

**Taxi and Private Hire Trade Meeting to discuss Vehicle Age
and Emissions Policy
Thursday 28th March 2019
9.30am, Large Conference Room, Manor House**

Present:

Chris Neville (CN) – BCC, Acting Director of Regulation and Enforcement (Chair)
Cllr Waseem Zaffar (WZ) – BCC, Cabinet Member for Transport (left 10.30am)
Cllr Barbara Dring (BD) – BCC Chair of Licensing and Public Protection Committee
Shawn Woodcock (SW) – BCC, Licensing
Mohammed Rashid (MR) – BASTA & Elite Training
Iftexhar Hussain (IH) – BASTA & Elite Training
Abdul Saeed (AS) – BASTA & Elite Training
Amjid Afzal (AA) – A K Manor Cars
Habib Rehman (HR) – BASTA & Elite
Manawar Hussain (MW) – TOA
Sajid Hussain (SH) – TOA
Sajid Mahmood (SM) – RMT
Mohammed Halim (MH) – RMT
Abdul Saheed (ASa) – Private Hire Drivers Forum
M Latif (ML) – A K Manor Cars
Stephen Hull (SHu) – IWGB / Private Hire Drivers Forum
Raheel Shah (RS) - WMPHDA
Sylvia Broadley (SB) - BCC
Kevin Cummins (KC) – BCC, Transportation
Rebecca Wilson (RW) – BCC (Notes)

Apologies:

Rory McLaren – Elite Radio Cars
Kieran Harte - Uber
Mumtaz Mohammed - BCC
Chris Arundel – BCC, Licensing
Martin Walker – Star Cars
Emma Rohomon – BCC, Licensing

CN thanked everyone for being here and introduced Councillors Zaffar and Dring, noting Councillor Zaffar's need to leave at 10.30am. Introductions were then given around the table.

2. Vehicles Emissions and Age Policy

A) Summary of current position and proposals

CN summarised the current position:

The report was due to be presented at LPPC on 13th March. The report was withdrawn 2 days before because of representations made by RMT, and the threat of a protest which would cause congestion in the city centre. Since the withdrawal, CN has met with MR and the Trade Representatives Working Group (TRWR).

B) Summary of requests from trade representatives for changes to the policy and the council's response

TRWR have put forward requests they would like to see accommodated; these closely reflect RMT's proposals.

The main issues raised were:

- 2021– the point at which drivers would need to have ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV).

It was agreed this was a big ask, therefore it is proposed this will apply to newly licensed drivers only and not those already licensed.

- All vehicles must meet Euro 6 (diesel) or Euro 4 (petrol) standards from 1st Jan 2020.

It was felt that this is quite draconian as very few vehicles will meet these standards. The new policy proposes an age based criteria whereby drivers would need to pay the daily CAZ charge as an alternative to replacing their vehicle. For HC that are eligible for a retro-fit and which cannot be completed by 2020, we will allow them to continue driving and be exempt from CAZ charge until such time as retro-fit product is fitted.

Also now proposing that electric ULEV HC vehicles can be licensed until 18 years old, and PH vehicles up until 12 years old (currently 8).

CN stated that Government have now formally written to us, outlining what funding we will be getting for supporting drivers. We had applied for £50m and have been awarded £38m, which is broken down below:

- £14.75m for taxi and PH drivers, made up from:
- £5m for HC which will be combination of £5k per driver towards CVRAS retro fit or £5k per driver towards the running costs of a ULEV
- £7m for PH upgrades towards purchasing cleaner vehicles
- £2.75m for leasing scheme where council could buy ultra-low HC vehicles and rent them out. CN stated this could buy 50 vehicles, but by leasing rather purchasing outright, we could obtain 80 vehicles. This scheme would be aimed at older drivers who are thinking of retirement. CN is unable to confirm what the rate of hire for drivers would be at present.

WZ asked for more clarity around the £7m towards PH upgrades. SB replied drivers could receive up to £2.5k towards the purchase of a ULEV, and up to £1k towards upgrading a compliant vehicle. This is based on the disposal of their current licensed vehicle (referred to as "scrappage"). SB feels that the vehicle would not need to be scrapped; it just means that the vehicle would need to be un-licensed. However she will seek confirmation of this from Government and let the Trade know so that they can inform drivers.

ACTION: SB

C) Discussion

A lengthy discussion then ensued. The main points are summarised below:

- More support for TX vans and wheelchair accessible vehicles as they will be hard hit and would be expected to incur CAZ charge.
- Infrastructure – it was noted there are not enough charging points at present. BD has already raised this. She stated there would be enough points to accommodate the need for them.
- A main concern for trade is that if somebody has an accident after 2021, then they will need to spend up to £60k on a new vehicle. CN confirmed it has been agreed in the policy they could replace like for like ie Euro 6 for Euro 6. Reps would also like to ensure this applies to diesels and LPG conversions.
ACTION: CN
- Retro-fits: CN confirmed that VRS are looking to take on additional employees to carry out the LPG conversions. They are confident that can complete all vehicles in the first 6 months of 2020.
- WZ confirmed that all BCC vehicles will also need to be compliant. This is something we are currently working on.
- Drivers (especially older drivers) are unsure of what to do for the best. WZ stated Reps will be given factual information that they can share with drivers. They can then make an informed decision based on this. He wanted as many drivers as possible to have access to the funding available. He stated we are not able to implement without support from the Reps; therefore we should all work together on this.
- Highlighted was that there is no support for PH multi-seated ULEV vehicles from 2021, and there is no reference to this in the reports. There is also no ULEV compliant 8 seater vehicle available at the moment. This would have a detrimental effect on transport for disabled children. SB will go back to Government to see if such vehicles could be considered under the £5k retro-fit scheme.
ACTION: SB
- ULEVs are not capable of doing long distances, and so the only purpose is for doing inner-city trips. In response, SB clarified that ULEV means very low emissions – including some hybrids. It was stated that there is some confusion around ULEVs. Most people think ULEVs are battery only, and that this should be made clear. SB replied the range has been extended, and the available vehicles are detailed on a new website (businessbreathes.co.uk). The website also gives advice and guidance on all types of suitable vehicles. SB will send Reps a link to this website.
ACTION: SB

CN stated that the policy would go forward as it stands, with a commitment that we will review that aspect (where no ULEV solution is available for private hire people carriers) and consider what we do. [The LPPC report was subsequently amended to include a recommendation to consider the rules around the provision of ULEV private hire vehicles.]

- SB to seek clarity on why the £7.5k plug-in grant goes to the manufacturer rather than the driver.

ACTION: SB

- A query arose about whether the CAZ fine picked up by vehicles can be passed onto the customer. CN stated this would need to go on the fare tariff charge; he felt the Council would not approve this.
- TRWG requested only one MOT per year on LPG conversions over 15 years old, and not 2 as in the proposal. CN replied that 2 MOTs a year were necessary to ensure the roadworthiness of the vehicle and safety of passenger(s). He added that TX taxis are especially prone to corrosion in and around the boot and rear wheel arches exactly where the LPG tank is situated.
- TRWG also asked whether it was possible for a driver to suspend their vehicle licence for 2 years. For example, a HC driver wanting to go into PH trade and return to HC trade 2 years later. There was a very lengthy conversation around this; it is highly likely that this would not be possible as it would be deemed illegal. CN noted this is not an imperative part of the policy. However he will look at this issue and provide a response as to whether or not it is possible and why. [This was subsequently included as a recommendation in the report to LPPC.]

ACTION: CN

- It was clarified that from January 2020, vehicles older than stipulated age limit can run until the expiry of their licence.
- LPG conversions – drivers need to obtain permission from Licensing before this is carried out (unless already noted in Log book). If drivers are replacing an engine like for like, they do not need permission as this is not classed as a modification.
- Euro 4 and 5 diesels – query raised can they continue in the same manner? CN's response was no as these are the oldest and most polluting vehicles. As there are few options available, we need to look at whether we can license rear-loading vehicles. SW replied that this is being looked at by Chris Arundel, Licensing and he is awaiting information from other Local Authorities. BD was hopeful a report would be submitted to May LPPC.
- Comment made about problems experienced with LPG conversions. SB reminded reps that LPG vehicles should not be idling for lengthy periods as

they are not designed for this (although the latest LPG conversions are modified to cope better with idling.).

- Concerns raised that accident management companies could utilise grants available to upgrade their own fleets. CN stated we would want to give the money to individual drivers rather than such companies. There is a limit to how much we can give out on each case of £5k – and we will take this into account when we design the scheme. Reps were in favour of one driver, one vehicle only.
- Lengthy conversation around LPG's and insurance. SB suggested drivers needed to have a conversation with their insurer beforehand to ascertain value of the vehicle once an LPG engine has been fitted. They can then make a decision as to whether they feel it is financially viable to have the product fitted. It was also highlighted that drivers can only have one grant. If they write off a vehicle in an accident they won't be entitled to another grant.
- Discussion around Euro 5 vehicles and whether a 2 year exemption could be allowed. The reasoning behind this is that the money saved from not paying the CAZ charge would allow the driver to save towards a new vehicle. CN said that this was a separate issue in its own right, and we wouldn't be able to make special exemptions for these vehicles. SW will go back and find out how many Euro 5 vans we have, and have a conversation with CN and SB to see what, if anything, can be done.

ACTION: SW

- Following a query, CN confirmed that vehicles over 15 years old that have not been LPG converted will not be licensed.
- Reps requested a breakdown of the concessions being offered to the trade. BD stated that a copy of the Government's letter will be forwarded shortly.

ACTION: CN

D) Next Steps

CN then summarised the main amendments to the policy:

- Agreeing like for like replacement scheme so drivers are not forced to upgrade vehicles following an accident.
- Age limit will be HC 15 years, PH 12 years
- LPG conversions can remain licensed until 2025 or until 15 years old (whichever is longest).
- Vehicles that reach their age limit after 1st January 2020 will continue until the expiry of their licence in 2020.

The policy will be amended to reflect the above changes. The report will then be presented at LPPC on 10th April, and will be published online on Monday 1st April (Reps will be sent a link to this)