

TAXI  
**GLOBE**



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## CONSULTATION ON ABOLITION OF HALF-YEARLY CAB INSPECTIONS

Mayor Boris Johnson has taken his first step towards delivering on his campaign promise to taxi drivers by announcing the start of a consultation period on the abolition of half yearly cab inspections.

The controversial mid-year inspections were introduced in October 2007. This made a £36 increase in the annual licence fee, from £142 to £178, to cover the cost of the additional test. During his campaign to become Mayor, Boris Johnson promised he would abolish the mid year inspection as taxi drivers have found that this arrangement has created an unnecessary administrative burden. The Mayor has now asked Transport for London to consult on a new approach



that would remove unnecessary red tape whilst maintaining the taxi trade's superb safety record. The Mayor is obliged to put the proposals to a consultation, but has sent a clear signal that he intends to deliver the necessary changes swiftly, prioritising the announcement and delivering it within the first two weeks of his administration. A PCO Notice will be issued in due course, detailing how drivers can submit their opinions.

These are some of the proposals which will be included:

- \* Retaining the annual taxi inspection as a condition of licence.
- \* Removing the mid-year taxi inspection as a condition of licence.
- \* Increasing the number of on-street taxi inspections by TfL's vehicle compliance team.
- \* Reducing the annual licence fee to reflect the lower overall taxi licensing cost.
- \* Introducing a fee for any taxi requiring a re-test after failing the annual vehicle inspection or an on-street inspection.

Joining cab drivers at Taxi House, HQ of the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association, the Mayor said: "The black cab is an icon of London, and an essential part of our transport system. It is essential that we support and work with London's cabbies, who are the best in the world, rather than tying them up with red tape. Mid-year taxi inspections



**Boris Johnson meets Bob Oddy**

have proved an unnecessary burden for drivers and owners, and have penalised the majority who maintain their vehicles throughout the year.

"This consultation proposes a fairer system, where the industry benefits from a simpler and cheaper inspection regime. Only those few taxi drivers whose vehicles do not meet required standards will have to pay for follow-up inspections."

Ed Thompson, Transport for London's Director of Taxi and Private Hire, said: "Black cabs are an invaluable part of London's transport network, and over 250,000 people use them every day. London's taxis have a reputation for being the best in the world in terms of quality and safety, and we are determined to see them both deserve and maintain that reputation.

"The proposed changes to the licensing regime will reward taxi drivers and owners who keep their vehicles in good condition throughout the year. Well maintained vehicles are safer and cleaner in terms of emissions, so that could only be good news for all Londoners and visitors to London."

Once the Consultation period ends, a decision will be made. Brian Rice, Chairman of Dial-a-Cab and the London Taxi Board said: "I am delighted the Mayor has instigated a consultation regarding the second inspection as indeed he said he would. However, I am very disappointed with the sting in the tail which could see taxi owners having to pay in the future for any re-test!"

Taxi Globe asked Bob Oddy, General Secretary of the LTDA, to comment on the consultation. Bob said: "What I hope is that the proposal to scrap the mid year inspection is to scrap it – not to replace it with a 6 month MOT. This would not be acceptable to drivers. We do not want one thing replaced with another."

A TfL spokesperson said: "The PCO is currently in discussions with SGS, who deliver annual and mid-year inspections for taxis in London, to assess the impact if mid-year inspections are scrapped following consultation."



## STOP & SEARCH IN THE CITY TARGETS TAXI TOUTS

Bishopsgate Safer City Wards team recently put together a high-visibility operation to address taxi touting. This continues to be raised as a priority by the local community. Operation Pumpkin, run in partnership with the Public Carriage Office, saw officers stop 70 vehicles. They detected 14 private-hire vehicles and three black cabs that weren't in a fit condition to carry passengers; in two cases the defects were so serious that the vehicles were taken off the road. Bailiffs who also took part in the operation seized a vehicle and collected over

£500 in fines as a result of hits on the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system.

"We ran the operation mainly around the Bishopsgate area, and we also checked the licences of the private-hire firms that operate from various clubs in the City," said DC Kirsten Watkins, from the Operations Team at Bishopsgate Safer City Wards. "The operation was a success in deterring illegal taxi touts from preying on people in the City. It's just one of the activities we do to drive out this type of criminality."

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