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**TAXI**

10<sup>th</sup> December 2024 #577

# CHRISTMAS GRIDLOCK

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## CHRISTMAS GRIDLOCK

Cabbies working this Christmas are experiencing some of the worst traffic conditions ever encountered in the capital. With roadworks on the Euston and Marylebone Roads matched with works on Gray's Inn Road and Kings Cross Road, drivers are left sitting in traffic with no alternative route open to them. This is exacerbated by random closures and road layout changes elsewhere all meaning that some areas of London are grinding to a halt.

On social media and in WhatsApp groups across the capital, taxi drivers are reporting long delays, with some describing journeys taking outrageous amounts of time such as an hour to go down Park Lane or access problems at Euston station with customers reporting waiting over an hour for a cab.

Poor planning by highways authorities and a lack of joined up thinking by TfL and the Boroughs is wreaking havoc on London's road network. The taxi trade and many others are calling on transport planners to urgently sort out this mess and ensure that where works are unavoidable, more robust and effective contingency plans are put in place to prevent gridlock.

## TAXI EXEMPTION FOR TOLL TUNNELS CONFIRMED

Licensed taxis' exemption from the tolls to be introduced for the Blackwall and new Silvertown Tunnels has been confirmed. TfL's Board met on 4<sup>th</sup> December to agree the package of charges, discounts and exemptions for the tunnels that will come into force from Spring 2025. This followed a consultation earlier in the year to gather views on the proposals, which included an exemption for licensed taxis and zero emission capable and wheelchair accessible PHVs.



Elsewhere, following the meeting of the Board, a petition with more than 37,000 signatures was presented at City Hall calling for the tolls to be scrapped. The petition has been described as the "largest ever" to be presented to the Assembly and is urging the Mayor to rethink the tolls which would negatively impact local residents. Blackheath resident and petition founder Liam Davis said:

*"The 37,000 signatures show that ordinary Londoners are fed up to the back teeth with being penalised for merely going about their daily lives. The proposed toll charges will hurt families, commuters and businesses who depend on these routes."*

*"The fact we have garnered so much support – the largest ever petition presented to the Assembly – shows people have simply had enough!"*



## FAMILIAR FACE APPOINTED AS NEW TRANSPORT SECRETARY

London's former Deputy Mayor for Transport, Heidi Alexander, has been appointed as Secretary of State for Transport. Ms Alexander replaces Louise Haigh MP, who was forced to resign last month after it emerged she had previously pleaded guilty to a fraud offence. Alexander is the MP for Swindon South and had been serving as

a junior minister at the Ministry of Justice before being offered a seat at the Cabinet Table as Transport Secretary.

Between 2010 and 2018, Heidi Alexander served in Parliament as MP for Lewisham East before resigning her seat to accept the position as London's Deputy Mayor for Transport, working alongside Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. She left City Hall in 2022 to consider her next career move and eventually decided to seek a new parliamentary seat. Her time as Deputy Mayor was marked by the Covid-19 pandemic during which she was tasked with overseeing TfL and London Transport Network's response to the many challenges that arose. She was one of the architects of the Streetspace for London schemes and not always popular with the London taxi trade.



## PCN Hotspots Don't get caught out this festive season!

\*Tottenham Court Road restrictions WILL be in force as normal over Christmas\*

### YELLOW BOX CAMERAS

- The Strand O/S Charing Cross Station
- Upper Woburn Place/ Endsleigh Gardens
- Eversholt Street/Churchway
- All along Piccadilly
- Park Street/Green St W1
- Vauxhall Cross
- Shepherds Bush Green (Westfield)
- Hans Road (rear of Harrods)
- Victoria Street/Palace Street
- Bayswater Road/Westbourne Street
- Bayswater Road/Brook Street
- Bayswater Road/Hyde Park Street
- \*NEW\* Holland Park Ave/ Holland Circus

### CAMERA PCN ENFORCEMENT

- Harrods (Brompton Road) Over-ranking/Zig-Zags
- Tottenham Court Road
- Sopwith Way (Chelsea Bridge) Do Not Enter
- Cornhill (coming from Leadenhall Street)
- Bath Street EC1 No Motor Vehicles 24/7
- Wilton Road, Victoria Station Over-ranking
- Edgware Road W2 Red Route
- Borough High Street Red Route
- Tower Bridge Road Red Route
- Park Plaza Westminster Bridge Hotel, No Right Turn
- Lower Belgrave Street AM/PM Timed School Restrictions
- Great Suffolk Street (The old Café) When using J V Bright's or the toilets, Private PCN's are being issued for over-staying the short grace period or non-payment of longer stays.

### 20MPH MOBILE CAMERAS

- Vauxhall Bridge Road/ Neathouse Place
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- Bayswater Road/ Hyde Park Street
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# Trade Unity & Tickets

All the trade groups and businesses recently signed a joint letter to the Mayor of London calling for urgent action to support our trade.



“Hidden within the paperwork there is a form that has to be filled in with the driving licence number, signed and posted to an address in Southend.”

## Steve's comment

**T**he great myth about the taxi trade groups is that we don't work together or that we argue amongst ourselves, it was always untrue, but in recent years the exact opposite is true. We now all work together constantly and especially when dealing with TfL. A great example is with the upcoming Taxi Action Plan.

We are all concerned that the new plan will not deliver what we want and need - a commitment to universal access to all roads, defined as 'taxis go where the buses go'. We also need financial support in the shape of interest free loans, another scrappage scheme and support in lobbying central government to extend the Plug in Taxi Grant (PiTG) beyond next March and to extend the VAT exemption for adapted motor vehicles for disabled people to purpose built taxis.

To highlight everyone's commitment to these key asks, all

the trade groups and businesses recently signed a joint letter to the Mayor of London, calling for urgent action to support our trade. I was then able to hand the letter directly to the Transport Commissioner, Andy Lord, the Deputy Mayor for Transport, Seb Dance, Claire Mann TfL's Chief Operating Officer and Helen Chapman the Head of Taxi and Private Hire licensing, at a trade reps meeting last week.

The letter follows on from the Plenary motion from the London Assembly calling for the same support last month. I also took the opportunity to remind these key players of what Elly Baker AM, Labour Chair of GLA Transport Committee, had said at that plenary session: *"The Mayor and TfL need to make active interventions on these matters, it's not enough to be hands off while the black taxi trade withers and to basically blame the market..."* Here's hoping all of this has an impact.

## Tickets, tickets and more tickets

Just talk to any cabbie on any rank, eatery, garage or anywhere

where we run into each other, and it's very rare to find one who has not had a ticket of some sort. There's plenty to choose from, speeding tickets and yellow box cameras to parking tickets. When it comes to parking tickets, private companies issuing them at petrol stations and retail parks are the biggest pain. Most are designed so that it is almost impossible to challenge or query them, as the tickets and websites hide all the details except how to send them your hard earned, which is only to be expected as the whole thing is basically legalised theft.

## Don't end up with an SJPN

Unfortunately, it is not only the private companies' paperwork that's confusing. There are many ways to get caught out, as we at the LTDA are only too aware. I have lost track of the number of members, who having received a fixed penalty offer, for something like a minor speeding offence, accepted the offer, paid the £100, and consider the matter concluded only to later receive a Single Justice Procedure Notice (SJPN) from a court for the same

offence. This is what happens if you don't respond to the fixed penalty notice, however, they all insist that they have.

These members paid the £100, most have pictures, scans or copies of the paperwork and all believe it must be an administrative mistake, unfortunately it's not. Hidden within the paperwork there is a form that has to be filled in with the driving licence number, signed and posted to an address in Southend. Should you fail to do that, they do not contact you again, despite having an email address, phone number and address for you, instead they refund the £100, cancel the fixed penalty offer and issue a SJPN, which is about 30 pages long and a bureaucratic nightmare on its own. It is also then a much more complicated process to sort out.

## Leave it to the experts

Don't make this costly mistake. Our advice is always the same, if you get anything from the police or TfL and you have any doubts of any kind, please call us for advice. It's better to spend ten minutes talking to one of our experts than a full day attending some court or hearing somewhere! And if you aren't an LTDA member already, give yourself an early Christmas present by signing up today and making sure we've got your back, whatever happens.

Happy Christmas to one and all and be lucky! ■ LTDA



# Looking Back at 2024

Another year of highs and lows for the taxi trade, with some positive moves by London Boroughs on taxi access and some really poor traffic management decisions elsewhere.

## Top rank

**A**s this is the final edition of TAXI for the year, can I start by wishing you all a very Merry Christmas, I hope whatever you're doing, you have a good one. If you're working, I wish you lucky, if you're spending it with family and loved ones, I hope you can switch off, chill and enjoy their company.

In the last edition of the year, I always typically look back on the year we've had, both the positives and the negatives, so here goes.

### Some positives

One key positive points from this year is that although there has been the odd dip, we have seen really good work levels throughout the year.

6

We have also seen some sensible thinking by certain boroughs when considering road restrictions and taxi access. Of course the usual suspects like Camden and Islington remain anything but sensible.

Lambeth have been a bit hit and miss with no exemptions to many LTNs but they did give access to some bus gates such as the now removed infamous ones around Streatham Wells. Southwark have mostly given us free access, as have Lewisham, Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham and many outer boroughs.

### Bank Junction

In the City of London, I had been pushing hard for increased access for taxis, meeting everyone and anyone that would indulge me. This resulted in our permanent unfettered access to Chancery Lane and experimental access to the Cheapside bus gate being added into the mix. Both these exemptions have been implemented without any issues that many of the nay sayers said would happen.

The Court of Common Council also voted overwhelmingly to have a trial to once again give some access back into Bank Junction and more recently the City of London Streets and Walkways

Committee voted overwhelmingly to support the City Officers' recommendation to trial a West/East - East/West access route using Poultry and Cornhill.

The best argument that the most outspoken opponent of taxi access, who allegedly said that taxis will be back in Bank over their dead body, could come up with against this was that pedestrians are so used to now just walking out and crossing the road without looking where they are going at the Junction,

**"We are seeing complete and utter gridlock because our road network has been decimated, fragmented and its capacity so vastly diminished..."**

that if taxis were allowed back in, there would be the risk of more accidents. The absurdity of this was pointed out via a rhetorical question from another committee member, asking (and I'm paraphrasing) are you really saying we shouldn't do it because pedestrians don't look where they are going?

Of course, this councillor was talking out of their backside as every pedestrian ALWAYS looks,

if they don't one of the countless cyclists that ignore every rule of the road at this location will send them flying. There is another reason that pedestrians don't just walk out onto the roads of Bank without thinking or looking, now what was it, it's coming to me, oh yeah, I almost forgot, those 13-tonne big red things, the bus.

If that's the best the antis can come up with then the only real barrier to our access will be if TfL kick up a stink. There has been a small sea change in TfL's attitude towards us after some personnel changes at senior level, time will soon tell if that change in attitude is just words or if it will be backed up by actions.

### The negative

Our road network is increasingly being brought to a standstill by closures causing congestion and delays, either for roadworks or more likely, due to a stupid vanity project. If you ask me, this is the result of generation of people, now in decision making positions, who grew up in this new world in which we've been telling kids for a few decades now that there are no losers, and everyone gets a medal 'just for participating'.

I can only assume that as they've never faced any criticism or been told, their ideas are actually just plain bad, they've never learned how to adapt or own their mistakes. Instead, they just keep making the same ones again and again leaving us working in, and Londoners living in gridlock day, after day, after day.

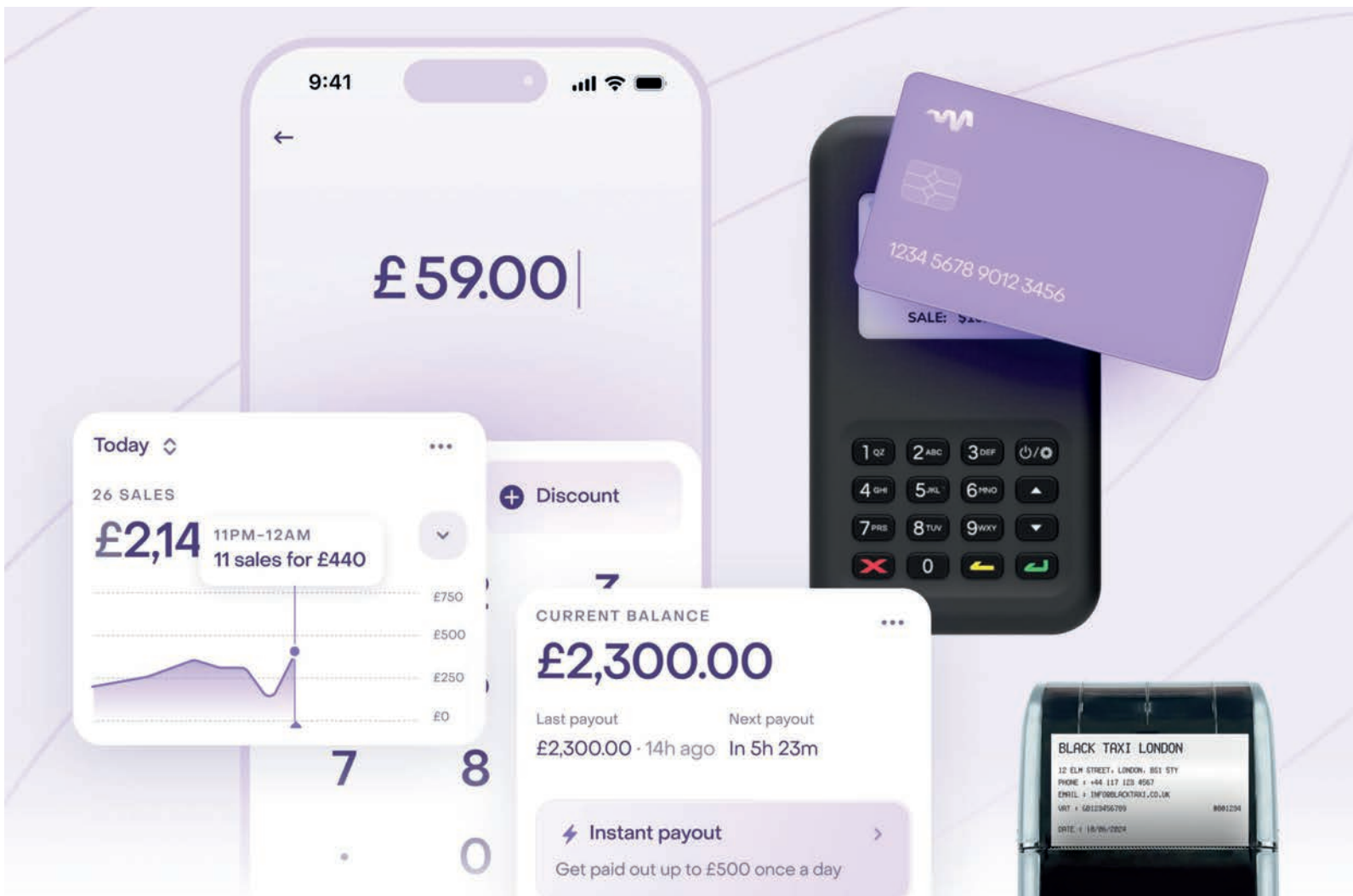
The outcome of this poor

decision making can be seen at Euston. I'm not even talking about getting into the station. Although that is also a good example of us repeatedly pointing out the problems in someone's ideas up to two years before they were implemented and explaining what needed to be changed to prevent chaos ensuing but being ignored, as they apparently just can't compute anything that isn't a pat on the back for having a go.

What I'm actually talking about is something we are seeing all over London, with Euston Road and surrounding areas simply being a prime example. Following the roadworks on Upper Woburn Place for essential roadworks (and these roadworks are essential as the sewers have completely collapsed) we are seeing complete and utter gridlock because our road network has been decimated, fragmented and its capacity so vastly diminished by these vanity projects for the privileged few as they start (and to use their terminology) 'a new world order' were London is a car free zone. It seems they can't comprehend that that will also mean a dead London. In their minds, London will revert to the hundreds of little villages that it once was, with no one needing to travel more than 15 minutes...what a quaint idea.

Perhaps 2025 will be the year they see the error of their ways and realise just how unrealistic and damaging this all is? Something we can all dream of and dare to hope for whilst sitting in traffic over the next few weeks.


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# Working for the Trade

The fact is that I am on drivers' side. I have upmost respect for each and every cabbie out there and have the trade's very best interests at heart.

## Airports & beyond

**I have been a Heathrow Rep for the LTDA for five years now, and I feel it is time to give a true insight into my experience and address some of the untruths that have been spread about me in recent months.**

### No easy task

It's no easy task being a female in a male dominated trade, let alone a female trade representative

My daughter wrote a dissertation four years ago about females in the London taxi trade. She interviewed lots of drivers of all genders and across different orgs. Her findings were that it's hard being a female in a male dominated trade, but at no point when writing that did, she expect her mother to be subjected to abuse, certainly not in 2024. I am super proud of her, as she got a 1st Class honours from Nottingham University after writing it.

I've accepted my fair share of banter aimed at me as a woman. I have a thick skin and will take a lot on the chin, whether it's comments like "Shouldn't you be at home doing the washing?" when I first started working at Heathrow or when I walked into the canteen and all the drivers

made bird noises signifying that the 'bird,' had arrived.

Unfortunately, becoming an LTDA rep seems to have made me more of a target and intensified things. Again, I largely ignore it and crack on, but I have been told, "well it's what you signed up for, just get on with it." I want to make it clear that no, it's not what I signed up for, who would?

To be clear, I am not saying I am being targeted specifically because I am a woman, but there is an extra dimension to what I have to deal with, compared to other LTDA reps. For example, I have previously been made aware of a senior rep openly discussing me in a derogatory manner over the urinals in the men's toilets at Heathrow with another driver. Unbeknown to them, my brother was in the toilet listening. My brother is the person who got me into the trade, but he is very different to me. He is very quiet and unassuming. As much as he is proud of me of doing what I do for the trade, I know he wishes I wasn't such a prominent figure at Heathrow. We are a very close family and it was very hurtful to hear such derogatory comments about his sister.

### Supporting all drivers

I decided to accept the role as a rep and was up for the challenge because I am passionate about the trade and wanted to help,

support and defend my fellow drivers. As a rep, I always do my best to make a difference to the trade and want to ensure its survival and success for many years to come. Sadly, my efforts to try to make the airport run efficiently and bring more revenue to the drivers have not always been met with support.

My only aim is to have a vibrant taxi trade for everyone, so I don't understand why I am getting so much resistance. I think perhaps I am just upsetting the apple cart at Heathrow which could be why certain reps from other orgs have tried several different ways to bring me down or break me.

In my capacity as a rep, I try to support all cabbies not just LTDA members, as we are all ultimately in this together. The LTDA represents the majority of London licensed taxi drivers. I am not sure how many drivers these other orgs represent but all I can surmise is that they are trying to discredit me and spread lies in an effort to recruit some of our members.

### Lies and untruths

In recent months, the lies and verbal abuse I have faced has escalated to a different level. I want to take the opportunity to make it clear that things people may have heard are baseless lies and untruths and such abuse can not and should not be justified. I

have only ever acted in the best interests of the trade and value all my fellow drivers and colleagues.

This escalation followed a decision taken by all the orgs operating at the Airport to re-write the service level agreements to prevent certain reps signing in and abusing the system. It's true to say this is something I pushed for because as a rep, I see my role being to make the system work as fairly and efficiently as possible for everyone. Isn't that what we all want? However, it seems I have stepped on a few toes in trying to do this and I'm now facing the backlash.

In the first major attack on me personally, a petition was set up by another org, stating that I had said something detrimental to the trade in an official Heathrow meeting. Drivers were asked to sign this petition to remove me as a rep and were also encouraged to leave the LTDA. Those behind the petition claimed there was evidence, but none was ever shown and the LTDA contacted all the Heathrow officials at the meeting, who confirmed the accusations were false and that I never said what was alleged. Any Heathrow meetings are now recorded at the request of all orgs to prevent such lies being told again in future.

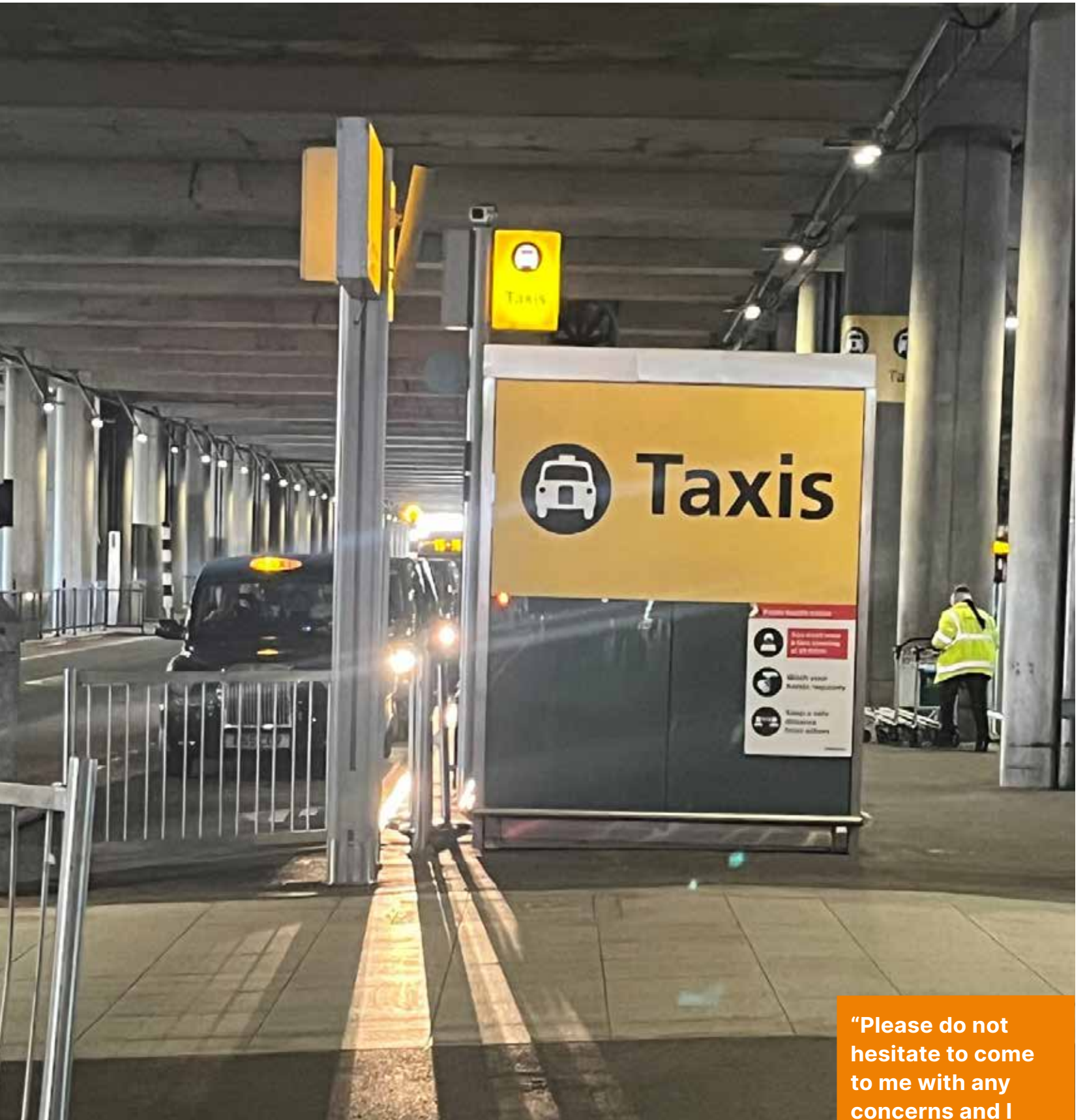
The org in question was contacted, and we are told an investigation is still ongoing. Unfortunately, despite promises that this would be dealt with, no action has been taken against the reps behind this malicious slander of my name, and if anything, the personal attacks and abuse I face on a daily basis from a small number of individuals, has increased further since then.

The day after a recent tariff meeting at Heathrow with TfL, we got a call from a member alleging that I had said certain things. I had not and quickly realised they were at it once again spreading lies about me and trying to recruit our members off the back of those lies.

The final thing I would like to dispute is the comments written about me in another org's publication recently. I think this was sparked by a podcast I took part in that got a positive response overall but sadly my







**“Please do not hesitate to come to me with any concerns and I will happily address them.”**

comments were misrepresented by some, who claimed I was boasting about the wardens’ scheme. The fact is that the scheme was approved by senior reps at a meeting that I wasn’t even present at.

**The truth**

Thankfully, I have a good reputation with our members at the airport, because I go above and beyond to help drivers, so

these efforts to disparage me aren’t paying off. If any driver whether LTDA member or not wants to know anything about how the airport operates and the role of the reps, or more importantly if you have heard rumours about me or been told something concerning that I have supposedly said, I would encourage you to speak to me directly or to another LTDA rep to make sure you are getting the facts.

When I see something happening that I think is wrong, I speak up, that’s just who I am, and I won’t apologise for that. The fact is that I am on drivers’ side. I have upmost respect for each and every cabbie out there and have the trade’s very best interests at heart. Anything you hear that suggests otherwise is simply just not true.

Please do not hesitate to come to me with any concerns and

I will happily address them. In the meantime, I will be continuing to support all drivers who need our help and working to keep the airport running smoothly so all drivers can maximise their earnings and make a decent living. **LTDA**



# Another Busy Year Serving LTDA Members

The LTDA successfully secured temporary measures for 95 per cent of our members, allowing them to continue working while their licences are being processed following delays.

## Streets ahead

**A**s we approach the end of another busy year at the LTDA, I wanted to take the opportunity to remind drivers about some of the recent changes and new requirements that are now part of the licensing process, that if not done correctly can cause delays and problems.

We've supported thousands of members to navigate these over the last year, as well helping drivers facing the many other issues that can impact them when driving a cab from speeding prosecutions to cases of mistaken identity. We've seen it all and whatever the problem we get results for our members.

10

### DBS Update Service

Since 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024, Transport for London (TfL) has implemented a policy requiring all drivers renewing their licences to subscribe to the DBS Update Service and retain a unique identification number. This change ensures that drivers no longer need to apply for a new DBS check at each renewal, as long as they follow a few simple steps. The service will automatically update every year, simplifying the process. However, it is important to note that TfL will now be notified of any convictions within the past three years, which could result in licence revocation or other actions in line with their policies.

LTDA members who have recently applied for a licence renewal but have not subscribed to the DBS Update Service must contact us immediately to avoid issues later on. We have encountered cases where members have failed to comply, which can lead to delays. Although this process was introduced ten months ago, many drivers who followed the rules are still awaiting their licences due to unforeseen delays.

This situation has created significant stress, particularly for those needing evidence



of their licence status to rent cabs or work with app-based services. The LTDA successfully secured temporary measures for 95 per cent of our members, allowing them to continue working while their licences are being processed. TfL has confirmed this arrangement via email, ensuring members avoid financial hardship.

### A grateful member

One of our members, Graham, shared his recent experience with licence renewal. He applied in August, assuming it would be a straightforward online process. However, he encountered numerous obstacles, including a system glitch. After switching to a paper application, Graham faced further delays. Describing his awful experience Graham said, *"The experience was horrendous, with countless emails back and forth. It was the worst decision I could have made at the time. I should have used a postal renewal application, which others have reported completing successfully within a month."*

After seeking assistance from the LTDA, including support from Heathrow office staff (Sam, Suzanne, and Chris) and a call with Anthony at the main office, Graham's issues were resolved promptly. Graham told us, *"This was an incredibly frustrating*

*experience during an already stressful time. I am caring for my terminally ill brother, juggling work and travelling to Norwich every evening. Without the LTDA's help, I would have been out of work for months. Thank you for sorting this out and easing my burden."*

### Addressing false accusations

We have also supported members facing accusations of offences they did not commit. For example, some drivers received letters from the Metropolitan Police or bailiffs demanding payment for penalty charge notices they knew nothing about, only to discover their cabs had been cloned. The LTDA worked to have all charges dropped and liaised with TfL and the police.

One such case involved John, who was accused of a hit-and-run incident. Initially uncertain whether he was at the location of the incident, we worked with ComCab to gather evidence proving he was completing a booked journey elsewhere at the time. We provided this evidence to the police, who subsequently dropped all charges.

### Points on your licence

We all know how ridiculous it is to be forced to drive at 20mph on certain major roads or across

entire boroughs, but these measures are not going away anytime soon. With these lower limits and tougher enforcement, we have seen an increase in the number of drivers accumulating 12 penalty points 'totting up' needing our support.

We are also getting more and more drivers who are not members of the LTDA asking for our assistance. Unfortunately, we have to advise them that this is not possible as it's like taking out insurance after the fact. We are known for having the best in-house lawyers in the trade and all our members are automatically protected and have the peace of mind that comes with knowing the team are on hand to help should you need it, but we can't take on members who want to join only when they find themselves in trouble. Drivers can join the LTDA with up to six penalty points on their licence to ensure they have back up and legal protection if they need it.

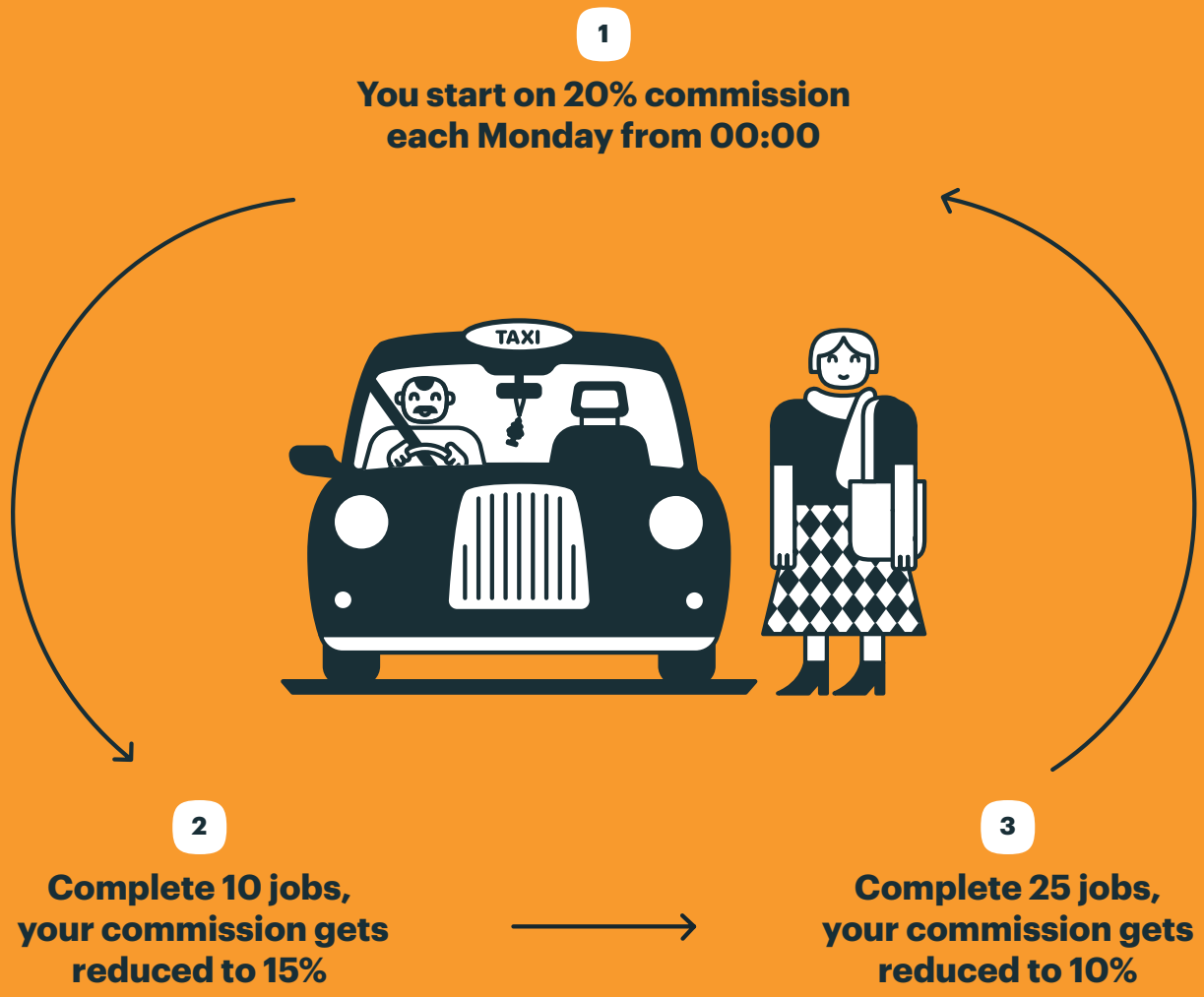
As the holiday season approaches, we extend our warmest wishes to you and your loved ones for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We are grateful for your continued support and dedication throughout the year and look forward to serving you in the year ahead. Stay safe and good luck out there!

LTDA

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# Tariff, Licensing Issues & Other Musings

**Notwithstanding the recent cyberattack, the current licence renewal process is overcomplicated, and fraught with delays and uncertainty.**

## M4 musings

**A**s Christmas approaches and the year draws to a close, some sectors are winding down but at the LTDA we are still busier than ever supporting members and the taxi trade is in one of our busiest periods.



To be fair, often the second code does work and then some days later the licence is issued. But in a significant number of cases a third or sometimes fourth code is required, all while the driver faces mounting anxiety and frustration.

This is unacceptable. Notwithstanding the recent cyberattack, the current licence renewal process is overcomplicated and fraught with delay and uncertainty. The DVLA check code element in particular is not fit for purpose.

Drivers deserve better, and hopefully this can be reviewed and improved at the earliest opportunity.

Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year to all our members and readers!

only useable for 21 days, so with all the delays at the moment, the code you put onto your application form is unlikely to be the one that gets used.

This means TfL has to contact

you and ask for another code – often they will say that your application was incomplete. So you/we at the LTDA, generate and send another code, and then it either works or it doesn't.

## The proof is in the pudding

Did I sign the petition to have a General Election? No, because we've only just had an election and whether you liked the result or not, every government deserves some time to see if their policies will bear fruit.

It's true that a lot of businesses (and farmers obviously) are complaining about tax increases and there have been many dire predictions but call me naïve in believing the whole point of the Budget was to try to improve the economy?

Whatever you might read in the press or social media they won't have done it just to be unpleasant to farmers or deliberately sabotage business. And while it is inevitable that some decisions taken are politically or

ideologically driven, ultimately nobody at the Treasury is trying to make themselves look incompetent, and no politician wants to be out of a job in three or four years.

The nature of politics at the moment means that three to four years is roughly the amount most governments get no matter what, but I think it's worth reserving judgment for now because we essentially all want the same thing: prosperity and security.

So, let's wait for that pudding to be properly cooked and see how it really tastes in the eating...



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## Tariff consultation

The Tariff Consultation has now closed and as usual speaking to five cab drivers on this will garner six different opinions on what should happen. There seems to be a consensus that last year's increase was both overdue and substantial; the proposed adjustment for 2024 is slightly more modest, and if agreed on schedule would be applied sometime in April 2025.

One of the changes that affects Heathrow is the proposal to reduce the extra from £2.00 to £1.60. There's also a proposed change for the drop-off extra to increase to £6.00 in line with Heathrow's increase.

More should be known by January/February about the likely recommendation. We will keep you updated.

## DVLA code error

I have lost count of the amount of DVLA Licence Check codes I've helped LTDA members with over the last few months.

This is a part of the licensing / renewal process that should be simple. It's an 'arm's length' method of TfL checking how many points a driver has on their licence before issuing a new Bill.

But there appears to be a problem with the technology. First of all, any code generated is

## The Crypto

It's been a while since I wrote about the crypto and I notice that Bitcoin, which is the only one I look at, is well up.

All my friends who bought crypto are now laughing at me because I didn't but do I regret it? Not really - I'm no Warren Buffett and I was no more likely to buy Bitcoin than I was to buy Coca Cola in 1988. Or Amazon or Apple before those stocks went through the roof.

There is a difference though in that Bitcoin is not a company, it's basically a commodity. It was initially touted as a currency but the number of people who use it as an actual currency is still vanishingly small compared with the dollar or the pound.

So essentially Bitcoin is being traded as a store of value, rather than Coca Cola, Apple or Amazon which are companies that sell things.

Anyway the fact is that had I been psychic and invested for example £5000 when Bitcoin was at its last low I would have around £27500 now, a return on my investment of 550% in less than 2 years, and a profit of £22500.

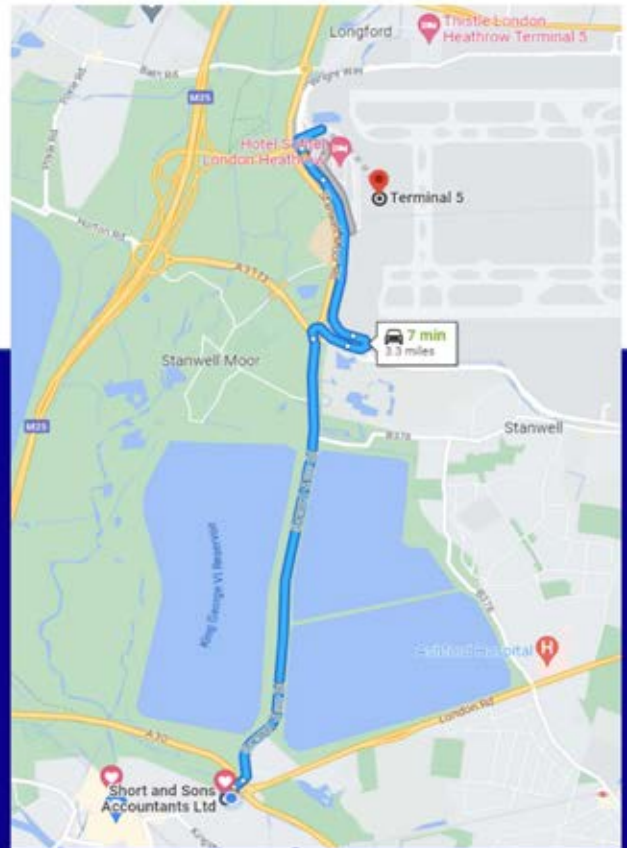
A tidy sum to be sure, but not the life changing money some people seem to be looking for out of crypto.

Good luck to all those who have made money - if I had by some miracle made that sort of profit I'd have probably taken it out again well before now, as it's still rather difficult to buy diesel or groceries with crypto...

LTDA

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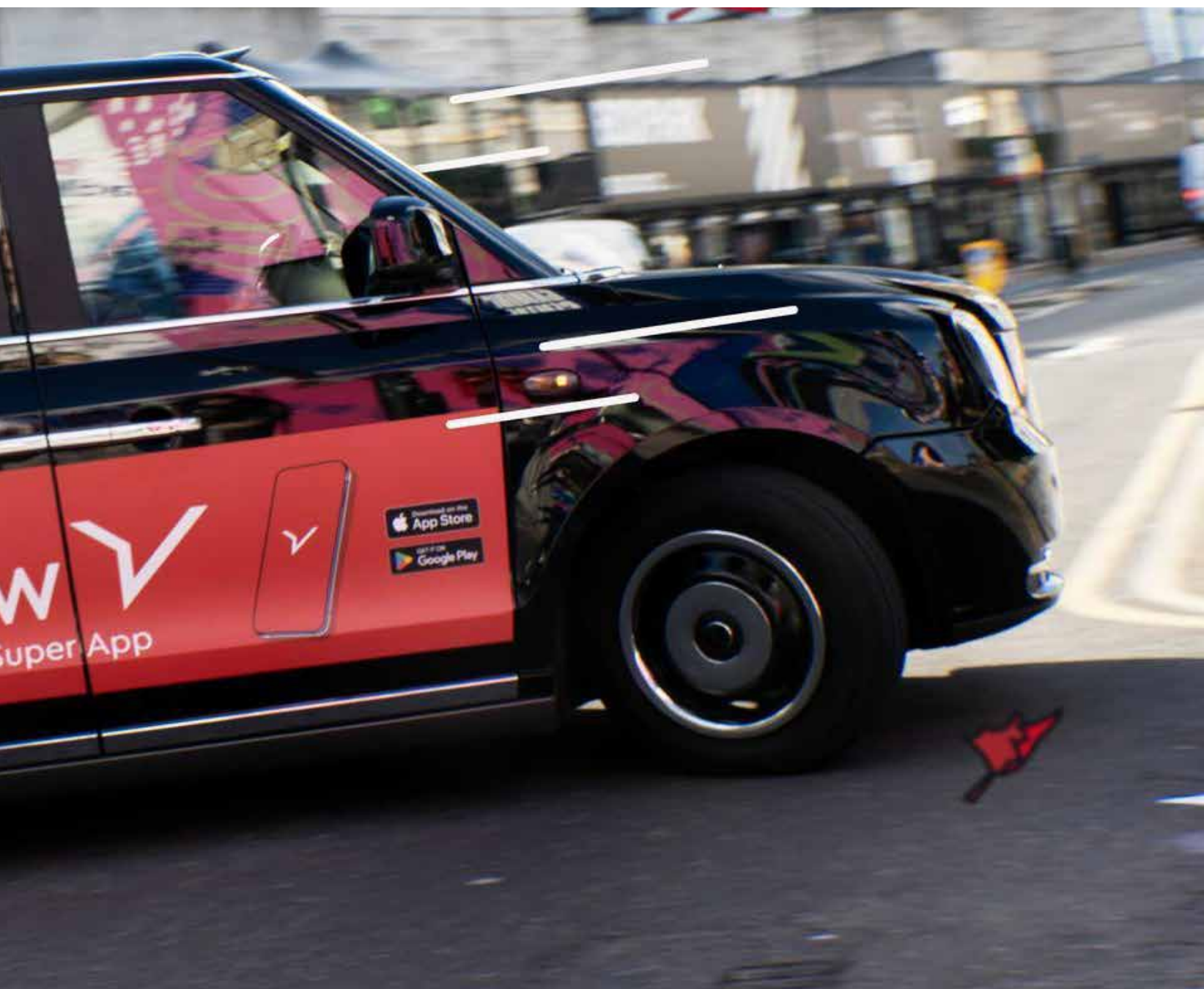
■ **Compassionate & parental leave** - we're providing drivers with a lump sum to cover time off if they welcome a new family member or lose a loved one.

■ **On-demand pay** - giving drivers the option to withdraw their earnings before FREENOW's regular weekly payment run.

To access the insurance benefits, drivers just need to have reached at least the 'Bronze' status in the FREENOW loyalty programme.

Meanwhile on-demand pay is available to all drivers for a small withdrawal fee, although drivers can unlock up to 5 free withdrawals per month if they achieve Gold Status in the FREENOW loyalty programme.

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that means a driver could earn up to £1,000 per month vs. a non-OCA driver.

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# The Hammersmith Ghost

This bizarre series of sightings and assaults left many fearful of venturing out after dark. In response small vigilante groups began to form in Hammersmith with lethal consequences.

## Rob's history trips

In the November and December of 1803, fear descended over Hammersmith - then little more than a small village on the outskirts of London - as numerous reports of a malevolent ghost began to circulate. This supposed apparition was no ordinary spirit: described as being "very tall, and very white", it was also said to sport horns and large, glass like eyes and, worse still, it physically attacked people.

## St Paul's Hammersmith

The spooky attacks all took place in and around the churchyard of St Paul's Hammersmith which, in those days, was surrounded by fields and muddy tracks. This led locals to theorise the ghost was that of a Hammersmith man who'd taken his own life the previous year by cutting his throat, and who was buried within the churchyard.

One particularly terrifying assault occurred at around 10.00pm one night when a pregnant woman was startled by the ghost after it leapt out from behind a gravestone. The figure then gave chase and grabbed the victim by the throat.

It was said the woman was so frightened she died of shock just two days later, although this was most likely a rumour. It was also claimed an elderly woman suffered a similar fate.

## The Shroud Slips

On another night, two men walking through the churchyard were attacked together; the being again attempting to seize their throats.

These fellows were bold though, with one managing to punch the figure- he claimed when he hit it, his fist landed on what



"This was no ghost though. It was an innocent man; a bricklayer named Thomas Millwood."

the jury returned a verdict of manslaughter- which the judge, Lord Chief Baron Macdonald wouldn't accept: he said Francis had to be found either guilty or not guilty of murder.

And so a verdict of guilty was returned instead, the reasoning being that mistaken identity wasn't enough to justify Francis's actions. Upon hearing the guilty verdict, Francis "sunk into a state of stupefaction exceeding despair."

## The Hammersmith Ghost Revealed

For this, the punishment was death. However, there was considerable public sympathy for Francis, as prior to the shooting he'd been a man of good character- described as "mild and gentle", and many thought he'd simply been trying to protect his community.

As such, the case was referred to the monarch at the time- King George III- who commuted the sentence to one year's hard labour.

In the wake of Thomas Millwood's death, a shoemaker named John Graham finally came forward to confess that he was in fact the Hammersmith Ghost.

He stated the reason he'd carried out the audacious hoax had been as an act of revenge: according to him, several apprentices working for him had delighted in telling his children ghost stories which had left them petrified... and so, bizarrely, he'd decided to scare the wider community with his own spooky creation.

felt like a large coat. In one particularly bold attack, the figure leapt out and disturbed a wagon which was being pulled by eight horses.

Then, late on the 29<sup>th</sup> December, a watchman named William Girdler spotted the ghost near Beavor Lane, prompting him to give chase. As the spirit ran, the shroud slipped off, although whoever- or whatever- was beneath it managed to sprint off into the dark.

## Lethal Vigilantism

This bizarre series of sightings and assaults left many fearful of venturing out after dark, and in response small vigilante groups began to form in Hammersmith, some arming themselves with firearms.

One such person was 29-year-old Francis Smith who, at around

11.00pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1804, spotted a figure walking along Black Lion Lane.

This was no ghost though. It was an innocent man; a bricklayer named Thomas Millwood who, despite the late hour, was still wearing his work clothes. In those days, bricklayers tended to have a uniform- white trousers, a white flannel waistcoat and a white apron.

Thomas had been visiting his mother and sister who lived on Black Lion Lane, and when Francis spotted him he was still close to their home, meaning his sister heard what transpired: in the dark, Francis was heard to call out, "Damn you; who are you and what are you? Damn you, I'll shoot you." Before Thomas could respond, Francis opened fire.

The bullet struck Thomas in the jaw and passed through his spine, killing him instantly.

Francis Smith was tried at the Old Bailey soon after, where it was revealed Thomas's wife had urged her husband to wear a large coat over his work clothes, for the night he was shot wasn't the first time he'd been mistaken for the Hammersmith ghost.

After an hour of deliberation,



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# Stolen for Spares

An insurance loss adjuster recently told me that car crime is at an all-time high and sadly the cab trade isn't immune.



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## Cab you drive

**O**ne of the very few motoring problems that London cabbies have traditionally not been impacted by is vehicle theft. I know that vehicle break ins and thefts from vehicles, are a problem, but to actually wake up and find your cab gone, is quite rare.

### What's going on?

Unfortunately, in recent weeks I have been made aware of an increase in late model TX4s and 114 Vitos going missing never to be seen again. The theory is that they are being stolen for spares.

It's no secret that spares for the rear wheel steering on Vitos are harder to find than a needle in a haystack. The extortionate cost of engine and other parts for the EU VI TX4 is also only increasing and

the situation is getting worse. The fact is that this is a limited market and whoever is behind the thefts must be somehow connected to our trade. It also means that someone is buying these parts and these people, whoever they are, must know that these parts are nicked, which in my book makes them worse than the thieves themselves!

### An all-time high

As a result of these thefts, I got chatting to an insurance loss adjuster, who called me checking his valuations on stolen cabs. He told me that car crime is at an all-time high, with thieves using increasingly sophisticated technology to get around alarm systems, immobilisers and tracking devices. It seems the car manufacturers are just not keeping pace and are almost disinterested in tackling the problem. The conspiracy theory being that it quite suits them, as they sell more cars!

### Even more bizarre

The loss adjuster told me that one of the most expensive, and weirdest, vehicle crimes at the moment is that a large number of Porsche Cayenne owners are returning to their cars to find that the headlights have been stolen! Just empty holes in the wing, all the wiring carefully disconnected and virtually no damage done. Initially the thinking was that they were being stolen to repair crashed and written off vehicles, and at a cost of £5000 each, £10,000 per car, it made sense. However, so many were being stolen that the crash theory did not stack up.

The real reason behind the epidemic turned out to be even more bizarre! It transpires that the daylight beam option on this Porsche creates the nearest thing to real daylight available and requires only 12 volts to function and runs at a very low temperature, making them ideal for cannabis

**"In recent weeks I have been made aware of an increase in late model TX4s and 114 Vitos going missing."**

growers! Apparently four of these headlights connected through 12v transformers are better than dozens of normal daylight bulbs, produce a better crop and because they use less electricity and generate less heat are less susceptible to being detected by police helicopters using infrared to detect hidden grows!

I have to agree with the assessor when he suggested that whoever figured this out, should be recruited by the car manufacturers and put to work designing anti-theft technology! **TAXI**

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# Oxford Street – The Times They Are A-changing

Although I have nothing but bad memories of the place as a child, it was in fact significantly better then than what we have now...

## Man in black

**T**is the season to be jolly blah blah blah. There's more than a hint of A Man Called Otto about me rather than Santa Claus...so bah humbug. Incidentally, Tom Hanks is superb in that film.

## Dull and boring

I've probably mentioned this in a previous article but, every Saturday (when there were no home matches at the Arsenal), I used to get dragged kicking and screaming down to Oxford

Street, especially over Christmas. I absolutely hated its very being, as far as I was concerned it was a place that used to suck the joy and happiness from my eternal soul (strangely similar to a few people I know). It was dull and boring with the only highlight being the bendy sausage on an international grill from the Wimpy... until that little bit of joy was taken away from me via the explosive exploits of a terrorist bomber, reducing the king of burger outlets to mere rubble.

Although I have nothing but bad memories of the place as a child, it was in fact significantly better then than what we have now, which can still be

described as a dull, boring cesspit. Plus, crime is now rife, traffic is horrific, people are oblivious to their surroundings and the shops...JESUS WEPT... what a mess.

## Still top of the pops

Now then, pop pickers, as of 2023, Oxford Street sees over half a million visitors per day. It vies with Madrid's Gran Via as the street with the highest footfall in Europe, and it retains number one spot in the UK. Yet figures show that footfall is down 20 per cent compared to 2019, according to the New West End Company, which represents Oxford Street's businesses. Obviously the

pandemic, people working from home and the cost of driving and parking in the area have had an impact. There is also a concern surrounding the quality of retail emporium gracing the UK's busiest shopping street.

With the number of American candy stores sprouting up like weeds in an unkempt garden, many retailers simply don't want their premises to open near these places. To be fair to Westminster Council, they have engaged with Oxford Street's landlords in a bid to eradicate the unwanted stores from the area. Initiatives such as offering to install local entrepreneurs or start-ups at these locations



**“There’s more chance of Inverness Caledonian Thistle beating Real Madrid in the European Champions league final than this being halted.”**

on a temporary basis, as well as suspending business rates have gleaned around 300 applications, yet some landlords still won’t co-operate.

### What’s next?

A £90 million (although now believed to be nearer £150 million) redevelopment plan for Oxford Street, led by the Council, focused on improving the Street’s overall appearance and usability was approved by two-thirds of the 1,600 residents and businesses in the area, who took part in a consultation at



the beginning of 2024. The plans proposed improved pedestrian safety as well as better lighting and paving, plus more greenery and seating. It also factored in a provision for more al-fresco dining (it looks like the roast chestnut stall-holder may have some competition). It’s hard to find fault in any of these proposals - but wait! A further change has now been proposed - by Mayor Sadiq Khan.

The Mayor has resurrected plans to ban traffic from a section of Oxford Street. This ban may also apply to cyclists (I can see sections of Twitter, X or whatever you want to call it spontaneously combusting in grim indignation). Now the first thing to recognise is that this IS NOT an attack on the taxi industry specifically. The plan is to pedestrianise the section between Marble Arch and Oxford Circus, so absolutely no motor vehicles nor self-propelled vehicles. Unsurprisingly, it’s been suggested that there may also be further restrictions between Oxford Circus and Tottenham Court Road, but this remains to be confirmed.

The section facing pedestrianisation, which is three-quarters of a mile long, has faced closure before. It was first proposed that Oxford Street be pedestrianised by the Mayor in 2018, however, this proposal was blocked by the then Conservative, Westminster Council. This time around there is a Labour Government, a Labour Council and of course, a Labour Mayor. Basically, this means that there’s more chance of Inverness Caledonian Thistle beating Real Madrid in the European Champions league final than this being halted. Now comes the \$64,000 question, is it a bad idea?

### Out with the old and in with the erm, old

The Mayor’s 2018 plans weren’t actually the first proposal of this nature. In the 1960s planners saw the possibility of elevated walkways which sat on top of podiums as traffic flowed beneath, but that was just pie in the sky. It was the 2004 mayoral election which saw a serious discussion emerge regarding pedestrianisation, with Lib Dem candidate, Simon Hughes, proposing a total ban on traffic in Oxford Street, if elected. Unfortunately for Hughes, his proposal never saw the light of day as Ken Livingstone was elected to the post and the policy was never pursued. The current Mayor did also pre-date his own 2018 recommendation by discussing the prospect of the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street back in 2016. Despite a few false starts there is a very real prospect of this finally coming to fruition.

### Problems ahead

Some of the problems which may be faced are strikingly obvious, with the redirection of 16 bus routes that travel the length (or part of) Oxford Street being the most apparent issue. Pushing buses through Wigmore Street is going to be about as popular as a rattlesnake in a lucky-dip with residents, given the 333 residential buildings situated in Wigmore, Mortimer and Goodge Street.

Then we have the Taxi industry, rank space in Oxford Street will have to be re-sited into side turnings, at strategic points where pedestrianisation has taken place. This in itself shouldn’t be a major problem given that no traffic will pass through the Street, in fact it could be a bigger problem to the PH industry who will be unable to drive through

Oxford Street, making themselves visible while awaiting a “ping”. Incidentally, they shouldn’t even be travelling along Oxford Street between 7am and 7pm, however since the restriction on motor vehicles except buses, taxis and cycles was suspended, the taxi industry has had to “suffer” the current situation. There would also be a need for the existing crossing points to remain in-situ, otherwise problems could ensue if taxi drivers are unable to pass from the north side of Oxford Street to the southern section.

As for crime being a potential issue - it’s a moot point as it already is an issue. Police entering into a high-speed chase along Oxford Street is a non-starter due to the nature of the street’s layout and the volume of traffic, so other than police officers on bikes patrolling the area and a smorgasbord of CCTV cameras retrospectively highlighting criminal activity, nothing really changes regarding crime and enforcement.

### Flawed concept?

It’s hard to say if the concept itself is a bad one or not. Stroget in Copenhagen, Rue Saint Catherine in Bordeaux and Las Ramblas in Barcelona are just three examples of successful pedestrianisation but, one size doesn’t fit all. If it does what it is supposed to do, regenerating the area, making it a more pleasant shopping area and increasing footfall, it could actually create the potential for more customers for the taxi industry, but who knows.

Ultimately, the taxi industry needs to be fully integrated and fully consulted, anything less is unacceptable given that taxis are a major part of London’s public transport network. As Bob Dylan once warbled - the times they are a-changing. **TAXI**





# A Christmas 'Lift'

**I am having a blinding night. In fact, if I'd dressed up as Father Christmas and given out mince pies, I couldn't have done any better, that is until I took a gamble on my last job...**

## Tales from the Cab

**C**hristmas is supposed to be a good time for taxi-drivers - plenty of work and Christmas spirit about, the tips are usually better and the four quid excess is very handy. Mind you, this I what I thought this time last year, but things don't always turn out as you expect.

### A successful EVENING

It was Christmas Eve and the wife was still complaining about me not staying at home with the family as I shut the door. Still, once I've given her some of that paper with the Queen's picture on she always sweetens up and she's particularly fond of the red ones.

So I'm off, and, of course, I have a bucket and sponge in the boot in case your fare coughs up their lungs in your cab but can't cough up the 60 quid you're supposed to get for the clean-up. However, there are no such problems and I am having a blinding night. In fact, if I'd dressed up as Father Christmas and given out mince pies, I couldn't have done any better. I'm even feeling a bit Christmassy myself and contemplating being nice to the mother-in-law when she arrives tomorrow on her broom.

It's still busy but you can get too greedy, so, now I'm looking for a job to take me home. It's Fulham Road and a smartly dressed guy waves me down and asks if I can give him a lift to Harrowby Street, which is good for me as it's in the right direction. However, I have to remind him that I am a taxi and that the lift, as he calls it, will cost him money, even if it is Christmas. "It's just an expression", he says, "of course, I'll pay" and gets in.

### A not so funny remark

Now I don't know about you but the road works in London do my head-in - they're all over the place like an epidemic. Road repairs, gas leaks, burst water mains and all controlled by the dreaded temporary traffic signals whose phasing is so slow, you wonder whether they've frozen up. Anyway, we're stopped at



one and I've cultivated a funny remark when this happens which I use on this guy. "Fancy a game of cards while we're waiting?" Now some people smile and others just grunt, especially when they realise the meter's moving and the cab isn't. But no-one has ever said "Yes, that's a great idea", which is what this guy in the back says. With that, he produces a pack of cards and tells me to pull over. Naturally, I'm a bit surprised but I can't tell him I was only joking and when he says I can keep the meter running, I park up and turn the engine off.

### Card sharp

Between us on the back seat we're using the briefcase as a table and I notice that he's put on shades and is riffling the cards

like a sodding magician. "Make it poker, shall we?" he says. Well, I've played a bit of poker with mates but this guy looks very serious. "No limit Texas Hold'em alright for you?" I nod weakly "For money?" He laughs "What else - it's the only way."

Fast forward 20 minutes and this guy has beaten me to the tune of £120. My cards aren't that bad but he seems to read me like a book and my 'hold' cards might just as well have been printed on both sides. I decide I've had enough and go to open the door when he puts a very firm hand on my arm. "Don't pack it in - your luck's bound to change soon." His voice is menacing and my arm is starting to go numb

so I sit down again.

He's right about my luck changing: it goes from bad to terrible, from terrible to diabolical! If I'd been dealt a joker, it wouldn't have surprised me. I finally get up.

"I've got to go, mate - you've cleaned me out."

### Feeling like a mug

As we're driving towards Marble Arch, I can see him counting the £250 he's won from me. I feel like the biggest mug there is and am well short of any Christmas spirit. He counts it at least three times, which really winds me up, before saying "I suppose this Scottish tenner is okay?" and laughs. I don't answer him because I have the hump bigger than Quasimodo.

I turn into Harrowby Street and he tells me to stop outside the Victoria Casino. "I work here", he says. "Well, that is a surprise," I say with sarcasm.

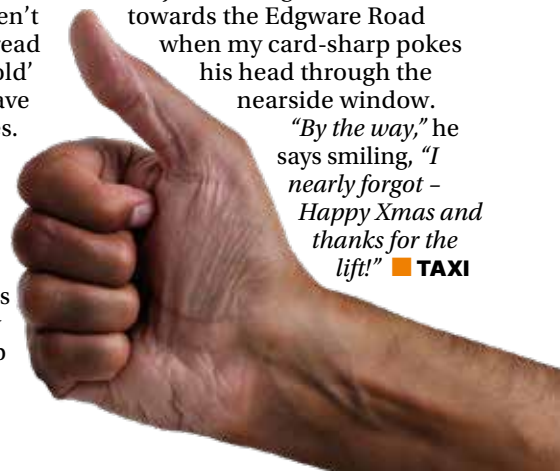
### Last chance

The only saving grace in this disastrous event is that the meter is now showing £70. "Tell you what", he says, "I'll spin you for it - double or nothing." I didn't want to, I knew I shouldn't, but I hesitated.

"Come on, you can't keep losing", he urges and slaps a coin in the palm of his hand. I don't know what to call, I have no confidence except the confidence that I will get it wrong. "Heh, heh...tails!" I say. He lifts his hand to reveal heads. "You nearly called heads as well," he laughs, "Your luck is terrible!"

It was supposed to be the season of good will but that wasn't how I was feeling towards him as he moved towards the casino entrance. I'm just waiting to turn back towards the Edgware Road when my card-sharp pokes his head through the nearside window.

"By the way," he says smiling, "I nearly forgot - Happy Xmas and thanks for the lift!" ■ TAXI



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# Cab Driver Reunites Veteran with his Beret

On Remembrance Sunday, veteran Paul Jacobs GM lost his treasured beret but the the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans network of volunteer taxi drivers scoured the capital and found it.

**T**AXI spoke to veteran Paul Jacobs GM and cab driver Dave Hemstead about how the mission to recover the beret was accomplished.

**TAXI** Hi both, lovely to meet you. Tell us what happened and how Paul was reunited with his beloved beret.

**Paul:** I was travelling up to London with my partner Renn on Remembrance Sunday when I realised that I had lost my beret somewhere along the route. The beret is important because it represents the regiment that I'm from, what I stand for and what I've done. The beret has been with me for over 17 years. Inside it is a very special token that was given to me by a school teacher who backed my decision to join the army. I pinned the coin, which has a picture of a kneeling angel on one side and the word 'hope' on the reverse behind my cap badge. It has been with me ever since, whether it's climbing Everest or Kilimanjaro, walking across Norway, running marathons - wherever I may be, that coin is with me.

When I realised that my beret was missing, Renn put a post on social media asking for help and fortunately someone from the Taxi Charity saw the post and sent the request out to their network of volunteer drivers who began scouring London to find it.

**Dave:** I saw the message on WhatsApp to say that the beret was missing and as Paul lived quite close to my location, I guessed the route he might have taken to the tube and thought I'd go and have a look. Fortunately, someone had come across the beret and put it on a fence, so I was delighted when I found it. I was put in touch with Paul and I dropped it off at his home later the same day so he had it for his appearance on Good Morning Britain the following day.

**Paul:** I was scheduled to appear on Good Morning Britain on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> to talk about Remembrance, but when the Taxi Charity told

"Fortunately, someone had come across the beret and put it on a fence."

them the story about my beret it was included in the interview and quite rightly Dave and the London cab drivers who volunteer for the Taxi Charity got the recognition they deserve, for what they do to support veterans.

The news about what had happened gained momentum and after an interview by the Cenotaph with ITV just after 11.00am on the Monday, Dave and I met at The Clarence Public House in Fulham. It was great to also meet WWII veteran Marie Scott, and we spent the afternoon chatting, enjoying the generous hospitality of the Landlord, Tony Millard, and doing yet another press interview.

**Dave:** On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November, The Clarence Public House was hosting an Armistice Day event for veterans and it was great to spend the afternoon with Paul, Renn, Marie and our host Tony, who is a huge supporter of the Taxi Charity. Both Paul and I served with The Rifles so it was very poignant that I had found the lost beret of someone from my regiment.

**Paul:** Dave is a great guy and I thoroughly enjoyed catching up with him on Monday and meeting the incredible D Day veteran Marie Scott - how can she be 98! I am looking forward to spending more time with the Taxi Charity and meeting more of the volunteer cab drivers and I cannot thank them enough for finding my treasured beret.

To find out more about the support the Taxi Charity offers to veterans, to donate or to volunteer visit [www.taxicharity.org](http://www.taxicharity.org)



Paul Jacobs GM with London cab driver and Taxi Charity volunteer Dave Hemstead.

**Rifleman Paul Jacobs, served in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion The Rifles. Paul was 20, when he lost his sight in Afghanistan. Serving as a VALLON man—the first to go out and the last to return—his role was full of danger. During a mission, a devastating explosion inflicted severe injuries, leading to the loss of his sight and mental trauma, putting him in a month-long coma.**

He was awarded the George Medal by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for his resilience and courage.

Paul spent his early life in care and is passionate about encouraging people to foster and is an Ambassador for the not-for-profit Diagrama Fostering Agency.

## About the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans

The Taxi Charity is run by volunteer London black taxi drivers and has been supporting thousands of veterans since 1948. It is the only Forces charity that focuses on providing fun and entertainment and arranges free trips (for veterans from all conflicts) to the Netherlands and France for acts of commemoration and days out to museums, concerts, or social events across the UK.

The charity received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2021 and celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023, a remarkable milestone for a small, niche charity peopled by enthusiastic volunteers.

In 2024, the charity took veterans to Normandy for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day and commemorated the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation Market Garden in the Netherlands in September. In May 2025 they will be returning to the Netherlands for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dutch Liberation.

To fund and facilitate their work, the charity is wholly reliant on donations, grants and sponsorship.

[www.taxicharity.org](http://www.taxicharity.org)

For more information, to arrange interviews or to request images please contact

Christina Bowden, Bowden PR, 07984 433614, [christina@bowdenpr.co.uk](mailto:christina@bowdenpr.co.uk), [www.bowdenpr.co.uk](http://www.bowdenpr.co.uk)



# Christmas Prize Winners



Congratulations to December's prize winners! If you haven't already, join the LTDA lottery & get your new LTDA diary on the dashboard to be in with a chance of winning in 2025.



## DIARY PRIZE!

### ONE4ALL BONUS FOR LTDA MEMBERS

The LTDA diary spotters have been out and about, on the lookout for members displaying their diaries on the dashboard. They spotted Carl Jeavons in his cab, and he was thrilled to receive a One4all gift card worth £150. Next up was Steve Cullinane, another longstanding member of the LTDA, with his LTDA diary displayed in pride of place, who was delighted to be handed the £150 worth of vouchers, which will come in handy this Christmas.

LTDA members should receive a new 2025 diary in the post shortly, make sure your new diary is on the dashboard and visible and it could be you next!

One4all cards can be spent on a huge array of items from 130 high street brands in store or online and restaurants. Participating retailers and restaurants include Argos, H&M, River Island, B&Q, John Lewis, Harvester, Pizza Express and Marks & Spencer.



Each year, the LTDA gives away thousands of pounds worth of gift cards to its members. All you need to do to be in with a chance to win is have your LTDA membership diary proudly on display and let us do the rest. Good luck out there.

25

## LOTTO WINNER!

You've probably heard of the **LTDA Lottery**. What you probably don't know is that since it started in 1986, we've paid out **more than £2,205,000** in prize money to more **than 400 winners!**

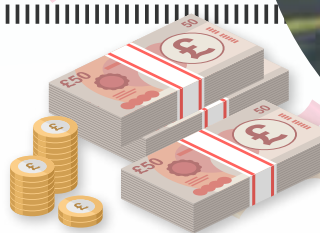
### CONGRATULATIONS MR PAUL BISHOP!

The latest LTDA lottery winner is Mr Paul Bishop. Paul only recently entered the LTDA lottery and was an instant winner. He was very surprised to receive the call saying that he had won the £5000 prize after buying his first monthly ticket.

Paul told us that he will be putting the money towards celebrating his wife's upcoming milestone birthday and their 40th wedding anniversary. We hope they enjoy the celebrations, and we wish them the very best!

#### LTDA LOTTERY

The first prize in our lottery is **£5,000 - every month!** But you won't win it if you're not in it. **Tickets cost £5 each per month.** And even if you don't win, you'll know that proceeds from the lottery contribute towards promoting and supporting the trade.

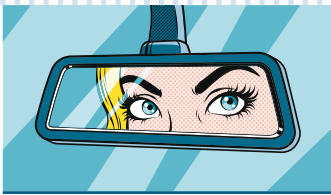


ENTER **LTDA** LOTTERY BELOW

SCAN ME!



To be in it to win it, scan above to enter online or call **020 7286 1046** and ask about the LTDA Lottery.



# Toilet Roll Holders and Tinsel



**Tis the season to... fight the urge to beat Mr Meg on the backside with a holly bush branch.**

## A woman of words

**This has nothing at all to do with conjugal rights, and everything to do with Christmas gifts. Pressies under the tree are always a thorny subject here at Meg Towers.**

It all stems from our first married Christmas when Mr Meg shopped at 4.59pm on Christmas Eve, in Robert Dyas. He grabbed a washing up bowl and drainer set for me. He didn't even wrap it up and bought in a colour that was not a match for the kitchen.

It's not that I hold grudges. But four decades later I remain in a gift huff with him.

## Gift related trouble

Since then, I treat myself to whatever I want for Christmas and he might order himself some nice new rawlplugs from the Screwfix catalogue. This

arrangement has kept us out of the Divorce Court. I buy the gifts for the Mini Megs and family and neighbours and friends, and he sits in his shed with his fingers in his ears going 'LaLaLaLa' and stays out of

**"He sits in his shed with his fingers in his ears going 'LaLaLaLa' and stays out of gift related trouble."**

gift related trouble. That was, until yesterday, when he placed a huge cardboard box on the kitchen table and announced, "This year we are going to make our Christmas gifts! It's more eco-friendly, more personal," then he did a drum roll thing on the tablecloth with the palms of his hands, "It's cheaper!"

"When you say 'WE' what do

you mean?" I asked him.

The silly man didn't hear the menace in my voice. "Us! You and me!" he cried, delighted with himself.

I asked him if he had bumped his head doing DIY in the past 24 hours. "No. Why?" he answered.

## Talk me through it

Then I asked him to talk me through the box.

There is a website he visits called tightgits.com, or something like that, and making your own Christmas shite was recently on it. The premise is that you gather up stuff destined for the dustbin... and make presents from it.

Mr Meg produced a list:

With used loo roll holders, he planned to make crib characters; Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus, for the woman at No 94. I told him she was Muslim and wouldn't be thrilled with those.

He produced some old glassware and told ME I could poach plums, put them in the jars and tie them with ribbon

for our neighbour across the road. She's diabetic and super allergic, so that's a no.

With the assorted string in the box, he planned to make a macrame wall hanging for the uber trendy minimalist pair who had just gutted their house three doors down. I assured him such an item would make this pair vomit on their polished concrete floor.

## My gift

Next out of the box came twigs, dead leaves and berries - like you'd get on a primary school class nature table.

"These are for your present!" he said, beside himself with excitement, "a wreath for the front door!"

To cut a long bad tempered Christmas story short - the box and its contents made a lovely pre-Christmas bonfire.

And, I did not poach Mr Meg's plums.

Happy Christmas one and all! Mwah x

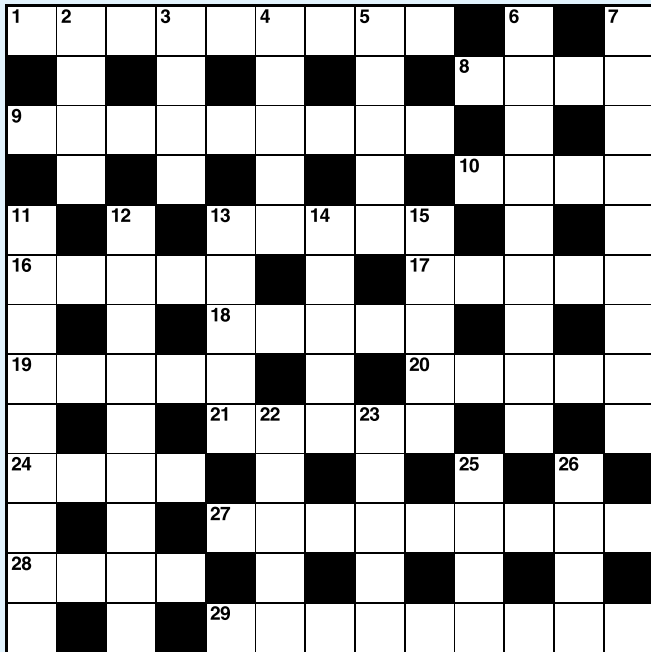
**TAXI**





# Puzzler Page

## Crossword



### ACROSS

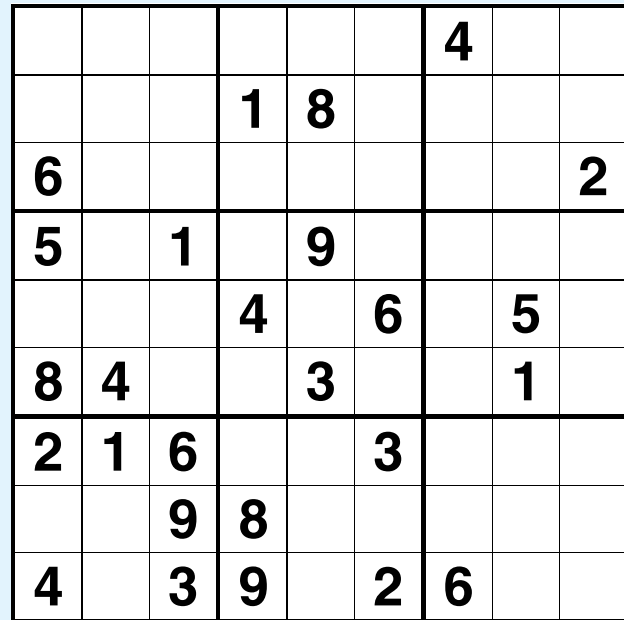
- 1 Item of cutlery (4,5)
- 8 Panorama (4)
- 9 Diffused (9)
- 10 Sudden sharp stab of feeling (4)
- 13 Ballots cast (5)
- 16 Model Campbell or actress Watts (5)
- 17 Really cross (5)
- 18 Reprimand (5)
- 19 Evocative of a style from the past (5)
- 20 Discharge through the pores (5)
- 21 Baby's biscuits (5)
- 24 Coniferous evergreens (4)
- 27 Taxing (9)
- 28 Tenant's charge (4)
- 29 Adding money to (an account) (9)

### DOWN

- 2 Is indebted to (4)
- 3 Cougar's other name (4)
- 4 Keyboard instrument (5)
- 5 Overweight (5)
- 6 Central American country (9)
- 7 Strutted (9)
- 11 Competition slip (5,4)
- 12 Inflicting pain on (9)
- 13 Face protector (5)
- 14 Runs briskly (5)
- 15 Sporting teams (5)
- 22 Speak (5)
- 23 Work (flour) into dough (5)
- 25 Tube for air or liquid (4)
- 26 Rotate (4)

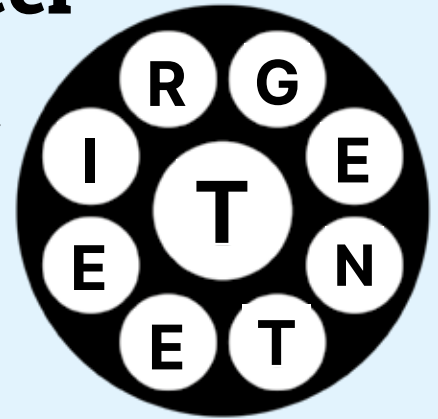
## Sudoku

Have a go at this medium level Sudoku puzzle. Fill the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 just once.



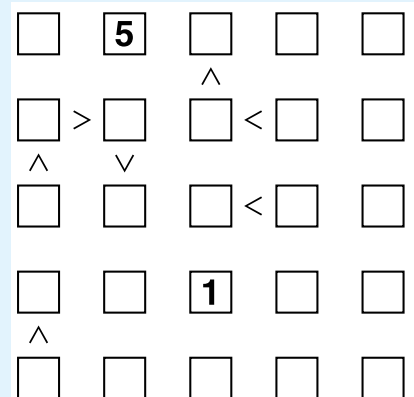
## Wordwheel

How many words of four letters or more can you make from this Wordwheel? Each word must use the central letter, and each letter may be used once only. At least one nine-letter word can be found. We found 13 words - can you do better?



## Futoshiki

Fill in the blank squares so that each row and column contains all the numbers 1 - 5. Use any given numbers and the symbols that tell you if the number in the square is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.



All answers to puzzler on p30



**07957 465423**  
e16-taxirentals.co.uk

**TAXIS TO RENT**

- Ascott's maintained.
- Pay by cash/bank/online.
- Taxis bought and sold.



**Get in touch**

---

 James Martin

 james.martin@cplone.co.uk

 01727 739 185

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**Earn more by selling  
outside London.**

**We pay cash, collect  
and drive away.**

**John  
07702 554934**

28

**TAXI** **LINAGE** **TAXI**

**CABS WANTED**

- **Low mileage tx4's and Euro 5's wanted.** Earn more by selling outside London. NOT BEATEN ON PRICE. John 07702 554 934
- **All de-commissioned TX4s wanted.** Instant decision, cash paid. We come to you. Call - 07973 335 739
- **Euro 5 about to be decommissioned,** Cabs wanted, TX4's and Vito's. Top Price paid. Call John 07702 554 934
- **Cabs wanted, London based buyer,** same day collection, cash or bank transfer, sell + rent back also available. Call Danny - 07877093866
- **All cabs wanted. Tx4, euro 4, 5 & 6 also TXE wanted** We come

to you, any condition, very quick decision. Cash paid instantly. 07702 554 934

**CABS FOR SALE**

- **TX4, euro 6 limited edition for sale,** 148k miles, 67 plate. Call Michael - 07803252586
- **13 reg mercedes vito, plated until June 6th 2025,** Engine rebuild 4 years ago. £4,500. Call Ozzie - 07947644541
- **Cabs for sale. Main Dealer service history.** Non-fleet cabs, trade sales. New stock daily. Cabs also wanted. Finance Paid 07957 465423
- **LEVC Comfort+, 87,000 miles,** Full Service History, plated until Sept'25, £35000 ONO. Call George 07903070656

- **Levc plated till end february, full service history,** 73.000 Miles, new erad end September 24 £34.500 ONO call 07984634684

**CABS FOR RENT**

- **Vitos 113 & 114, also tx4s for rent** 07872 504 604
- **TXE's available for rent, from £310 per week.** Call 07951 843663
- **Rent Taxis, Euro 6 and also LEVC Cabs from £250 - £335.** We also do repairs on cabs, call Nick 020 7700 1045 / 07951 661 430
- **TXEs, TX4s and Vitos available from £260 per week** contact Sabri – 07958973944

**OTHER**

- **Cherished number plate for sale,** M40 CAB, open to offers. Call 07976 738225

# LTDA APPLICATION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Badge No. \_\_\_\_\_

Badge colour (please state whether green or yellow) \_\_\_\_\_ Year badge obtained \_\_\_\_\_

Suburban badge sector numbers \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been a member of the LTDA before? (please tick) Yes  No

Do you currently have points on your DVLA driving license? (please tick) Yes  No

If Yes how many points do you have?

Do you have any motoring or other prosecutions pending? Yes  No

Please note: We do not provide assistance for any matters that have occurred prior to you joining the LTDA.

Please tick if you **DO NOT** wish to receive information from the LTDA and other related organisations in the future

I understand that my application for membership of the Association must be approved by the Council of Management and that until this is confirmed I am not eligible to vote in relation to any form of Association matters. I agree that all benefits prior to approval of membership shall be at the discretion of the Council of Management.

**Please note: We do not provide assistance for any matters that have occurred prior to you joining LTDA.**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## LTDA Basic Direct Debit Instructions Instructions to your Bank/Building Society to pay Direct Debits:

Please complete parts 1 to 5 to instruct your branch to make direct payments from your account. Then return the form to LTDA, FREEPOST, London, SE1 1PP

To the Manager of \_\_\_\_\_

Bank/Building Society Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Service User Number

9 1 4 4 2 8

### For Office use only

1. Please write the name and full postal address of your branch in the box (left)
2. Name of account holder \_\_\_\_\_
3. Account Number
4. Bank Sort Code  -  -   
Banks/Building Societies may not accept instructions to pay Direct Debit from some types of account.
5. Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_



This guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer

### The Direct Debit Guarantee



- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit LTDA will notify you (10 working days) in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request LTDA to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by LTDA, or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.
  - If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when LTDA asks you to.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

You can now also apply to join the LTDA online, simply scan here to complete an online application:



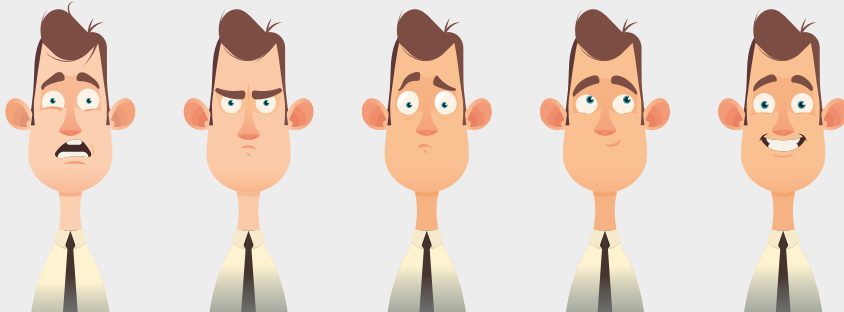


# Cabbie's Cartoon



30

## PUZZLER ANSWERS



S	O	U	P	S	P	O	O	N	N	S
W	U	I	B	V	I	E	W			
P	E	R	M	E	A	T	E	D	C	A
S	A	N	S	P	A	N	G			
E	T	V	O	T	E	S	R	G		
N	A	O	M	I	R	I	R	A	T	E
T	R	S	C	O	L	D	G	R		
R	E	T	R	O	T	E	X	U	D	E
Y	U	R	U	S	K	S	A	D		
F	I	R	S	T	N	D	T			
O	I	S	T	R	E	N	O	U	S	
R	E	N	T	E	A	C	R			
M	G	C	R	E	D	I	T	I	N	G

## Crossword

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### Sudoku

1	7	8	6	2	5	4	3	9
3	2	4	1	8	9	5	6	7
6	9	5	3	7	4	1	8	2
5	6	1	2	9	8	7	4	3
9	3	7	4	1	6	2	5	8
8	4	2	5	3	7	9	1	6
2	1	6	7	4	3	8	9	5
7	5	9	8	6	1	3	2	4
4	8	3	9	5	2	6	7	1

### Futoshiki

1	5	3	2	4		
		^				
3	>	2	4	<	5	1
	^		∨			
5	1	2	<	4	3	
2	4	1	3	5		
	^					
4	3	5	1	2		

### Wordwheel

SOLUTION: TEETERING

All words: Egret, enter, entire, entree, getter, girt, greet, grit, inert, integer, inter, nett, regent, rent, rite, teeing, teen, teeter, tenet, tent, tern, tier, tiger, tine, tinge, tint, tire, titre, tree, trite, TEETERING.

Word targets: Excellent: 26, Good: 22, Target: 16, Kids: 11



# NEED TO RENT A CAB?

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AVAILABLE  
TO RENT  
FROM £240  
PER WEEK**

**TXEs  
AVAILABLE  
TO RENT  
FROM £335  
PER WEEK**



**FACING A  
NASTY BALLOON  
PAYMENT?  
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INSTANT QUOTE  
AND GET CASH  
NOW!  
ON ALL  
TXEs**

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**Unit 7, Dominion Business Park, Goodwin Road, Edmonton N9 0BG**

# Good news, Mr Mayor.

The all-new Ford **MAXiCab** is **100%** electric.

A zero emission black cab for London?

Net zero 2030 target achieved in 2025!



**It's time to choose change.**



An exclusive partnership between Ford & Cab Direct  
Find out more at [cabdirect.com/london](https://cabdirect.com/london)