

CAB DIRECT SET TO BRING E7 TO LONDON

Cab Direct has had their E7 taxi licensed in many licensing areas around the country, but in some others, including London, the vehicle has not been licensed. Recently they battled with Liverpool City Council which, like TfL, does not allow vehicles which do not have the 25 foot turning circle. The battle went to the High Court, where Mr Justice Blake ruled that “an apparently arbitrary rule on turning circles contravenes Article 28 of the European treaty promoting free trade.”

Taxi Globe asked Cab Direct, based in Glasgow, for their comments. Their spokesperson told our reporter: “Cab Direct is looking forward to bringing a new range of high quality, good value products to the London hackney taxi market in very near future. The company has already contacted Transport for London and expects to present vehicles to the Public Carriage Office (PCO) for approval later this month.” The Chairman of Cab Direct is Gerry Facenna, who commented: “Drivers in London have been

starved of real choice and proper competition for far too long. However the Courts have now made it crystal clear that features and preferences – including any particular turning circle – are for the market to decide and simply cannot be used legally as a barrier preventing the sale of other vehicles.”

Facenna continues: “Of course it’s deeply frustrating that we had to go through such a lengthy legal process simply to open the way to sell our vehicles, which have proved so popular with cabbies across 95% of the UK. However the recent High Court judgment spells out, once and for all, that freedom of trade applies to throughout the taxi trade, just as it does to any other market across Europe. Given the clear legal position, Cab Direct now expects to work with, rather than against, the Public Carriage Office in licensing our vehicles. The company says it would be ridiculous to have to go back to court again to force TfL to act promptly, though of course it will do so if there is no alternative.

“We very much look forward to giving London cabbies the chance to buy better, cheaper vehicles within the next couple of months,” adds Facenna. “We also have some major new developments in the pipeline so the next few months are set to be an exciting time for the UK taxi trade.”

A TfL spokesperson said: “Now that we have received the full judgement from the Liverpool case, we will consider whether it has any implications for London and would be happy to discuss the way forward with Allied Vehicles. However, we do not believe that the Liverpool ruling invalidates our Conditions of Fitness, as the nature of London’s narrow streets makes a small turning circle in black cabs a vital requirement. It prevents unnecessary hold ups as taxi drivers turn to travel in a different direction, benefitting passengers and other road users and helping drivers deliver the world class service for which they are famed. To date, Allied Vehicles has never presented a vehicle to us for consideration.”

CAB ENFORCEMENT UNIT CONTINUES TO CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGAL CABS

Over the past two months, more than a dozen operations have taken place to tackle illegal cabs and touting across London. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Cab Enforcement Unit, part of the Transport for London (TfL) funded Safer Transport Command, report that they are continuing to carry out overt and covert operations as part of their ongoing drive to tackle illegal cabs and touts operating in the Capital. The Metropolitan Police Service Safer Transport Command (STC) was formerly the Transport Operational Command Unit.

OVER 400 ARRESTS

The STC made 442 arrests for touting between 1 August 2008 and 31 March 2009, leading to 93 Magistrates’ Court convictions involving licensed Private Hire Vehicle drivers. Of these drivers, over 60 have had their PHV licenses revoked by the Public Carriage Office to date, with the remaining still being processed. Chief Superintendent Royle, Safer Transport Command said: “We are working together with our policing partners to keep London moving safely by driving down crime and the fear of crime even further. Illegal cabs and touting undermines the legitimate cab trade and raises the fear of crime. The Safer Transport Command regularly targets policing activity on unlicensed and uninsured vehicles, and carries out major operations targeting offenders who pose as taxi or minicab drivers. The safety of the public is paramount and I would advise everyone not to get into any vehicle that they have not booked and always book a cab through a reputable PCO licensed company.”

COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS

Cab Enforcement operations are carried out on a regular basis in line with current intelligence on touting behaviour. They work with clubs to crack down on the touts who operate in the area, particularly the vicinity of Haymarket, ensuring compliance with regulations. During the operations roadside compliance checks are made and valuable intelligence is acquired. In addition officers use specialist undercover tactics to catch touts red handed as well as having a high visibility policing presence where checks are conducted on all minicabs within the confines of the operation area. Mayor Boris Johnson has taken a tough line on touting; any licensed private hire driver convicted of touting will lose their Public Carriage Office driver’s licence. He also announced last year that the number of dedicated cab enforcement officers in the Capital would be doubled to 68. The Cab Enforcement Unit has made over 4,000 arrests for touting and cab-related offences since 2003. Steve Burton, Director of Community Safety Enforcement and Policing said:

“Our ongoing operations should remind touts that we are out there and take the matter seriously. What’s more, where possible we will take action towards anyone found touting. Cab Enforcement operations are a priority for us as we are determined to get Londoners home safely and for the law abiding private hire and taxi trades not to be undermined.”

TACKLING TOUTS

London Hackney Carriage Drivers are asked to be aware that they should not attempt to tackle taxi touts themselves but should pass any information

directly to the police. Engaging in direct action of their own risks compromising police activity designed to identify, target and prosecute tout offenders, and may in some cases amount to conduct which could lead to prosecution if witnessed by undercover police. Cab Enforcement Unit officers are available to provide advice and guidance to drivers if required.

POLICE APPEAL

At approximately 03:59:26 hrs on the morning of Sunday 4th October 2009, a black hackney cab is seen on CCTV in Bermondsey Street, near to the Cable Club. The cab is hailed by a white male, 5’6” tall about 35 years old and the cab stops and picks up the fare, then drives off in a north direction in Bermondsey Street. The male fare was probably showing signs of excessive drink/drugs use.

The fare was later involved in an incident in which he was a victim. The City of London Police are attempting to identify the cabdriver in order to establish where the fare was dropped off. This information is very important and absolutely essential to the enquiry and we urge the driver to contact the police as soon as possible. The driver is in no way involved in any wrongdoing and all we need to establish is the drop off point.

Any driver with information relating to this incident please contact:

‘The City of London Police’ Bishopsgate CID on 020 7601 2661

or 07980 662190 and ask for DC Brian THOMAS.

Your assistance in this matter will be very much appreciated.