

LONDON CABS VOTED THE BEST IN THE WORLD



Taxi drivers will be delighted, although not surprised, to learn that research by Hotels.com has found London's cabbies make the best first impression as taxis rank as top transport from airport to hotel.

In a poll of international travellers, almost half (44%) of the 3,300 travellers from France, Germany, Spain and the UK surveyed said that London's black cabs were the best. The city's taxis fended off competition from New York (favourite amongst 15% of travellers) and Madrid (which secured 11% of the vote). The online hotels site found that Paris and Barcelona completed the top five. London's taxi drivers should be proud to see that they won by such a large percentage.

UK visitors' opinions of London taxis are doubly important, the research found, because cabs are the most-used method of travel from airport to hotel. Almost two thirds (64%) of travellers said that they take a cab over public transport when arriving in a city. London's cabs are one of the first experiences that many travellers will have of the UK: it seems that they are making a good first impression. It is

interesting to note this research shows that taxis are the most used method as the new terminal at Heathrow is about to open complete with a new rank.

David Roche, Senior Vice President of Hotels.com, comments, "It has been known for taxis across the world to get a hard time, but our comprehensive poll has shown that taxis are convincingly the most popular transport method when it comes to transferring from the airport to hotel. With such a large number of people taking a taxi from the airport, the taxi experience often forms a traveller's first impression of a destination. Where the taxi drivers are less service orientated, it could have a negative effect on the traveller's willingness to return."

Other countries were not as lucky as London and those found languishing in the bottom five spots after gathering the least amount of support were Rio de Janeiro (0.57%), Moscow (0.49%), Cape Town (0.49%), Shanghai (0.47%) and Santiago de Chile (0.24%).

T&G/UNITE TO RESTART CENTRAL LONDON BRANCH MEETINGS

by Eddie Lambert

The Central London 1/230 Cab Trade Section is due to restart following the suspension of branch meetings from November 2006. It is expected that the first meeting will be Tuesday 4th March 2008, but members are asked to read the "Newsletter" that will accompany the February/March copy of Cab Trade News due out in the last week of February.

The restart comes after the conclusion of a meeting of the Emergencies and General Practises Committee on the 17th December 2007 which heard charges against 4 active members who have been campaigning against the way the branch has been run. These members had already had to resort to taking a complaint to the Certification Office (a government agency set up to over see the Unions) regarding access to Branch Accounts. Something that they were fully entitled to see under union rules.

During the period that the branch was suspended the activists also alleged that there was evidence of misuse and fraudulent electoral practises. On the 17th December 2007 the Regional Secretary Mr Steve Hart issued a letter to all members of the Region 1 Passenger Group (which includes the Cab Trade Section) stating that (paraphrasing) due to a significant number of branch ballots showing clear evidence of fraud the results were unsafe and a re-run of the ballot would be conducted by post, utilising the independent Electoral Reform Services.

At the hearing on December 17th the four members were found not proven of sexist harassment of the branch chair due to her failure to open the meeting in November 2006 properly and then suspend "standing orders" to allow the meeting to be held on one issue the proposed merger (at the time) of the T&G and Amicus. The members wanted a separate meeting to be held on this issue and the branch meeting to concentrate on trade issues.

They were also accused of inappropriate language, threatening and intimidating behaviour. The E&GP Committee decided "No Further Action". The committee had accepted that the volatile situation was not helped by the Regional Secretary himself using profane language when addressing the meeting. Although the immediate charges of financial impropriety raised by the four defendants was not going to be taken further by the E&GP committee it is known that investigations are continuing.

The E&GP committee were also concerned that the four members and others had raised concerns over the way the 1/230 Branch was run over several years. They recommended that a full time officer attend future meetings. However this is not the first time that this has been said but following one meeting where this happened, the officer was not seen again.

As stated above members are asked to read carefully any communications from the Union particularly regarding the restart to the meetings and consider attending to help bring back the branch to the trade and its members.

INDIRECT IMPACTS OF BIOFUEL PRODUCTION

Over the past few months, a number of new research papers have come out in which suggest that the indirect impacts of biofuel production have not always been taken into account in earlier carbon saving calculations. Questions have been asked about the long term effect of biofuels and how they are produced.



Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Transport, has invited the UK's newly established Renewable Fuels Agency to lead a study of the wider economic and environmental impacts - particularly the indirect impacts - of different forms of biofuel production. The results of the study will help inform the development of both the UK and EU's policies in this area, and will underpin the consideration of EU biofuel targets after 2010.

Announcing the review, Ruth Kelly said: "Biofuels have the potential to help reduce the impact of transport on the environment, provided they are sustainable. That is why we are introducing the new Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation in April. The RTFO will allow us to gather a wealth of data on the impacts of biofuels, which we will take into account in determining future levels of support for biofuels.

"However, future biofuel targets must also take into account the latest scientific evidence about the environmental effects of biofuel production. There has been much recent debate around the risks associated with overly rapid expansion of biofuel production, with evidence now emerging on the indirect, or "displacement" impacts, of growing demand for agricultural production around the world.

"The UK Government takes this issue very seriously. We are not prepared to go beyond current UK target levels for biofuels until we are satisfied it can be done sustainably. The Review I am announcing today will ensure that the full economic and environmental impacts of biofuel production are taken into account in the formation of UK policy beyond 2010."

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