

SAFETY FEARS DRIVE **RICKSHAWS** OFF GLASGOW'S ROADS

Glasgow has effectively banned rickshaws. The city has turned down more than 20 licences for the pedicabs over the last 18 months - after a soldier on leave was killed in one in Edinburgh. Council sources have stressed there were no test certificates available for rickshaws and they are now looking for a manufacturer willing to surrender one of their vehicles for crash tests. An official council spokesman told the Glasgow Evening Times: "If we are going to license a vehicle, it needs to be safe. We are trying to give the trade time to get a vehicle tested or demonstrate that they

can meet safety standards." Council bosses want to see some kind of safety regime imposed on the Asian pedal taxis, which are booming in the capital and other European holiday destinations. But officials admit there isn't a national framework for deciding whether a rickshaw is safe or not - or whether a rider, or "wallah", knows the rules of the road. So they have been turning down applications from would-be wallahs for street trader licences. A source said: "You don't need to look very far to find some horrific accidents involving rickshaws.



Rickshaw wallah Owen O'Neill
Photo courtesy of the Glasgow Evening Times

"We're not looking for a ban - we're looking for someone to show us a vehicle built with passenger safety in mind." But the effect of the council's licensing regime is that rick-

shaws are disappearing from the city centre. Entrepreneur Owen O'Neill runs one of a couple of firms trying to develop the rickshaw trade in Glasgow. He said: "I

can't get my head around why Glasgow City Council is stunting healthy youth employment and hindering a green enterprise, especially in the middle of a recession." Glasgow started licensing pedicabs as street traders in 2009, nearly a decade after they first started appearing on city streets. Since late 2010 - after 26-year-old soldier Christopher O'Kane suffered fatal head injuries after falling out of a rickshaw in Edinburgh - the council has been refusing new applications, including renewals. Council bosses held a consultation on the

issue, finding that 97 per cent of those who responded wanted to see a rickshaw service. But most of them wanted to see it regulated and made safe. City taxi drivers are frustrated with the pedicabs, which present some competition on city centre routes. Crucially, the pedal taxi drivers don't have to have criminal background checks, or even have a driver's licence. Jack Ferguson, of Glasgow Taxis, said: "We don't see why rickshaw drivers and their vehicles shouldn't undergo the same scrutiny as anybody else carrying paying passengers in Glasgow."