

CALL SIGN MAKES ITS SIXTH LISTENING GROUP TRIP TO LTI

A new season of Listening Groups was recently launched by LTI. One of the first groups to be invited to the Coventry factory was one from Dial-a-Cab. The Listening Group programme was set up over 5 years ago to get feedback on the LTI model range from drivers, which contributed to LTI's vehicle development programme. It remains an important part of the programme, but LTI are broadening the scope of the programme, to discuss wider trade issues and the restructuring of its dealerships announced in July this year. Listening Groups give drivers the opportunity to speak directly to senior staff at LTI and to discuss their product and after sales experience. Alan Fisher, editor of Call Sign, has written the following report.

Richard Daniels, LTI Government Affairs together with their Market Development Manager, Paul Kelsey, greeted editor Alan Fisher and the eight Dial-a-Cab drivers, plus one guest, at Coventry Station at 10am.

The eight DaC drivers were Neville Chapman, Dave Creber, Alan Lipscombe, Paul Gane, Janet Ramsden, John Dixon, Kamel Abdellaoui, Fred Cooper with the Call Sign invited guest being John Paul Pace from TaxiCab News.

Arriving at the factory, we were delighted to see that Manganese Bronze CEO, John Russell, had kept his word to the Editor that he would attend to answer any questions. Also there to answer driver's questions were LTI Engineering



The DaC drivers at the end of the tour

Projects Director Paul Woolley, Sales Director based at M&O, Rob Laidler and LTI's Customer and Technical Support Manager - the man who always turns up to answer drivers questions and any moans about their taxis - Trevor Hattersley.

There followed around two hours of questions and answers interspersed with coffee and biscuits. The questions covered topics from bulbs to the problems tall drivers had to the heater noise when on boost and questions on whether, following a spate of rumours, there would be a new engine (the answer was no)! Questions comparing the TX4 to the Vito weren't in short supply either! No question was refused and promises to look at the many suggestions were made.

Then it was lunch and off on a tour of the factory – beginning with a view of a sheet of metal being pressed and ending with a completed taxi! En route, the group's timing was perfect as we saw a body lifted onto a chassis – not something that all Call Sign's visiting groups have been lucky enough to see.

Then it was the 4pm train at Coventry to get us all back to Euston just before 5pm. Everyone agreed that it had been a very worthwhile day, some believing that LTI had turned the corner, with others not so sure. But everyone was impressed by how well we had been treated.

The next Call Sign trip will be in the spring...



Taxi body drops onto the chassis



DaC driver Neville Chapman gets as close to an engine as he is ever likely to!



Dial-a-Cab drivers with L - R Rob Laidler, John Russell, Richard Daniels and Paul Woolley

MATCHING PASSENGERS TO TAXIS

Virgin Atlantic has launched an initiative to help its passengers find other travellers to share taxi rides into city centres across the world. The Taxi.to website helps match passengers on the same flight, or whose flights arrive at a similar time, travelling to a similar part of a city, so they can share the taxi ride. The scheme, launched by Virgin Atlantic, is not limited to Virgin Atlantic customers. The service is provided free and is currently the scheme is being trialled on the London – New York route.

Passengers log onto www.taxi.to and input their flight and destination details; the website will match them with a suitable travelling companion. They are then sent the details of the matched traveller and can decide whether to agree to the match and make arrangements of where to meet following their flight. Passengers print off the easy to make Taxi2 sign, which folds into a T shape, from the website so they can locate each other

at the airport. The system will also match female travellers who also only want female travelling companions. Dee Cooper, Director of Product and Service, Virgin Atlantic, commented: "We are always looking at ways to help improve our passengers' journeys and this is a simple initiative which helps them to connect in a clever way. We expect this scheme to be popular with our passengers."

The passengers meet at the airport, then get into a taxi. For those who do not speak the same language as their destination taxi driver, the destination is clearly printed on the "T" sign ticket. Ed Maklouf, the Taxi2 founder, said: "We are delighted to be partnering with Virgin Atlantic for this scheme, and our expectation is that this simple, sensible way of saving money and cutting down congestion and carbon footprint will become common activity for air travellers worldwide."