

## TAXI BOARD NEWS

### IS THIS THE FUTURE FOR LONDON ASKS THE LONDON TAXI BOARD

The New Northern Ireland Assembly is examining a Taxi Bill that aims to establish a one-tier licensing system across the region. The Bill will merge Hackney Carriages with Private Hire Vehicles potentially destroying the livelihoods of 450 Hackney Carriage drivers by allowing 2,000 Private Hire cars to pick up on the street in Belfast.

### HAILING ON THE STREET

Taxis traditionally in the UK can be hailed on the streets and at a rank, whilst Private Hire Vehicles must be pre-booked and cannot tout for business or use taxi ranks. Two weeks ago the Belfast City cab trade were allowed by the authorities to protest outside Stormont. A group of over 200 drivers turned out to protest against the proposed Taxi Bill.

The Minister of the Environment, Arlene Foster, realising this was an important issue, agreed to talk to the T&G representatives who organised the protest and has now agreed that they should be allowed to give evidence to the Environment Committee, who is looking at the details of the Bill. Northern Ireland is the only taxi licensing area that until recently was run by the UK Government. The re-establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont has meant that the new Assembly now governs this licensing district. Prior to the re-establishment of The Assembly, policy officials at the Department of Environment (DoE) decided that it would cease to differentiate between Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles, effectively combining the two very different services.

### THREAT TO HACKNEY CARRIAGE TRADE

Should the Bill be implemented, not only are individual Hackney Carriage drivers having their livelihoods threatened by Private Hire operators taking their work away, but they are also going to be required to be a 'taxi operator'. This would mean every fare will have to be recorded by every driver and a record kept of the name of the passenger and pick up and drop off point. Fines for not doing this will run to thousands of pounds if this requirement is not adhered to!

If the UK's mainland taxi industry thinks this is an 'across the water' issue and why should they worry about it, well, perhaps they should think again?

UK licensing regulators have indicated they have wanted to simplify licensing conditions and to them a one-tier system would in theory make sense! There has already been talk in Scotland about the simplicity of having a one-tier system and should the controversial Northern Ireland legislation be approved, it would not be too difficult for Scotland to follow suit. This could then happen in England and Wales and in particular in London, which is renowned for having the finest taxi system in the world.

### CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY TAXI BOARD

The London Taxi Board is extremely concerned by these developments. It is currently actively involved in assisting the licensed taxi trade in Northern Ireland in ensuring that this misguided element, of what is otherwise a not unreasonable review of taxi legislation, never reaches the statute book.

## CHARITY GOLF DAY *by Derek Leone*

On 2nd July The Woolston Hall Manor Golf Club, Abridge Road was the venue for a charity golf match in aid of The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled.

Drivers began arriving at 8.30am and register their names with John Rowland before taking advantage of the coffee and bacon baguettes which were in endless supply. 68 players organised into teams of four began to play. Halfway round the course, the hospitality tent gave players water and cold drinks, courtesy of Westminster Insurance.

At 6.30pm, the last of the teams completed the course. The three course dinner was enjoyed by all and after checking the score cards John Rowland and Barry Rowan announced the winner., Micky English. He was presented with the Dame Vera Lynn Charity Shield and a new set of golf clubs. In second place was Jeff Rowe with 33 points and in third was John Flynn

with 32. Rob Richards won the booby prize for the least number of points. Congratulations and thanks go to all the players who took part.

During the evening, Terry Ward, known as "Barking Bill" organised a raffle. There were a large number of prizes. Together with Micky Long, Barking Bill had been working hard all day on the course, putting out sponsors' advertising. An auction was also held for a day's golf at Royal Blackheath Golf Course, four Michelin Taxi tyres, a Golfing Cap signed by a large number of professional golfers, a complete taxi overhaul, including labour, valet and presentation to the testing centre.

The Chairman and Committee would like to extend their heartfelt thanks to John Rowland for all his hard work and help in organising the golf match this year. These thanks also go to the sponsors.

