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THE KNOWLEDGE

The esteemed right to ply for hire in London can only be achieved by completing the Knowledge of London, which was started in 1884 and continues to the present day.

This fact was highlighted and reinforced in TfL's Law Commission response (TPH 1080 p.4) which states "London's taxi service is widely recognised as the best in the world. The world renowned Knowledge of London that must be demonstrated before a taxi driver is licensed to ply for hire, means that these drivers have an unparalleled understanding of London's streets and points of interest, as well as pride in their profession".

PUBLICLY HIRED V PRE-BOOKING

Plying for hire allows a taxi to be publicly hired the significance of this was further clarified by the Maxwell Stamp report (1970) which stated... "The entitlement to ply for hire being for the most part safeguards against the possible abuses of the travelling public by taxi drivers and of taxi drivers by their passengers that are inherent in a situation where it is reckoned that any member of the public, however defenceless should be able to pick up any one of a large fleet of identical vehicles in the street to take him or her to the destination of his or her choice without being harmed, lost or cheated in the process. The reason for the distinction between the two types of vehicle is that taxis are allowed to ply for hire and private hire cars are not and it has always been held that a degree of control is necessary in the interests of the travelling public, when the vehicle can be hailed in the street which does not hold for vehicles that have to be ordered in advance. More recent analysis and comparison of this was explored in an article by Rory Sutherland of The Spectator 20th July 2013 where he states... "Now, useful as it once was, many people feel the Knowledge has been made superfluous by the arrival of cheap satellite navigation devices. I thought this. Conventional economic thinking, obsessed with 'market efficiency', would argue that the Knowledge is a 'barrier to entry' erected to maintain the scarcity of cab drivers, rather like a medieval guild. But as some people have begun to realise, markets need trust before they can be efficient. Medieval guilds existed for this reason. Trust is always more difficult in cities because of the anonymity they afford. Guilds offset this problem. If it is costly and time-consuming to join a guild, the only people who enter a trade are those with a serious commitment to a craft. And guilds are self-policing; the up-front cost of being admitted adds to the fear of being ejected. Could you really trust cabbies as you do now if they had gained their licences through attending three or four evening classes and shelling out for a second-hand TomTom? Reciprocation, reputation and pre-commitment are the three big mechanisms which add to trust. You can use a small local firm which needs your loyalty. You can use someone larger with a brand reputation. Or you can trust someone who has made a big investment in getting a badge, and stands to lose everything if caught –cheating".

While no system can claim to be perfect, figures released by TfL in the "Where to Guv" report 2005



Putting the London Cab back on Point

for the period 2000 – 2005 showed an average of 1034 complaints against taxi drivers were received per year. However it is estimated that London taxis complete 75 million hirings per year! This clearly demonstrates Mr Sutherland's analysis of why the knowledge is fundamental for passenger trust.

THE KNOWLEDGE A SAFETY ISSUE

Trust is also about safety as highlighted in Mr Ellis's response (TPH 0384) where he states "A driver who is lost can inadvertently take a passenger into danger and can also be taken into danger by passengers... Uncertainty regarding a route reduces the driver's ability to drive safely, especially if searching for directional signs or road names... In responding to street hails a taxi driver does not have the luxury of time to input a destination and wait for a sat nav to calculate the route but needs to move off quickly in the right direction to avoid hindering other traffic, causing an obstruction or creating danger."

Of the 343 Licensing Authorities about 60 per cent of them test taxi drivers on their local geographical knowledge. Only in London and Northampton does the estimated average time to acquire a level of geographical knowledge take more than 12 months. The All London Knowledge testing currently takes an average of 44 months to complete. However in 2007 the London Chamber of commerce report on the London Taxi trade asked over 120 company directors: "Would you be willing to accept any of the following if it meant there were more taxis on the streets - A less stringent "Knowledge" requirement for drivers?" 83% answered No.

By not defining plying for hire and repealing the term will devalue the KoL. Why spend a number of years completing the Knowledge to gain an entitlement that has been repealed along with valuable underpinning case law.

We therefore take the view that plying for hire and the knowledge are synonymous with London, and are intrinsically linked. Devalue one you devalue the other. By defining plying for hire will not only reinforce our rights and privileges but also assure Londoners that the future of their taxi trade will remain safe to use and of the highest standard.

London - Safe in the Knowledge since 1884 let it remain so! The Knowledge – A London Thing Since 1884

BE PROACTIVE – NOT REACTIVE

It's your job. It's your future!

Calling ALL Taxi Drivers help us to

"Put the London Cab back on Point"

Text: **4Hire** (along with your name and badge number) to **60777**

(Your details will be treated in confidence)

