

PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE: 8 February 2011

Report of the Chief Strategic Planning and Environment Officer

**APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL FOR THE FITTING OF ROOF MOUNTED
ADVERTISING ON HACKNEY CARRIAGES & PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES**

1. Background

- 1.1 An application has been made by Mr Lewis Smith for approval to fit roof mounted illuminated advertising boxes to Hackney Carriages and private hire vehicles.
- 1.2 This report is to provide details of the application to enable the application to be considered by Committee.

2. Details.

- 2.1 Mr Smith proposes to use two-sided straight pyramid top boxes on private hire vehicles, and triangular top boxes on Hackney Carriages. He claims the different style of signs will assist the public in differentiating between the two types of vehicle.
- 2.2 Mr Smith's advertising literature lists a number of benefits of this style of advertising, including providing an extra income for drivers and taxi companies during the current economic climate in which the cost of operating a taxi has increased due to fuel price increases and larger insurance premiums. He also details how in his view illuminated top boxes make it easier for the public to quickly identify a licensed vehicle.
- 2.3 Clearly it is vitally important for safety reasons that any object on the top of a vehicle should be mounted safely and Mr Smith proposes two methods of affixing the boxes, magnets or nuts and bolts. A copy of the proposal literature is attached to the report as Appendix A.
- 2.4 Mr Smith has been requested to provide an example sign fitted to a vehicle available for inspection at the meeting.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 At present all licensed vehicles are identifiable by an exterior licence plate issued by the Authority that must be displayed together with plate signs on the interior of the vehicle. The driver is also required to wear a numbered photo-identity badge and display a copy in the vehicle. The vehicle is also required by motoring law to display a registration plate. In addition to this, Hackney Carriages are immediately recognisable as are clearly marked as black with a white bonnet or

all black in the case of vehicles which meet the Metropolitan Police Conditions of Fitness. All licensed drivers are vetted in respect of their criminal convictions and medically examined to ensure they are fit and proper persons.

- 3.2 In considering the appropriateness of the use of advertising equipment the Committee should consider the safety of the product and its suitability within a vehicle used for hire and reward and in particular may consider:
- Acceptability of the medium by fare paying passengers
 - Whether the medium will cause confusion in distinguishing between Hackney Carriage and private hire vehicles.
 - Whether such adverts will confuse passengers by distracting from the licence plate numbers displayed
 - Type, size and design of the equipment
 - Secure mounting and safety of the equipment
 - The safe storage of any necessary controls, and any implications of this storage e.g. reduction of luggage compartment
 - Effects on the suitability and comfort of the seating arrangement
- 3.3 The committee may also wish to take into account that a similar application was approved by Public Protection Committee in January 2006 in respect of illuminated roof-mounted advertising boxes on Hackney Carriages. The committee discounted the use of magnets and concluded that the boxes were to be affixed to the vehicles by bolts. The following additional Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence Condition was introduced at that time:
- “External advertising in the form of illuminated roof signs affixed to the vehicle in an approved manner is approved subject to the advertisement being approved by the Authority, in writing, prior to its use.”
- The Authority would approve the use of triangular roof signs on hackney carriages where they are affixed to the roof securely by means of nuts and bolts and the advertising does not concern alcohol, smoking or sexual issues. The advertising media did not prove popular and their use has not been adopted.
- 3.4 There is no similar condition for private hire vehicles. The essence of private hire work is that it is “private” with vehicles being used for private hire by pre-booking. Private Hire Vehicles may not resemble hackney carriages or give the appearance of being a taxicab available for immediate hire by the public. Signs of this nature are used in large urban cities in America where there the law in respect of taxis is entirely different. However in this country they would have the effect of clearly indicating to the public that the vehicle was used for hire and reward and would exacerbate the public’s confusion on the issue. It is therefore recommended that their use on private hire vehicles should not be permitted.
- 3.5 Regulations made under the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 lay down requirements for the lighting of vehicles. In particular light showing from the rear of a vehicle may only be red subject to exemptions for certain circumstances

(white light shown from a taximeter for example). The applicant would need to ensure that the equipment met the requirements of the legislation.

4. Consultation

The draft reports were made available for comments in the Licensing Offices at Sloper Road and City Hall to enable interested parties to make comments. Additionally draft copies of the reports were sent to trade representatives and the published on the Licensing Web Pages.

The following comment has been received from Mr M Khan of the Hackney Carriage Association

“The application made by Mr Lewis for approval of roof light for private hire vehicles is totally unacceptable and as said in your report paragraph 3.4 very accurately it will certainly confuse the public (especially the visitors) who will have no knowledge of such difference between two type of vehicles in Cardiff. The Association's secretary Mrs Avril Mumford would like to have couple of minutes to explain more negative points about this at the meeting if she is given the opportunity.”

5. Achievability

This report contains no equality personnel or property implications.

6. Legal Implications

As indicated in the Report, the Authority already permits the display of illuminated roof signs on hackney carriages.

It is a legislative requirement that a private hire vehicle should not be of such design or appearance as to lead any person to believe that the vehicle is a hackney carriage. The Council may attach such conditions to the grant of a private hire vehicle licence as it considers reasonably necessary, including conditions requiring or prohibiting the display of signs on or from the vehicle. Existing conditions allow the Council to control the display of signs.

7. Financial Implications.

The licensing service is required to be self financing with all expenditure being met from fees and charges which are reviewed annually.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that illuminated signs should not be approved for use on private hire vehicles. The authority already permits the display of illuminated roof signs on hackney carriages and it is recommended that this should remain unaltered.

For the information of officers the Committee may wish to indicate if the triangular form of roof top display proposed would be considered appropriate.

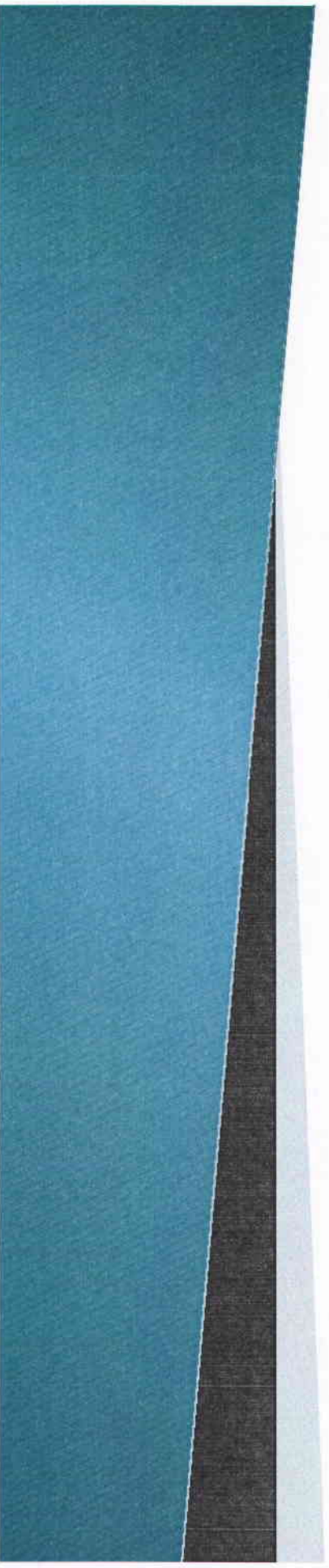
SEAN HANNABY
CHIEF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

This report has been prepared in accordance with procedures approved by Corporate Managers.

Background Papers: None

Proposal For Taxi Top Advertising

By Lewis smith



Proposal

This proposal is for the use of a marketing method, which is already being used, and promoted successfully on taxis in many major cities worldwide.

This application is for approval to affix a roof mounted advertising graphic on vinyl and in the form of a two sided and three sided polycarbonate graphite shell top box to hackney carriage and private hire vehicles throughout the City. The graphics to be applied to 2 / 3 sides of the shell.

Reason for Proposal

Councils, have, for years encountered difficulty in so much that private hire vehicles pick up the public from the side of the road without any booking being placed. This is known as flimping and is illegal. Recently stickers have been issued to be put onto private hire vehicles to make the public aware that they must book a private hire vehicle in order to be insured during their commute, but not with the right results.

L S Media's solution to this problem would be to use illuminated top boxes in the form of a two sided straight pyramid on Private Hire vehicles, with triangular top boxes on Hackney Carriage vehicles, this would clearly differentiate between the two types of vehicles.

Identification

Private Hire

A plastic lit top box with 2 sides for advertising will be used on the private hire vehicles. The two sided straight pyramid sign would be easily identifiable as a private hire vehicle as the top box, would display 'Private Hire' and their license number. The sign would be at eye level and be clearly visible at night, being illuminated.



Identification

Hackney Carriage

A triangular shaped box that has 3 sides in which to attach the advertising graphic will be used. From the examples shown below you can see that they have a large and effective presence. The three sided top box would display City of Cardiff, TAXI and vehicle license number. This will clearly identify that this is a licensed taxi. Again the sign would be at eye level and be clearly visible at night, being illuminated.

Given that both types vehicles would have clear identification it would, without doubt, also clearly reduce the risk of harm to the population of the City, in so much that any illegal taxi drivers, would hopefully, not be able to infiltrate the system.



Securing of Top Box

There are two options for affixing the top box:

The Preferred Option

This would involve the use of industrial magnets which would fixed to the bottom of the shell, as this is a more efficient and safe way of securing the top box to the vehicle without damaging it. This method has been used on thousands of vehicles across the USA.



Second option

This would involve securing the top boxes to the vehicle using nuts and bolts.

Both types of top boxes are available for demonstration upon request.

Benefits and Strengths



- ▶ A lot of women and the majority of men to day, feel very uncomfortable getting into a taxi of any sort on their own due to past events. Our aim is to make the public more aware of what vehicle they are getting into. Past events show that unlicensed vehicles have been known to pick up passengers with the motive of either making money illegally or to commit a crime of some sort. We aim to prevent this using the 'top box' to identify licensed private hire/ hackney carriage vehicles. From a distance the 'Top Box' can be clearly seen as it is large and illuminated as appose to the small illuminated 'Top Box' that are currently on Hackney carriage vehicles and from a distance are similar to police car illuminated signs. The average person after a night out will get into any sort of vehicle because they just want to get home. We want to create a big impact with our 'Top Boxes' so it is not a hard task for the public to get into the correct licensed vehicle. This can be a benefit for Taxi companies/ Taxi drivers, as sometimes when making pick ups there are a number of Taxis waiting. 'Top Boxes' make the process quicker for the taxi driver and the customer, as a txt/ call back is usually made to the customer to inform them that they have arrived, they can be informed what their license number is, in which the customer can clearly identify from the illuminated 'Top Box'
- ▶ Due to petrol increases and large insurance premiums in this bad economic climate, Taxi driver profit margins are for ever decreasing and Taxi Top advertising will provide extra income to private owner drivers and Taxi companies.
- ▶ Illuminated 'Top Boxes' will reduce accidents due to the visibility and presence it will have on the road.
- ▶ Illuminated 'Top Boxes' will also give the public a larger awareness of what is on the road when attempting to cross, as a large majority of vehicles at night are Taxis, that sometimes have their head light(s) off or will mistakenly drive with only their side lights on.
- ▶ Illuminated 'Top Boxes' provides extra light for passengers entering and exiting the vehicle.
- ▶ Illuminated 'Top Boxes' provide extra light in unlit areas that may act as a prevention to criminal activity.

Benefits and Strengths

- ▶ Taxi top service can be used to get a public and safety message across the city quickly and effectively.
- ▶ Taxi top advertising will create employment within the private sector and also provide opportunities to sub contractors.
- ▶ Taxi top advertising will generate extra media coverage and publicity in Cardiff that could help generate tourism to the area.
- ▶ Taxi top advertising is there to help small and large business' grow and create extra income within Cardiff.
- ▶ Taxi top advertising is a very cost effective way of advertising that is made available for small business' and providing large business' with a large media coverage for their budget.
- ▶ Mobile advertising therefore will be seen in various locations in and around the city that that will have a fixed message that cannot be turned off.
- ▶ Taxi top advertising targets impulse buyers of in which 60% of people on the high street make impulse purchases.
- ▶ Provides the opportunity to post large and small volume campaigns within a very short period of time.
- ▶ Taxi top advertising circulate in close proximity to point of purchase.
- ▶ Top boxes have been proven successful in other cities such as Las Vegas and New York being around since the method of advertising was invented in 1972.



Taxi Top advertising By Lewis Smith

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