

TAXI
GLOBE



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City Hall

MAYORAL ELECTION INTERVIEWS

by Sandie Goodwin and Bob Fisher

CAR JAMS REPLACED BY BUS JAMS SAYS BRIAN PADDICK

As editors of Taxi Globe and TaxiCab News we met with Brian Paddick last week to discuss his policies as he continues his campaign to be Mayor of London. Brian Paddick had met drivers at Dial-a-Cab the week before and he told them that he would give the taxi trade a place on the TfL Board if he becomes Mayor. He says: "A representative of the taxi trade on the TfL Board is an essential input." This is an important milestone for the taxi trade and Boris Johnson had promised it as well when he published the manifesto for the taxi trade. Brian said that in his opinion the PCO were better when it was under the management of the Met police. He says: "The PCO has gone to pot under Mr Livingstone. I am not having it! The PCO should listen to taxi drivers and keep them informed. Currently the PCO make decisions without considering that they are dealing with human beings." We asked Brian what he thought about the pedicabs now blighting the city. He said "I don't want to see pedicabs or tuk tuks on the streets." This will be good news for cab drivers who are increasingly finding the pedicabs a constant nuisance especially in the West End and Covent Garden area.



Other issues we wanted to ask Brian about had stemmed from his 10 point plan to help London's taxi drivers. He agreed that more, bigger ranks would be a good idea and that in the case of road works common sense and proper control should be exercised. He agreed that the congestion on the streets has become worse since the extension of the Congestion Charge Zone. He does not think that through routes in London should be subjected to a 20mph speed limit. "This is more appropriate in residential areas, but definitely not on major routes through London," he said. "Bus lanes have helped the traffic flow but more consistency is needed. These should have uniform hours of

operation. Traffic management needs improving. Car jams have been replaced by bus jams as the Mayor looked at the problems and just threw more buses at it. People need a reliable service not just more and more buses. I would like to see the bus lanes have the same hours across the city." On the subject of PCNs, Brian said that he thinks the rules are being enforced to the point of causing problems to taxi drivers trying to earn their living and would want to see more flexibility in the system. "If a taxi driver is not causing an obstruction or parked dangerously while a passenger uses an ATM, he should not get a ticket. The idea of a driver having to park some distance from the ATM could pose a threat to the safety of the passenger, especially at night," he told us. As Brian has inside and in depth knowledge of policing, he feels more could be done to help the taxi trade in the fight against illegal touts. "I would want to see more high visibility operations in places where the touting is most prevalent," he said. "This would be a deterrent as well as catching the touts." This led us to ask Brian his opinion on the possibility of signage on private hire vehicles. We asked him if he would consider the idea of signage such as that used in other areas of the country which says Private Hire Vehicle No Pre Booking = No Insurance. This is successful in other areas and could help in the fight against the touts. Brian said he likes the idea. He also told us that the Mayor is now spending more on advertising than Microsoft UK does each year. Brian thinks that some of this money would be better channelled into educating the public rather than advertising campaigns. Brian thinks that the idea of directional ranks is a good one. He would like to look at the possibility of more as he sees them as a win-win situation for the travelling public and the taxi drivers. The Liberal Democrat Mayoral Candidate has launched a Facebook campaign to encourage people to sign up and vote in the London Mayoral elections, which take place on 1 May 2008. He said: "When I was the Borough Commander for Lambeth, I used the internet to engage with people who would never otherwise interact with the police. Facebook provides a great platform to reach out to a new generation of voters and to encourage them to participate in the election in May."

"WHY DOES LIVINGSTONE HATE THE CAB TRADE?"

This was the question Boris Johnson asked when we went to interview him recently. He was talking about his proposals to help the cab trade if he is elected Mayor in the forthcoming elections. He told us that he felt the current Mayor had done little to help London's taxi trade and that this was a fundamental mistake as the world famous London taxi and its knowledgeable driver is part of the life blood of the city. "I do not believe in trying to wreck the taxi trade in the way that Mayor Livingstone has been doing over the last eight years," he said. "Why does he hate the cab trade?"



As previously reported, Boris Johnson has promised that should he be elected, he will definitely scrap the mid year inspection. He feels that this inspection is unnecessary and puts an extra financial burden on taxi owners. He said: "The costs of being a taxi driver should not include the mid year inspection. It is not necessary. Drivers work hard for the right to be a licensed hackney carriage driver and policies such as the Mayor's Emission Strategy place an unnecessary burden on the taxi owners." Mr Johnson went on to discuss other issues which are important to working cab drivers; we asked him what he would do to improve the situation surrounding the provision of public toilets that taxi drivers can use without the fear of getting a ticket for parking, what he thought about the way the Public Carriage Office is organised and if he could see an alternative way and we also asked him about illegal touting and how he would like to see this policed.

Mr Johnson was open and receptive to all our questions and obviously he would not be in a position to be able to wave a magic wand and put everything right overnight should he be elected as Mayor. He wants to improve the policing situation regarding touting and would also look at the PCO. He says that pedicabs are

"a medieval menace which poses a risk to passengers." Again he assured us that he would put the pedicab situation under scrutiny should he become Mayor. "I want to preserve the distinctive black cab and the taxi trade in London," he commented. It is also important to make the Mayor's office more transparent and accountable in their dealings. Mr Johnson has promised a seat on the TfL Board to a member of the taxi trade.

He said: "I want to effect changes to make advisors more accountable to Londoners. A separate section on Mayoral advisors should be on the public website, with a full list of who they are and their job descriptions. This will be similar to the section on the TfL website, where Londoners can find out who sits on the TfL Board and what their background is. The Mayor appoints TfL board members, just as he does advisors at City Hall. The webpage should contain their direct contact details, so Londoners can engage in correspondence with them on what they are doing for them."

The campaign office for Boris Johnson is based at County Hall. Mr Johnson has already been to meet cab drivers at the Royal Oak and his team are out on the ranks handing out receipt pads with the Back Boris campaign on them. Mr Johnson concluded: "Once a physical trading port, today London is the home of banking, discounting, insurance, foreign exchange, money management and market-making. The City is London's biggest industry. London contributes the best part of £90 billion to the UK Exchequer."

"London will always need to sell itself to the rest of the world – as a tourist destination, as an attractive place to do business, as a home for the brightest and best talents. I want to be that champion. The current Mayor is a relic from another age, hostile to markets, and a Balkaniser who likes to set people against one another."



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