

**Taxi & Private Hire  
marshalled rank  
counts**

**09023**  
July 2009



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Research conducted by MVA Consultancy

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# 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1** MVA Consultancy was commissioned by TfL to conduct observational research on the marshalled taxi rank at Cranbourn Street in London's West End. Until 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2009 this rank operated on a directional basis, whereby marshals matched passengers and drivers who wanted to travel in the same direction. However, there were some reports of problems with this arrangement, particularly with taxis on the rank not always being available for journeys in directions where passengers wanted to go.
- 1.2** To better understand how well the directional taxi rank works, MVA Consultancy observed the rank over three consecutive weekends. Following TfL's decision to change the rank so that it operated on a traditional "first come first served basis", MVA conducted a fourth weekends observations to understand how well the non-directional system works, and to establish whether any of the problems associated with the directional system continue.
- 1.3** A team of three covert observers, observed the rank between 22.00 and 03.00 hours on Fridays and Saturdays over the four weekends (three consecutive weekends commencing Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2009, and also the weekend of 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> July 2009).
- 1.4** Observers recorded information including the number of marshals present at the rank; the number of police officers assisting at the rank; the number of people in the taxi queue, the number of taxis present on the rank; the number of taxis accepting passengers (groups or individuals) and the number of taxis refusing groups and individuals. Where possible, the observers also recorded any reasons given for refusal and, in the last weekend, any instances of taxis refusing multiple fares or parking on the rank for over thirty minutes.
- The proportion of taxis departing with passengers/fares has increased from weeks 1 to 2 and then remained consistently high. The opposite was observed for the proportion of taxis departing empty.
  - The number of refusals experienced by customers, counted in terms of both individual passengers and groups of passengers, decreased from the period when the rank was directional to the last weekend of observation, by which time the rank had changed to non-directional.
  - Refusals also declined considerably across the period of first to third weekends of observations. There has been an overall decline, with fewer instances of multiple refusals and 'home direction only' refusals. However, although much less significant, 'home direction only' still remains the main reason for refusals.
  - Fewer taxis visited the rank during the last weekend of observation (17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July), two weeks after the non-directional system had been put in place.
  - During the first weekend of fieldwork several taxis were parked on the rank, not in use, for long periods. In subsequent weekends, this practice continued, but to a lesser extent. Observers suggested that this caused problems for members of the public during the first weekend of observation, but have not reported any problems since.

**1.5** The taxi rank at Cranbourn Street, WC2H has improved considerably since the first weekend's observations (29<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> May 2009). After this first weekend, there were reductions in the number of people being refused a taxi, and improvements in the proportion of taxis departing with passengers; and the ease of which members of the public can use the rank. These gains were maintained throughout the subsequent weekends. However, during the final weekend's observations from 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July (when the taxi rank was non-directional), fewer taxis visited the rank and a persistent minority continued to 'pick and choose' which fares they wanted to take and/or parked-up on the rank for long periods.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 Until 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2009 the marshalled taxi rank at Cranbourn Street, London, WC2H operated on a “directional basis”, based on passengers and drivers telling the marshals where they want to go to, and marshals matching-up passengers and drivers who are going in the same direction. However, there were some reports of problems with this arrangement, arising from taxis on the rank not always being available for journeys in directions where passengers wanted to go. In response to this, Transport for London (TfL) modified the marshal scheme so that from 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2009 it would operate on a traditional “first come, first served” basis, with the first taxi taking the first queuing passenger(s).
- 2.1.2 Since the marshalled taxi rank started at Cranbourn Street, marshals have been supplied by the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association (LTDA) and Unite. However, following the contract to supply marshals being put out to tender, a new company, Taxi Marshalls.com, was appointed, and from 5<sup>th</sup> June 2009 it started to supply the marshals for Cranbourn Street.

### 2.2 Research Objectives

- 2.2.1 TfL commissioned MVA Consultancy to conduct observational research at the Cranbourn Street taxi rank, initially to better understand how this marshalled taxi rank works on a directional basis. These observations were intended to help TfL to assess the nature and extent of problems at this taxi rank, and thus help formulate future policy decisions.
- 2.2.2 Following three weekends of observations and the subsequent change to the marshal scheme, MVA Consultancy also carried out additional observations during the first weekend under the new, non-directional scheme (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> July 2009). The aim of these additional observations was to help TfL understand how well the new non-directional scheme works, and whether any of the problems associated with the directional rank continue.

### 2.3 Methodology

- 2.3.1 Our approach taken comprised of observational research at the Cranbourn Street taxi rank, with observational tasks split between three covert observers, who recorded their observations for each 15 minute time period, between 22.00 and 03.00 hours on each Friday and Saturday night during the fieldwork period.
- 2.3.2 Following an initial pilot exercise on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May, observations took place over three consecutive weekends (Fridays and Saturdays, between 22.00 and 03.00 hours), from Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May to Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2009, to examine the issues with the existing “directional basis”. A final weekend of observations took place from 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July: after the switch to “first come, first served” had been implemented.
- 2.3.3 Observers recorded the following information:
- the number of marshals present at the rank;
  - the number of police officers assisting at the rank;

- the number of people in the taxi queue;
  - the number of taxis on the rank;
  - the number of taxis arriving and departing;
  - the number of taxis accepting groups and individuals;
  - the number of taxis refusing groups and individuals;
  - the reasons for refusing groups and individuals;
  - the number of interactions between passengers and marshals; and
  - the number of interactions between marshals and taxi drivers.
- 2.3.4 In addition, the observers noted details of police activity, weather conditions and anything else considered to be relevant to the running of the taxi rank.
- 2.3.5 During the final weekend of observations, observers also recorded:
- the number of taxis parked on the rank for longer than thirty minutes; and
  - the number of taxis who refused more than one fare.
- 2.3.6 Details of survey procedure, including copies of interviewer briefing notes and an example of the data collection booklet, are presented in Appendices A and B.
- 2.3.7 Full verbatims of qualitative observations are presented in Appendix C.

## **2.4 Structure of the report**

- 2.4.1 Chapter three presents key findings in terms of:
- the number of marshals working on the rank, their arrival time and their departure time;
  - the number of taxis that depart the rank with passengers, and the number that depart the rank empty;
  - the number of refusals of groups and individuals;
  - the reasons for these refusals;
  - the occurrence of repeat refusals;
  - the total number of taxis on the rank; and
  - instances of taxis 'parked-up' on the rank for a prolonged period.
- 2.4.2 Chapter four summarises the key findings and presents our conclusions.

## 3 Main Findings

### 3.1 Number of marshals

- 3.1.1 During the first weekend of fieldwork, the rank was not fully staffed by marshals at all times between 22.00 and 03.00 hours. There were rarely three marshals on the rank, and on 30<sup>th</sup> May there were never more than two marshals at any one time. Furthermore, the first marshals arrived half an hour late on 29<sup>th</sup> May and left before 02.00 hours on both the Friday 29<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May.
- 3.1.2 On the following two weekends (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> June and 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> June), the three marshals arrived more or less on time (within five minutes) and remained on the rank until after 03.00 hours.
- 3.1.3 On the final weekend (17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July), under the new non-directional system, there were two marshals on the rank all night. The first marshal arrived shortly after 22.00 hours (22.14 on Friday and 22.05 on Saturday) and the marshals remained on the rank until after 03.00 hours.

### 3.2 Number of taxis departing with passengers

- 3.2.1 Table 3.1 shows the number of taxis that departed with passengers over the course of each weekend. Very few taxis departed with passengers on the weekend of the 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> May. In total, 54 per cent of taxis departed with passengers, compared to 79 per cent over the second weekend, 85 per cent over the third and 81 per cent during the final weekend. There appears to have been a significant improvement in the proportion of taxis departing with passengers during the second weekend, which has since been maintained.
- 3.2.2 Although, there were numerically less taxis departing with passengers on the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> July than on the previous two weekends, this is because Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July was exceptionally quiet, with observers commenting on the apparent shortage of cabs:

*"This evening was very quiet compared to the previous shifts. We didn't get the same volume [of taxis] on the rank waiting." (22.00-22.59, 17/07/2009).*

- 3.2.3 On the first weekend just over half of taxis departed with passengers between the peak hours of 00.00 and 03.00 hours. Very few taxis departed with passengers in the early part of the night, in fact between 23.00 and 00.00 hours just a quarter of taxis departed with passengers. The situation improved on the following weekend, 90 per cent of taxis departing the rank between 00.00 and 02.00 hours contained passengers, and nearly 80 per cent of taxis after 02.00 hours took passengers. During the early part of the evening (before midnight) roughly half of all taxis departed with passengers. These gains were maintained during the weekend of the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> June and the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> July.



**Table 3.1 Proportion (and number) of taxis departing with passengers over each weekend<sup>1</sup>**

	Directional System				Non-directional System
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3		Week 4
	29 <sup>th</sup> /30 <sup>th</sup> May	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> June	12 <sup>th</sup> /13 <sup>th</sup> June	Average Weeks 1-3	17 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> July
2200-2259	31% (4)	42% (10)	39% (11)	38% (8.3)	50% (15)
2300-2359	25% (2)	70% (32)	79% (27)	69% (20.3)	73% (11)
0000-0059	53% (9)	91% (49)	100% (51)	89% (36.3)	78% (25)
0100-0159	65% (17)	90% (47)	94% (68)	88% (44)	92% (55)
0200-0259	54% (19)	79% (30)	84% (42)	74% (30.3)	93% (39)
<b>Total</b>	<b>54% (56)</b>	<b>79% (168)</b>	<b>85% (199)</b>	<b>74% (122.3)</b>	<b>81% (145)</b>

3.2.4 Overall, more taxis departed with passengers under the new non-directional system, than under the directional system. In particular, a greater proportion of taxis departed with passengers before 23.00 hours and after 02.00 hours under the new system. However, the average proportions for the first three weekends are greatly affected by the poor performance during the first weekend of 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May. Performance in weekends two and three (also still under the directional system) was no worse than performance in weekend four (under the non-directional system). It is important to note, however, that there was not a clear cut off point where the taxi rank system changed from being a directional to a non-directional rank. Because of this confusion it can be assumed that the rank was not operating on an exclusively directional system during weekends one and two, and some drivers had been happy to use the rank on a non-directional basis from the beginning of our observations. Some messages had gone out to the taxi trade that the scheme would become non-directional from the start of June, but this was subsequently put back to start of July and has caused some confusion. Indeed one observer suggested in week 3 that:

*“... [The taxi rank appears to be] working on a hybrid system of first come first served and direction matching.” (22.00-22.59, 13/06/2009).*

<sup>1</sup> The proportion of taxis departing with passengers was calculated by comparing the number of taxis that departed with passengers with the number of taxis that departed empty.

### 3.3 Number of taxis accepting groups and individuals

3.3.1 Figure 3.1 shows the proportion of taxis departing with groups, and the proportion of taxis departing with individuals, each weekend. Almost 90 per cent of all fares taken were of groups of passengers. Across the four weekends, there were no differences in the proportion of fares accepted under the directional system versus fares accepted under the non-directional system.

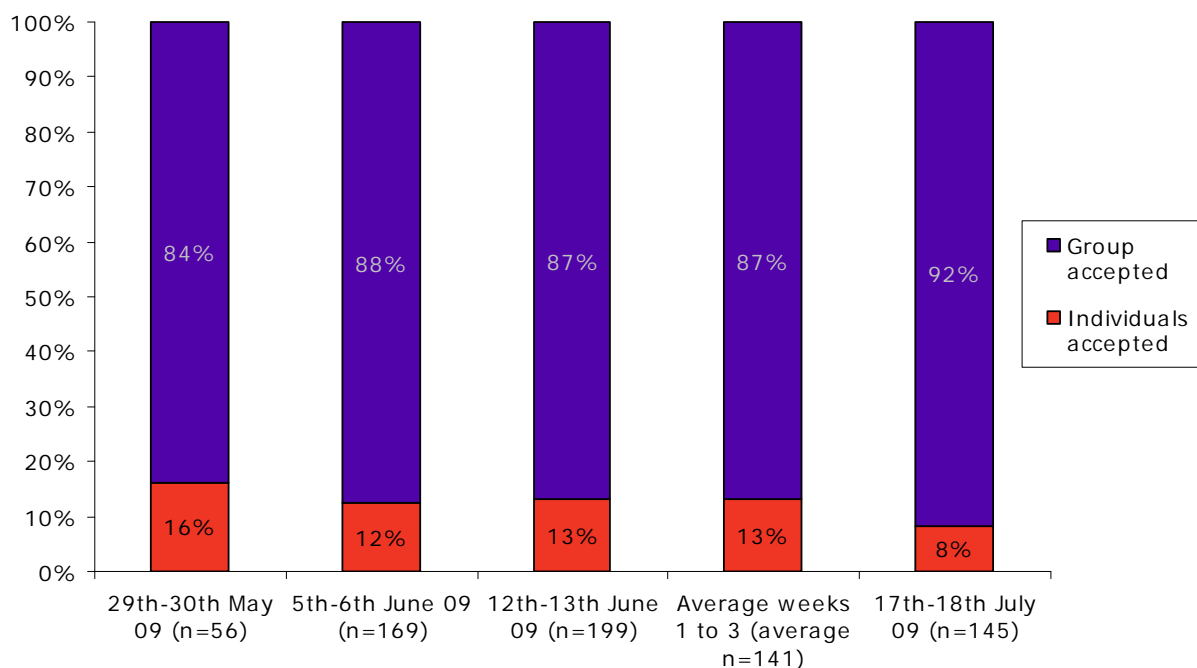


Figure 3.1 Proportion of taxis departing with groups and with individuals

### 3.4 Number of taxis departing empty

3.4.1 Table 3.2 shows the number of taxis departing empty in each hour period. On the first weekend, nearly as many taxis departed empty (n=48) as departed with passengers (n=56). However, during the following weekends a much smaller proportion of taxis departed without passengers. On the weekend of the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> June, 21 per cent of taxis departed without passengers and the proportions for the weekends of the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> July are 15 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.

3.4.2 During the weekend of the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May, almost half of taxis departed empty during the busy period between 02.00 and 03.00 hours, suggesting that although there were people waiting in the taxi queue these taxis did not want to take the fare. However, for all other weekends taxis were most likely to depart empty before 00.00 hours, particularly before 23.00 hours, when there were less people waiting in the queue. On the final weekend (under the first-come first-served, non-directional system) very few taxis departed empty after 02.00 hours.

**Table 3.2 Proportion (and number) of taxis departing without passengers over each weekend**

	Directional System				Non-directional System
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Average Weeks 1-3	Week 4
	29 <sup>th</sup> /30 <sup>th</sup> May	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> June	12 <sup>th</sup> /13 <sup>th</sup> June		17 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> July
2200-2259	69% (9)	58% (14)	61% (17)	62% (13.3)	50% (15)
2300-2359	75% (6)	30% (14)	21% (7)	31% (9)	27% (4)
0000-0059	47% (8)	9% (5)	0% (0)	11% (4.3)	22% (7)
0100-0159	35% (9)	10% (5)	6% (4)	12% (6)	8% (5)
0200-0259	46% (16)	21% (8)	16% (8)	26% (10.7)	7% (3)
<b>Total</b>	<b>46% (48)</b>	<b>21% (46)</b>	<b>15% (36)</b>	<b>26% (43.3)</b>	<b>19% (34)</b>

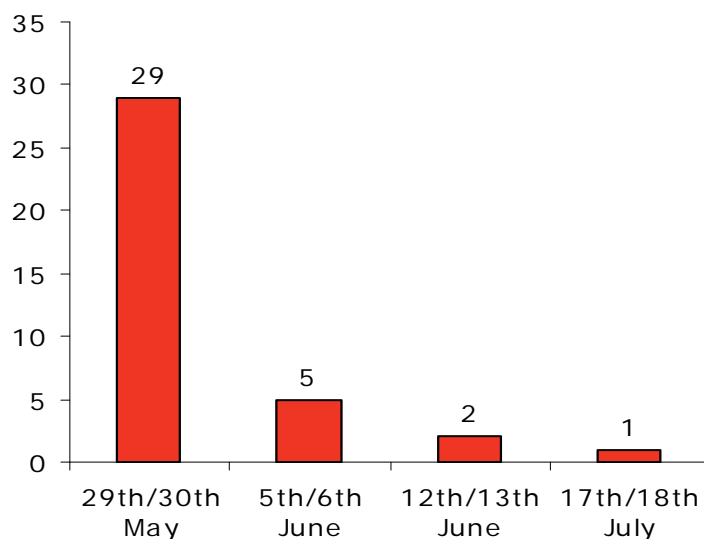
3.4.3 Table 3.2 also shows the average number of taxis departing empty across the three weeks of observations under the directional system. Overall, a quarter of taxis departed empty under the directional system compared to a fifth of taxis under the non-directional system. However, as with the number of taxis departing with passengers, this figure is greatly influenced by the first week's observations. There appears to have been a large reduction in the proportion of taxis departing empty during the second weekend of observations, which has since been maintained.

Overall there appears to have been only a small improvement in the number of taxis departing with passengers versus empty under the directional system compared to the non-directional system. However, when comparing the first weekend under the directional system (29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> May) with the final weekend which was under the new non-directional system (17<sup>th</sup> /18<sup>th</sup> July), the differences are significant. There are nearly thirty per cent fewer taxis departing empty and more taxis departing with passengers in the latter. Differences are particularly noticeable after 02.00 hours. During the first weekend, a large proportion of taxis departed empty after this time, but this pattern was not subsequently repeated.

### 3.5 Refusals

#### Individual Refusals

3.5.1 There were many more refusals during 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May than in following weekends. On Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May twenty individual customers were refused and on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May nine individuals were refused. This is compared to just five individual refusals over the weekend of 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> June, two during the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> June and one refusal during the weekend of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> July (Figure 3.2).



**Figure 3.2 Number of refusals of individuals over each weekend.**

3.5.2 Observers tried to identify reasons for each refusal, where possible. The only reason given during the first weekend of fieldwork, 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May, was that **the taxi driver did not want to travel to that location**. During the remaining three weekends, drivers refused less often and when they did it was less likely to be because they did not want to go to the location. On the second weekend, 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> June, two people were refused because they were deemed to be drunk. Other reasons include one person being told the driver was on a “home rate” and another being told that the taxi would not take them to that location. On the third weekend, 12<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> June, one person was refused because they did not have enough money to pay for their fare, and one because their driver would not go to that location. Finally on the weekend of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> July, one person was refused because they wanted to travel outside the zone in which taxi drivers are legally obliged to accept a fare<sup>2</sup>.

3.5.3 There was no discernible pattern in terms of the time periods when individual passengers were more likely to be refused by taxi drivers, and individuals were no more likely to be refused after midnight than before.

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<sup>2</sup> Within London, outside of the City of London, Hackney Carriages are legally obliged to accept fares with a destination of less than 12 miles.

## Groups Refusals

- 3.5.4 Table 3.3 shows the number of groups of passengers that were refused over the four weekends (separate to individual passenger refusals). On the weekend of the 29<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> May over 300 groups of passengers were refused a taxi. This is consistent with the low number of taxis departing with passengers, and the relatively high number of taxis departing empty. For all instances where we could establish a reason for refusal, this was due to the location of destination. At least two of these groups were referred to another taxi rank:

*"Next front-ranked cabbie, when asked for lift and given destination, said 'not from this rank you won't', and directed them to hail a cab elsewhere. Front 2 ranked cabbies rejected 11 girls on a hen party - to the 'Barbican Thistle Hotel' - they were sent up the road, followed by 2 other groups rejected." (02:00-02:15, 29/5/09)*

*"Cab in front is refusing to take any groups but is redirecting them to another rank." (02:30-02:45, 29/5/09)*

*"Group of teenagers went to cab for a lift but cabbie told them that all the cabs were for out of town work and then pointed them to other ranks. Young group of Americans were told to go up Tottenham Court Road for cab as these cabs are for out of town." (01:15-01:30, 30/5/09)*

**Table 3.3 Number of groups of passengers refused during each weekend**

	Directional System				Non-directional System
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Average Weeks 1-3	Week 4
	29 <sup>th</sup> /30 <sup>th</sup> May	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> June	12 <sup>th</sup> /13 <sup>th</sup> June		17 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> July
2200-2259	23	0	0	7.7	1
2300-2359	55	3	1	19.7	1
0000-0059	50	4	4	19.3	3
0100-0159	86	2	2	30.0	15
0200-0259	96	4	6	35.3	3
0300+	1	0	0	0.3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>112.3</b>	<b>23</b>

3.5.5 On the first weekend of observations (29<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> May), when the rank was operating a directional system, there were five groups refused for every taxi that departed with passengers. However, during the following weekends very few groups of passengers were refused. Just 13 groups of passengers were refused on the 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> June, 13 on the 12<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> June and 23 on the 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> July.

3.5.6 During weekends two and three the most common reason for refusals continued to be that the driver would not travel to the requested destination. Similarly, during the final weekend of observations (after the switch to a non-directional system) eight of the ten groups (for whom we could identify a reason for refusal) were refused because the driver would not go to that location. This suggests that some drivers continue 'pick and choose' which fares they wish to take based, on the direction the passengers wish to travel in or the destination they want to go. A full list of reasons for refusals of groups of passengers during these weekends is shown in Table 3.4.

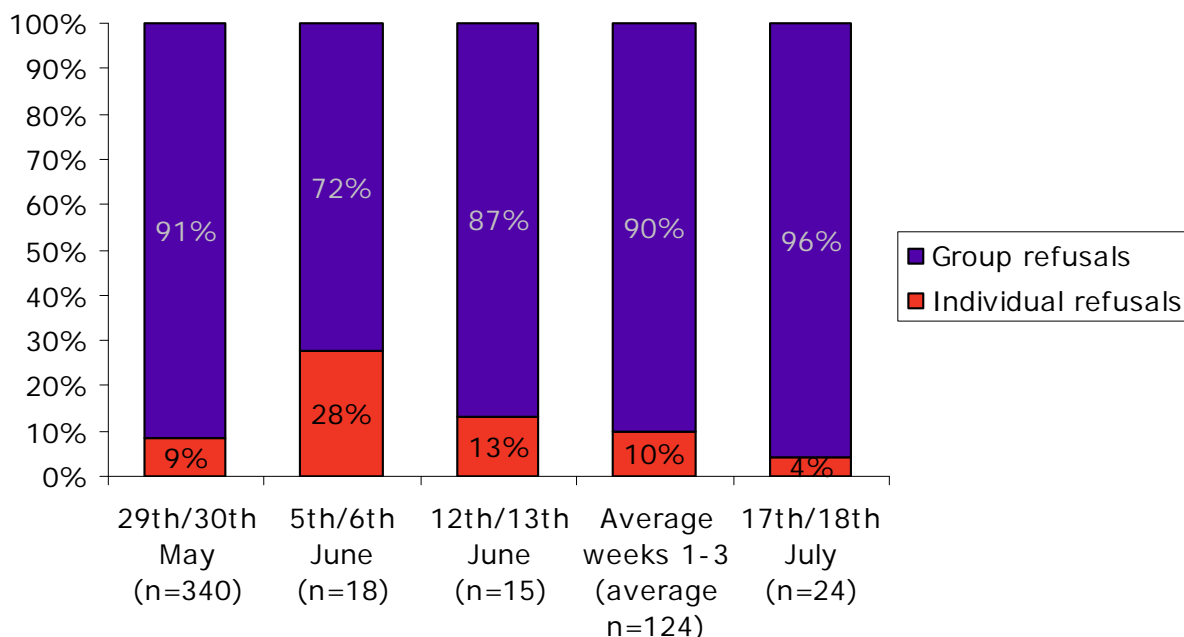
**Table 3.4 Reasons for refusal of passenger groups**

	Directional System			Non-directional System
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
	29 <sup>th</sup> /30 <sup>th</sup> May*	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> June	12 <sup>th</sup> /13 <sup>th</sup> June	17 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> July
Not going to that location	258	5	10	8
Taxi driver had finished working	0	2	0	0
Taxi driver was on a break	0	1	0	1
The passengers were too drunk	0	1	2	0
Driver "didn't want to take group"	0	0	0	1

#### Individual versus Group Refusals

3.5.7 Figure 3.3 shows the proportion of all refusals that were made to groups and to individual passengers. On each weekend, most refusals were of passenger groups. This is unsurprising given that 90 per cent of passengers accepted were groups, hence the majority of passengers on the rank were group rather than individual fares. This suggests that group fares were no more likely to be refused than individual fares on any weekend, except for the second weekend of 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> June. On this particular weekend a disproportionate number of

refusals were made to individuals (28 per cent, compared with 12 per cent of fares being accepted being from individuals during this weekend).



**Figure 3.3 Proportion of refusals made to groups and individuals**

Overall, many more groups of customers and individual customers were refused taxi hire under the directional system than under the new, non-directional system. Once again there was a large reduction in the number of refusals after the first weekend, and this improvement was subsequently maintained.

### Repeat Refusals

- 3.5.8 During the first weekend of observation, 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May, observers reported that several taxi drivers had used the rank just to find an expensive journey in the direction of their home, and in doing so refused several fares. Observers reported that some taxi drivers waited in the rank for *up to two hours* for such a journey:

*“Cab driver acting as ‘third’ unofficial marshal wanted to know what we were doing. He said the cabbies on the rank had been working hard all day and now they were waiting for a ‘good £50 fare’ from the marshals. They said they don’t want to drive around in traffic anymore. [We were told] from next week it changes - he said there will be no black cabs ranked up. They don’t want the short fares after a day’s work. Lots of people appear not to be queuing but individually going up to the first cabbie, who refused at least 6 fares.” (01.00 – 01.15, 29/5/09)*

*“Cab drivers have sat at rank for about 1 and a half to 2 hours waiting for a fare home and many people have been refused, due to it not being a long distance fare.” (02.45 – 03.00, 29/5/09)*

- 3.5.9 Some passengers were observed as appearing **confused** and often annoyed with regard to why they could not get a taxi, and why they were being sent to another rank:

*"Quite a few young people, especially girls, appear to be confused as to why there are at least 8 black cabs on the rank, but they won't go anywhere unless it's an expensive fare on their way home." (01.30 – 01.45, 29/5/09)*

*"Again 7 young girls not able to get a cab from the rank, though several are left - they're just sent up the road. Another couple who were refused a cab said "I don't understand it, all these cabs here but we get sent up the road?" No queue, just individuals coming up to each cab and being turned away." (02:30-02:45, 29/5/09)*

*"People now coming from other end of road, meeting marshals outside tube, amassing there and asking for cabs. Marshals are far away from the 'cab stand'. People appear confused and wandering down a rank of empty black cabs". (01:00-01:15, 30/5/09)*

- 3.5.10 This practice continued over the following two weekends, although to a lesser extent (5<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> June and 12<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> June). On the second weekend (5<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> June), observers reported that several cabs were using the rank to find a fare in the direction of home. The observers reported that this made it difficult for the marshals to reduce the length of the queue, and appeared to have angered people who had been waiting in the queue. Incidences of repeat refusals seemed to be a problem after 01.00 hours:

*"Marshal said a couple of cabs at the front of rank are now waiting for fare home if possible – as they have no lights on they can." (01.30, 5/06/09)*

*"Heard driver say "no one wants to go to Clapham" as he stood chatting to another driver parked up." (01.00-01.15, 6/06/09)*

*"It is called locally the 'going home rank'." (01.30-01.45, 6/06/09)*

*"Girl comes up to the police to complain about long wait for taxi. She said that the marshal was just handing out 'the big fares' to the cabbies" (02.05, 6/06/09).*

*"Man asked police why these cab drivers won't take fares to where the people in the queue want to go" (02.20, 6/06/09).*

*"People joining the back of the queue all of the time – people going [in a cab] from the middle of the queue depending on direction. Marshal tried hard but cabbie said no." (02.30, 6/06/09).*

*"Marshals shouting out directions – cabbies going west/east etc. People getting in from various sections of queue, certainly not the front. Marshals being as persuasive as they can to help customers" (01.30, 13/06/2009).*

- 3.5.11 To establish whether taxi drivers were continuing to refuse fares under the new, non-directional system, which was in place from the weekend of 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> July, we asked observers to record the number of taxis who refused multiple fares during each evening of the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> July.



3.5.12 On 17<sup>th</sup> July, just one taxi made multiple refusals; he refused two groups and one individual. This taxi was not parked on the taxi rank for longer than thirty minutes. No taxi drivers refused multiple fares on the 18<sup>th</sup> July.

3.5.13 Observers reported that some taxi drivers were not happy with the new, non-directional system, and still wanted to 'cherry-pick' the most expensive fares in the direction of their home. However, observers said that marshals were trying to get taxi drivers to take any fare and informing drivers of the new system:

*"Marshals said that they are getting 'loads of abuse' from the cab drivers now, due to the change of use of the rank from a directional one. Talk about cover ups at briefings and not telling cabbies the use of the rank has changed." (22.05, 17/07/09).*

*"Cabbie pulled up and asked marshal for a 'fare home job'. Marshal gave him a leaflet explaining that it was no longer a 'fare home rank' cabbie wasn't aware of the fact. He pulled further up rank assumed he was going to sit there and wait for people to come to him" (02.45-03.00, 17/07/09).*

*"Cabbie refuses fare and asks the marshal 'have you got one going north'. Marshal said no and explained the change in the rank and the cabbie said "yes mate, you told me that last week" He [Taxi Driver] left." (01.25, 18/07/09).*

3.5.14 The observers also suggested that some of the taxi drivers who were told that they could not use the rank to find a 'fare home job' just parked up along the road or on the rank with their lights off and waited for a fare, rather than taking a fare in any direction:

*"Cab pulled in at the rear of the rank, refused fare and parked on rank, light off right alongside all the people waiting for a cab. Cab driver got his tea, and then asked down the queue "anyone going to Tower Hill?" Five girls said Southwark so he took them. The girls were not at the front of the queue but halfway down." (01.00-02.00, 18/07/09).*

*"... [same] cab arrived again. Marshal said he's a regular who sits in rank, as does his friend. They have no lights on but take a fare if someone comes up to them. If the fare isn't wanted they send people down to the marshals." (22.00-23.00, 18/07/09).*

**The evidence suggests that whilst the majority of taxi drivers responded well to the change in the rank system, and the number of taxis departing the area with passengers has increased, a minority of drivers continued to use this site as a 'going home rank', with or without the marshals' help.**

### **3.6 Total Number of Taxis on Rank**

- 3.6.1 Observers recorded the number of taxis that were waiting on the rank (parked up/not in use/accepting passengers) at fifteen minute intervals<sup>3</sup>. Table 3.5 provides the total number of taxis on the rank at each time point over each weekend. Overall, fewer taxis visited the taxi rank during the final weekend (under the non-directional system) than did on other weekends (under the directional system).
- 3.6.2 It could be assumed that, under the directional system, taxi drivers came to the rank because they knew that they could get an expensive fare in the direction of home. Now that the rank system has changed they have no incentive to come to the rank, or perhaps even the Cranbourn Street area.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that this method could lead to double counting if a taxi was waiting on the rank for longer than fifteen minutes.

**Table 3.5 Total number of taxis on the rank at each fifteen minute interval**

	Directional				Non-directional
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3		Week 4
	29 <sup>th</sup> /30 <sup>th</sup> May	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> June	12 <sup>th</sup> /13 <sup>th</sup> June	Average weeks 1 to 3	17 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> July
22.00	11	11	10	10.7	5
22.15	11	8	11	10.0	5
22.30	9	4	3	5.3	3
22.45	8	4	3	5.0	4
23.00	9	8	4	7.0	4
23.15	11	4	5	6.7	5
23.30	9	2	7	6.0	5
23.45	10	5	6	7.0	5
00.00	11	5	4	6.7	6
00.15	13	5	6	8.0	4
00.30	13	6	8	9.0	3
00.45	14	7	6	9.0	4
01.00	5	7	4	5.3	4
01.15	15	4	4	7.7	4
01.30	14	6	4	8.0	5
01.45	8	5	2	5.0	2
02.00	10	4	2	5.3	3
02.15	13	7	4	8.0	4
02.30	8	7	5	6.7	3
02.45	11	9	5	8.3	5
03.00	3	5	4	4.0	5

### 3.7 Long Term Parking (When Not in Use)

- 3.7.1 During the weekend of 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May observers reported that marshals parked their cabs at the front of the rank all night. Some taxi drivers also parked up in the rank whilst they took a break. This, the observers said, appeared to confuse members of the public looking for the taxi rank. Individual passengers often waited at the rank sign near the empty taxis for a while before giving up and looking for a taxi elsewhere. Observers reported that:

*"Number of people near front of rank standing next to empty cabs looking for lifts but not successful - they just walked off." (22.45-23.00, 30/5/09)*

*"People are in queue at the Stand, as the sign depicts but the marshals are halfway down the street, so they move away after a while." (00.30-00.45, 30/5/09)*

*"Elderly gentleman looked into cab at front of rank found it empty - hung around for 5 mins - not finding any help, moved on." (23.00-23.15, 30/5/09)*

- 3.7.2 During the second weekend and third weekends (5<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> June and 12<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> June), although there were some empty cabs parked-up/not in use, this was not identified as creating any particular problems for customers.
- 3.7.3 During the last week of fieldwork (17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July) we extended our observations, to also monitor the number of taxis parked-up on the rank for long periods of time. Observers were asked to record the registration plate of taxis parked on the rank at fifteen minute intervals. From this we were able to identify the number of taxis that had been parked on the rank for longer than thirty minutes.
- 3.7.4 On 17<sup>th</sup> July, two cabs were identified as being parked-up / long-term parked. One of these belonged to the marshal and was parked there for his full shift. The other vehicle was an unknown taxi; it arrived at 22.30 hours and remained on the rank for one hour and thirty minutes. Several other taxis were parked-up/not in use for shorter periods of time.
- 3.7.5 On 18<sup>th</sup> July, there were three taxis parked on the rank for a prolonged period. Again, one of these was the marshal's taxi and it remained on the rank for his full shift. The other two vehicles were unknown taxis, one arrived at 22.15 hours and one at 02.15 hours, both remaining on the rank for approximately 45 minutes. Again, several more taxis were parked- up/not in use but for shorter periods of time.
- 3.7.6 However, during this final weekend, observers did not identify any problems with passenger confusion regarding these empty cabs.

**During the first weekend of fieldwork, several taxis were parked on the rank and not in use, for long periods of time. This appeared to cause confusion for some members of the public looking for the taxi rank. Although some taxis continue to park on the rank for long periods this practice has since considerably reduced and observers did not identify any problems in the remaining weekends' observations.**

## 4 Conclusions

### 4.1 Key findings

4.1.1 This survey has gathered detailed data to help TfL understand how the Cranbourn Street marshalled taxi rank works on a directional basis. The observations reported above help to identify the nature and extent of problems at this taxi rank, across the four weekends covered by this survey.

4.1.2 Key findings are as follows:

- The proportion of taxis departing with passengers/fares has increased from weeks 1 to 2 and then remained high. The opposite was observed for the proportion of taxis departing empty.
- The number of refusals experienced by customers, counted in terms of both individual passengers and groups of passengers, decreased from the period when the rank was directional to the last weekend of observation, by which time the rank had changed to non-directional.
- Refusals also declined considerably across the period of first to third weekends of observations. There has been an overall decline, with fewer instances of multiple refusals and 'home direction only' refusals. However, although much less significant, 'home direction only' still remains the main reason for refusals
- Fewer taxis visited the rank during the last weekend of observation (17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July), two weeks after the non-directional system had been put in place.
- Long term parking continues, but to a lesser extent. Observers suggested that this caused problems for members of the public during the first weekend of observation, but have not reported any problems since.

It is, however, important to note the following caveats, when comparing observations across the four weekends covered by this survey:

- The relatively small sample size for the "non-directional" operations in the fourth weekend (17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July) means that comparisons with the three previous weekends must be made with caution, particularly as the fourth weekend (Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July in particular) appears to have been unusually quiet.
- Whilst we did note improvements in service before the taxi marshalling scheme switched to a non-directional system (i.e. between the first and second weekend's observations), it is unclear how much of these improvements were a direct result of the change in company responsible for operating the rank (i.e. the new marshals), rather than changes to the rules of operation.
- Changes to the rules of operation were not uniformly applied or followed. For example during 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July, some drivers that were told they could not just accept 'home direction only fares' parked-up and took customers from the queue anyway. In addition, the fact that change of operation from directional to non-directional were - to some extent – gradual, makes attempts at 'before and after' comparisons problematic.

4.1.3 It would be desirable to undertake a further round of observations, after all taxi drivers can be assumed to know that the rank is non-directional. This would establish more clearly whether the number of taxis using the rank does in fact reduce, and whether the reduction in

location-based fare refusals is sustained. A 'long term after' follow-up survey would enable the relative effectiveness of non-directional taxi rank operations at Cranbourn Street to be assessed more fully.