

Item 9.3 – Street Knowledge Test - Deputation by Russell McLeod

As a trade we are well aware that during Covid, Aberdeen's Taxi & PH Fleet has diminished by approx. 25%. A large percentage of those who have left the trade seem to have been those drivers that worked "the ranks" which impacts Taxi numbers servicing the ranks at peak times especially at weekends.

Our trade has no intention of burying our heads in the sand, we realise there is an issue, and we want to be proactive in increasing the Aberdeen Fleet, but we will not, nor should we, forget that we have standards, standards that have been built over the past 40+ years, standards that we should not just disregard, because we have a shortage of Taxis at some peak times. We really need to emphasis the point, at peak times ! It is not an everyday issue.

Our trade is not the only trade that is struggling to recruit, ask the bus companies ? Last numbers I was aware of, is that they are 300 drivers short. Bus companies openly acknowledge that they have no plans to re-start their late-night buses anytime soon and certainly not before October or November, at earliest.

We have been represented at many groups over the past 2 years, for once being allowed to take part in conversations that directly affect our industry, with other stakeholders and not as an afterthought.

Since the City started to open after Covid, it is only the Taxi trade that have kept people moving after 11pm, no help from bus companies, our most used night-time rank (St Nicholas Church) not accessible. No direction for members of the public to know where to find, or wait for a Taxi, until most of the SFP measures were lifted, nowhere for our customers to wait. It has been a nightmare, but slowly we are getting back to some resemblance of normality. As of 2 weeks ago, we now have night-time Marshals again, most of the night-time ranks are now back operational, things will begin to improve, but we cannot, nor should we, be expected to do it on our own.

Proposals that you have before you today, are in short, just not acceptable to our trade. They would undo 40+ years of striving to make our industry, the best it can be.

- (1) Why would someone being asked to do the same job, be allowed to do this with a lesser test?
- (2) No test at all will put our industry back many years, we have one of the best, most knowledgeable fleet in Scotland, maybe even the UK, why would you want to erode all those years of hard work?
- (3) Yes, we would welcome this, but for the record, this was muted by the T&PHCG almost 3 years ago.
- (4) Nothing wrong with anything that improves standards, it just needs to be across the board, but there is the issue of cost?

In association with Aberdeen Taxis, ComCab Aberdeen & Rainbow City Taxis, we would like to propose the follow as an alternative to these proposals. It might be prudent to point out, that allowing no test for PH Drivers, would be beneficial financially for all Taxi Offices, remember, that is the only way they can work, but in our view, allowing this would seriously damage the standards that we have all striven to achieve.

- (1) At present, each applicant needs to achieve 75% pass rate on all 4 modules, we propose that this is reduced to 60%. For obvious reasons, if it was felt that keeping the Highway Code part at 75%, then we would have no issue.
- (2) If an applicant, passes at least 2 modules out of 4, then that applicant should only have to sit the parts that were failed on first sitting. We would propose that each applicant is allowed only 2 attempts to pass. After this they would need to start again.
- (3) Test for a PH Driver should remain the same as a Taxi Driver, they are doing the same job.

We feel that the above, will help increase those applying and passing the Knowledge Test, which in turn will steadily increase the Aberdeen Fleet, all three of our offices now run Taxi training schools, to help & teach applicants how to pass the Street Knowledge test, obviously during the past 2 years being able to maintain these schools has been a challenge, but currently all 3 schools are well attended and with a little help we are confident that we can begin to reverse the downward trend, over the coming 12 months. We just need you to give us a little help, without having a detrimental effect, on both the standards and future of our trade.

It would be totally wrong and almost immoral, to allow a situation, where those drivers who have worked long & hard over the past 2 years, just to keep their heads above water, to have their earnings eroded overnight, with a decision, that could have a catastrophic impact on our trade and destroy 40+ years of hard work, from many, to have the best, most knowledgeable fleet in the country.

Russell McLeod, Rainbow City Taxis.