

Taxidermy: Would Uber be stuffed in Guernsey?

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Uber, the app-based company which allows users to order car rides on their smartphones, was celebrating recently.

On 16th October the High Court ruled that Uber's operations were legal in London and that the way that its drivers calculate fares – via GPS on external servers – was not treading on the toes of licensed black cabs, which use meters (and jump through some pesky regulatory hoops for the privilege).

Uber, for those unfamiliar with it, gives users the opportunity to hail a driver to their exact location using their smartphone. The destination is also added, at which point the app calculates the approximate cost of the ride and sends the job to Uber drivers in the area. Once a job is accepted by a driver, the user is able to see the driver's location on their phone in real time, and once picked up the app shows the fastest route and ETA. All payments are carried out electronically using a pre-prepared payment method (such as credit card) through the app. Crucially, Uber drivers are generally not required to be licensed taxi drivers, meaning almost anyone can apply to become a driver and earn money working flexible hours, for example on evenings or at weekends.

The recent court decision was met with predictable responses: jubilation from Uber bosses and consternation from the 25,000 London cabbies currently working in the capital.

Uber is probably right to feel upbeat at present. Despite a number of mishaps (from legal setbacks and PR disasters to safety worries and pricing concerns) in Australia, India, France, Spain and the USA, Uber's expansion and worldwide momentum has been impressive.

It's even become a verb. People are now Ubering around a host of jurisdictions, especially cities.

Uber in Guernsey

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