

THE LIGHTMARE *by Roy Milnes*

As professional drivers, cabbies will appreciate that acuity of eyesight is vital to preserving life safety and the lives of passengers. The life preserving skills that an experienced driver develops to observe and predict the fine details in complex city traffic situations are paramount. Why then have the European Union mandated blinding daytime and night-time lights which decrease a driver's ability to perceive these fine hazards by causing temporary blindness?

You would think road safety experts would know better, but they seem fixated with the idea that brighter is better. Often Volvo is cited – yes, probably less people ran into Volvos in the past, but when everyone is forced to use lights their advantage is negated and less conspicuous, vulnerable road users suffer tragically.

So now we have blinding High Intensity Discharge Xenon headlamps at night, dazzling LED daytime running lights bright enough to combat the power of the sun plus the trend of boy racers to drive using foglamps or inconsiderate drivers keeping their foot on the brake at traffic lights in contravention of the Highway Code creating a LIGHTMARE! We are not against daytime running lights in principle - like any machine it's nice to have an indicator light to show it's running. But in countries where we can measure the consequences is that accidents have increased, particularly to pedestrians, cyclist and motorcyclists. When Daytime Running Lights were introduced into Poland, accidents increased by 6%. In Bulgaria by 8% and Austria by 12%.

In the UK, HID-Xenon headlights Daytime Running Lights are being introduced by stealth so it is difficult to produce hard statistics about the dangers. However we do know about the damaging effect upon your eyesight, this is typical of

the comments Lightmare receive: "With 30 years behind me as a Road Safety officer, working to reduce the risk to vulnerable road users, it fills me with concern that we are looking to take this retrograde step. Pedestrians, cyclists, horse-riders and similar will disappear behind the dazzle and distraction caused by such running light, especially in low light/ twilight conditions," Neil Ellison Road Safety Officer.

In Impaired Perception in Driving and Sports leading Ophthalmologist Prof. Peter Heilig of Vienna University provides us with proof that these lights are detrimental to a driver's eyesight due to neurological effects of Change Blindness, Inattentional Blindness and Capacitive Dysfunction which affect the Visual Short Term Memory. It seems unbelievable that before permitting blinding lights, neither the EU nor the UK Government consulted expert ophthalmological opinion.

In the interests of UK road safety, we must to persuade Philip Hammond our Transport Minister to take action - and soon – technology offers more elegant solutions than crudely blinding each other. Mind you technology can cause grief – a couple of years ago in Tokyo a company coated a small car with a thin film organic electroluminescent polymer that made it glow – about the intensity of a computer screen. The driver had the ability to make the front appear like a yellow Mr. Smiley face to thank drivers for a courtesy or a Mr. Angry red face if he was cut up – somehow methinks the driver would not last too long on the streets of London!

What can you do? Please help Ken Perham and myself to combat this Lightmare by voting at www.lightmare.org

EDINBURGH'S 24-HOUR TAXI TURNAROUND!

The London Taxi Company (Scotland) says that it continues to surprise and delight the trade North of the border, with their fantastic service and delivery times and standards. Their latest super satisfied customer, Gary Henderson, originally arrived at the Edinburgh dealership in a state of mild panic. His taxi, a decade old TX1, had been written off and sent to Hackney Heaven, and the driver-owner was desperate to get his hands on a new vehicle, as soon as physically possible.

Mr Henderson explained: "My Taxi is not just the key to my livelihood, it's my wife Paula's too! She takes the vehicle out during the day and I do the night shift, so the idea of being off the road, even for a few days, was a massive cause for concern." Mr Henderson was introduced to London Taxi Company General Manager, Gary Ranson, who led the team in sorting out a new vehicle in record

time for the two drivers. Gary said: "We endeavour to offer the highest levels of service to every customer that walks through our doors, so for us, thinking on our feet to deliver for drivers, goes with the territory. We knew what the customer was looking for, so once we had agreed on the vehicle, it was down to us to get both drivers back on the road asap."

Mr Henderson and his wife Paula Chancy decided on an ex-demo TX4 Bronze (Auto) with Saltire livery, which was taxed and ready for collection within 24hours.

Mr Henderson added: "I cannot fault the excellent service that I received from the team at Edinburgh, especially Gary Ranson. We really weren't expecting to be back trading in such a short space of time. We would definitely recommend them and they were an absolute joy to deal with!"

THE LONDON TAXI SERVICE HAS ARRIVED IN MALTA

Dial-a-Cab Ltd in Malta has launched its a 24 hour 7 day a week chauffeur-driven service around Malta in its highly recognisable fleet of bright yellow London Taxis. Dial-a-Cab Ltd is a newly set up company with a new initiative which is managed by Muscat Motors Ltd, the official appointed partner for The London Taxi Company. "There is demand in every country for a premium taxi service that costs less than a traditional limousine. Malta not only chose the iconic London Taxi which is the only purpose-built taxi in the world but also chose their fleet of vehicles to be in a bright colour making them quite hard to miss as they pass you on the street," said Matthew Cheyne, International Market Development Director for The London Taxi Company who make and sell them around the world. "Feedback since launch has been really positive. Passengers enjoy riding in the famous cab and they think it's great that they now have an around the clock service that is available for business or leisure and accessible for wheelchair users and travelers with limited mobility, partial sight or hard of hearing."

