

DAC CHAIRMAN TALKS TO FT



Brian Rice was recently interviewed by the FT in his role as Chairman of Dial-a-Cab. The FT was asking various people with businesses interests in the City to offer their opinion of the current economic downturn. Brian said: “The taxi industry is considered a good barometer of how the economy is doing in London and the south-east. Dial-a-Cab works with all the big financial institutions - 99.6 per cent of our business comes from the corporate sector. The UK financial centre is trying to claw back its losses from companies such as ours by saying that we need to cut prices.

“I have noticed a distinct downturn since May, and we are now running at something like 20 per cent under what we were for the equivalent period last year. Don’t misunderstand me, we are not on the breadline. Until the end of July, a month before our financial year ended, we were ahead of the previous year, but by the end of August, turnover was down by £500,000.” Brian has been involved with DAC for 34 years and so has seen lows and highs before. He continued: “Recent events have been so traumatic that it got to a point where I was afraid to turn on the news in the morning. But while I am delighted that governments stepped in, there is a part of me which feels that the chips should stay where they fall. You have big banks that mismanaged their portfolios but which are allowed to continue - a luxury which would not be afforded to smaller businesses, including Dial-a-Cab.

Things did get bad, but some prominent people, who really should have known better, made things worse. The incessant talking down of the economy frightened people. I attended a dinner where Richard Lambert, the director-general of the CBI, gave a very downbeat talk on the status of the economy. By the end of it, my only dilemma was whether to cut my throat or jump out of the window. There is always some good news somewhere in the country.” It would appear that bad news sells more papers than good news, but even through the past few weeks there has been good news which has not made it to air or in print. Brian continued: “I don’t think a lot of politicians understand how much emphasis is put on what they say. For people such as Alistair Darling to have said we are in the worst recession in 60 years is premature. I’ve been with Dial-a-Cab for 34 years and this certainly is not as bad as the three-day week we had in 1974 with Edward Heath. Then there was, of course, the miners’ strike in the 1980s. That was far worse than it is at the moment, and I wish someone, somewhere would stand up and say this.

While I have to make some revisions to my forecasts, as a company, Dial-a-Cab will be fine as we have no debt to service - a very important factor given the current state of affairs.”

SIBLING RIVALRY SEES NEW RECORD FOR PASSING KOL

Friendly sibling rivalry has seen 19 year old Kevin MacLaren break his older brother’s record for being the youngest person to pass the KoL. Kevin has just completed and passed the Knowledge, although he is not legally allowed to be licensed as a taxi driver until he turns 21. This means he will have to wait 2 years until 11 November 2010 to be presented with his All-London ‘green badge’.

Transport for London’s Director of Taxi and Private Hire, Ed Thompson, said: “It gives us so much pleasure to see young people choosing taxi driving as a career. We hope many continue to take on the challenge that is the Knowledge, getting to know London inside out to provide what we feel is the best taxi service in the world. I hope Kevin has a long and successful career ahead of him.”

Kevin currently plays football with his brother for Hendon FC and has been boxing since he was nine years old. He also teaches two days a week at the Paddington Knowledge School. To keep his Knowledge of London skills up-to-date, he regularly gets back on his Moped, but is looking forward to getting behind the wheel of a taxi as soon as he turns 21.



Kevin

His brother Casey was the previous record holder. He passed his Knowledge at the age of 20 and was licensed in March this year when he turned 21. Both their parents are also licensed taxi drivers, so they really are keeping it in the family. Kevin completed his studies in less than two years. He said: “My brother took just over two years to complete the Knowledge and I would never have heard the end of it if I took longer. I’ve always wanted to be a cabbie - I like the flexibility of setting your own hours and being your own boss.”



Casey

CHARGES AT DARTFORD CROSSING

For drivers who come into town via the M25 Dartford Crossing, charges are set to increase, unless they are resident in Dartford and Thurrock Council area. A new Charging Order will start at 10pm on Saturday 15 November 2008. The Order includes a new Local Resident Scheme for Dartford and Thurrock Council residents. Other key changes are the removal of charges at night and for trailers. There will also be greater discounts for those using a pre-paid DART-tag.

Charges to use the Crossing					
With effect from 10pm - Saturday 15th November 2008					
		Day Charges (6am - 10pm)		Night Charges (6am - 10pm)	
		Cash	DART-Tag	Cash	DART-Tag
	Cars	£1.50 (£1.00)	£1.00 (£0.93)	Free (£1.00)	Free (£0.93)
	2 Axle Goods	£2.00 (£1.80)	£1.75 (£1.67)	Free (£1.00)	Free (£0.93)
	Multi-axle Goods	£3.70 (£2.90)	£3.20 (£2.69)	Free (£1.00)	Free (£0.93)

Charges up to 10pm – Saturday 15th November in ()