

LOOPHOLE IN PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING CLOSED

For many months concerns have been raised about what amounted to a legal loophole in private hire vehicle licensing. Certain vehicles were outside of the licensing regulations as they were being used for contract work, such as school runs and hospital work.

Under The Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 a private hire vehicle (PHV) is defined as a “vehicle constructed or adapted to seat fewer than nine passengers which is made available with a driver to the public for hire for the purpose of carrying passengers”. Section 54 of the Road Safety Act 2006 has now removed the term “to the public” from the 1998 Act. The effect of this amendment will be to make it irrelevant whether a vehicle is provided solely for contract work or to the public at large. Any vehicle that seats fewer than nine passengers and is made available with a driver for hire for the purpose of carrying passengers now falls within the meaning of the 1998 Act and those that have previously claimed exemption will be required to be licensed. The only exemptions will be those specifically stated in the 1998 Act i.e. licensed taxis, public service vehicles and vehicles used solely for weddings and funerals.

It is not just in London that this loophole has been used; now a similar change is being made outside London under Section 53 of the Road Safety Act 2006. The Department for Transport has confirmed that it will ask for the new provision

to be enacted on 1 April 2008. In PCO Notice 36/07, Mary Dowdye, Head of Standards & Regulations at the PCO says: “The PCO would therefore urge all parties to ensure that PHVs covered by this change, and the drivers and operators of those vehicles, are brought within the licensing regime without delay. Given the processing times for driver and operator licence applications, the PCO would advise individuals who need to apply for such licences to submit their applications by the following deadlines: PHV operator licence applications: 7 November 2007 and PHV driver licence applications: 30 November 2007. Applications received after the deadline dates may not be processed in time for a licence to be issued. Those trading after the commencement date without the relevant licence would be doing so illegally and would be liable to prosecution.”

CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION SEEKS THREE HONEST WOMEN

A wedding can be a costly affair with the average couple spending around £11,000 on their big day. Back in the 19th century, Pasquale Favale, an Italian, married his Londoner wife Eliza Bryan. He bequeathed 18,000 Lira to the City of London Corporation, stipulating that each year a portion of the money was to be given to “three poor, honest, young woman, natives of the City of London, aged 16 to 25 who had recently been or were about to be married.” Clearly a true romantic, Favale’s will stated that he was “induced to make the bequest by the fact that his wife was a native of London and that he had passed many happy years of his life in the City” with his beloved wife Eliza.

With London being one of the most expensive cities to live in, the City of London Corporation’s biggest challenge since then has been finding women who live in the City, can prove that they are City-born and, of course ‘honest’! Each modern-day dowry recipient receives on average £100. 2007 marks the

125th anniversary of the bequest which was made in 1882 and to mark the occasion the City of London Corporation recently carried out a search for recipients who received the dowry in the past and invited them to a special celebration in the City. One of the past Pasquale Favale brides present at the event on 10th October was 72 year old Barbara Jelley who received the dowry at the time of her marriage in 1958. Although her husband sadly passed away last year, Mrs Jelley was happily married for over 40 years.

She says: “Marriage is a wonderful institution but it takes work to keep the spark alive. It seems quite appropriate that one of the criteria from Pasquale Favale was honesty as I think honesty is one of the most important things for making sure marriage is successful and happy.”

The past recipients of Pasquale Favale’s bequest joined the Italian Ambassador and Committee Chairman John Brewster OBE at Guildhall on 10th October for afternoon tea and the presentation of dowries to this year’s lucky brides.



EALING COUNCIL TAKES ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL MINICABS

£3000 has been invested by Ealing Council in a new taxi-marshalling scheme to stop weekend revellers using illegal mini cabs. The Community Safety Team and Safer Neighbourhood Teams are working together to encourage partygoers to use licensed mini-cab companies at the end of the night.

Temporary railings are set up in the evenings to stop pedestrians spilling over into the road. These railings also direct people towards the Morrisons car park. With the support of Morrisons supermarket, 20 Police Community Support Officers marshal the car park, keep watch over pub goers and ensure there is no trouble in the queue. Councillor Sue Emmet, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, said: “Dangerous situations have arisen with people accepting lifts from bogus mini cabs. There have been incidents where men and women have been assaulted by illegal minicab drivers. People should be

able to enjoy a safe night out in the borough without the fear of becoming a victim of crime. This scheme will help make that possible by offering anyone in the area a safe way to get home.”

The scheme is currently being piloted until the end of November; if successful, it will be extended further. It is estimated that around 1,000 people use bogus taxis every weekend in Acton. There is an on going investigation into the rape of a woman by an unlicensed minicab driver in Perivale during July this year.

Councillor Sue Emmet is in charge of safer communities in the borough. She said: “Dangerous situations have arisen with people accepting lifts from bogus mini cabs and there have been incidents where men and women have been assaulted. People should be able to enjoy a safe night out in the borough without the fear of becoming a victim of crime.”