

Clean Air Zone update - January 2020

Clean Air Zones are under consideration in towns and cities across the UK in response to Government and local authority concerns on high levels - sometimes illegally high levels - of air pollution.

The first Clean Air Zone impacting on cars and vans/light goods vehicles was introduced in London on April 8, 2019.

Elsewhere numerous towns and cities are considering implementing Clean Air Zones. However, plans, which require Government approval prior to introduction, are evolving at different rates as significant behind-the-scenes analysis is undertaken.

Venson Automotive Solutions published its first Clean Air Zone guide early in 2019 - https://www.venson.com/uploads/pdfs/VENS6373_CleanAirZone_V3-67-2019-49.pdf. The guide was significantly updated in July 2019 and included a city-by-city, town-by-town listing on the roll-out of local plans - <https://www.venson.com/Media/ViewWhitePaper/37>

Now, as local authority proposals continue to evolve, Venson Automotive Solutions has further updated guidance on an individual city and town basis as the latest developments emerge.

Bath and North East Somerset

A Class C Clean Air Zone is expected to see charges for all higher emission vehicles, except cars, driving in the centre of Bath by the end of 2020.

Bath and North East Somerset Council has recently completed a public consultation on the scheme that will see higher emission buses, coaches and HGVs charged £100 a day to enter Bath city centre; and vans, taxis, private hire vehicles and minibuses £9 a day.

The council is now examining all responses to the consultation before the final plan is submitted for approval by central Government in December 2019. If approved it is anticipated that Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras and signage will be installed in 2020.

To help businesses upgrade their vehicles ahead of introduction of the Clean Air Zone, the Council has proposed a £24.2 million interest-free loan fleet scheme. The Council says it will cover the interest on the loan scheme via funds being requested from the Government's Clean Air Fund. The scheme will be open for applications early in 2020. Further information is available at: <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/bath-breathes-2021-overview/financial-assistance>

Councillor Joanna Wright, cabinet member for transport services, said: "We don't want people to pay to drive polluting vehicles in the Zone, but we understand that not every business or tradesperson has the means to buy new commercial vehicles. That's why we've secured significant funds from central Government to help local business and individuals upgrade their non-compliant vehicles with interest-free finance or grants.

"We've also secured funds for local bus companies to retrofit older buses, and to hire travel advisors to help businesses in particular to access support and plan for more sustainable transport and deliveries."

Birmingham

The city's Clean Air Zone will be "rolled out by July 2020". Birmingham, like Leeds City Council, had planned to introduce the Zone, which will cover all roads within the A4540 Middleway Ring Road (but not the Middleway itself), in January 2020.

However, as mentioned in Venson Automotive Solution's Clean Air Zone update (summer 2019), introduction was postponed with the councils blaming the Government for not delivering digital vehicle checking tools in time that were needed to make the Zones operational.

The Class D Clean Air Zone will see non-compliant - non-Euro 6/VI for diesel or Euro 4 for petrol - cars, vans/light goods vehicles, taxis and private hire vehicles charged £8 a day to travel in the Zone and HGVs, coaches and buses will be charged £50 a day. There is no charge for motorcycles, mopeds or scooters to drive in the CAZ.

Employees who currently drive to work in a non-compliant vehicle, if their employer is located within the Clean Air Zone and they earn less than £30,000 a year, will not be charged a Zone entry fee until 2021, one year after its introduction.

Separately, Birmingham City Council has proposed plans to investigate developing and implementing a workplace parking levy in the city. It is predicted that the scheme, if given the green light, would not become operational until 2023/24.

Businesses which would have to pay the levy, if introduced, would be those located inside the A4540 Middleway ring road, the same boundary as the Clean Air Zone, and have more than 10 workplace spaces.

Also aimed at improving air quality to create a healthier environment and reduce congestion in Birmingham, the council's initial report estimates that the levy charge would be £500 per space in the first year. It is suggested that the levy would increase 2% per annum rising to £510 in 2024/25 and to £520 in 2025/26 up to £609 in 2033/34. The number of chargeable spaces is estimated to be 14,587.

Cllr Waseem Zaffar, cabinet member for Transport and Environment at Birmingham City Council, said: "A Workplace Parking Levy would help tackle air pollution, fund public transport improvements, reduce congestion and improve the way we move around our city.

We have already undertaken some initial work to understand the potential benefit of a Workplace Parking Levy in Birmingham."

Currently, Nottingham is the only UK city to have a workplace parking levy.

Bradford

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council has completed an online survey to seek people's views on proposals, which include a Clean Air Zone, to reduce air pollution and protect the health of people.

The public consultation will help shape the preparation of the Council's final business case, due for submission to the Government in early 2020.

The current suggestion is for a Class D Clean Air Zone, which would impact on buses, coaches, taxis, private hire vehicles, HGVs, light commercial vehicles and cars.

Bristol



Bristol is to ban all privately owned diesel cars from a section of the city centre and introduce a wider charging zone for non-compliant commercial vehicles such as buses, taxis, HGVs and vans, if Government approval for the initiative is given with implementation slated for March 2021.

Bristol City Council's Clean Air Zone plan means that it is set to become the first city in the UK to take what it called "the bold step of introducing a small area diesel ban".

Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, said: "These ambitious plans demonstrate our commitment to tackling air pollution so we meet legal limits within the shortest time, without disproportionately affecting citizens on lower incomes which would happen with a blanket approach to charging vehicles."

The plan has now been submitted to the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit. The Council will continue to work closely with the Unit on preparing the full business case for submission early next year.

As part of the full business case, there will be direct engagement with all businesses and residents affected to help manage implementation, including details of mitigations measures and exemptions. The deadline for the implementation of the plans is March 2021.

The diesel ban on all privately owned cars is set to cover part of the M32, the old city, Redcliffe, Spike Island, the Harbourside and part of Hotwells between the hours of 7am and 3pm, seven days a week. It will not apply to taxis/private hire or emergency service vehicles.

And a Class C Clean Air Zone impacting on vans/light goods vehicles, private hire vehicles, taxis, buses, coaches and HGVs will simultaneously be introduced covering a wider area of the city. Non-compliant vans/light goods vehicles, private hire vehicles and taxis and non-compliant HGVs, coaches and buses - those that do not meet Euro6/VI emission standards - would be charged £9 per day and £100 per day entry respectively.

Fines will be levied on diesel cars and commercial vehicles that enter the area covered by the diesel car ban and the Clean Air Zone, although the level of punishment has yet to be announced. Enforcement will be via number plate recognition cameras.

Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham says the area "is ready" with its Clean Air Plan, which includes the largest proposed Clean Air Zone outside London, covering 500 square miles and 2.8 million people, but wants the Government to commit more cash to fund the transition by businesses to 'clean' vehicles.

The proposed Class C Clean Air Zone would cover 10 local authority areas - Stockport, Manchester, Oldham, Bolton, Bolsover, Bury, Salford, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford.

However, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) rejected the plan, which would target non-compliant HGVs, buses and coaches, taxis and private hire vehicles from 2021 and expand to non-compliant vans/light goods vehicles, minibuses, motorhomes and motorised horseboxes from 2023. The 10 local councils received a ministerial instruction to accelerate by two years plans to include vans/light goods vehicles in its Clean Air Zone plan.

Furthermore, the Authority was also asked to demonstrate that introducing a Class D Clear Zone, which would include cars, would not mean compliance with legal air quality standards sooner than 2024.

The Authority also asked the Government for £116 million of clean vehicle funding to help local businesses upgrade to clean vehicles and thereby avoid any penalty for travelling through the Clean Air Zone. That included: A £59 million Clean Freight Fund, for upgrading HGVs and vans; a £29 million Clean Bus Fund to support a switch to a greener bus and coach fleet in the city-region; and a £28 million Clean Taxi Fund, for a move to compliant hackney cabs and private hire vehicles.

Mr Burnham said: "Greater Manchester is ready with our Clean Air Plan proposals to quickly tackle the huge problem of air pollution, which contributes to the equivalent of 1,200 deaths in our city-region each year. But Government has so far failed to commit enough funding to implement.

"And, crucially, it has not so far put forward any funding to help Greater Manchester bus and coach operators, taxi and private hire drivers and companies, businesses with HGVs and vans - which could be affected by our Clean Air Zone proposal - to retrofit their existing vehicles, or move to cleaner models, to avoid paying a daily penalty to drive within the zone. We don't want businesses to pay - we want to help them switch to compliant vehicles. But we need much more support from the Government to do this."

Leeds

The city's Clean Air Zone was due to be launched on January 6, 2020, but has now been pushed back and will now not be introduced "any earlier than July 2020".

Both Leeds and Birmingham were due to implement England's first Clean Air Zones in January 2020. However, as mentioned in Venson Automotive Solution's Clean Air Zone update (summer 2019), introduction was postponed with the councils blaming the Government for not delivering digital vehicle checking tools in time that were needed to make the Zones operational.

Leeds City Council has now begun installing a network of 300 purpose-built ANPR cameras at more than 100 road junctions around the perimeter of the Zone with the work expected to be completed in December 2019.

The Class B Zone means that owners of the worst polluting - non-Euro 6/VI for diesel or Euro 4 for petrol - HGVs, buses, coaches, taxis and private hire vehicles will be charged to enter. Private cars, light good vehicles, and motorcycles will not be charged.

Non-compliant HGVs, buses and coaches will face a £50 a day charge and taxis and private hire vehicles £12.50 a day or £50 a week for Leeds-licensed vehicles.

North East England

A public consultation has opened seeking views on implementation in 2021 of a Clean Air Zone in Newcastle city centre.

The Clean Air Zone would see introduction of a £50 per day charge on non-compliant coaches, buses, and lorries - as well as a £12.50 charge on taxis and vans that do not meet emissions standards. Private cars will be exempt from the charges initially, though that could change in the coming years.

The public are also being asked for their views on the prospect of reducing general traffic on the Tyne Bridge to one lane in each direction, which would come into force alongside the Clean Air Zone.

Also included in the six-week consultation are possible grants of up to £16,000 to help people affected by the charges to upgrade their vehicles, new delivery hubs for goods vehicles outside of the city, and changes on the Central Motorway to prevent traffic from merging on and off the slip road between the New Bridge Street and Swan House junctions.

Newcastle, Gateshead and North Tyneside councils developed the revised proposals following consultation feedback, which highlighted concerns about the potential impact of charges in the first year on individuals, businesses and the local economy.

The Clean Air Zone is a watered down version of what was originally proposed – from a Class D to a Class C scheme that excludes cars and impacting only on Newcastle city centre.

Cllr Arlene Ainsley, cabinet member for transport and air quality at Newcastle city council, said: "Simply charging everyone for driving into Newcastle city centre or over our bridges isn't going to clean up air quality on its own. That's why we've developed a package of measures to address many of the issues the public and businesses raised with us during our first consultation.

Cllr Martin Gannon, leader at Gateshead Council said: "At this stage, we will not be looking to charge private vehicles as we firmly believe that there have to be credible alternatives in place for people to get out of their cars, such as better walking and cycling infrastructure and cheaper and more reliable forms of public transport which will be our primary focus.

"We may need to look again at private cars in the future which will require further consultation, but we believe our proposals should – if the supporting measures are funded adequately by government – bring our air quality to legal levels and protect the health of our population."

Following the consultation, which concludes on November 25 the clean air plan will be submitted to the Government for approval.

North Staffordshire

Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council are investigating ways to reduce air pollution in certain areas by 2021, predominantly in and around the A53 corridor - but a Clean Air Zone is now viewed as unlikely although a workplace parking levy is reported to be under consideration.

The Government has ordered the councils to evaluate various options, and develop a preferred approach that improves air quality on the A53 and in other parts of the city and borough in the shortest possible time.

Traffic surveys have recently been carried out to understand how people, taxi drivers and businesses with higher polluting vehicles use the A53 between the A500 and Newcastle town centre, Festival Park and Hanley, as well as surrounding areas. Additionally, motorists have been asked how they would respond if a charging Clean Air Zone was to be introduced.

The information gathered from the five-week exercise is now being used by the local authorities to develop alternative, non-charging traffic management solutions. However, it has emerged that a workplace parking levy could also be under consideration, according to local newspaper reports although no further details are available.

Councillor Trevor Johnson, borough cabinet member for environment and recycling, said: "The Government has determined that Clean Air Zones are the most effective way of resolving this issue quickly and has instructed that other methods must be measured against this benchmark.

"The Borough Council has serious concerns about a chargeable Clean Air Zone, and the impact it could have on the local economy. We are keen to rigorously test credible alternative options which we believe can deliver the same improvement, in the same time frame, such as improving air quality through improved traffic management. This research is hugely important as it will give us real data about how drivers would respond to a Clean Air Zone and help us to identify the most appropriate solution to the air quality problem."

Oxford

UK's first Zero Emission Zone banning all but electric and hydrogen vehicles from free-entry is scheduled to be introduced in Oxford city centre later this year and to be expanded further afield in 2021/22.

The far-reaching two-phase measure has been revealed in final draft proposals that are now open to public consultation.

As previously reported - <https://www.venson.com/Media/ViewWhitePaper/37> - the plans see the city taking a staggered approach towards its final target of zero transport emissions within its boundaries by 2035.

The informal consultation on phase one, the Red Zone, which essentially covers five city centre streets, runs until the end of January. Both Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council are seeking feedback on:

- Charge levels for non-compliant vehicles - cars, vans, HGVs and mopeds/motorcycles - of £10 per day charge is suggested rising to £20 per day in December 2024
- The Zone's hours of operation – 7am-7pm is recommended
- Whether discounts should be available for all blue badge holders entering the Zone until December 2024 and a 90% discount for residents living in the Zone until December 2030
- What future phases of the Zero Emission Zone should include, and when they should be implemented. The draft document proposes the creation of a Green Zone covering the rest of the city centre in 2021/22, which would be accessed free of charge by zero emission vehicles and with discounted charges for vehicles which comply with the London Ultra Low Emission Zone standards (Euro6/VI for diesel vehicles/Euro 4 for petrol vehicles).

The document also proposes exemptions for businesses registered in the Red Zone until December 2024, followed by a 50% discount until December 2030 when a £10 per day charge would be levied.

The Councils say that exempting vehicles registered to businesses within the Red Zone from any charge until December 2024, allows employers time to transition to zero emissions fleets. Deliveries in non-zero emission vehicles may be made free of charge outside of the operating hours of the Red Zone.

Under the proposals, a compliant vehicle is considered to be one that matches the Government's Plug-In grant criteria - allowing some plug-in hybrids (cars with CO2 emissions of less than 50g/km and can travel at least 70 miles without any emissions at all and vans with CO2 emissions of less than 75g/km and can travel at least 10 miles without any emissions at all) and hydrogen vehicles, as well as 100% electric vehicles.

Following the feedback, the Red Zone will then go to formal consultation in March, and the draft charging order published, with both Councils making a formal decision on implementation in the spring, which could mean the scheme coming into effect in December 2020.

Under the proposals, zero emission vehicles would be able to drive in the Red Zone, which consists of Bonn Square, Queen Street, Cornmarket, Ship Street, St Michael's Street, and New Inn Hall Street - free of charge.

The Councils say that buses and taxis are already on agreed journeys towards zero emission fleets. From January 2020, all Hackney Carriage Vehicles licenced in Oxford will be moving towards becoming zero emission by 2025, with phased emission standards. The councils are also working with bus companies operating in Oxford to move towards zero emission by 2035 at the latest, but are working to achieve that by 2030 if possible.

Meanwhile, as part of its pledge to become carbon neutral by 2030, Oxfordshire County Council has already started switching to an electric fleet, with the aim of being electric for most of its cars and vans by 2024 and 2028 respectively. New e-bikes have also joined the fleet meaning that staff unused to cycling can get to local meetings more easily under their own steam.

The City Council's wholly-owned direct services company, Oxford Direct Services Ltd has committed to electrifying at least 25% of its fleet by 2023. The City Council currently has 50 hybrid and electric vehicles in its fleet. That, it says, has contributed to the reduction of the City Council's emissions by 10% in the last year, and by 40% in the last five years.

The Green Zone due to cover the remainder of the city centre and slated for implementation in 2021/22, would operate alongside the Red Zone, with separate requirements.

That could involve a charging scheme with:

- Daily charges for high emission vehicles - worse than Euro 6/VI diesel or Euro 4 petrol
- A discounted daily charge for low emission vehicles - Euro 6/VI diesel, Euro 4 petrol or better, and/or for vehicles which comply with the London Ultra Low Emission Zone standards
- No charge for zero emission vehicles
- Discounts for residents' cars, vans or motorcycles.

Greater detail around the implementation of the Green Zone and how it would work is subject to further technical work, and consultation in 2020.

Councillor Yvonne Constance, cabinet member for environment, Oxfordshire County Council, said: "Not only will this project make a huge difference to the quality of life and health of people living and working in the city centre, we are showing that it is possible as we start to respond seriously to the climate emergency. This is a great way to start an important decade of climate action."

Christopher Benton, director of Oxford-based logistics Pedal & Post, said: "We now work with over 80 local businesses delivering everything from parcels to veg boxes to urgent medication and we've managed to save an estimated 30 tons of CO2 from cycling across 2019. The Zero Emission Zone gives us as a local business the confidence to invest further and be much more ambitious in 2020 to help Oxford towards emission free deliveries."

• Further information is available at:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1288/final_draft_proposals_published_in_count_down_to_oxford_zero_emission_zone

York

York could become the first city in the UK to ban cars from its centre under new plans to improve air quality.

Under the proposals, City of York Council aims to stop all non-essential private car journeys within the city walls by 2023. It has also said that it would work with businesses to make sure deliveries continued and companies were not negatively impacted by the changes.

This month (January), the Council is phasing in a Clean Air Zone for buses with a minimum standard for the emissions of vehicles travelling on and inside the Inner Ring Road.

Last year, the Council also introduced anti-idling measures. Signs have been installed across the city urging drivers to switch off their engines while parked. Those who are asked to turn off their vehicles but refuse to do so can now be fined £20 and could be prosecuted if they fail to pay.

However, the Council's latest moves to improve air quality go further than any city to date including Bristol, which, among other measures, plans to ban all privately owned diesel cars from a section of the city centre from March 2021 if the measure is given Government approval.

Additionally, the Council has said that it would work with traders in any plans to ensure deliveries continue and businesses were not negatively impacted by any changes to city centre access; work with disability groups and Blue Badge holders to ensure they could still enter the city; and would ban all non-essential cars from accessing roads around the city's primary schools at drop-off and pick-up times.

The measures are part of the Council's plan to make the city carbon neutral by 2030. Councillors claim that by reducing and removing non-essential car journeys across the city, whilst improving the attractiveness of other travel options - cycling and faster, more reliable public transport - will boost air quality.

The plan "to restrict all non-essential private motor vehicle journeys within the city walls by 2023" was proposed at a full Council meeting by Labour councillor Jonny Crawshaw and secured majority support.

Councillor Andy D'Agorne, deputy leader of City of York Council and executive member responsible for transport, said: "Reducing congestion and supporting more residents and visitors to move around our wonderful city through walking, cycling and public transport is essential to meet our ambition.

"Our largely pedestrianised shopping areas have already transformed the city centre and we are looking at options to take this to the next level. A car free and thriving city centre



- which is accessible to those with limited mobility like blue badge holders - is achievable but only through detailed planning and engagement with those most affected by the proposals.

“Responding to the climate emergency will be a city-wide effort and we will develop our plans with York residents and businesses in the next year as we work to become a cleaner, greener city.”

A Council spokeswoman officers would develop the plan and how they could be implemented, while also taking account of other initiatives including the authority’s local transport plan and ‘my city centre’ plan, with the aim of councillors discussing proposals at the end of 2020.