here. Given our taxis are both electric AND wheelchair accessible, can you consider VAT relief

as well as charging subsidies?

3. The TXE is currently too expensive, it's that simple. My Sherbet fleet drivers overwhelmingly ask for you to allow Black Taxi drivers to choose from more than 1 vehicle to lessen the financial burden of buying a new taxi. In most other UK cities, and for PHV's, authorities license more than one vehicle. Yet for the Black Taxi trade, we are obligated to drive only one vehicle, from one manufacturer. The cost of this TXE vehicle can be as high as £100k when you include interest. We should be given the option to choose from a more

reasonably priced vehicle, even if we have to compromise on some features. At least give us a choice. By growing the choice of vehicles for Black Taxi drivers, you level the playing field with Private Hire and invite an acceleration in adoption of EV that will help build to Net Zero.

4. Access to all roads. I understand the importance of offering Londoners choice of transport options at all price points and the rational for granting concessions to UBER and PHV's to support their growth and we accept that because we offer a different service. However, we find it hard to accept having a chunk of our bread and butter jobs wiped out as we have access denied on key roads and the City. We 'black cabs' offer transport that's efficient, comfortable, spacious and driven by career drivers so much of our work is taking City professionals to and from the City, but we can't serve them anymore.

Our taxis have always best served those needing additional access needs as we have the widest door access for wheelchairs and our drivers are trained

on the correct protocols for on and off wheelchair access. With us being denied access to many key locations and roads, we can't serve those passengers either.

We accept sharing work with PHV's but let it be a level playing field for both the trade. Passengers also want the choice. Let all us taxi operators divide and conquer by giving Licensed Black Taxis access to bus lanes and The City so we can serve the passengers we have always looked after and let UBER do the jobs they do best.

'Jobs availability' is the second biggest concern for my drivers (no1 being the costs of the taxi). When I asked them what one thing they would wish for from you the top response was 'access to all roads'.

If changes to this effect don't get introduced, we risk losing a loved institution that's famous the world over. The 'black cab' has survived everything that's challenged it and reincarnated itself into an even better version of its previous self. It's testament to the trade that for over 300 years we have survived the industrial revolution, we've survived two world wars, the tech revolution (when you'd think GPS would have killed us off overnight) and even a pandemic. Surely we can't let a few oversights in policy be the straw that breaks our back.

My own fleet, Sherbet, has proven what the 'black cab' can do when you embrace tech and future vision. My taxis aren't a horse drawn carriage anymore, they are possibly the smartest and most intelligent vehicles on London roads. They are all fitted with cameras, high level telematic tracking and advanced data collection for Smart Cities. They are purpose built taxis that offer unrivalled, 360 panoramic views of London with all the comforts any passenger needs and wants and are regulated and trusted. I am regularly asked to attend expos around the world to share my roadmap to success, so please Mr Mayor, what can't you also see our value.

If you see us in the future of this city, I implore you to consider the 4 asks above and make it a fair playing field so that we can continue to be at the forefront of ground transport for London and on the fast track to Net zero.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Asher Moses
Green Badge Driver #46626, Founder & CEO of Sherbet Electric Taxis.

'AS ANY WOMAN IN THE BACK OF A LOCKED TAXI KNOWS, SAM KERR SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO COURT'

Any woman who has been sitting in a cab and reached for the handle to find the door locked and felt their muscles instinctively tense for a split second until they hear the familiar clink of the car unlocking, even though they have been safely delivered to their requested destination, will have had an opinion on Sam Kerr's court case.

Drunk or sober, when a woman gets in a taxi at night, they are keeping a close eye on the route being taken, sharing their live location, messaging friends and/or partners and sharing trip details, watching the driver. In an Uber watching the driver go off the recommended route on your phone? Watching out the window as a driver turns off the route you know makes the most sense? Logical answers flash through your mind – there must be traffic, perhaps there are road closures, maybe there's been an accident – but they do not quell a rising fear that puts you on high alert.

It's not just in cabs either. Every woman who has walked down a street after dark has at some stage taken a longer route to stay on more populated roads, has taken a different route to stay under streetlights, has either removed their earphones or turned them off so that they can be alert to everything and everyone around them, has clasped their keys in their hand in case they need some kind of weapon.

Every woman will have mentally listed the items in their bag according to how useful they could be in an emergency, will have thought about the clothes they're wearing and what they look like that day to determine whether they might be at a higher risk, will have crossed the street when they don't need to to check whether someone they suspect of following them does the same, will have watched their shadow to make sure no other shadows creep silently closer.

These are just some of the many examples of the unspoken things women instinctively do to stay safe.

There are also many examples of unspoken things people of colour and members of the LGBTQI+ community do to protect themselves at night too.

I and a friend were followed home from school by three men when we were 11. We were acutely aware of it, managed to stay calm and waited until there was enough distance between us, and we had turned a corner and were out of sight before running. Each morning as a teenager, I and friends used to choose which of the two routes to school we wanted to take, one which took us down the nicknamed "Paedophile Lane" and the other down the nicknamed "Rapist Road". I won't go into the many examples that have followed.

How often does a straight, white man consider these things? This is the question an intoxicated Kerr was attempting to ask of PC Stephen Lovell when she was sat in a police station telling him to "put your shoes in a female's shoes. We were trapped for 20 minutes in this guy's car."

killed."

Kerr and her fiancée, Kristie Mewis, said in court that they felt like they were being kidnapped by the taxi driver when he rerouted from driving them home to a police station after Kerr had "spit-vomited" out the window. He did so without telling them, they alleged.

They also said that it was in fear for their lives that Mewis kicked a window out with the doors locked and the driver refusing their requests to stop. They claimed the taxi driver's allegations of fare dodging were fabricated and that he was driving erratically. They said they had called the police themselves and had been hung up on. They questioned why, despite Mewis admitting it was her who kicked out the window, they were both charged with criminal damage. This is what preceded Kerr's inappropriate and poorly articulated rant, which she conceded was embarrassing. "You guys are stupid and white, you guys are fucking stupid and white," she said. "I'm looking you in the eyes, I'm looking you in the

Except the context is everything. Start with the Metropolitan police, which was found to be institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic in a report less than two years ago and has a history (including a very recent history through the murder of Sarah Everard) of failing women, seemingly ignoring two women in significant distress. They were intoxicated but that does not mean they should not have their concerns taken seriously.

As Kerr and Mewis were sitting in the police station their claims were dismissed without investigation. The police did not subsequently request copies of emergency service calls, speed cameras and ANPR records were not checked, the taxi driver was taken at his word that he did not have a recording device in the vehicle and this was not checked. The taxi driver was not arrested or interviewed despite detaining the women in the taxi to drive them to the station (an action explicitly advised against in the Taxi Drivers' Handbook which states: "Detaining passengers

out of a broken taxi window, they did not see the need to switch on body cams.

Meanwhile, PC Lovell failed to mention any upset caused by Kerr's "stupid and white" comments in his first statement. The Crown Prosecution Service initially decided that the evidence against Kerr did not meet the required threshold. Then, 11 months later he submitted a second statement saying he had been left "shocked, upset and humiliated".

In his closing statement, the prosecutor, Bill Emlyn Jones KC, asked the jury: "The fact you will be able to think of much worse examples of racial aggravation is irrelevant. Would we consider this a racially aggravated insult if she had said stupid and black? Of course you would, it wouldn't even be contestable."

Except, that feels like a straw man argument. The likelihood of Kerr calling a black police officer "stupid and black" was and is close to zero. Had she been talking to a black male officer, who does not benefit from the same privilege as a white man, race would probably have not been brought into the equation even in a drunken rant. It's reasonable to speculate that had a black man been in that room interviewing Kerr her concerns as a woman of colour might have been taken more seriously. And had a woman, of any race, been in the room interviewing Kerr, the likelihood is her concerns as a woman would have been taken more seriously too.

What will the impact of this case be on Kerr and her very valuable image? Hopefully, not significant. People make mistakes that they may not be proud of, and Kerr certainly won't be proud of the widely watched footage of events in the police station, but being dragged through a jury trial charged with racially aggravated harassment was an unnecessary trauma to inflict and a waste of time and money.

Courtesy of The Guardian



The Chelsea player added: "You have to understand the emergency that both of us felt. Look at what happened last time when a woman accepted a police officer's help in Clapham and got raped and

eyes, you guys are fucking stupid."

The prosecution argued that all that preceded those words was irrelevant because what she has said was there for everyone to see on video.

against their will in the back of a taxi over an unpaid fare, including locking the passenger in and driving to a police station, is not condoned by police and could get you in trouble.") In addition, when the police saw a woman climbing

The Anderson Shelter's TAXI LEAKS

I find it quite amazing that on most Taxi groups across social media, drivers are continually saying we need more students on the knowledge. Many trying to promote the trade, by painting rosy pictures, but overlooking what the main problem is...and that's the way TfL are currently controlling the Knowledge course.

It's blatantly obvious that students, looking at three to four years training are being put off. But there's no need for it to be this hard.

Under the Met (yes I realize that was over 24 years ago) the knowledge process was much smoother and resulted in drivers passing out in around eighteen months to two years. The quality of drivers getting their badge was as good then as it is now!

But many drivers will be against more students getting out quicker, thinking that's just more competition for their work.

Looking at TfL's own figures, last week saw a reduction of 26 Taxi drivers on the previous week, with no new licenses issued, while 247 new private hire drivers arrived on the scene.

So why are TfL holding back students?

It all goes back to around 2009-10 when TfL came up with the secret plan to cut the number of Taxi drivers by 50% and double the amount of Private hire drivers, by giving PH better access to passengers, first by allowing clip board men on venues putting work into unbooked PH cars, then when online apps became available, making it easier for them to enter the market.

How do I know this....I have posted about TfL's Project Horizon many times and the way I found this. But I'm not going to bore you with all the details again, repeating long posts



I've made about this over the last 24-25 years.

So here's a quick recap.

I first uncovered the "Project Horizon" plan, in an email train sent to a number of TfL's senior personnel. I found this on TfL's internal internet (info-net) back in 2009/10 after a friend who worked for TfL gave me the password. I tried to get the RMT Taxi Branch (of which I was a founding member and Ranks and Highways officer) involved. They didn't want to know, as back then, they desperately wanted a seat with other taxi groups around the negotiating table and didn't want anything to upset the applecart with regard to TfL....Then later, same thing with the UCG, which I was also a founding member and Ranks and Highways committee member.

So, I decided to expose this find on my website, but TfL's legal team informed me, that any emails I'd found online, were private, marked for the recipients eyes only, and were therefore copyright.

They told me to remove my articles or they would take me to court. At that time I had the evidence on my

computer, so I told them "take me to court", and let's get this all over the Main Stream Media... they bottled it, but then strangely, Google removed my website.

Then unfortunately, the computer which I'd been using to access TfL's internal internet (which also held all my evidence) was infected with a virus, which cleared my hard drive of all data. Coincidence...what do you think?

The ultimate goals of Horizon were:

- Cut taxi trade in half
- Double the amount of private hire vehicles
- Allow certain PHVs use of ranks at major termini
- Create a three tier PH system of badges 'Bronze, Silver and Gold', with Gold being closer to a one tier service where PHVs and Taxis together share the work.

After I'd exposed the project, TfL panicked and remove all trace of Horizon from their system, the name of the project was changed and it was shelved. Unfortunately, when Khan became Mayor, Horizon (albeit under a new name) was suddenly back on the table. But that's enough and I'll leave it there.

After losing my websites, I decided to start up again with a new blog and Facebook page.

I have for many years believed that the 3 representative Orgs and 3 unions system, doesn't appear to be saving the trade. In my opinion, there's a desperate need for a Taxi Board with everyone working together, reading from the same page...not fragmented, empire building and trying to attract each other's members.

But to be honest, I can't ever see that happening. This opinion has recently been echoed by the Chair of the LCDC Grant Davis, in an interview with WizAnn.

Over the years, I've been accused of being a 'Gloom and Doomer', a 'Keyboard Warrior', a 'Conspiracy Theorist', but I'll take that... If you care what other people think, you will always be their prisoner (Loa Tzu).

Everything I predicted, as far back as 2009/10, is finally coming to fruition.

Even though I'm now retired, I still care about the trade that gave me a wonderful living for 50 years and I want to see it back on top as the best Taxi service in the world that it used to be.

But that can only happen if these five major objectives are achieved:

- We need to see all representative groups working together as one.
- We need to see the knowledge process made more attractive.
- We desperately need an affordable vehicle.
- All Taxi apps must go back to Taxis only.
- Where buses go...Taxis go.

With the lack of fighting spirit in the trade from rank and file drivers, as witnessed over the last 6 years, I will just reiterate the words of John Heywood, who way back in 1175 said...."you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink."

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LCDC ASKS SUSAN HALL TO QUIZ MAYOR OVER TAXI FUTURE

Hi Susan,

Could you please ask the Mayor these questions for me?

Sadiq Khan - how is he a Knight? - has failed to adopt most of the recommendations made by the Transport Scrutiny Committee in recent reports - including a charter for delivery companies. Cuts to the Police and allowing protests every week have decimated the Metropolitan Service, why can't he raise Private Hire Licence Fees and lobby for legislation to regulate the Delivery Industry so that we can have Police Officers on every street corner instead of Uber, Deliveroo and Amazon riders and drivers turning London into a congested third world city? Amazon Prime and DPD undermine the Post Office in the same way Uber and Bolt undermine taxis. Our world class services will be destroyed for cheap low standard entities that do not pay tax in the UK.

Undermining the Taxi Trade: Regulatory Arbitrage & Economic Terrorism

1. Does the Mayor accept that Uber and other private hire operators have engaged in regulatory arbitrage—exploiting gaps between different licensing and employment frameworks to avoid proper taxes, regulations, and workers' rights—while simultaneously undercutting the heavily regulated Black Cab trade?

2. Private hire operators have been allowed to flood London's streets with tens of thousands of drivers using regulatory arbitrage, creating congestion, pollution, and forcing both PH and Black Cab drivers into poverty wages. What urgent steps will the Mayor take to stop this practice?

3. Does the Mayor agree that Uber's model amounts to economic terrorism—deliberately destabilising the Black Cab trade and the wider transport industry by forcing drivers into a race to the bottom while shifting the costs of poverty pay onto the welfare state?

4. What specific measures will



the Mayor include in his new Taxi & Private Hire Plan to tackle regulatory arbitrage and prevent PH operators from continuing to exploit legal loopholes at the expense of London's professional drivers?

The Cost of Electric Taxis & the Failure of LEVC's Monopoly

5. The cost of a new electric taxi is over £70,000, yet PHVs—including polluting vehicles—operate at a fraction of that cost. Does the Mayor accept that this is not a free market, but a rigged system where Black Cab drivers are forced to absorb high costs while PH operators exploit every loophole available?

6. Black Cab drivers were promised a "robust second-hand market" for electric taxis, yet LEVC's poor reliability and lack of proper support have made resale values collapse. Does the Mayor accept that forcing cabbies into a single vehicle option with no viable resale market has been a complete failure?

7. Given that the TX is currently the only approved Black Cab model, will the Mayor commit to allowing alternative electric taxi models to increase competition and affordability for drivers?

8. Will the Mayor call for a full review of LEVC's monopoly and its failure to provide proper support for taxi drivers—especially when LEVC's so-called 'goodwill policy' has proven worthless?

Ending Private Hire Exploitation & Economic Terrorism

9. Does the Mayor accept that Uber's entire business model is based on economic terrorism—

flooding the market with drivers, suppressing wages, and destroying viable, regulated taxi businesses while shifting the financial burden onto the taxpayer?

10. Uber and other PH operators misclassify their workers as "self-employed" to avoid paying fair wages, pensions, and sick pay. Will the Mayor demand that TfL take action to stop this abuse?

11. TfL's failure to regulate PHVs has led to driver oversupply, congestion, and unsafe working conditions. What action will the Mayor take to finally put a stop to this race to the bottom?

12. Will the Mayor commit to increasing private hire licence



fees so that companies like Uber pay the full regulatory cost of their operations rather than exploiting loopholes that allow them to shift costs onto the public?

13. Will the Mayor reconsider lobbying the government to introduce a cap on PHV numbers to prevent further exploitation and protect both PH and Black Cab drivers from financial ruin?

Licensing the Gig Economy: White Van Man, Deliveroo, UberEats & More

14. While Black Cabs and PHVs are heavily regulated, the Mayor has failed to address the rise of unlicensed delivery vehicles, mopeds, scooters, E-bikes and vans operating for companies like Amazon,

Deliveroo, and UberEats. Will he now lobby for legislation to introduce proper licensing for these vehicles?

15. White Van Man, Deliveroo riders, and UberEats drivers are responsible for a significant rise in road congestion, pavement obstructions, and dangerous driving in London. Why are they not subject to the same scrutiny as taxi and PH drivers?

16. Black Cab and PH drivers are subject to compliance checks, insurance requirements, and licensing fees, yet thousands of delivery drivers operate unchecked, often uninsured. Will the Mayor now demand that delivery companies pay licensing fees to bring them in line with taxi and PH regulations?

17. Will the Mayor ensure that any new licensing fees on delivery operators are used to fund proper compliance and enforcement teams within the Metropolitan Police—rather than constantly looking to cut officers and other essential public services?

18. If the Mayor is serious about tackling congestion, road safety, and fairness in the transport sector, why has he allowed delivery companies to operate with zero licensing costs while forcing taxi drivers into ever-higher expenses?

19. Amazon, Deliveroo, and UberEats rely on a revolving door of poorly paid gig workers who have no employment protections. Will the Mayor

commit to lobbying for national legislation that holds these companies accountable for fair wages and proper working conditions?

Funding Proper Enforcement Instead of Cutting Police & Services

20. The Mayor claims TfL lacks funding for enforcement, yet he refuses to impose proper licensing fees on companies like UberEats and Deliveroo. Will he commit to redirecting these fees towards proper compliance checks and enforcement?

21. Why is TfL spending resources aggressively enforcing taxi regulations while allowing PHVs and delivery companies to operate with minimal oversight?

22. The Mayor has consistently cut policing budgets, yet the revenue from PH and delivery licensing could be used to fund Metropolitan Police enforcement teams. Will he commit to using these funds to tackle illegal and unsafe drivers?

23. When will the Mayor finally admit that he has allowed a two-tier system to develop in London—where fully licensed and compliant professionals are penalised, while unregulated gig economy drivers are allowed to operate unchecked?

Final Challenge to the Mayor

24. The Mayor is responsible for setting policies that affect thousands of taxi, PH, and delivery drivers. Will he finally commit to stopping regulatory arbitrage, ending economic terrorism, and ensuring a level playing field where all drivers—Black Cab, PH, and delivery—are subject to fair and enforceable rules?

25. If the Mayor refuses to take action, is he prepared to admit that he has no control over London's transport sector and that his policies actively support the exploitation of drivers while destroying the regulated Black Cab trade?

Regards,

Mark White

PARKING FINES SET TO INCREASE AFTER COUNCILS SAY THEY AREN'T A DETERRENT

Parking fines are likely to become a heftier hit across London after mayor Sadiq Khan signed off a £30 rise in the penalties.

The proposal comes after a review dating back to 2023 by London Councils, an organisation representing London's 32 borough councils, which looked into parking and traffic enforcement penalty charges, which have remained unchanged for over a decade.

After a public consultation in 2023, the proposal was approved by the London Councils' Transport and Environment Committee and was then sent to the mayor for approval.

The proposal included increasing parking penalty charges for higher-level and lower-level penalties.

Penalties are split into two bands, Band A and Band B, and are dependent on the area or borough where the fine was

issued.

In Band B, higher-level charges would see an increase from £110 to £140 and lower-level from £60 to £90.

The penalty is usually halved if a driver pays within 14 days.

Higher-level charges are handed out for incidents that are considered more serious, such as parking on a yellow line or causing an obstruction.

Lower-level charges apply where parking is permitted but after regulations have been contravened, such as overstaying in a pay-and-display bay.

Other traffic-related charges are also set to rise, such as vehicle removal, clamping, storage and disposal.

London Councils says that it has been 13 years since the penalty charges were last reviewed, and since then the deterrent effect of the charges has waned.



Some drivers have claimed in recent years that paying a penalty fare is cheaper than paying for parking in the capital.

London Councils also stated that the number of people receiving penalty charges has increased by 50 per cent over the last 12 years, with the cost of enforcing the charges also increasing, leading to some councils being concerned that the penalty charge regime is not sufficiently recovering costs.

As part of the proposal, London Councils wanted to bring the penalties in line with Transport for London (TfL)'s charges. TfL looks after London's main roads and has increased the number of fines it has issued in recent years.

A London Councils spokesperson said: "Boroughs are committed to making London's roads safe and accessible for everyone. PCNs need to be set at an

appropriate level so that they are effective as deterrents.

"Through using PCNs to manage parking and traffic, boroughs can reduce congestion and incentivise road users to drive and park safely, protect access, crossing and junctions, and increase active travel such as walking and cycling.

"Boroughs can also improve bus prioritisation, reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality.

They added that any net revenue raised by PCNs goes towards transport schemes.

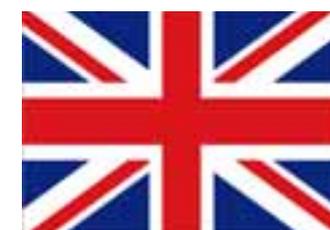
While Mr Khan has signed off on the proposal, it will only go into force if the secretary of state for Transport, Heidi Alexander, does not raise any objections to the proposal within one month of notice.

Courtesy of the Independent

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13TH CABMEN'S SHELTER IN LONDON LISTED

The picturesque green cabmen's shelter on Wellington Place in St John's Wood, London has been listed at Grade II by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on the advice of Historic England.

Known locally as 'The Chapel' shelter it is the final example in the capital to be protected by listing.

The wooden huts were built by the Cabmen's Shelter Fund as much-needed rest stops for licenced cab drivers, at a time when cabs were all horse-drawn.

The first cabmen's shelter in London was built in 1875. Only 13 of these shelters survive in the city today and they are now all protected as listed buildings, recognising their architectural and historic importance.

The small, distinctive buildings continue to serve modern-day taxi drivers and are still overseen by the Cabmen's Shelter Fund, which celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2025.

Only drivers with 'The Knowledge' can take a seat inside but many huts offer takeaway refreshments to the public too.

Full of intrigue, history, tea and bacon sarnies, London's cabmen's shelters are distinctive relics of the horse-drawn age.

They are one of the few reminders left on London's streets of the prevalence of the horse-drawn hansom cab trade in the 19th century. At the peak of their popularity there were thousands of hansom cabs in the capital. The last hansom cab driver in London stopped operating in 1947.

The familiar size, shape and colour helped cabbies spot the shelters easily. They are all the same proportions – no bigger than a horse and cart as they were on a public highway.

Designs varied over time but the most recognisable 'ornamental' version we see today was the work of



architect Maximilian Clarke. The letters CSF for Cabmen's Shelter Fund can often be found in the decorative fretwork. There's even an official cabmen's shelter paint colour – Dulux Buckingham Paradise 1 Green.

All 13 shelters were restored in a campaign by Heritage of London Trust during the 1980s and 1990s. Heritage of London Trust most recently supported the repair of 'The Pier' shelter on Chelsea Embankment by Albert Bridge in 2022.

We're really pleased that the Wellington Place shelter now has protected status, along with all the other remaining shelters. We know how special the shelters are but we need the London taxi trade and public's support more than ever so that this important part of our heritage and working class history lives on.

Courtesy of Historic England

<https://historicengland.org.uk/>

A brief history of cabmen's shelters

In Victorian London cabmen were prohibited by law from leaving their cabs unattended in the rank. While on the job there was no protection from the elements, access to hot food or a place to rest. This led many drivers to stop at a pub between fares. They also had to pay someone to look after their cab or risk it being stolen. Stopping for shelter at a pub tempted some cabmen to drink too much, risking their own safety and that of their passengers.



The idea of providing shelters on the ranks was first conceived by Captain George C Armstrong, editor of The Globe newspaper. When Armstrong was unable to get a cab during a storm because the drivers had all sought refuge in local pubs, he decided to band together a group of wealthy and influential philanthropists to provide a solution. He helped establish the Cabmen's Shelter Fund in London in 1875 with the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, providing warm and dry rest stops at ranks along many major thoroughfares across the city. The charity still operates today.

Between 1875 and 1950 sixty-one shelters are known to have been built across London. The first shelter was moveable and was erected in February 1875 on Acacia Road in St John's Wood, outside Armstrong's home.

The shelters had a small kitchen and space for around 10 drivers to sit, enjoy a meal and each other's company. Gambling, drinking and swearing were strictly forbidden.

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■ **RANKS AND HIGHWAYS**

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■ **CAB TRADE ADVICE**

All members can call the office for any information or up to the date news on any trade related subject.

■ **TRADE'S FUTURE**

The Club worked tirelessly in bringing in the green & yellow identifiers to the taxi trade. And are always working hard to protect our future.

■ **CAB TRADE REPRESENTATION**

We are working hard to work with members of the GLA and also politicians to fight our corner against TFL and was a major influence in the recent " future proof" document.

■ **VEHICLE MANUFACTURERS**

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FOLLOW UP ON LEVC ERAD AND ELECTRIC HEATER ISSUES - TFL ACTIONS AND RECALLS

Dear Ms Chapman,

I hope you are well.

I am writing to follow up on the ongoing concerns regarding the failures of the Electric Rear Axle Drive (ERAD) and Electric Heating Assembly in LEVC taxis, which were discussed at the London Assembly Transport Committee hearing, over a year ago, in January 2024.

During the hearing, you acknowledged that TfL had received numerous complaints about these issues and that you were actively engaging with LEVC to address the problems. Since then, I understand that Unite the Union visited the LEVC factory in October 2024 and raised driver complaints, at which point they were informed that the supplier of the Electric Heater had been changed.



Could you please provide an update on the following:

1. How many complaints has TfL received in total

regarding ERAD and Electric Heater failures?

2. What steps has TfL taken since the hearing to ensure

LEVC resolves these faults effectively?

3. Did TfL approve the reported change in supplier for the Electric Heater, and if

so, what checks were carried out to ensure reliability?

4. What measures did TfL put in place to support drivers affected by the faulty parts, particularly those whose vehicles were out of warranty?

5. What action, if any, did TfL take to recall or mandate repairs for the affected vehicles?

Given the financial burden and disruption caused to taxi drivers, I would appreciate your response as soon as possible.

Best regards,

Mark

Mark White

(LCDC)



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100,000 PHVs, but is That the Real Number?

The number of Private Hire vehicles in London fluctuates around the 100,000 number, sometimes going up and then dropping back down again.

This is due to several factors. The Private Hire industry has a large turnover of drivers, some come into the industry but decide it is not for them and consequently do not renew their license so in turn they do not relicense their car. Another factor is vehicles coming off the road due to the age limit which reduces the number of vehicles licensed, but then new vehicles presented for licensing means the numbers of PHVs on the road increases.

But is this the real number of PHVs working in London?

Most of us are aware of the Wolverhampton fiasco where the local council have licensed so many Private Hire vehicles that there is almost 1 vehicle per 1000 residents, I believe it is the highest concentration of PHVs per 1000 people anywhere in the UK.

In 2018, the Mayor of London required all London Taxis to be Zero Emissions capable and now PHVs must also comply with this rule. Also, TFL removed the exemption from London's congestion charge for Private Hire vehicles and the exemption for electric vehicles ends in December 2025.

I have been noticing more and more V Class Mercedes not displaying a TFL roundel hanging around hotels and some of London's historic locations. TFL do allow exemptions from displaying a roundel if the vehicle does a lot of VIP work, whether you agree or disagree with this rule this is the case. But it cannot be the case that TFL are allowing the vast majority of these V Class Mercedes an exemption from displaying their license!

I started to do some digging and talked to a few drivers of these V Class Mercs and of some VW Caravelle's and found there are several reasons that they are not displaying a license.



Some of these vehicles do have an exemption from TFL so they do not have to display a license or roundel, displaying a TFL roundel in the rear window of a PHV with blacked out windows is basically pointless and even the front roundels have such small print of them that you cannot see the license details unless you are extremely close to it. Maybe it is time to review this and bring London in line with licensing authorities outside of the capital and require them to have a plate affixed to the rear of the vehicle clearly displaying the vehicle license number.

Many PHV drivers are fed

up with TFL and no longer want to adhere to TFL rules and policies and they have sought to license their vehicles within other areas. Cross border hiring has meant this can be done, although somewhat dubious and unethical the law is a bit of a grey area.

Some drivers that I have spoken to appear to have thrown caution to the wind and not bothered to relicense anywhere but continue to work covering passengers in the vehicles. I have seen this quite a lot while on tours and have seen one lady, taking clients on tours in an old 60 plate people carrier that would evidently not pass any

licensing inspection!

For drivers who want to upgrade their V Class, or VW there is also the issue that TFL will no longer license a new diesel vehicle in London. They state that the new electric V Class is virtually unusable for Private Hire work as they tend to do a lot of long-distance work and on a bad day the V Class will only give approx. 90 miles before charging is required. These drivers looking to purchase new vehicles are also leaving the TFL licensing sphere and looking at other licensing authorities.

This presents a few issues. If these vehicles that are

licensed in areas other than London come into the Capital to work, there is basically no enforcement at all. TFL have no jurisdiction over vehicles that are not licensed by them. They have no control over the drivers, and they cannot inspect the vehicles as they do not hold a TFL license.

The mayor's policy of only allowing Zero Emissions capable vehicles to work as Private Hire in London is being flouted and basically makes a mockery of the whole situation.

If the vehicle has 9 seats then it can be exempt from the congestion charge and if it is a Euro 6 diesel it will also be exempt from the ULEZ charge as well, this is why we are seeing more and more new diesel people carriers working in London.

There are various licensing authorities around the Country that will license a new diesel vehicle as Private Hire and cross border hiring is legal in England & Wales providing the triple lock is adhered to where the drivers, vehicle and operator are licensed in the same area. So, this is clearly not being adhered to by numerous operators.

According to Google the issues with cross border hiring are:

- It can undermine local licensing regimes
- It can create public safety issues
- It can restrict the ability of local licensing authorities to enforce safety standards
- It can undermine public confidence in the license private hire trade

These issues are all quite valid, so if Google can see the problems with cross border hiring then why can our government and local licensing authorities not see the problem?

So, in answer to the question posed at the beginning, there is likely to be far more than 100,000 Private Hire vehicles operating and working in London!

Happy New Year
As this is the first issue of the Badge I have not had the opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year, so Happy New Year to you all, let's hope that 2025 is a good year for us all.

I hope that you all have a healthy and happy year ahead, until next issue, be healthy, be, happy, be prosperous and be Lucky.



London council 'reviewing' cost of mayor's car after he boasted about chauffeur-driven vehicle on TikTok

A cash-strapped London borough has said it is reviewing the cost of its Mayor's chauffeur-driven car after he boasted about having access to the vehicle on TikTok.

Lambeth Mayor John-Paul Ennis said one of the perks of his position was you "get a nice car, get driven around, it's a vibe."

In a video posted on social media, he was asked what the job is like and added: "It's mad, I can't lie. It's sick."

The 27-year-old Labour councillor, from Brixton, is the borough's youngest-ever mayor and attends events, chairs meetings and raises money for charity as a representative of Lambeth.

He told influencer DJ AG that his "big thing is about supporting young people,



trying to create opportunities for them."

However, his comments were criticised by some who branded the borough "anti-car" and hit out at the wave of cuts the council is set to make as the skyrocketing cost of providing services pushes it to the brink of bankruptcy.

Lambeth is the most

expensive inner-London borough for drivers to buy a parking permit and the average price increased by 71% last year, according to the local Liberal Democrats.

Local Lib Dem leader Donna Harris has previously accused the Labour administration of launching a "war on motorists".

The town hall has expanded the use of controlled parking zones in areas where parking was previously free and in the past five years has spent £3.4million on controversial low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs).

This year, Lambeth leaders have said they face making "impossible choices" in a bid to balance the books before April's budget.

The borough has applied for exceptional financial support

from the Government to tackle rising costs as it estimates it will have to "urgently" make £70million of budget cuts.

Anthony Boutall, the former Conservative MP candidate for Streatham, said Mr Ennis's comments were a "kick in the teeth for residents".

Lambeth council did not say how much the town hall paid for the Mayor's chauffeur-driven hybrid Volkswagen Passat, however a spokesman confirmed all council spending is "under review".

In 2018, documents revealed the cost for the car that year was more than £15,500.

A Lambeth Council spokesperson said: "With rising costs and rising demand for council services

big savings, worth an estimated £70million must be made, so all council spending is under review.

"Our youngest ever mayor goes to events across Lambeth every day and is inspiring young people, as seen on TikTok with DJ AG.

"He also cycles and takes public transport in his official role. Most London boroughs have a mayoral vehicle, and Lambeth's is a hybrid.

"Our wide range of healthy neighbourhood measures, from mini-parks, segregated cycle lanes, more trees, fairer use of our streets, extra bike storage and more all aim to clean our inner London borough's heavily polluted air, cut road danger and support walking, cycling and taking public transport."

Courtesy of The Standard

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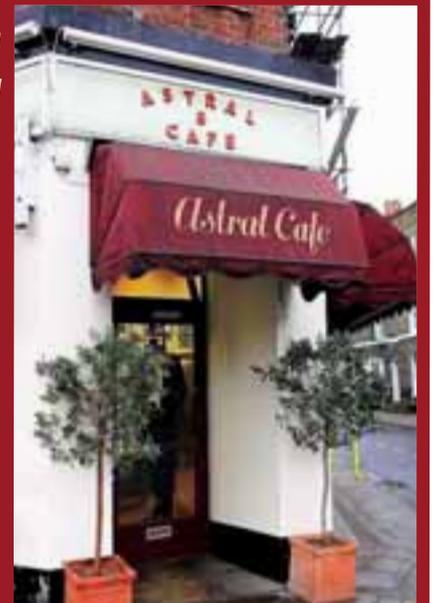
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LCDC PEDICAB SUBMISSION

Below is our response, outlining our recommendations that should be considered by Transport for London in regulating pedicabs in London.

- All journeys must be pre-booked through a licensed operator. All bookings must be recorded, including the time, date, passenger name, driver details, pick-up and destination locations, and fare.

- Records must be available on demand 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- Operators must inform the Metropolitan Police Service and TfL immediately of any complaints of an unlawful or serious nature.

- TfL should provide a public online driver register.

- Operators should inform TfL of every registered driver and report any changes weekly.

- All bookings should only be dispatched to an operator's registered driver.

- All individuals associated with a pedicab operator licence should undergo an enhanced DBS check.

- All operator licences should be granted on a yearly basis.

- All operators must comply immediately with any employment ruling.

- In public places, drivers or agents of pedicab operators must not solicit passengers.

- No pedicab should wait close to, near, or in sight of a taxi rank.

- Pedicab drivers should be restricted from direct initial contact with passengers. If such contact occurs, the driver should not undertake a journey with that passenger.

- All fares must be fixed and clearly communicated to passengers before a journey.

- Fare rates should be



determined by TfL and standardised (e.g., price per mile or meter).

- All fare payments must be processed through the operator.

- All pedicabs should display external signage denoting "Pre-Book ONLY."

- All pedicabs should have external identification signage.

- All pedal-powered pedicabs should be inspected every six months. Battery-assisted pedicabs should be inspected every three months and speed-restricted to 12 MPH. All inspections must be conducted under stringent safety criteria.

- All pedicabs must be

covered by comprehensive hire-and-reward insurance to protect passengers, drivers, and third parties.

- All pedicab drivers should undergo an enhanced DBS check, be medically fit, have the right to work in the UK, be at least 21 years old, demonstrate English language proficiency, and have a sound understanding of safety, equality, and regulatory requirements. Unless a driver can provide documentation proving residency in a country for the stated period, certificates of good conduct should not be accepted.

- A UK driving test should be mandatory for all pedicab drivers, ensuring they are familiar with road safety

regulations and the responsibilities of carrying passengers.

- All pedicab drivers should complete cycling proficiency training before being granted a licence.

- All pedicab driver licences should be granted on a yearly basis.

- All pedicab drivers should wear TfL licence identification and high-visibility clothing.

- Playing music on pedicabs should be strictly prohibited.

- Pedicabs should not congregate, wait, or park on pavements or pedestrianised areas.

- TfL should limit the

number of pedicabs in tourist or high-footfall areas, considering congestion and obstruction for other road users.

- TfL must fully account for the significant enforcement costs required to ensure compliance with the licensing regime. These costs should be covered through licensing fees.

The club appreciates that the current consultation applies only to certain aspects of the proposed licensing regime but we believe these broader measures are essential to ensuring a properly regulated and enforceable system.

*Grant Davis
Chairman
London Cab Drivers Club*

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON TOUTING AT HEATHROW AIRPORT

By Mark White

Introduction

Touting at Heathrow Airport has been a persistent issue, adversely affecting licensed taxi drivers and the airport's reputation. Despite numerous interventions and discussions over the past decade, illegal touting remains prevalent across all five terminals. This report delves into the challenges faced, highlights key operations like Operation GADI, and critically analyses the effectiveness of Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL), the Police Cab Enforcement Unit, and Transport for London (TfL) in addressing this issue.

Challenges Faced by Licensed Taxi Drivers

Licensed taxi drivers operating at Heathrow contend with several challenges:

- **Prevalence of Illegal Touting:** Hundreds of jobs are being touted daily across all terminals, directly impacting the earnings of licensed drivers.
- **Inadequate Enforcement:** Despite the known issues, enforcement actions have been sporadic and insufficient, leading to a resurgence of touts shortly after operations conclude.
- **Internal Complicity:** Reports have surfaced of Heathrow staff, including those in terminals and associated services, directing passengers to unlicensed vehicles, exacerbating the problem.

Operation GADI

Operation GADI was a targeted initiative aimed at curbing taxi touting at Heathrow. Utilising decoy officers proficient in Arabic to pose as passengers, the operation spanned two days and led to:

- **Arrests:** Six individuals were apprehended for taxi touting.
- **Traffic Offence Reports:** Fifteen reports were filed for various offences, including driving without insurance, speeding, and Automatic Number Plate Recognition



(ANPR) evasion.

While the operation initially disrupted touting activities, reports indicate that illegal touts returned to all terminals within days, suggesting that such operations, in isolation, offer only temporary relief.

Critical Analysis of Stakeholder Effectiveness

1. Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL)

• **Enforcement and Oversight:** HAL has been criticised for inadequate enforcement against touting. Instances of terminal staff and associated personnel facilitating unlicensed hires have

been reported, undermining licensed drivers and passenger safety.

• **Collaboration with Stakeholders:** While HAL has engaged in discussions with taxi trade representatives, tangible outcomes have been limited. The lack of sustained, effective measures raises questions about HAL's commitment to eradicating touting.

2. Police Cab Enforcement Unit

• **Operational Constraints:** The unit has conducted operations like GADI, but the temporary nature of these initiatives highlights a lack of sustained enforcement. Resource

limitations and the need for formal invitations to operate within airport premises have further hindered consistent action.

• **Strategic Approach:** The reactive nature of enforcement, focusing on periodic operations rather than continuous presence, has allowed touts to re-establish their activities swiftly after crackdowns.

3. Transport for London (TfL)

• **Regulatory Measures:** TfL holds the authority to regulate and enforce private hire operations. However, despite awareness of the touting issue, enforcement at Heathrow has been inconsistent.

• **Resource Allocation:** There have been calls to allocate funds from taxi and private hire license fees to establish a dedicated touting enforcement squad at Heathrow. The reallocation of TfL officers to duties such as checking bus and train tickets has further diluted efforts to combat touting effectively.

Recommendations

- **Dedicated Enforcement Team:** Establish a permanent, well-resourced enforcement unit at Heathrow, funded through taxi and private hire license fees, to provide continuous oversight and deterrence against touting.
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** Foster stronger partnerships between HAL, TfL, the Police Cab Enforcement Unit, and taxi trade representatives to develop cohesive strategies and share intelligence on touting activities.
- **Accountability Measures:** Implement strict penalties for internal staff found facilitating or ignoring touting activities, ensuring that all personnel uphold the integrity of licensed taxi operations.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Educate passengers about the risks of using unlicensed vehicles and promote the benefits of choosing licensed taxis, thereby reducing demand for tout services.

Conclusion

The persistent issue of touting at Heathrow Airport necessitates a comprehensive, collaborative approach. While operations like GADI demonstrate the potential impact of targeted enforcement, their temporary nature underscores the need for sustained efforts. By addressing internal complicity, enhancing enforcement, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, it is possible to mitigate the challenges posed by illegal touting and protect the interests of licensed taxi drivers and passengers alike.



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

In response to Jamie Hawes' article in the latest edition of The Badge, regarding the Warden scheme.

As you know I am a Warden, and one of the longest serving members of the team. I want to address the comments published in our paper.

"I think it's fair to say, that opposition to the scheme is increasingly growing"

I Warden in the mornings, Monday to Friday. I constantly engage with drivers, and not one has ever approached me regarding their opposition to the scheme. I have spoken to other members of the team, and they have said the same as me. There is opposition from a small minority, and a lot of it stems from Kamal at Unite. There is also a few faces in the canteen that try and push their own agenda. I refute the statement above.

"the lucrative concession of a 100% discount on the entry fee"

This was in fact suggested by Jamie Hawes at a HAL taxi trade meeting.

"also the concession that rides may be carried over"

This is standard practice for the Wardens, the Representatives and for those undertaking collections.

"The scheme was brought in on the back of the busiest year on record"

The scheme has been in operation since July 2016. It was paused during the pandemic, but was brought back to assist in ensuring we had a constant supply of taxis on the ranks.

"the 1 hr wait per ride suggested by the Warden Manager, LTDA Rep, Suzanne Sullivan"

This was not suggested by the Warden Manager, but by a consensus of the trade reps.

"movements monitored by APCOA from 31/10/2023-2024, only 103 movements were 1 hour and under"

It is easy to make figures suit an agenda. What needs to be looked at is the average wait times. These were offered to Unite to scrutinise in the past, to which they refused to look at. After the last HAL taxi trade meeting, the Warden Manager offered to sit down with Jamie Hawes to go through the figures - Jamie Hawes refused.

"having a negative impact on the mental health and well being of all drivers"

On a personal note, I find this statement disparaging to those that truly suffer with mental health issues.

"complaints of Wardens speeding in Newall Road"

This is a serious claim, and evidence must be gathered and handed to APCOA for investigation. If not, then this is just hearsay.

"Wardens are after all just fellow Tag holders with no real power"

I agree with this statement, however, Jamie Hawes continues:



"and shouldn't be in a position to punitively punish any driver"

Wardens cannot and do not punish any driver as Wardens are, after all, just fellow Tag holders with no real power.

"CARRIED OVER RIDES?"

As stated before, carried over rides are allowed by Wardens, Representatives and those undertaking collections.

"after having endured a 20min wait in Newall road"

Without Wardens in the North Feeder Park squeezing taxis in, and stopping drivers jumping out early, thus leaving empty spaces, that 20 minute wait would have been far greater.

"I came out 5 minutes late to the South Park"

Jamie Hawes had just stated he waited 20 minutes on the road, and then admitted he was 5 minutes late back to his taxi in the South Feeder Park. Being late back to your taxi is a contravention of Heathrow Byelaw 9.14 Taxi feeder park good order:

Taxi drivers who are for the time being in a Taxi Feeder Park shall comply with such directions for ensuring good order and an orderly movement of traffic within that Taxi Feeder Park.

Being late back to your taxi has a detrimental effect on the movement of the Taxi Feeder Park. Not only is it stopping fellow Tag holders from going to work, there is a real danger of having no taxis on the terminals and the trade losing customers. Without Wardens, both of those statements would be true. Jamie Hawes next comment proves that neither of these happened:

"to find cabs starting to go around me"

Without Wardens ensuring a continuous movement of the

This is simply untrue, as all Wardens are regular airport workers and would have been in the system anyway.

"still putting the £2 airport charge on the meter...potentially passing the charge onto the customer illegally"

If a Warden chooses to put the £2 charge on the meter, it cannot be illegal, as it is stated on the TfL Fare Chart situated in every taxi.

"an increased wait time for TFP Wardens would provide much better coverage"

Wardens currently operate from 5am until 10pm, and every minute is covered.

Does every airport driver know every other airport driver? If there is any evidence of drivers being "parachuted", it must be presented to APCOA.

"the Warden scheme...is supposed to be for the benefit of ALL Drivers not just the few"

As I've demonstrated above when Jamie Hawes admitted he was late back to his taxi, the warden scheme is there for the benefit of "ALL Drivers".

"it's beginning to look more like a 'scam' than a scheme"

The Warden scheme is open to all qualifying drivers. I'm not sure what Jamie Hawes is referring to by using the word 'scam'.

"recently we had a serious altercation after a Warden placed a 'Polite Notice' on a fellow Driver's windscreen... with both...having a 28 day 'holiday' from the TFP"

This was a serious altercation, and both did receive a 28 day ban. However, this was a result of historic reasons and not Warden related.

The role of the Warden is extremely important to the movement of the Taxi Feeder Park. It is not being used as a smokescreen. It is not a scam. It is not quite the little scandal. Wardens are visibly assisting drivers in ALL weathers. Wardens are visibly assisting drivers no matter how the Taxi Feeder Park is moving.

The rewards of the Warden scheme has to be attractive, in order to recruit and retain drivers.

Wardens play a crucial role in ensuring queuing on Newall Road is greatly reduced. If taxis are queuing on Newall Road, having Wardens visible on the road deters the Police and Heathrow Traffic Officers from turning drivers away. Wardens play a crucial role in ensuring we have taxis on the terminal ranks. If drivers are late back to their taxi, as Jamie Hawes admitted to doing so in the article, without Wardens keeping the Taxi Feeder Park moving we would definitely have lost passengers. The cost of lost business is far more damaging to the taxi trade than the Wardens reward scheme.

Sorry for the long email, but I strongly support the role the Warden plays for the betterment of our business at Heathrow Airport. The knock on effect is a happy customer and more bums on seats, both at Heathrow Airport and in town.

Regards, Brian "noodles"

"doing two thirds of the actual TFP wait time seems to be much more reasonable"

This simply will not work, as it would be impossible to manage. It would also leave the Taxi Feeder Park without any Wardens. The system works on fixed shift patterns, ensuring Wardens know 24 hours in advance the hours they will be operating.

"34 drivers will 'blow out' each night as a result of jobs already taken by Wardens"

This is another untrue statement. As mentioned earlier, all Wardens are regular airport workers and would have undertaken these rides anyway.

"Warden jobs don't seem to be advertised anywhere"

This is due to drivers verbally showing an interest in becoming a Warden, and them being put in touch with the Warden manager. The Warden SLA clearly outlines the criteria drivers have to meet. I categorically refute Jamie Hawes following statement:

"every job taken by a Warden, a Tag holder loses a ride"

"Wardens that drivers don't recognise - that seem to have been parachuted"

It is not Wardens that are directing traffic onto the northside of the road, this is being done by drivers not following instructions and forming a queue of their own. At time like this, to stop the Police or Heathrow Traffic Officers turning drivers away, Wardens are visibly assisting drivers.

HEATHROW FEEDER PARK WARDENS 1 HOUR PER RIDE SCAM

One of the Oxford dictionary's definitions of a scam is as follows "A dishonest scheme"

Why is it those who seek to line their own pockets are always the same ones shouting as loudly as they can that they are "helping drivers" ?

It's curious that when "helping drivers" there always seems to be a mechanism in which they are very much helping themselves , take the Warden scheme at Heathrow , where "helping drivers" seems to have resulted in excessive financial rewards and time advantages for those doing the "helping" The Warden Scheme at Heathrow exists in a parallel universe where "helping drivers" who are waiting between 3-5 hours for one ride and paying a £3 entry fee consists of Wardens waiting 1 hour per ride and paying nothing .. each time a warden "helps" you by jumping the queue and taking 2 rides, you the driver move back two places in the queue ...I'm not sure I want this kind of "help" , are you ?

FACTS

1, The UK is officially in recession.

2, The most recent figures suggest a significant downturn in footfall (rides) through Heathrow .

3, Drivers are currently experiencing anything from 2-5hr wait times with a present average of around 2.5-3.5 hours (and rising) and pay a £3 entry fee.

4, WARDENS WAIT 1 HOUR PER RIDE

5, WARDENS PAY NO ENTRY FEE

These are the unfortunate facts , that no amount of explanations about "helping" drivers or any other such nonsense can mitigate .

Each time your trade representative/warden jumps the queue and takes TWO RIDES FOR TWO HOURS "wardening" you the driver go back two places in the queue !

"WORST ABUSE OF THE SYSTEM I HAVE SEEN IN 33 YEARS "

It may not be popular among certain Unions and Trade Representatives to state the obvious but the Warden scheme



is an affront to each and every hard working, entry fee paying driver at Heathrow . It is quite simply the worst abuse of the system I have witnessed in 33 years of working at the TFP Heathrow and by the response I received to my last article in the badge, the majority of drivers at Heathrow feel the same way .

A SAFE PLACE TO WORK

Since the last article I've noticed that some wardens seem to have taken to covering their faces with balaclavas and have more in common with a SWAT team than those supposed to be "helping" by moving a few cabs up . Drivers are coming to me complaining that even those leading the scheme have been intimidating drivers brave enough to voice their dismay , this is unacceptable and if anyone at Apcoa or HAL is reading this article I would remind them that the same rules regarding abusive or threatening behaviour apply to tag holders at Heathrow as those that apply to their own employees. How can a driver complain to Apcoa or the Warden Manager when he or she will have to then face the perpetrator each day at the TFP ? It's an extremely tense and damaging situation that shouldn't be forced on anybody , least of all those who turn up to do a days work at the TFP and pay for the privilege.

Giving cab drivers authority to place "POLITE NOTICES" on other cab drivers vehicles is a recipe for intimidation, abuse and harassment and is, in itself, enough to warrant at the very least, a temporary suspension of the Warden scheme .

NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE

The Warden scheme in its current form is serving no one

but the Wardens themselves , increasing wait times and economic uncertainty mean that ring fenced 1 hour wait times and free entry is no longer sustainable.

Instead of pretending they are "Helping the trade "Those that run the scheme should take action to amend wait times and reinstate the paying of entry fees , anything less than that is basically two fingers to the trade at Heathrow . If those that run the scheme wish to help the trade then they should run a fairer scheme , each and every Warden needs to remember that doing less time than their fellow drivers is a privilege not an entitlement. contrary to what those that reap the rewards from the scheme are saying , Heathrow TFP has been operating for decades perfectly Well without wardens ..90% of the time they aren't needed , the scheme was started , to counter queues building up in Newall Road, which due to the tiny amount of new tags released , rarely happens . Wardens are not the Fourth emergency service they would have you believe and no amount of high viz jackets , radios or body cams or indeed , fake urgency , can legitimise them .

Also APCOA and HAL if you are listening , you have a team of unqualified "Wardens" with no liability insurance or certified training , directing £80k electric vehicles amongst pedestrians . Come on guys , sort that liability insurance out or scrap the scheme

SNOUTS IN THE TROUGH?

LTDA representatives at Heathrow continue to sanction and in some cases financially benefit from what some would describe as a thief-dom , lead figures at the LTDA seem to be

blissfully unaware of the unfolding abuse of the system, taking place at Heathrow .. Is it that they are unaware or just don't care ? Well they should , the LTDA has many members working at Heathrow and the growing level of anger at the Warden scheme may leave increasing numbers cancelling their direct debits and heading for the exit ... Members will only put up with their representatives dashing in and out of the feeder park at 1 RIDE PER HOUR while they face endless waits ,for so long.

SAM HOUSTON- "THE ROYAL WE"

LTDA Rep, Sam Houston , proponent and chief supporter of the Warden scheme, has recently stated in an email to the trade that "We have looked extensively at the figures provided by APCOA and are satisfied that the scheme provides good value to our members and to drivers at the TFP."

Let's unpack this statement ... First of all , who is "we" ? is it the "royal we" as in himself ? If this is true as I suspect it is , then for some reason he personally feels it's good value, if that's his opinion he can pay for it ! But what he cannot do is force you or I to do the same . Let him take personal responsibility for the continuation of this so called scheme . There is no transparency around what formula or figures were used to draw this conclusion , absolutely none .. LCDC rep Brian Nayer admitted during the an interview that "savings" made from the warden scheme were" knocked up on the back of a fag packet" Not exactly a basis for a scheme that sees wardens jumping the rank to the tune of 1 HOUR PER RIDE !!!

Sam Houston hasn't seen the wardens signing in book, no one has.....it's top secret apparently... this would tell him how many rides wardens are doing and at what cost to tag holders , how can it be stated that the wardens are "value for money" without having seen and calculated the cost of free rides born by tag holders ? I have done the math on average wait times and found very little "value for money" ...if any .

So why and how has he decided the warden Scheme is "value for money" ? On what basis ? Why is Sam Houston making judgement calls about your money at all ?

Do drivers want their money spent on a large group of cab drivers dodging long waits in the feeder park ? I'm sure I don't !

Houston seems to have made this decision for everyone , with no evidence to support it whatsoever ?

If you are an LTDA member or an entry fee paying tag holder , were you asked your opinion on wardens jumping the queue, gaining 1 RIDE PER HOUR and free entry ?

It is The Same Sam Houston that feels that wardens making a lucrative career out of drivers long wait times and queues is "good value" has also stated he needs to see concrete proof of "Value for Money "in regard to installing taxi desks inside terminals , maybe he should go to the "we know London" desk and ask them ?

The UCG has decided they need to uphold a "democratic" cobbled together and latterly amended "agreement" even though no one seems to remember what the actual incentives were , with two organisations saying when they voted, they had no idea they were voting for 1 HOUR PER RIDE.

DOES ANYONE KNOW WHERE THE RMT HAS GONE?

Where is the RMT ? why is the RMT content to watch a large group of Wardens step over the rest of the long suffering drivers at Heathrow ? ... while we're on the subject , why is the RMT having any say at all ? The RMT rep is rarely seen and as far as I'm aware have so few members that the Heathrow branch of the RMT was actually shut down at one point, until they shipped a town driving rep out to the airport to prop it up .. The RMT seem to have almost disappeared from the airport entirely, yet decisions made by the RMT rep are affecting all drivers at Heathrow . There is evidence that the Heathrow Rep for the RMT

voted for the warden scheme yet had no idea wardens were waiting only one hour per ride.

FULL DISCLOSURE

The skeleton of the original Warden Service level agreement was Drawn up by the LCDC senior airport rep Mark White but the wording of the service level agreement (the wardens charter) was amended by LCDC rep and Warden Bryan Nayer , it's certainly possible that this amendment occurred after the vote and certain separate paragraphs were joined together that may have changed their inherent meaning , this may have been missed by those voting or a genuine mistake but in my humble opinion, to avoid any conflict of interest someone benefiting from the agreement should never have been in a position to have any input in the first place.

My fellow rep Bryan Nayer may only have been trying to be "helpful", but, late night amendments to the warden SLA (a la Watergate style) AFTER the democratic vote via group chats, in "consultation" with the LTDA rep and "Warden Manager" was neither democratic nor ethical.

Serving Trade representatives should not be operating as wardens, least of all voting on

incentives and benefiting from those incentives themselves .

WHEN IS A MEETING NOT A MEETING?

Recently LCDC Chairman Grant Davis and LCDC rep and Warden Bryan Nayer attended a meeting regarding desks in the terminal buildings ,this took place at the LTDA's Taxi House, upon leaving the meeting, LCDC Chairman Grant Davis was drawn into a discussion in a hallway regarding the Warden scheme , this Discussion involved both Trevor Merralls and Stephen Jones UCG , LTDA rep Sam Houston , LTDA rep Paul Brennan, LTDA rep Warden manager and Warden Suzanne Sullivan, "Warden"Ben Ellis UCG and LCDC rep "Warden" Bryan Nayer . Sam Houston and the "Wardens" (which sounds like a band, presumably with at least one member on the fiddle) then went on to explain how successful and amazing the Warden scheme was (no surprise there) and that figures could be supplied to prove this (these were never produced as they don't exist) and how Grant Should support the scheme . Chairman of the LCDC Grant , who hadn't prepared for an ad-hoc corridor LTDA warden ambush and had no facts or

figures, felt compelled to nod in agreement. No harm done you may think ? Well not exactly , this exchange in the corridor was then passed off by LTDA rep Sam Houston as a full blown "reinstatement of support for the warden scheme" This sort of predictable scheming is what we have come to expect of those profiteering from the Warden Scheme. Three Wardens , essentially agreeing to their own ridiculous incentives and rewards to remain in place for another 6 MONTHS leaves any so called "agreement" untenable , if not laughable .

To be clear , a discussion in a corridor that was top heavy with LTDA reps and Wardens was passed off by LTDA senior airport representative Sam Houston as a democratic agreement that wardens should carry on enjoying 1 hour per ride and free TFP entry for another 6 MONTHS!!

DIVIDED WE FALL

let's not allow perpetrators to present themselves as victims while at the same time dipping their hands into the pockets of every driver at Heathrow . This is the language of division, let's not allow those that are supposed to be promoting the trade at Heathrow and reducing wait

times, to profit from managing the queues they themselves have engineered through inaction in promoting the trade . Our time is better spent focusing on uniting the trade .

After the notorious YouTube "very very good" incentives" interview , It was decided that we had to do something about the incredibly unfair and duplicitous Warden scheme at Heathrow, A scheme that is dividing the whole trade.

There is infighting amongst the trade organisations at every turn, there are those individuals who will have their fingers in your wallet whilst telling you they're helping you , there are ignorant bullies and belligerent oiks trying to block any changes and amendments every step of the way in an attempt to stave off long waits in the feeder park .

Recently a video surfaced of two LTDA Heathrow reps/Wardens singing a "cover version" of the well known madness song "My Girls made at me" retitled "Drivers Mad at me" This video was discussed with the usual suspects during an online "interview" it was claimed it was just a harmless skit that was knocked up whilst the creators of it were bored during Covid ...

There is a problem with this excuse ...

First of all why would you be singing about drivers queueing during Covid when you yourself were not even working at the feeder park at the time ? Even worse, why would you be mocking drivers who were enduring TFP wait times of up to 38 HOURS!!

There are good people working for the various trade Organisations and it's time for them to stand up and stamp out these unfair and divisive incentives and ridiculous rewards.

Reigning in the excessive incentives of wardens is a much wider reaching solution to so many other problems . If we get our own house in order by rooting out the "wrong-uns" then maybe we can go one step further and bring the trade together, this may lead to further improvements to our working lives , desks in terminals , a United front and more "bums on seats" for all...

Trade representatives should not be stepping over their own members under the guise of "helping" to manage queues.

This 1 HOUR PER RIDE scam is indefensible.

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Three world heavyweight title fights, fortunes earned, critics silenced, 96,000 at Wembley, one of the most dramatic rounds and one of the great champions left standing proudly at the end.

It was a good year for the heavyweights in 2024.

At the very top, Oleksandr Usyk looks untouchable now, holding three of the four recognised belts; Daniel Dubois shocked the boxing world when he dropped and stopped Anthony Joshua in September at Wembley Stadium to keep the fourth version. It was another sold-out stadium fight for the heavyweight world championship between two British boxers.

Usyk and Fury fought each other to a physical and emotional standstill over 24 rounds of exceptional craft in Riyadh, separated by seven months and a dozen heavyweight brawls. The debate about Usyk's position in the heavyweight pantheon is raging, distracting in some ways from his formidable year. Meanwhile, Fury still believes he won both fights.

the chasing pack is arguably led by Joseph Parker, who beat Zhilei Zhang in Riyadh. Joshua had knocked out Francis Ngannou in March before the Dubois loss. Agit Kabayel stopped the Cuban enigma Frank Sanchez in the seventh round; Sanchez had been unbeaten in 24 fights. Kabayel is too often ignored in these conversations and that is an error. Zhang knocked out Deontay Wilder in June, and he and Kabayel fight for the WBC interim title in March, after Parker fights Dubois in Fabio Wardley drew with and then stopped Frazer Clarke in two British title fights; Wardley is now unbeaten in 19 and can no longer be ignored. In a very competitive fight on paper, David Adeleye, stopped by Wardley in 2023, knocked out the previously unbeaten Solomon Dacres in the first round. Johnny Fisher remains unbeaten after 10 torrid rounds with Dave Allen in December, and former cruiserweight world champion Lawrence Okolie gained 60lb to join the heavies the same month.

There is also a double Olympic champion called Bakhodir Jalolov, who is unbeaten as a professional, a teenager called Moses Itauma – who terrorised the division with four quick wins before turning 20 on 28

2025 COULD BE A VINTAGE YEAR



December – and a man from Congo, who is based in Scotland, called Martin Bakole. Nobody wants to fight Big Martin.

In the summer, Bakole ruined the top American, Jared Anderson, in five brutal rounds. Anderson was unbeaten in 17, but Bakole walked through him, exposing the pitfalls of modern matchmaking and the ancient emphasis on the protection of prospects. It was yet another risky, risky fight.

Jalolov won his second Olympic gold in the summer in

but took a break from the professional ring. "I will win a world heavyweight title," he vowed after victory in Paris. The southpaw towers at 6ft 7in but only managed two quick wins in his 2024 fights. As a professional, thanks to matchmaking magic, he has knocked out every one of his 14 victims. It could be argued that the real depth was in the gang of dreamers raking up wins, returning with a vengeance from defeats, staying ready for a last-minute and life-changing call – and

heavyweights. All the heavyweights, it seems. Andy Ruiz Jr was back in a fierce draw with Jarrell Miller in the summer, and just before Christmas, Dillian Whyte returned in Gibraltar with an easy win. The never-ending story of Derek Chisora continued, and he fought for the 48th time to beat Joe Joyce. His 49th is scheduled for February. Hughie Fury, cousin of Tyson, fought and won three times in the year. Hughie is an annoyance, having only lost on points to

Dychko won bronze. Another Olympic medal winner, Tony Yoka (this time gold from Rio in 2016), emerged from an exile with two quick stoppage wins. In theory, the best American is Michael Hunter, but he fought three easy opponents in 2024 and has not even been close to the carnival. Hunter's last opponent had 10 wins and 10 draws; he has lost just once in 27 fights and is being matched like a fighter from the 1990s. Those days are over – well, they are finished in the present climate. It seems the money is in the risk. here was a bit of comedy when Kubrat Pulev and Mahmoud Charr, with a combined age of 83, ignored the thriving and competitive scene to fight for the WBA's regular title; Pulev won a good fight. To highlight the lunacy of the WBA's pathetic insistence on "regular" title fights, it is worth considering that Pulev lost a real-world title fight in 2014 and Charr lost his chance in 2012. There are still rogue elements carrying on as if it were three decades ago. Richard Torrez Jr had four quick wins in the year to end unbeaten in 12 fights; the Californian southpaw might be the best prospect still under the radar. Torrez Jr v Itauma is my heavyweight fantasy fight, the type of ridiculous bout that could get made as part of a Saudi bill.

For the first time in decades, there seem to be 25 or more heavyweight attractions. It was a great year, and 2025 could be even better.



Paris, placing his vest on the canvas at the end of his fight, a sign of future intentions, and leaving the ring in tears. He is known as the Big Uzbek and had 12 amateur fights in 2024

some simply refusing to call it a day. They all seem to have shown signs in 2024 that they are prepared to take risks; it was a year of action and not empty words from the

three top men including Parker, and he remains a risk for many. The Kazakh Ivan Dychko stopped one man in 2024 to make it 13 quick KOs in 14 wins. At the London Olympics,

COPPOLA THE GENIUS AND GENT



One of my various jobs in the past twenty odd years, was working as the PR/Social Media manager for Bar Italia on Frith Street, in London's Soho.

As dream jobs go, this one was up there. Great heritage, history and of course, loads of interesting people to make the acquaintance of during the working week. The place was simply full of stories, like the time film director Francis Ford Coppola was in town working on a project. Whilst staying near Soho, he would arrive very early each day for a belt of the secret blend of coffee they serve there, to get his motor running. The owner and staff got very friendly with him and when he was due to leave to go back to the States, he promised them when he was next in London, he would drop in a bottle of vino from his own Francis Ford Coppola Winery. And this he duly did a few months later. 'A gent' was the common consensus on the man.

Of course, he is synonymous with cinematic excellence, as a film director, producer, and screenwriter. With an illustrious career spanning over five decades, Coppola has left an indelible mark on the industry. From epic dramas to thought-provoking character studies, his films have captivated audiences with their rich narratives, striking visuals, and profound themes. In this particular Speakeasy, I'll delve into the life and works of the man exploring his creative genius and the enduring legacy he has built.

He was born on April 7, 1939, in Detroit, Michigan and grew up in a creative family, where he was exposed to storytelling from an early age. His mother's name was Italia, and his father was Carmine. Dad played the flute in the Detroit symphony orchestra, among others. The family, including his sister, the actress Talia Shire, and brother August, settled in New York City, in Queens and Long Island. Bed-ridden from catching Polio aged nine, Francis began experimenting with puppet theatre, before moving onto 8mm films. He later earned a B.A. in drama in 1960, from

Hofstra University, where he had studied from 1955, before later working towards a master's at UCLA, where he studied filmmaking. His early projects included a stint working as an assistant to Roger Corman in the independent sector, from which he directed his first film in 1963, called, after a nine-day shoot, *Dementia 13*.

That year he married Eleanor Jessie Neil and they went on to have three children. Gian Carlo, Roman and Sofia. The actor Nicolas Cage is Coppola's nephew, the son of August. His next film *You're a Big Boy Now* came in 1966. This put him on the radar of Warner Brothers and resulted in him

very vividly this long, kind of being raked over the coals for this opening scene.'

The situation was rectified by the actor George C. Scott who played Patton in the film. He said he'd only make the film if they used Coppola's script.

'Scott is the one who resurrected my version.'

Due to the success of *Patton*, he found himself at the forefront of a group of fellow directors, who were dubbed 'New Hollywood,' and featured among them, Steven Spielberg, Brian de Palma, Woody Allen, Martin Scorsese, Robert Altman and George Lucas.

Coppola's major breakthrough



directing *Finians Rainbow* in 1968, which starred Petula Clark and Fred Astaire. Next came *The Rain People* in 1969. With neither setting the film world alight, Warner's severed their ties. However, it was not all bad news, as Coppola picked up an Oscar for his work on the screenplay for the film *Patton* in 1970.

'I wrote the script of *Patton*. And the script was very controversial when I wrote it, because they thought it was so stylised. It was supposed to be like, sort of, you know, *The Longest Day* and my script of *Patton* was—I was sort of interested in the reincarnation. And I had this very bizarre opening where he stands up in front of an American flag and gives this speech. Ultimately, I wasn't fired, but I was fired, meaning that when the script was done, they said, "Okay, thank you very much," and they went and hired another writer, and that script was forgotten. And I remember

came in 1972 when he directed *The Godfather*, a three-hour adaptation of the novel of the same name by Mario Puzo. At first reluctant to take the job on, he was finally persuaded by friends and family, to say yes to the project. This cinematic masterpiece which examined the Corleone family, rightly earned him critical acclaim, and earned Marlon Brando, as Vito, the head of the family, an Oscar, whilst Puzo and Coppola also won for best adapted screenplay.

'*The Godfather* was a very unappreciated movie when we were making it. They were very unhappy with it. They didn't like the cast. They didn't like the way I was shooting it. I was always on the verge of getting fired. So, it was an extremely nightmarish experience. I had two little kids, and the third one was born during that. We lived in a little apartment, and I was basically frightened that they didn't like it. They had as much as said that, so when it was all over, I wasn't

at all confident that it was going to be successful, and that I'd ever get another job.'

There was an immediate clamour for a sequel and that arrived in 1974 with *The Godfather: Part II*, which many consider a better film than *Part I*. Certainly the Academy agreed, as Coppola picked up the Oscar for best director and Robert De Niro, as young Vito, won for Best Supporting Actor. The directors father Carmine also won an Oscar for the films score.

One of the defining aspects of Coppola's filmmaking is his unwavering commitment to his artistic vision. He is known for his meticulous attention to detail, his ability to create immersive worlds, and his dedication to telling stories that resonate with audiences on a profound level. His films often explore themes of power, morality, family, and the human condition, delving deep into the complexities of the human psyche.

An example of that, was his next project, *Apocalypse Now* from 1979. This was his exploration of the Vietnam War, using Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* transplanted to Cambodia as inspiration. Shot on location in the Philippines, the production was beset with immense challenges, including typhoons and earthquakes and the star of the film, Martin Sheen suffering a near fatal heart attack. Added to that, the considerable delays – with the film nicknamed *Apocalypse When?* as they over ran the budget by \$20 Million dollars, with a vast portion of that having to be covered by Coppola personally. The film when complete and despite all its problems, did well at the box office and today, is considered a partially flawed masterpiece.

'We were in the jungle, there were too many of us, we had access to too much money, too much equipment and little by little, we went insane.'

In 1980, Coppola set up Zoetrope Studios, as a way to compete with his major studio competitors, but the expensive failure of its first film *One from the Heart* quickly brought that enterprise to a halt, though he continued his production activities from home in San Francisco.

Some of his other notable work, includes *American Graffiti* in 1973 – in the role of producer – *The Conversation* starring Gene Hackman and *The Great Gatsby* – screenplay – both from 1974, *Rumblefish* and *The*

Outsiders in 1983, both of which introduced the cinema audience to the likes of Matt Dillon, Mickey Rourke, Rob Lowe, Tom Cruise, Patrick Swayze and Diane Lane among others.

Then there is *The Cotton Club* starring our very own Bob Hoskins alongside Richard Gere in 1984. 1986 saw *Peggy Sue Got Married* and 1988 gave us *Tucker: The Man and his Dream*. Two years later in 1990, *The Godfather: Part III*, finally saw the light of day. Overall, it was considered somewhat of a disappointment, when compared with the previous two films in the series, though it did very well at the box office, tripling its approximate \$50 Million budget. This was followed by *Bram Stoker's Dracula* in 1992, starring Gary Oldman, Antony Hopkins, Winona Ryder and Keanu Reeves. This again did remarkably well at the box office, becoming the ninth highest grossing film worldwide that year.

Francis was involved in numerous legal battles with film studios in the years that followed, saying this in 2015 'That's why I ended my career: I decided I didn't want to make what you could call 'factory movies' anymore. I would rather just experiment with the form, and see what I could do, and [make things] that came out of my own experiences. And little by little, the commercial film industry went into the superhero business, and everything was on such a scale. The budgets were so big, because they wanted to make the big series of films where they could make two or three parts. I felt I was no longer interested enough to put in the extraordinary effort a film takes [nowadays]'. However, in April 2019, he announced plans to direct *Megalopolis*.

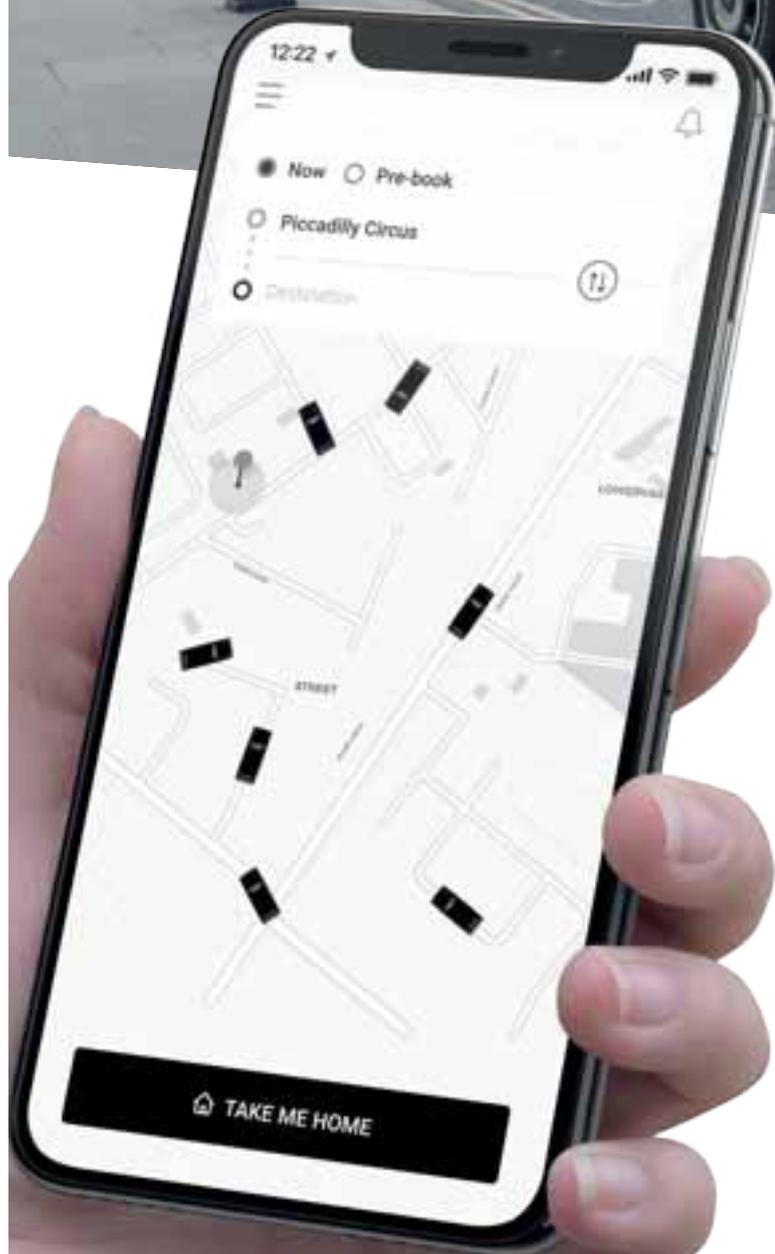
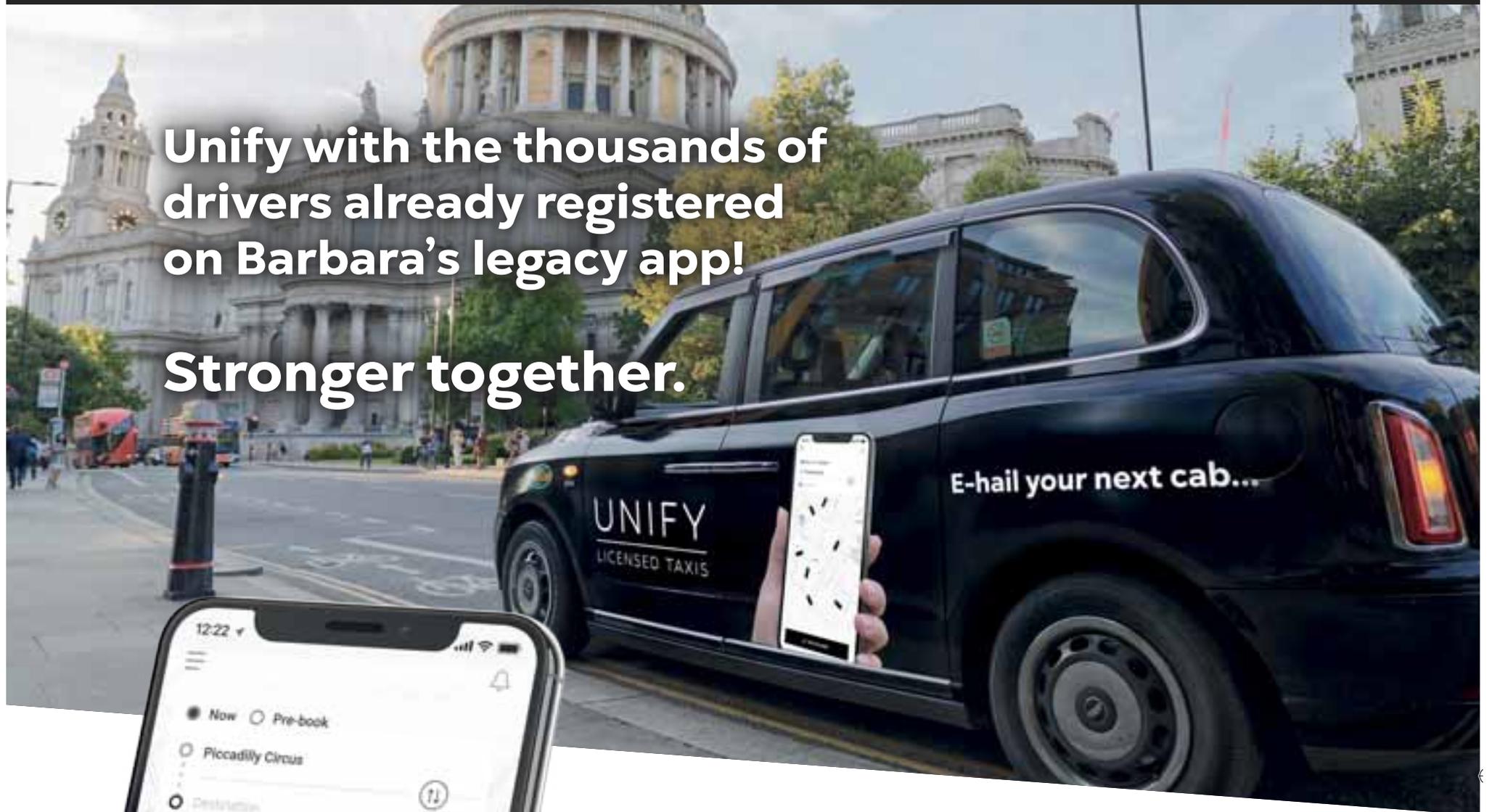
His overall influence on cinema, of course, cannot be overstated. His films have inspired generations of filmmakers and continue to be studied and celebrated for their artistic brilliance. He has also played a significant role in championing independent cinema, nurturing new talent, and creating opportunities for emerging filmmakers to bring their stories to the screen.

A body of work and legacy, to be proud of, I think you'll agree.

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