

# TIGER TIGER RANK RECOVERED

The following report of the action taken by taxi drivers in the Haymarket has already been sent to Ed Thompson at the PCO.

## DIRECT ACTION

On the night of Friday 15th August taxi drivers took action to recover the rank outside “Tiger Tiger” Night Club in the Haymarket. After trying to be diplomatic and contact the relevant Authorities responsible for enforcing this stretch of roadway so that taxi drivers can rank up for fares without having to be intimidated by licensed Private Hire Drivers illegally plying for hire outside this venue, some of London’s taxi drivers decided to coordinate some direct action of their own. Meeting en-masse locally, about 30 Taxis gathered nearby and converged on the venue to take control of the rank at 2am. This prompted the arrival of the Club’s Manager, Gavin Hughes to come out and see what was happening. Gavin told the taxi drivers that he is more than happy to have licensed Taxis outside and saw it as a positive benefit for the venue. This rank was put in at the request of the Anti terrorist squad following the events where by a car bomb had been parked outside the club and another car bomb just around the corner.

Having forced the illegally ‘plying for hire-touting’ PHVs to move off, the taxis took their rightful place next to the kerb outside the venue; within a very short space of time every one of the taxis had picked up a legitimate hiring and were replaced by more cabs who came rolling down the Haymarket, so much so, that due to the Traffic Congestion at Piccadilly Circus (not helped by the illegal parking of minicabs both in Regent Street and at the top of Haymarket) there was a queue of fares and no taxis. This led to the return of the touting licensed private hire drivers who swiftly descended like vultures.

However, when questioned as to whether they had pre-booked jobs, most took flight when a camera was produced taking their photos. If one man with a camera can keep the rank clear, why can’t Martin Low’s Enforcement Officers, who seem a little too cosy with the Mini Cab drivers? Westminster’s Director of Transport, Martin Low, claims that his Officers get intimidated and physically abused by the (mainly licensed) PH drivers, yet if Mr Low wishes to check the CCTV of the area last night he will see that one man did the job of his various teams and cameras with one small digital camera and a mobile phone. Why can’t Westminster do this with their vast resources? If Mr Low and his team want a demonstration please feel free to make contact and he’ll be shown what it is really and how the touts operate instead of being given a glorified tour for the benefit of the Press!!

## RMT PHOTOGRAPH CARS ON THE TAXI RANK



The Police responded to two incidents in the area at the time; this allowed a chance to gather some feedback first hand from the police on the street and the opportunity to gather some contact numbers. The first Police Officer who was based at Charing Cross, responded to an incident across the road and when

he had finished taking a statement happily took some details to pass on to his colleagues at the ‘nick’. The Second incident involved a van from TfL’s TOCU and a motorist. After finishing with the incident, the Sergeant explained who he was and his remit for the area (TOCU-mainly bus crime) but was happy to give his details and to make a report to his Office. He came over and saw for himself the situation, reading the newly posted Official Notice. However, at one stage he had to have some extremely stern words with the Operator of Diamond Cars who was unhappy that a Taxi Trade Rep from the RMT was taking photos of cars parked on the Rank outside the venue.

The officer explained quite forcefully to this person (who incidentally was a dead ringer for another driver who had been touting outside the Club wearing a PHV Driver’s licence around his neck, which he was quick

to hide!) that the Taxi Rank was for licensed taxis and not for any other purpose, whether that be touting or picking up pre-booked fares. A Taxi Rank is for taxis to rank on and be able to legally ply for hire and picking up fares by licensed taxi drivers, not for PHV to collect their booked jobs from the venue; they must do that by parking legally somewhere else. However having said that only one fare was put into a licensed PHV in two hours... the driver had sat outside for quite some time (at least 20-30 minutes) and a young lady was put into his car by a member of the Club. The driver was handed a piece of paper with the details of the hiring (making a complete mockery of the fact that vehicles should not be immediately hired) whilst the Operator’s staff member waved another piece of paper in their hand.



## CHECKS NEEDED

Hopefully, the officials from the PCO/TfL and the Police will now visit the venue and check the details of the bookings made in the Club by the Operator and see if they tally with some of the Registrations in the photos. I doubt that they will as the licensed PHV’s usually departed at great speed almost knocking people over in their haste to get away but then don’t take my word check the CCTV footage. My feeling is it will not be very clear or the film will mysteriously have run out, even though it’s probably digitally recorded, but if it exists it would be extremely embarrassing for people like Luke Howard and Ed Thompson whose Safer Travel at Night Campaign is exposed as nothing more than a charade where Licensed Private Hire drivers openly tout for custom as “Pseudo Taxis” illegally rank outside Venues all over London.

The PCO’s Integration and Forward Strategy Manager, Luke Howard, hides behind advice which he says has come from TfL’s Legal Department via a solicitor who is based in Derbyshire, James TH Button, whose opinion is along the lines of “it is too rude and crude an indicator to believe that a line of PHVs legally parked in a line are ranked up and plying for hire!!” A comment from Luke Howard says: “James Button is a solicitor - it is in his and his professions interests to raise doubts about the veracity of the law, if they can entice or encourage bodies or people to challenge legal verdicts then they make money as whatever the eventual verdict win lose or other, they get paid. Then they instigate the appeals process another fine earner.” When their intent is to be hired at any time, now/in the immediate future/ or at some time after parking outside that venue, they are, plying for hire illegally... but they are not even parked legally. The Vehicles at Tiger Tiger are parked on a licensed Taxi Rank and in a 24 hour bus lane!!!

## EASY ACCESS TO OUR RANKS NEEDED

In relation to Martin Low’s offer of a ‘golden fare’ scheme to get people home from the West End, every job went home in a licensed Taxi on the meter except for one job which had the fare capped at an agreed rate with the customer before leaving. Should Mr Low wish to fund a late night Marshal scheme with the licensed Taxi Trade we will be more than happy to sit down with him and talk. However, if he would just like to make sure that we have easy access to get onto the Taxis ranks (remove the Traffic Congestion and the rail stopping us getting to the kerb in the Haymarket!) in and around the West End he will see that we can quite happily take people home for fair prices. It’s our job and we’d like to be able to do it!! One taxi driver commented: “I was off within a couple of minutes to Tibbett’s corner (Putney Heath). They asked for a price, I said around £25 (£24.80 on the meter on arrival). I asked the passengers if they were approached by a mini-cab”. They said “Yes,” and when I asked how much they were quoted, they said between £35 and £45. Is this what you are condoning PCO? Rip off Britain!”