

Transport for London



# MY VISION FOR THE PCO

## By Sandie Goodwin

TAXI-PRIVATE HIRE



John Mason, the new Director of Taxis and Private Hire at the PCO, may not have been in his new office for very long, but he has hit the ground running. He has already met with representatives from both trades in order to learn and understand the business get a firm grip of the challenges ahead. John's career started with the Nat West Bank, before moving on to Westminster City Council. There he was Contract Manager in charge of off street parking. He then moved to TfL where he worked within Congestion Charging. He was Head of Enforcement and Deputy Director and it was here that he first came into regular contact with both the taxi and the private hire trades. In particular, John was involved with setting up processes to ensure Taxis and PHVs were not issued PCNs for driving in the Congestion Charge zone.

John decided he wanted a new challenge and so applied for the new role he is now in. He is responsible for some 185 staff at Penton Street and is looking at what internal issues there are facing the PCO. He wants to know what the PCO does well and also what improvements need to be made. Undoubtedly the taxi trade will have some comments for John to hear on the subject of what improvements are needed! John recognises that the back office system at the PCO needs to become more automated to provide a better service to licence holders – his customers. He has different priorities to those of the outgoing director, Ed Thompson; he sees the PCO as more of a part of TfL than a stand alone organisation. The back office team will soon move to the Palestra building, with just counter services and KoL remaining at Penton Street. John has promised that he will give high quality leadership and consistent management to the running of the PCO. He recognises that the ph licence recently given and now revoked to the man dubbed “Killer on the KoL” was an issue of overwhelming importance to the taxi trade, which felt that their values

were being compromised in terms of safety for the travelling public. Under the new guidelines, this will not happen again, he says.

Another area in which John promises changes to is that of consultants. He reports that he wants a stable staff at the PCO and sees little value in having expensive consultants bought in. Stakeholder engagement is his priority and as part of this John intends to look at how the PCO deals with complaints from stakeholders. He intends to review costs and value for money and is conscious of the fact that licence fees need to be spent wisely to keep costs down. He has also said that he supports the KoL and sees why it is so important to the taxi trade – a review of the KoL process has been carried out which will see improved customer service to those studying the Knowledge, better use of technology and improved transparency. By no means, however, will this make the Knowledge any easier to pass. Touting is also high on his agenda and he thinks that it should remain a high priority. This is one area in which the cab and ph trades agree – illegal touts need to be taken off the streets.

As John has only been in his new role a few weeks, it is hard to measure progress yet. No doubt there will be some criticisms of his ideas and plans but if he achieves a more open and transparent system of working at the PCO and continues to engage actively with the trade, the future is looking more positive.



## COMCAB INSURANCE PLAN PROVES POPULAR

The taxi driver insurance plan launched by radio circuit Computer Cab plc earlier this year has proved popular with growing numbers of drivers taking out the policies.

Computer Cab plc joined up with Lockton Affinity to launch the insurance plan in March, exclusively for drivers who subscribed to Computer Cab plc. The aim was to provide drivers on the circuit with competitive premiums with some additional cover benefits. The scheme has seen many Computer Cab plc driver take advantage of the package, with many drivers citing reductions in their premiums.

Key to the success of the insurance plan is the inclusion of third party, non-



motor cover, to provide taxi drivers with extra piece of mind if one of their passengers is injured. General Manager for Computer Cab plc, Malcolm Paice, explained: “The Customer Assistance cover is something we worked long and hard developing. Essentially it provides third party cover for the passenger when away from the vehicle. So for instance

if a driver is helping a passenger from their taxi to their front door, typical taxi insurance policies would not cover this, but with this policy the driver is still covered should the passenger get injured during that transfer process. This is an area of increasing concern for many taxi drivers, so we were delighted to be able to offer it as a standard part of the cover under this plan. We knew the scheme would be popular but even we have been surprised by the high take up.”

The insurance plan also provides cover for personal effects, including cash, in case of theft from the taxi and also special license protection cover in case the drivers Hackney Carriage

licence is threatened. Since launching the insurance plan there has been some especially attractive savings on premiums for drivers with a previous claim history. Malcolm added: “We have found that drivers who had previous claims, and therefore had exceptionally high premiums as a result, were doing especially well when they obtained a new premium quote from the Computer Cab insurance plan. This makes the offering well suited to a range of drivers.”

Additional optional extras are now being made available to drivers who have the insurance plan, including income protection and legal expenses and breakdown cover.

## UNION PICKET TFL



RMT Trade Union picketed outside TfL offices, Blackfriars Road, on Wednesday October 15 against the London Authorities and Transport number 2 Bill, which will give all Councils across London and TfL the power to appoint ranks and bays for Pedicabs and Rickshaws. The Union is also seeking a Public Inquiry into the Public Carriage Office management processes that the Union say have failed the public and the taxi trade. The Union accuse the Public Carriage

Office and Transport for London of careless management and the subsequent fall in standards. A spokesperson for the RMT Union said: “We shall be lobbying the Greater London Assembly, The Mayor of London and Transport Secretary along with Members of Parliament who represent constituencies in London. We will continue to picket TfL offices on a regular basis to highlight to members of the public and the Taxi trade the insane policies of TfL.”