Consultation outcome: Category B driving licence derogation for alternatively fuelled commercial vehicles

Updated: Government response to consultation on regulatory changes to support the take-up of alternatively-fuelled light commercial vehicles.

The government wants to establish low emission light commercial vehicles as an alternative to diesel-powered vans. This will help to improve air quality in our towns and cities and meet our legal obligations under the Climate Change Act and air quality regulations.

The proposals set out in this consultation would allow category B (car) licence holders to drive a slightly heavier vehicle, if it is powered by a low emission technology, by offsetting the additional weight of the powertrain.

This will help compensate for lost payload capacity due to the added weight and size of alternative fuel technologies.

Press release: Plan for roadside NO2 concentrations published

The Government confirmed today that it will end the sale of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars by 2040, as it unveiled new plans to tackle air pollution.

The UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations produced by Defra and the Department for Transport outlines how councils with the worst levels of air pollution at busy road junctions and hotspots must take robust action.

Today’s announcement is focused on delivering nitrogen dioxide (NO2) compliance at the roadside in the shortest amount of time. This is one part of our programme to deliver clean air – next year the Government will publish a comprehensive Clean Air Strategy which will address other sources of air pollution.

Air quality in the UK has been improving significantly in recent decades,

with reductions in emissions of all of the key pollutants, and NO2 levels down by half in the last 15 years.

Despite this, an analysis of over 1,800 of Britain's major roads show that a small number of these – 81 or 4% – are due to breach legal pollution limits for NO2, with 33 of these outside of London.

To accelerate action local areas will be asked to produce initial plans within eight months and final plans by the end of next year.

The Government will help towns and cities by providing £255 million to implement their plans, in addition to the £2.7 billion we are already investing.

Due to the highly localised nature of the problem local knowledge will be crucial in solving pollution problems in these hotspots. The government will require councils to produce local air quality plans which reduce nitrogen dioxide levels in the fastest possible time.

Local authorities will be able to bid for money from a new Clean Air Fund to support improvements which will reduce the need for restrictions on polluting vehicles. This could include changing road layouts, removing traffic lights and speed humps, or upgrading bus fleets.

Air pollution continues to have an unnecessary and avoidable impact on people's health and evidence shows that poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK, costing the country up to £2.7 billion in lost productivity in 2012.

The UK is one of 17 EU countries breaching annual targets for nitrogen dioxide, a problem which has been made worse by the failure of the European testing regime for vehicle emissions.

The government will also issue a consultation in the autumn to gather views on measures to support motorists, residents and businesses affected by local plans – such as retrofitting, subsidised car club memberships, exemptions from any vehicles restrictions, or a targeted scrappage scheme for car and van drivers.

Measures considered will need to target those most in need of support, provide strong value for the taxpayer and be resistant to fraud.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

> Today's plan sets out how we will work with local authorities to tackle the effects of roadside pollution caused by dirty diesels, in particular nitrogen dioxide.
>
> This is one element of the government's £3 billion programme to clean up the air and reduce vehicle emissions.
>
> Improving air quality is about more than just transport, so next

> year we will publish a comprehensive Clean Air Strategy. This will set out how we will address all forms of air pollution, delivering clean air for the whole country.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

> We are determined to deliver a green revolution in transport and reduce pollution in our towns and cities.
>
> We are taking bold action and want nearly every car and van on UK roads to be zero emission by 2050 which is why we've committed to investing more than £600m in the development, manufacture and use of ultra-low emission vehicles by 2020.
>
> Today we commit £100m towards new low emission buses and retrofitting older buses with cleaner engines.
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> We are also putting forward proposals for van drivers to have the right to use heavier vehicles if they are electric or gas-powered, making it easier for businesses to opt for cleaner commercial vehicles.

Local authorities will have access to a range of options to tackle poor air quality in their plans such as changing road layouts to reduce congestion, encouraging uptake of ultra-low emissions vehicles and retrofitting public transport.

If these measures are not sufficient to ensure legal compliance, local authorities may also need to consider restrictions on polluting vehicles using affected roads.

This could mean preventing polluting vehicles using some of these roads at certain times of the day or introducing charging, as the Mayor of London has already announced.

The Government is clear that local authorities should exhaust other options before opting to impose charging. Any restrictions or charging on polluting vehicles should be time-limited and lifted as soon as air pollution is within legal limits and the risk of future breaches has passed.

Plans will be assessed by government to make sure they are effective, fair, good value and will deliver the required improvements in air quality in the shortest time possible. If local plans do not meet that test, government will require councils to take action to achieve legal compliance.

Government is supporting councils to develop these plans through:

- A £255 million implementation fund for all immediate work required to deliver plans within eight months to address poor air quality in the

shortest time possible;

- A Clean Air Fund for councils to bid for money to introduce new measures such as changing road layouts to cut congestion and reduce idling vehicles, new park and ride services, introducing concessionary travel schemes and improving bus fleets. More details will be announced later this year.

- A £40 million Clean Bus Technology Fund grant scheme – part of a £290 million National Productivity Investment Fund announced in the Autumn Statement – to limit emissions from up to 2350 older buses. Government remains committed to putting the public finances back on a sustainable footing: so all money spent on air quality measures will be funded through changes to the tax treatment for new diesel vehicles or through reprioritisation within existing departmental budgets. Further details will be announced later this year.

Also announced today:

- Van drivers are set to be given the right to use heavier vehicles if they are electric or gas-powered, in measures that will help improve air quality in towns and cities across the country.

- Manufacturers found to be using devices on their vehicles to cheat emissions tests could face criminal and civil charges, with fines of up to £50,000 for every device installed, under proposed new laws.

1. Government plans to improve air quality include:
    - Plans to ensure that new vehicles used in the Government fleet are low NO2, as well as low carbon.
    - Lorry emissions checks at the roadside and new emissions standards for non-road mobile machinery.
2. Local Authorities will be expected to produce draft plans in eight months and final plans by December 2018.
3. According to Public Health England, poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. Evidence from the World Health Organisation (WHO) shows that older people, children, people with pre-existing lung and heart conditions, and people on lower incomes may be most at risk. A review by the World Health Organization concludes that long-term exposure to air pollution reduces life expectancy by increasing deaths from lung, heart and circulatory conditions and there is emerging evidence from the Royal College of Physicians of possible links with a range of other adverse health effects including diabetes, cognitive decline and dementia, and effects on the unborn child.

4. Research commissioned by Defra estimated that in 2012, poor air quality had a total cost of up to £2.7 billion through its impact on productivity.

5. Read The Government's UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations.

6. Breakdown of £2.7bn government funding:

- £1bn – Ultra low emissions vehicles. This includes investing nearly £100m in the UK's charging infrastructure and funding the Plug In Car and Plug In Van Grant Schemes.

- £290m – National Productivity Investment Fund. In the Autumn Statement 2016, a further £290 million was committed for reducing transport emissions which includes £100 million for new buses and retrofit (of which £40million is made available today), £50 million for a Plug In Taxi programme and £80 million for ULEV charging infrastructure.

- £11m – Air Quality Grant. We have awarded over £11 million under our Air Quality Grant scheme to help local authorities improve air quality.

- £89m – Green Bus Fund. The UK Government has invested a total of almost £89 million via the Green Bus Fund to help bus companies and local authorities in England to put over 1200 new low carbon buses on the roads.

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- £1.2bn – Cycling and walking. In April 2017, the UK Government published its Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy which identifies £1.2 billion which may be invested in cycling and walking from 2016-2021.

- £100m – National road network. Through the Road Investment Strategy, the UK Government has allocated a ring-fenced £100 million for an Air Quality Fund available through to 2021 for Highways England to help improve air quality on its network.

For further information contact the Defra press office on 020 8225 7317.

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Updated: Firs line amended to include vans

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Background:

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Policy paper: Air quality plan for nitrogen dioxide (NO2) in UK (2017)

Updated: Added the supplement plan and annex D maps.

Statutory air quality plan for nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), setting out how the UK will be reducing roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations.

These documents and zone plans set out our comprehensive approach to meeting the statutory limits for nitrogen dioxide, and the policy background.

The technical report details the modelling techniques and assumptions used when developing the plan.

A supplement to the plan was published on 5 October 2018. Read the local authority studies used to develop the supplement.

The Directions require specified local authorities to carry out studies or to

implement actions to meet legal limits for nitrogen dioxide in the shortest possible time, and sets deadlines.

These documents detail how we will meet our legal requirement to reduce nitrogen dioxide set out in the:

- Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010
- Air Quality Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2010
- Air Quality Standards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- Air Quality Standards (Wales) Regulations 2010

Collection: Future of mobility

Updated: Added 6 workshop reports.

Technological developments and disruptive business models will have a significant impact on how people and goods move around the UK over the coming decades. This project investigates the impact and consequences of these issues on how people and goods will be transported.

The project aims to:

- share the latest scientific evidence with policy makers
- use futures techniques to inform policy decision making
- help policy makers deal with uncertainty around the future of transport

Emerging areas of focus are:

- the interaction between people, technology and data
- new transport business models
- alternate transport futures

These areas are likely to develop over the course of the project.