



BUSY AS BEAVERS

First dam on moor in centuries – page 3

SCRAPHEAP CHALLENGE

50 metal sculptures and still counting – page 6



‘Every possible obstruction was put in my way,’ says taxi driver First electric cab gets green light

By TONY JAMES

WEST Somerset finally has its first all-electric hackney cab taxi after a two-year fight by Alcombe Taxis owner Keith Griffiths to overcome what he called ‘a mountain of ridiculous red tape’.

This is third time lucky for Mr Griffiths, who had his first application turned down by the former West Somerset district council’s licensing committee in 2018.

A taxi driver in the town for over 25 years, he bought his £35,000 Nissan Leaf electric car in 2018 to offer customers eco-friendly transport but was told the district council’s rules made no provision for licensing electric vehicles.

For the past two years he has only been allowed to use the car for private hire while he pressed the district council to sort out what he claimed was a ‘confused jumble of conflicting rules’.

Mr Griffiths made another bid for a hackney cab licence for his car to the newly-formed Somerset West

and Taunton council the following year but was again refused.

This time he had applied to take over a licence handed back by a retiring hackney cab owner but was told that under current rules, only cars, not licence plates could be transferred.

“I have been stuck with a vehicle I can’t use as a hackney cab while the Government is spending millions encouraging the use of electric vehicles and the local council actively promotes the message of being green and sustainable, he said.

Mr Griffiths finally received his electric hackney cab licence this week by agreeing to go through ‘an absolutely crazy process’ which involved buying the retiring cabbie’s car – transferring the hackney cab licence plate to his own car – and giving the car back to its owner.

“Have you ever heard such nonsense?” Mr Griffiths said this week. “But that was the only way I was going to get a hackney cab licence

EXCLUSIVE



Keith Griffiths of Alcombe Taxis with the licence he has finally won after fighting what he described as a ‘ridiculous amount of red tape’. PHOTO: Jim Parham

for the Nissan. Over the past two years every possible obstruction has been put in my way but I refused to give up because I knew that electric cars are the future.

“I kept being told by the district

council that it was following government guidelines but those guidelines were from 2010. We are now in 2020 and government guidelines are to encourage electric vehicles.

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Lucky escape for three in sea

THREE young men had ‘a very lucky escape’ when caught by a rising tide near the St Audries Bay waterfall on Sunday afternoon and forced to swim for the shore.

A major rescue bid was being launched by Watchet coastguard and Minehead lifeboat was heading for the scene when the three were encircled by a rising tide and found themselves in deep water.

Helped by an onlooker who swam out to their aid, they managed to reach the beach safely, where they were checked by the coastguard for injuries and hypothermia before being allowed home.

“This was a very lucky escape for three young adults,” a Coastguard spokesman said. “They had been encircled by the rising tide with deep water between them and dry land.”

“With the water temperature low and a sea mist approaching, they could soon have become disorientated and lost out in the water.

He added: “Our thanks go to a local man who entered the water and helped bring the three ashore. It is important when visiting the coast to always check the weather and the tides and to take a charged phone. This incident could have ended very differently.”

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