

TAXI GLOBE TALKS TO THE LTDA'S BOB ODDY

None of us likes to think about what could happen during our working lives that will cost us money. But for taxi drivers the pitfalls of driving on London's streets every day means it is almost inevitable that at some point legal advice and help will be needed. One of the challenges drivers face every day is that of the ever persistent problem of PCNs. So if you do receive a ticket, whether for a parking offence or a yellow box junction, where will you turn for help? If you are already a member of the LTDA the answer is quite simple; one of the outstanding benefits members get is total legal cover. No ifs, no buts, no maybes, whether you are working or not, the LTDA cover will ensure you get the best possible advice. PCNs are a daily problem for taxi drivers, and they are particularly aggravating when all you are trying to do is give the public a service.

Taxi Globe went to talk to Bob Oddy, General Secretary of the LTDA. Bob said that in his opinion the LTDA legal cover is the number one benefit drivers receive from belonging to the LTDA. "Furthermore, our subscriptions have not increased for 9 years and we have no intention of putting them up. For just £4 each week our members benefit from the most comprehensive legal cover, with an in-house taxi specialist solicitor on hand to help." The LTDA membership means that, in most instances, if you have a problem you can just pop into Taxi House, Woodfield Road and get immediate over the counter advice on cab related issues. Alternatively you can telephone for advice and get an immediate response – from a real person not a call centre! One of the main problems with PCNs is the Appeals Process. Bob said that he would like to see a short cut system introduced for PCNs which have been issued in error. He said: "Any PCN issued in error, and there are many of them, should be revoked immediately, the current appeals system takes far too long." Other benefits include tax advice, discounted holidays and leisure activities as well as a sickness and accident scheme.

The LTDA has been a strong opponent of licensing pedicabs and has challenged them in the High Court. Anyone who has read the LTDA information pack and watched the DVD about the dangers pedicabs pose cannot be in any doubt that the ever growing problem this "trade" causes will result in a fatal accident. So far, many accidents have happened but luckily with no serious consequences, but it is just a matter of time. The West End is crippled by the pedicabs on Friday and Saturday evenings but unfortunately the public do not seem to recognise the dangers they expose themselves to, not to mention the high cost of the dangerous rides. The LTDA has maintained a high level high visibility campaign against the pedicabs. If these vehicles do get banned, all taxi drivers will stand to benefit, not just LTDA members. Perhaps this is one of the more hidden benefits that the LTDA brings London's taxi drivers; negotiations and campaigns often bring benefit to the

whole trade not just its own membership. Pick up any mainstream newspaper with an article about London's taxi trade and the reporter will be asking Bob Oddy for a comment on behalf of the LTDA. This can be a double edged sword for the trade when the articles are less favourable but the fact Bob Oddy is asked for a comment means the trade has a chance to comment. It seems that the Mayor Ken Livingstone is not happy with the state of the pedicab trade now; in the beginning he welcomed the pedicabs but his recent statements suggest that he may have changed his mind. The PCO now has leave to go to the High Court to appeal the previous decision in favour of pedicabs. This is in no small measure thanks to the hard work of the LTDA.

Bob Oddy is the General Secretary of the LTDA, a position he has held for 14 years. In general terms his role is similar to that of an MD or a CEO. The LTDA is certainly well run and well organised under his leadership, although Bob says this is because those involved in running the LTDA work together closely as a team. He attends regular meetings with the PCO, TfL and the Mayor discussing a wide variety of taxi related issues. Many of these are reported in the LTDA's in house newspaper TAXI. Like Taxi Globe, TAXI is a fortnightly publication which is available at many places across the capital for taxi drivers to pick up freely. Whether you agree with all the content or not, at least the taxi trade press is able to report freely on the things that matter to working drivers.

Taxi Globe asked Bob if he envisaged a role for satnav systems in the taxi trade. Many private hire drivers are totally reliant on their satnav to find their way around and perhaps it fulfils a useful role in finding destinations outside of a taxi driver's working area. However, it has been proven time and again in head to head tests that a taxi driver will always win against a satnav within his licensing area. Bob said: "In my view satnav is nowhere near efficient or responsive enough to replace the Knowledge and I don't think it ever will be, London taxis consistently win the vote of passengers in a wide variety of surveys, and the respect of the travelling public is in part due to the fact London's taxi drivers can be relied upon to know where they are going."

For more information about joining the LTDA please telephone 0207 286 1046 or email john@ltda.co.uk



LETTER FROM BORIS JOHNSON

Taxi Globe's editor has received this letter from Boris Johnson regarding the Back Boris receipt pads.

You can contact the campaign team by email on boris@backboris.com or by writing to Boris Johnson Campaign, County Hall, Riverside Building, Belvedere Road, SE1 7PB or by telephoning 020 7202 7042.



Dear Editor,

It has come to my attention that many taxi drivers are being hassled over handing out Back Boris receipts to customers.

We need to stamp out this arrogant behaviour and leave you all to get on with your doing your valuable job of getting people around London.

If anyone has been intimidated by members of TfL or any other authority, please do feel free to get in touch with my campaign team.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and hope you and your colleagues will be voting for change on May 1st.

Your sincerely,

Boris Johnson, Conservative Candidate for Mayor of London