

To: Cabinet
Date: 19th November 2025
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive, Citizen and City Services
Title of Report: Hackney Carriage Vehicle Emission Standards Amendment

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To consider a delay to the final phase of emission standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles licensed by this Authority.
Key decision:	Yes Issue details - Hackney Carriage Vehicle Emission Standards Oxford City Council
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Anna Railton. Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for a Zero Carbon Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Strong, Fair Economy; Thriving Communities; Zero Carbon Oxford.
Policy Framework:	

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Approve the removal of the current hackney carriage emissions standards requirement that all new and renewal HCV applications must meet the Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle standard by 1st January 2026.

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix One	2019 GPL Committee Report	No
Appendix Two	2024 GPL Committee Report	No
Appendix Three	COLTA request for policy delay	No
Appendix Four	2025 Affordability and Emissions Report	No
Appendix Five	Equality Impact Assessment	No

Introduction and background

1. On 23rd January 2019 the General Purposes Licensing (GPL) Committee approved the recommendation to introduce new emission standards for hackney carriage vehicles (HCV) licenced by this Authority, to reduce emissions in the taxi fleet and improve air quality in the City.
2. It was acknowledged that Oxford City centre has high levels of toxic nitrogen dioxide, which contributes to diseases including cancer, asthma, stroke and heart disease; and, to around 40,000 deaths in the UK every year.

The 2019 GPL Committee report can be found at **Appendix One**.

3. On 5th February 2024 the GPL Committee approved an amendment to the emission standards for HCVs, by extending the final phase of the standards, requiring all new and renewal HCV applications to meet ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) standards from 1st January 2026 (previously 1st January 2025). This report included a public consultation.
4. On 18th March 2025, the recommended extension was further debated at full Council, who subsequently voted to approve it.

The 2024 GPL Committee report can be found at **Appendix Two**.

5. The current HCV emission standards, as adopted by the Council are:

Date From	Renewal HCV Applications	New HCV Applications
Renewal – 1st January 2020 New – Immediately	All HCV must meet EURO 4 emission standard	All HCV must meet EURO4, EURO 6 or ULEV emission standard.(EURO 5 vehicles will not be considered to meet this standard)
1st January 2022	All HCV must meet EURO 4 emission standard	All HCV must meet ULEV standard, *or at least Euro 4 if replacing an existing Euro 4, Euro 5 or Euro 6 due to the vehicle being written off by an insurance company or is a temporary courtesy vehicle due to repairs
1st January 2026	All HCV must meet ULEV standard	All HCV must meet ULEV standard

6. As of September 2025, 40 out of 107 licensed hackney carriage vehicles have transitioned to meet the ULEV standard, along with 3 out of 4 currently licenced temporary vehicles. This means 67 licensed HCVs and 1 temporary vehicle still need to upgrade to meet the ULEV standard from the 1st January 2026.

General Purposes Licensing Committee – September 2025

7. On 22nd September 2025, a report on this matter was presented to the GPL Committee who asked questions and considered answers from Officers in the Licensing Team. In addition, there were two public addresses to the Committee and these were also considered.
8. After considering everything before them the GPL committee agreed a postponement of the final phase until the establishment of a new unitary council under the Local Government Review, aligning the policy with wider structural changes and enabling consistent standards across the new licensing authority.
9. The full recording of the Committee can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3cHDNrRRWk> 1:17:55 – 2:23:50

City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association (COLTA) request

10. On 11th April and 22nd July 2025, the City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association (COLTA) formally requested that the Council postpone the final phase of the Hackney Carriage Vehicle (HCV) emission standards, currently set for implementation on 1st January 2026, by an additional two years, extending the deadline to 2028. COLTA cited the following reasons in support of their request:
 - Financial hardship.
 - Impact of the evolving private hire trade.
 - Uncertainty regarding hackney carriage quantity control.
 - Local infrastructure challenges, including road closures and delays to the Zero Emission Zone.
 - Uncertainty regarding local government reorganisation.

A copy of this request can be found at **Appendix Three**.

Affordability and Emissions

11. To support making an informed decision, the Environmental Sustainability Team produced an updated report examining key factors affecting the hackney carriage market. The report explores:
 - The affordability of electric hackney carriages, including ownership and running costs.
 - The impact of reduced government grants, rising energy, and borrowing costs.

- Comparative cost scenarios between electric and diesel vehicles.
- Emissions reductions achieved since the introduction of licensing standards.
- Implications of Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) charges and delays to its expansion.

A copy of this report can be found at **Appendix Four**.

Oxfordshire policy comparison

12. Oxford City Council is leading the way for low emission hackney carriage vehicles, with the current requirement of ULEV standard from 2026.

South Oxfordshire District Council & Vale of White Horse District Council aim for zero-carbon by 2030 but currently only require Euro 6 by 2026.

Cherwell District Council sets a later ULEV deadline of 2030 for new applications, and 2033 for renewals.

West Oxfordshire District Council has no formal ULEV requirement at present.

Local Government Reorganisation

13. The Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will reshape Oxfordshire's council structure, with implementation expected in 2028 following a shadow authority period, with three unitary models proposed.
14. Based on March 2025 County wide data, a single Oxfordshire-wide authority would license approximately 1,068 hackney carriages, an increase of 898% compared to Oxford City alone. A two-unitary model would create one authority with around 332 vehicles (Oxford City, Cherwell, West Oxfordshire), an increase of 210%. A three-unitary model is less precise due to the boundary proposal, but estimates suggest a Greater Oxford fleet of 300–350 vehicles, an increase of 180–227%.

Conclusion

15. Cabinet is asked to consider the future implementation of the final phase of the Hackney Carriage Vehicle (HCV) emission standards in light of several key factors.
16. The City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association (COLTA) has formally requested a two-year extension to the current policy deadline, citing financial hardship, market change from the private hire trade, infrastructure challenges, and uncertainty surrounding future regulation. COLTA emphasises that while many vehicle owners have already transitioned, further time is needed to ensure a fair and sustainable shift for the remaining fleet.
17. The Environmental Sustainability Team has provided an updated assessment of the hackney carriage market, exploring affordability, emissions reductions, and the impact of government grants and energy costs. Their findings confirm that significant progress has been made in reducing emissions, but also highlight the increasing financial pressures faced by vehicle owners, particularly those without access to home charging.

18. The Local Government Reorganisation adds further complexity. Regardless of which unitary model is adopted, there will be a significant increase in the number of vehicles within the new licensing areas that do not currently and will not meet Oxford City's ULEV standard. Aligning these standards will be a priority for the shadow authority, and any decision taken now will have implications for the future policy alignment.

19. Cabinet is invited to consider the alternative options:

A. Maintain the current policy

Retain the existing implementation date of 1st January 2026, requiring all new and renewal HCV applications to meet the Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle standard.

B. Extend the deadline by one year

Amend the policy to defer the final phase by 12 months, setting a new implementation date of 1st January 2027, allowing additional time for transition while maintaining momentum towards the Council's environmental objectives.

C. Remove the current hackney carriage emissions standards requirement that all new and renewal HCV applications must meet the Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle standard by 1st January 2026. This matter would be considered by a new unitary council set up under the Local Government Review.

Officers recommend option **C**.

Financial implications

20. The updated financial implications on the hackney carriage trade are outlined in the affordability and emissions report found at **Appendix Four**.

Legal issues

21. The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 at sections 47, 48 and 51 allows the Licensing Authority to attach to vehicle licences such conditions as it considers 'reasonably necessary'. Improving standards in vehicle safety, and air quality are relevant factors in this respect.

Equalities impact

22. The equality impact assessment identifies that the current Hackney Carriage Vehicle (HCV) emissions policy will primarily affect vehicle owners and licence holders. Any extension to the implementation date would provide financial relief to those who have not yet upgraded their vehicles to meet the Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle (ULEV) standard, currently 67 vehicles. However, such an extension may result in a financial disadvantage for early adopters of ULEV vehicles, currently 40 vehicles, who have already made significant investment in compliance.

A copy of the equality impact assessment can be found at **Appendix Five**.

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