

es and funeral services and if they did nothing else I accept they would be exempt from the need to licence.....but every web site I go in on offer "Airport transfers" "business chauffeurs" and all manner of things not related to weddings or funerals.

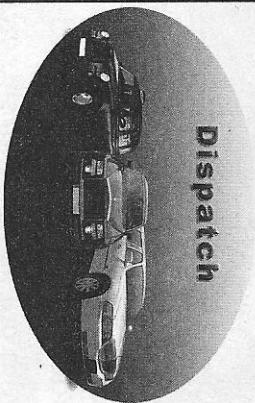
The Hospital activities in many parts of the country go unchecked and only last week we had a news story land on my desk about the huge amount of money being spent on volunteer services..... In the article a lady said she worked 24/7 had bought a new car 18 months ago that now had 85,000 miles on the clock and she only got 42p per mile!!! Please don't bother getting your calculator out .....that is £35,700 or £457.69p per week. Now hands up all those drivers in our industry that would like to earn £457 a week!?? I think there are just a few.....let's move on shall we.

And this is the revised Magistrates Court Sentencing Guidelines ....Eh!! What!! Yes the Magistrates Courts had a look at what they were doing and changed stuff round a lot and one of the things that got changed was the sentencing rules on TOUTING!!

Under those rules a conviction for toutting now carries an optional disqualification from driving from between one to twelve months depending on how serious the offence was and it also stretched out the offence to embrace a business that was allowing their drivers to tout a little bit later in the year. In August, the Public Carriage office changed their rules as well so if you get caught for toutting you get your badge revoked as well.

Problem here appears to be that I have not heard of one single prosecution for toutting having been brought so that we can highlight it in the Paper. Hello!! Councils are you listening??!! Forget plying for hire for a moment ~ let's have a go at toutting.... so if you have a club out there on the High Street where taxis and p/h hang around and shout "do you need a taxi?" at the crowd .....that is toutting.....that is an arrestable offence.....that could lead to heavy fines and disqualifications!!! Perhaps that might get the message out there a bit stronger than at present?!! Oh and if all those vehicles come from one particular company.....perhaps grabbing the collar of the boss at the same time might have an impact??!!

**Next we had the Corporate Manslaughter Act** - nothing to report here because I do not think we have an industry related death which was caused by any failure of companies or Councils in their duty of care. What we can say is all those councils that give out school or other contracts have been just a little bit more careful...and I for one am not complaining about that!!



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**Next we have the Local Transport Act...**just passed and given Royal Assent....what's that got to do with us?? Well since 1985 Taxis have been able to run taxi bus services, under the Transport Act of that year, well, 23 years later so can private hire!! Eh!! you what!! Yes, Private hire vehicles stopping at bus stops without a booking and without illegally plying for hire!!

Well, I have to say the taxi trade have had 23 years to get the taxi bus services going and have done diddley squat so let's see if the p/h do any better. The Act has been passed as I have said but the functionality is going out to consultation and the documents arrived on my desk just as I was writing this review so if you look at page 18 you will see the announcement letter and the links to the website to get the full consultation document.

Oh!, and finally what else did not happen in 2008? Well, if you cast your minds back to May you may remember Nigel Dotchin from the DFT writing to all Local Authorities saying forget first phase 2010 we are going out to consultation again in Summer of 2008.....no!! relax you did not miss it, it missed the summer, but I am informed by the DFT that we should get the consultation in mid January 2009 and we have arranged to give details in our February edition. So we started 2008 with a consultation and we will start 2009 with two consultations!! It will remain to be seen whether the effects of all this hard work will amount to a noticeable change for the better. I for one certainly hope so but in the meantime and until next time sayonara ...Oh!! and a Happy and prosperous New Year to one and all!!!