

HEATHROW TAXIS LAUNCH WEBSITE *by Colin Evans*

After a great deal of blood, sweat and tears the Heathrow Taxis website (www.heathrowtaxis.org) is now online. It has been designed in such a way as to appeal to the target market with valuable information and easy navigation and is a huge improvement on the previous site in terms of design and content. All journeys will be from the point of the rank and set prices will be available for prepaid jobs. All prices are fair to both passengers and drivers, will be constantly monitored and reviewed if needed and should attract new business for the trade at the airport. This is the first of a number of phases to develop a payment platform for customers to pre-pay online for their journeys from Heathrow and Heathrow Taxis are in the process of developing the pricing application on the new website into a full blown prepaid ticketing system. This is a revolutionary step for the trade at the airport as it must respond to the pre-paid market. Radio circuits and minicab companies win work on the basis of setting up accounts facilities with the corporate sector and many of their drivers can wait some time to be paid. The trade at Heathrow must look to compete and that means drivers accepting credit cards and account work with the awareness that immediate payment is not practical but Heathrow Taxis believe drivers will benefit in the long run with more work resulting in greater income and increased job security.

PRIVATE HIRE AT THE AIRPORT

Heathrow Taxis has been working with other recognised trade bodies at the airport to respond to Heathrow Airport Limited's (HAL) proposal to introduce private hire into Heathrow. This has included regular dialogue with HAL to dilute that proposal which has been achieved; from April 1st two private hire companies will replace the fifteen that are presently given out at the official Airport Information Desks. The trade has introduced a number of initiatives to compete against this which includes the website, refurbishment of the taxi desk within the terminals and the introduction of new state of the art credit card terminals to Heathrow drivers. The credit card terminals are the Sagem/Ingenico 930G model and provide drivers with a robust machine as well as a leather carry case and marketing material and are available to all cabtag holders at Heathrow subject to acceptance. Full details can be obtained by calling the Heathrow Taxis/Unite office on 0208 745 5325.

RE-BRANDING THE TAXI PRODUCT

Heathrow Taxis are also pleased to announce to drivers a re-branding of the taxi product at the airport which includes a new logo and corporate image, major refurbishment of all the taxi desks and improved communications and benefits for drivers. This follows the majority vote by drivers at Heathrow for the contract of services previously provided by HALT to be taken over by 'Heathrow Taxis'. The long planned refurbishment of the desks is schedule to start at the end of April and includes a fit out of the new desk at Terminal 5 and moving the location of the T4 desk to a more prominent position. The new signage for the desks will comprise of two elements. Firstly, the main signage will be the same style and colour as the standard airport information signs, meaning that potential passengers will be comforted by the knowledge that the service provided is endorsed by HAL and is an integral part of the airports' transport system. Secondly, the new logo and branding will be clearly displayed so that passengers who have visited the website prior to arriving can find Heathrow Taxis easily.

Once the refurbishment is completed new enhanced IT and communications facilities will be installed on the desks so that the product can be marketed more effectively and the staff are able to provide a better service to prospective clients. Heathrow Taxis are confident the planned initiatives will be of great benefit to the trade at the airport and encourage drivers to visit the website and desks once refurbished and give feedback on the improvements.



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