

RMT TAXIS LONDON HOLD 1st BRANCH MEETING

Monday 30th March at 7pm saw the newly launched RMT Taxis London hold its first branch meeting. The venue was upstairs in the Cock Inn public house in Chalton Street, Euston (corner with Phoenix Rd).

OFFICERS ELECTED

A good turnout of members elected 3 officers of the branch committee. Dave Vidgen Acting Branch Secretary, Eddie Lambert Acting Chair, and Stan Marut Acting Complaints, were all elected unanimously by the attending members. The Chair and Branch Sec positions are elected every year and do not vote on normal business, except that the Chair has a casting vote in the event of a tie on any vote.

Over the next couple of meeting we intend to elect further committee members. Under normal "RMT Standing Orders" these positions would be for 3 years with members able to serve for 2 terms before having to stand down for a term and then been able to stand again for the committee or other posts. However to avoid the situation whereby the whole committee could possibly have to stand down at the same time leaving the branch with inexperienced committee members and officers it is planned to stagger the committee so a third stand down or face re election every year. We don't want to get into the situation we see elsewhere, whereby the same faces dominate their organisations and stifle any new blood which can lead to disengagement with the trade's grass roots. Which in turn leads to an only there for the "stand down" money mentality which some feel has taken over at one, if not more of the other trade organisations. There are many drivers out there who feel that they have abilities to give to the trade and we want to encourage them to come to us and help us fight for the trade's future.

BRANCH POLICY

Following the elections a long discussion ensued to formulate a branch policy on many items of concern to the trade.

- 1) Reformation of the basket of costs etc, that are used in the Annual Tariff Review with costs been taken from a wider range of sources than at present. More trade input into the way the tariff is implemented once the amount is settled.
- 2) Total review of legal status of powers of PCO and how they use them.
- 3) The use of the Police National Computer (PNC) for licence renewals instead of CRB. (Cost £10.00 and takes 7-10 day and money goes to police funds, not a commercial company and its shareholders) First licence to remain enhanced CRB checked.
- 4) More and better control of Private Hire, both drivers and Operators, through conditions of license. Planning Permission to become one of these conditions of licence. No planning permission no license. Consultation with relevant powers to enable swifter, easier prosecutions ref possible fixed penalties for first offence.
- 5) More and better anti touting enforcement. (Targets or quotas to be considered. i.e. 70 arrest a week). More realistic fines.
- 6) A plan B for pedicabs. If they are not banned then a strict licensing system to be set up with a minimum requirement of a provisional British Drivers Licence for rider. This would mean that they would be fully accountable and traceable if necessary. (The days are long gone when a would be driver filled in a small form at the local Town Hall, paid 5 shillings and walked out clutching a little red booklet which was the licence. Today applicants have to provide proof of identity in the form of Passport or Birth Certificate.) The owners of these contraptions to be legally compelled to hold full records of who hires which vehicle when. All pedicabs to have system of individual identification with limit on number of passengers of any age carried, safety

helmets, for all passengers and riders, high vis clothing for riders, licence with identification photograph to be displayed at all times.

- 7) Full access to all Bus Lanes 24 hours.
- 8) Quick and easy means of driver badge colour identification. (Post card size Green or Yellow plate with badge number to sit inside front windscreen whilst driver is working perhaps?)



INFLUENCE AND SET POLICY

If you have any more ideas of what we should be doing, then join us, come along to branch meetings and get your voice heard and have an input. We are a member lead Union. It's your Union, have your say. 10 meetings a year, (more if required) so you the drivers can influence and set policy etc, not come to hear what an executive has decided in your name every 3 months.

NEXT MEETING

Next Branch Meet 7pm Wednesday 6th May Cock Inn, PH. Chalton St. Plenty of free parking.

MEMBERSHIP FORMS AND CONTACT NUMBERS

Membership forms available from Unity House 39 Chalton St NW1 George Vyse - portacabin at Great Suffolk Street Services.

Or free phone 0800 376 3706

Other contact numbers are Dave Vidgen Sec 07899 786 433, Eddie Lambert Chair. 07973 365 191.

VICTORIA COACH STATION - WATCH YOUR FRONT END!

Since this meeting I have been contacted by a couple of members regarding a problem that has come up at the Victoria Coach Station (VCS). Apparently "Megabus" have started using a longer coach measuring 15 metres (only 3 meters shorter than a bendy.) These have a rear wheel steer option which is used to make the tight turn into the Ecclestone Place Arrivals terminal. Unfortunately using the rear wheel steer takes the backend of the coach out towards the near side pavement, and on two occasions so far cabs on the front of the feeder rank have been hit causing some damage to the cabs. Obviously something needs to be done to rectify this problem.

I spoke to Robin Gillies of the PCO's Ranks and Highways about the situation and made a suggestion that would not only solve this problem but that of some drivers sitting on the back of the rank with their lights off and interviewing passengers as they come out on to the street when its quiet. Needless to say if they don't fancy the job they direct the passengers down to any cabs at the front of the rank by Elizabeth Street. The answer is to reverse the rank's direction so the point cab is directly opposite the exit from the terminal and so is the first cab passengers see as they walk out the terminal. It also removes the possibility that anyone wanting a cab not realising that the cabs with their backs to them 25 yards or so way are available for hire and walking off down Ecclestone Place towards Ecclestone Street to get accosted by touts. The feeder rank can them be moved up to about 10 or 15 feet from Elizabeth Street and can just u turn on to the back of the rank as cabs move up. Mr Gillies has agreed to go down and look the situation in the week following the Easter Break and get back to me. Unfortunately Westminster Council will need to be involved if these changes are agreed to and it will take time. So if you put on the front of the feeder rank at VCS watch out for your front end.

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