

REAR SCREEN ADVERTISING ON LICENSED LONDON TAXIS

Following a review of guidelines for advertising on licensed London taxis, the PCO has made some amendments. These include, where approved, the placing of advertisement material on the rear windscreen and wheel trims of licensed London taxis.

The position of the advertising image/graphics must only be on the lower 33.3% of the rear windscreen glass (measured from the lower edge of the glass at the window seal) affixed on the outer surface, and may be the full width of the window. The material

construction must be of a perforated one-way vision film or similar type design which will allow the image/graphics to be seen from the outside of the vehicle only. Images and/or graphics must not be visible from inside the vehicle when looking out of the rear windscreen.

Advertising material when placed on the rear windscreen must not interfere with any equipment normally fitted to the taxi, such as rear windscreen wipers, or obscure any high level brake lights or any 'For Hire' indicator lamps fitted on the taxi.

LONDON IS LEADING DESTINATION 2009

London has been announced as the world's leading travel destination at the grand final of the 2009 World Travel Awards on 8th November. The event took place at the JW Marriott Grosvenor House hotel, with 1,000 travel companies nominated in 94 categories. As well as being named the world's best destination, London is also home to the winner of the award for the best city hotel, which went to Grosvenor House in the West End. The Grosvenor House will once again play host to The Mad Hatters Tea Party in January, organised by The London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children.



Mad Hatters Party at Grosvenor House

Graham Cooke, president and founder of the World Travel Awards, said: "Today's winners have not only been recognised as the best in their region, but they have proved themselves to be the best in the world and the number one choice of travel professionals and consumers alike. They have remained focused on their long-term objectives and continued to deliver above and beyond the call of duty, setting an industry example."

FIXED FARE LANDS TAXI DRIVER IN COURT

In a recent Court case, Lord Justice Sullivan and Mr Justice Openshaw in the divisional court heard a case stated from Stratford on Avon magistrates' court.

A licensing officer from Stratford on Avon council phoned a taxi firm and agreed a journey for a fixed £32 fare. A driver was instructed to collect the officer, and he confirmed the fare with the firm. When they reached the destination, the driver was cautioned and informed he would be reported for overcharging as the fixed fare greatly exceeded the fare that had been shown on the meter.

Hackney carriages – as distinct from private hire vehicles – can also be booked over the telephone to operate as hackney carriages. Where a local byelaw requires meters to be used, drivers are not allowed to charge more than the metered fare – but they may usually agree a lower fare. What, however, is the position, where the fare is not agreed with the driver, but with the taxi firm who took the booking? Does it matter that the taxi driver knows it is an offence under section 67 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to carry the passenger, and that the fare is excessive?

The driver faced two charges at trial: undertaking a journey in a hackney carriage used as a private hire vehicle and knowingly charging more than the metered fare, contrary to section 67, and driving a hackney carriage with fare-paying passengers without switching on the meter, contrary to the council's byelaws. As the driver had not been a party to the original agreement about the arranged fare – and it was not unusual for him to have been asked to undertake a fixed-fare journey – the magistrates found it had been legitimate for him to take the fixed fare. They also decided to exclude the officer's evidence under section 78 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 as the driver had been persuaded to commit the alleged offences and the officer's evidence was unfair.

Upholding the council's appeal, the High Court accepted their argument that its officer's conduct was similar to test purchasing and the driver had been given an unexceptional opportunity to commit a criminal offence. The judges said the relevant question was not whether the driver was a party to the agreement between the passenger and the taxi firm. It was whether an agreement could lawfully have been entered into in view of section 67. As a hackney carriage driver, the driver would have been aware that it was illegal to over-charge more than the metered fare, and – perhaps more crucially – that the metered fare would not have been as much as the amount actually charged. The magistrates had failed to consider section 67 in that respect.

The bottom line, the court said in remitting the case to be re-heard by a different bench, was that the driver had known any fixed fare had to be equal to or less than the metered fare, and it would have been less than the £32 charged. There was nothing before the magistrates that suggested the driver might have believed the fixed fare (as opposed to the metered fare) was lawful. The driver, with his local knowledge and knowledge of metered fares, would have known the fare was excessive.

CITROËN DISPATCH WHEELCHAIR-ACCESSIBLE TAXIS

A major vehicle supply agreement has been signed between Citroen and the Glasgow-headquartered Allied Vehicles Group. This will see Allied Vehicles convert several hundred Dispatch Combi models into wheelchair-accessible taxis and people carriers. Alternative taxis are licensed in many areas across the country and under this agreement, the Citroens will be sold under Allied's Cab Direct brand. The Dispatch-based Citroën EuroTaxi is offered on either L1 or L2 models and is available equipped to full Hackney cab specification, seating for the driver and up to seven passengers. Robert Handyside, Citroën's commercial vehicle operations manager, comments: "We are delighted with this new vehicle supply agreement with the Allied Vehicles Group. The Dispatch is ideally suited for taxi and Motability conversions,

combining competitive first cost, low running costs and generous passenger carrying capability, all in a vehicle with compact overall dimensions."

