

TAXI OPEN DAY AT HEATHROW

According to statistics from the CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) during 2006 27.5% of passengers taking flights from Heathrow Airport arrived by taxi or minicab. As the figures available put the two modes of transport are put together, it is a little difficult to get an exact figure of the number of passengers using black cabs, but it is thought that in the region of 10% of all passengers either arrive or depart by taxi. So it is of great interest to see how the taxi trade can make the most of the opportunities to earn money at the airport.



to undertake a Level 2 NVQ in Customer Service to help them deliver a good passenger experience. This qualification will help drivers go the extra mile in customer service, giving a good impression of both the cab trade and the driver personally. With competition from the private hire trade hot on the heels of the taxi trade, anything which helps improve customer service has to be positive. Some of the courses are free of charge and there was an opportunity for drivers to learn more about the NVQ from staff at the exhibition on the day.

TERMINAL 5 OPENS MARCH 2008

The Heathrow Academy Atrium was the venue for Halt, Unite, the LTDA and BAA to hold an exhibition which answers some of the questions drivers wanted answers to. A shuttle service from the feeder park to the Academy was supplied on the day by Mann and Overton, giving drivers the opportunity to drive a new TX4 for themselves. Information about Terminal 5 was on display. This state of the art new Terminal will be open in a matter of weeks now and thanks to the hard work of those representing the taxi trade's interests, a new rank has been secured over at the new terminal. This will hold 12 cabs with a buffer rank having a further 18 cabs available. Drivers will also get the opportunity to service the new Sofitel Hotel and conference centre which is situated within T5 from the buffer rank. This is quite an achievement as competition to supply private hire services at the terminal has been fierce and it now remains for the cab trade to supply a good service to passengers to ensure a long term future for the trade at the terminal and indeed at the airport as a whole. The new Fare's Fair trial began just before Christmas at the existing terminals with large posters going up for passengers to see. This scheme will offer set rates to different zones. From a passenger's point of view they often want to compare the cost of various modes of transport for their onward journey and this will allow them to see what they will pay before taking a cab. In the future this could mean a new stream of work being available to drivers as passengers traveling to the west of the airport could be encouraged to use the taxi services. Areas such as Reading and Basingstoke have a high proportion of blue chip companies with corporate clients flying in and out of the airport on a regular basis.

MEETING THE STANDARDS

A Code of Conduct has been agreed in conjunction with HALT, the LTDA and Unite (formerly the T&G Union). This Code outlines the standards of conduct and behaviour expected of drivers at Heathrow, including the feeder park and canteen. It also provides guidance on procedures to be followed if a driver is alleged to have failed to meet the required standards. This Code is alongside of any requirements set out by the PCO. Representatives from the PCO were also on hand at the Academy to answer questions from drivers. It has been said many times that not all members of the world renowned London taxi trade dress appropriately and this is particularly important when securing corporate clients. The taxi itself is an iconic shape and for many passengers arriving at Heathrow it is their first choice of transport. They expect the driver to know where he is going and it is good to have a well presented driver who prides himself in his role as a licensed taxi driver.

As passengers today expect more and more from the service industries in the UK, any driver working at the airport is being offered the opportunity

Passenger numbers using taxis at Heathrow are changing as more people use regional airports and so have the number of drivers using the Feeder Park. This has resulted in a reduction of revenue for HALT and it must be questioned how long this reduction can be sustained for. There are those drivers who feel entry to the feeder park should not be charged for but there is a return for the fee paid not least of all in terms of an organisation standing up for the taxi trade in meetings with BAA.

CHALLENGING TIMES AHEAD

From this exhibition many questions were answered about the Fare's Fare, Meteor, the Code of Conduct, Taxi Expert and the Code of Conduct. As the economic climate changes in the coming months, there will be challenging times ahead for the cab trade at Heathrow. Those drivers not working out at the airport might think it is of little relevance to them but if the day comes when private hire win their battle to supply the taxi service at the airport, all those drivers currently working at the fliers will be looking for work back in town, so it is of relevance to everyone.

PARAMOUNT CREATES A BUZZ ON TAXIS!

To promote the launch of the animated picture Bee Movie, Paramount is having fun with Megasides, developed by taxi advertising specialist Ubiquitous. The special Bee Movie cabs delivered celebrity guests to the movie premiere in December to The Empire Cinema, Leicester Square. Stephen Hunt, Head of Media at Paramount said; "Bee Movie has translated brilliantly onto taxis and complements our London promotional activity."

Andrew Barnett, MD of Ubiquitous said; "Bee Movie is about a bee named Barry who just wants to stand out from the crowd, Paramount has achieved the stand out factor by using our new Megaside format on the side of our taxis."

