

Take a deep breath.
*The latest on
Clean Air Zones.*



Introduction

Clean Air Zones are being implemented in towns and cities across the UK in response to Government and local authority concerns about high levels – sometimes illegally high levels – of air pollution.

Poor air quality affects the health of millions of people across the UK and is reported to contribute to the early deaths of 40,000 people each year. It is caused by high levels of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and particulate matter. Transport is responsible for 80% of NO_x in areas of the poorest air quality, most of which is related to emissions from vehicles.

Local authorities are already responsible for improving air quality in their area, but are now developing new and creative solutions to reduce emissions as quickly as possible, while avoiding undue impact on motorists.

The problem for fleet operators is that there is no Clean Air Zone ‘D-Day’ in respect of when they will be introduced; no commonality among local authorities as to charges; and no consistency as to which vehicles will be impacted. That means entry criteria may vary in each Zone leading to potential complications for businesses and users travelling between cities. Furthermore, some authorities that were expected to introduce chargeable Clean Air Zones have shied away from the move, while still taking action to improve air quality.

What’s more, some London authorities are taking a different approach where some have, or plan to introduce, ‘low emission streets’ with the possibility of Penalty Charge Notices being issued for non-compliance.

The first Clean Air Zone to be introduced will be London’s Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) on April 8 this year (2019). Other Clean Air Zones across the UK are expected to be introduced from January 2020, giving fleets 12 months to prepare.

While there is widespread agreement that most company cars will be compliant with Ultra-Low Emission Zone emission standards that will operate 24/7, seven days a week – Euro 4 for petrol cars, vans, minibuses and other specialist vehicles and Euro 6 for diesel cars, vans and minibuses and other specialist vehicles – there is concern that many van fleets require upgrading.

Indeed, at a recent event hosted by the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (BVRLA) and Transport for London (TfL) to explore the impact of the ULEZ on van users in the capital, James Davis, customer strategy and insight director (commercial vehicles) at vehicle remarketing giant Cox Automotive UK, said:

 **“The biggest challenge for commercial vehicles is the age of vehicles which are on the road right now.**

Our calculations show that about 80% of vans on the road would not be compliant in a ULEZ. It’s important for an operator to think about futureproofing themselves by buying or changing their ownership model to get themselves into a Euro 6 van.” 

Toby Poston, director of communications and external relations at the BVRLA, added:

 **“TfL has an enormous task ahead of it to support the hundreds of small businesses which essentially rely on vans but will be caught out by the new ULEZ.”** 

As a result, BVRLA members, which include Venson Automotive Solutions, Mr Poston said: **“Stand ready to help offer affected businesses affordable, compliant alternatives.”**

The BVRLA believes that the introduction of Clean Air Zones provides ‘a great opportunity for businesses to consider new, more sustainable vehicles or modes of transport’ with London setting the direction of travel as it accelerates towards becoming a zero-carbon city by 2050.

Overleaf we highlight what you need to know about London’s ULEZ; the ‘low emission streets’ being introduced in London; and where more than 60 other towns and cities in England, Scotland and Wales currently are in their plans for introducing Clean Air Zones.



London's new

Ultra-Low *Emission Zone*

Q: When will London's Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) be introduced?

A: The Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) will be introduced in central London on April 8, 2019. It will replace the existing T-Charge, officially known as the Emissions Surcharge, which was introduced on October 23, 2017 and applies to pre-Euro 4 emission standard petrol and diesel vehicles.

Q: What area of London does the ULEZ cover?

A: The area covered by the ULEZ mirrors that of the near 16-year-old London Congestion Charge zone, which was introduced in February 2003.

Q: What hours does the ULEZ operate?

A: The ULEZ will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year including weekends and public holidays.

Q: What is the vehicle compliant entry standard for the ULEZ?

A: The vehicles affected by the ULEZ include: Cars, motorcycles, mopeds, motorised tricycles, quadricycles, small vans, large vans, 4x4 light utility vehicles, motorised horseboxes, pickups, ambulances, motor caravans, minibuses, lorries, buses, coaches, breakdown and recovery vehicles, snow ploughs, gritters, refuse collection vehicles, road sweepers, concrete mixers, fire engines, tippers and removals lorries. The ULEZ entry standards are:

- Euro 4 for petrol cars, vans, minibuses and other specialist vehicles
- Euro 6 for diesel cars, vans and minibuses and other specialist vehicles
- Euro VI for lorries, buses and coaches and other specialist heavy vehicles
- Euro 3 for motorcycles, mopeds, motorised tricycles and quadricycles (L category).

Generally speaking, ULEZ-compliant petrol cars are those registered after 2005. However cars that meet the ULEZ standards have been available since 2000. For diesel vans the Euro 6 standard was mandated for all new vehicles sold from September 2016. A ULEZ vehicle compliance checker is available at: <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/ultra-low-emission-zone/vrm-checker-ulez>

Q: What is the charge for non-compliant vehicles entering the ULEZ?

A: The daily charge for cars, vans and motorcycles that do not meet the ULEZ standard is £12.50 and for commercial vehicles above 3.5 tonnes, buses and coaches it is £100. The daily charge runs from 00:01-midnight each day. Therefore, if driving a vehicle that does not meet the ULEZ standard within the central London area across two days, for example before midnight and after midnight, two daily charges will be due. The ULEZ charge is in addition to the existing weekday Congestion Charge (£11.50 per day or Fleet Auto Pay £10.50) and the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) charge (daily charge is £100 for larger vans, minibuses and other specialist vehicles, and £200 for lorries, buses, coaches and other specialist heavy vehicles). The ULEZ charge will be payable online, but exact details have yet to be announced.

Q: How will a driver know that they are entering the ULEZ?

A: Road signs will be put in place before the ULEZ starts, at every entry point along the boundary and along key arterial approaches. They will be placed alongside or below existing Congestion Charge signs. There will be no barriers or toll booths at ULEZ entry points. Instead, cameras will read vehicle number plates as they are driven within the Zone to check against Transport for London's (TfL) database to see if they meet the ULEZ emission standards.

Q: I'm starting to see signs appear already promoting the ULEZ. What are they?

A: TfL is installing more than 300 ULEZ warning signs across central London. The signs, which are being installed at the same locations as existing Congestion Charge signs, warn drivers at all entry points to the Zone, and on a number of key approach routes, to ensure their vehicle meets the tough new emission standards that come in to effect on April 8, 2019. The signs further extend TfL's communications campaign. That has seen more than 2.5 million emails sent and registered Congestion Charge users contacted whose vehicles do not meet the ULEZ standards, to remind them of the new Zone's introduction. TfL is also contacting other drivers it has identified in central London whose vehicles are not currently ULEZ-compliant.

Q: What happens if the entry charge is not paid on a non-compliant vehicle?

A: The registered keeper of a vehicle that does not meet the ULEZ standard and its operator/driver will, if they fail to pay the daily charge, be issued with a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). The penalty is in addition to any Congestion Charge or LEZ Zone non-payment penalties received. The penalty charge for cars, vans and motorcycles is £160 (reduced to £80 if paid within 14 days) and for commercial vehicles above 3.5 tonnes, buses and coaches it is £1,000 (reduced to £500 if paid within 14 days).

Q: Can payment of the ULEZ charge be avoided to stop operating cost increases?

A: Fleets invariably lead the way in operating the 'cleanest' vehicles on the UK's roads. Therefore, if a fleet is presently operating non-compliant vehicles now is a good opportunity to look at replacing them as there is just a few months to go before the ULEZ is introduced. If businesses do not want to replace existing non-compliant vehicles, it may be the case that some vehicles, particularly vans, are reassigned if possible so they operate on routes outside the ULEZ if they do not meet the qualification criteria.

Q: Is the ULEZ being expanded in the future?

A: Yes. The ULEZ will be expanded from October 25, 2021 to the Inner London area bounded by the North and South Circular roads, although vehicles using those roads and not entering the ULEZ will not be charged.

Q: Are changes to the Congestion Charge Zone Ultra-Low Emission Discount proposed?

A: Yes, that's right. TfL has already consulted and has announced that the Congestion Charge Ultra-Low Emission Discount will be removed – a 100% discount applies to qualifying vehicles – and replaced with a new Cleaner Vehicle Discount as part of the drive to clean up the city's toxic air. The current Ultra-Low Emission discount allows vehicles emitting 75g/km CO₂ or less to enter the zone for free provided they meet Euro 6 emission limits. In a phased introduction, the Cleaner Vehicle Discount means that:

- From April 8, 2019 only zero emission-capable vehicles will be exempt from the Congestion Charge
- The restrictions will tighten further in October 2021 with only pure electric vehicles qualifying for the discount. That means charges will apply to plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. The discount will expire completely in December 2025.

It is expected that around 10% of the vehicles currently eligible will no longer receive a discount. Further consideration will be given to future incentives for the uptake of zero-emission vehicles after 2025, which, subject to consultation, could include a central London Zero-Emission Zone.

Q: Where is further information available on the Ultra-Low Emission Zone?

A: Further information is available at: <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/ultra-low-emission-zone>

Low emission streets in London



Q: So tell me about 'low emission streets' and what the City of London Corporation is planning?

A: It is currently consulting on plans for a pilot scheme limiting access to the south section of Moor Lane, near Moorgate, to ultra-low emission vehicles. They are defined as emitting less than 75g/km of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and include electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid, fuel cell, range extended and some conventional hybrid models. Following the consultation, the City Corporation aims to deliver the trial by April 2019, which will close the road to all vehicles which are not ultra-low emission vehicle compliant. Access for drivers of non-compliant ultra-low emission vehicles to the rest of Moor Lane will still be available from the north side. Two options for an ultra-low emission vehicle pilot in the southern end of Moor Lane have been developed for consultation: Option one would introduce the measures 24 hours a day and seven days a week; Option two would apply Monday to Friday from 7am-11pm. For the first four weeks of the trial, those who drive through the ultra-low emission vehicle-only zone with a non-compliant vehicle will be issued with a warning letter. Following that Penalty Charge Notices will be issued. The City Corporation is encouraging the uptake of fully electric and compliant hybrid vehicles to improve air quality in the Square Mile. It will use the pilot to consider whether similar measures are suitable for other streets in the City of London.

Q: But is it not correct that some London boroughs have already introduced ultra-low emission vehicle streets?

A: Yes, that is correct. Ultra-low emission vehicle streets have already been introduced by Islington and Hackney Councils – nine streets close to Old Street Station – with sub75g/km vehicles only allowed in Monday to Friday, 7-10am and 4-7pm. Non-compliant vehicles receive a £130 Penalty Charge Notice. The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is also planning to introduce low emissions streets in Hammersmith town centre. What's more it can be expected that other London boroughs, as well as some towns and cities across the UK, could introduce similar air quality improvement initiatives.

Clean Air Zones in other towns and cities

in England, Scotland and Wales



Q: London apart, did not the Government designate five English cities as being the first to have Clean Air Zones?

A: Yes, that is correct: Birmingham, Derby, Leeds, Nottingham and Southampton. What's more, the Government's national Clean Air Zone framework outlined that vehicles that were not Euro 6/VI for diesel or Euro 4 for petrol could be charged entry – effectively following the same entry criteria as outlined for London's ULEZ. In turn the Government set out four categories of vehicle compliance for Clean Air Zones:

- Class A – buses, coaches, taxis and private hire vehicles;
- Class B – buses, coaches, taxis, private hire vehicles and HGVs;
- Class C – buses, coaches, taxis, private hire vehicles, HGVs and light commercial vehicles;
- Class D – buses, coaches, taxis, private hire vehicles, HGVs, light commercial vehicles and cars. Class D also includes an option to include motorcycles and mopeds that do not meet Euro3 emission standards.

Having drawn up proposals and consulted widely with residents, businesses and the fleet industry – including ACFO and the BVRLA – the five cities submitted plans for approval to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) with a likely introduction from January 2020.

Q: So what's happening with each of those cities in terms of Clean Air Zone introduction?

A: This is where it gets a bit complicated so let's take each city in turn. Birmingham is the only city among the five to submit plans to introduce a Class D Clean Air Zone with all non-compliant vehicles charged. The proposed daily entry charges are: Buses, coaches and HGVs £50 and cars, taxis, private hire vehicles and light good vehicles £8. The plans for a Clean Air Zone covering all roads within the A4540 Middleway ring road must now be approved by the government. Leeds and Southampton both proposed to introduce Class B Clean Air Zones, which means non-compliant cars and light goods vehicles would not be charged to enter. Leeds City Council has proposed daily charges for non-compliant vehicles of: buses, coaches and HGVs £50, taxis and private hire vehicles £12.50 (£50 per week for Leeds licensed drivers), while Southampton proposed daily charges for non-compliant vehicles of: buses, coaches and HGVs £100, taxis and private hire vehicles £12.50. However, following a public consultation Southampton has abandoned plans for a charging zone. The City Council said work already undertaken to reduce emissions coupled with further new initiatives would achieve the improvements in air quality required with implementation of a Clean Air Zone. Finally, both Derby and Nottingham local authorities have decided against introducing Clean Air Zones saying that they could improve air quality by introducing a range of other initiatives including increasing the uptake of ultra-low emission and plug-in vehicles, traffic management schemes and sustainable travel options. In fact Nottingham City Council has become the first city to have its plans approved by the Government. It will see the local authority improve air quality by: Converting its own fleet, including replacing heavy, high polluting vehicles such as bin lorries with electric vehicles; retrofitting 171 buses with technology to reduce emissions; and changing the age and emissions policy for Hackney carriages and supporting an increase in low emission taxis.

Q: That's what's happening in London and five other urban areas in England, but what about other towns and cities?

A: More than 60 local authorities have proposals for improving air quality at various stages of development – and some, but not all, include Clean Air Zones that some non-compliant vehicles will be charged to enter. Sheffield City Council has become one of the most recent local authorities to reveal proposals to create a chargeable Clean Air Zone for non-compliant high-polluting vehicles although cars will be exempt. Businesses and residents are set to be consulted early in 2019 over proposals that could see a charging system introduced on and within the inner ring road. The Clean Air Zone is likely to be introduced in 2020. It will mean a single daily charge for heavily polluting buses, coaches, taxis, HGVs and vans and light goods vehicles (LGVs) to drive through the city. Vehicles that are older than Euro 6 for diesel (2016) or Euro 4 for petrol (2006) will be charged – £50 per day for buses, coaches and HGVs and £10 a day for vans, LGVs, taxis and private hire vehicles. Bath and North East Somerset Council is planning to introduce a Clean Air Zone in the congested historic city by the end of 2020. With vehicle entry standards replicating those of Sheffield – pre-Euro 6 diesel and pre-Euro 4 petrol – the Council is proposing to charge non-compliant cars, vans and taxis £9 per day and non-compliant HGVs, buses and coaches £100 per day. Charges will apply 24/7, 365 days a year. Bristol City Council has announced plans for a Clean Air Zone with the five options including charges for pre-Euro6 diesel and pre-Euro4 petrol vehicles – both Class C and Class D options, as outlined by the Government, are

under consideration – although a non-charging Clean Air Zone is another option. A public consultation on the chosen scheme is expected in early 2019 with implementation in 2021. Transport for Greater Manchester is developing a clean air plan on behalf of local authorities in its area. Andy Burnham, the mayor of Greater Manchester, has indicated that the area will be subjected to so-called 'Class C' Clean Air Zone. That means buses, coaches, taxis, private hire vehicles, HGVs and light commercial vehicles that are not Euro 6/VI for diesel or Euro 4 for petrol could be subjected to an entry charge. A charging Clean Air Zone could be implemented by 2021 with cars exempted from any charge. A final decision has still to be made. Meanwhile, in addition to Bath, Bristol, Manchester and Sheffield local authorities, the Government has tasked a further 19 councils with producing plans to tackle air pollution hot spots, which may or may not include proposals for Clean Air Zones. They cover the towns and cities of: Basildon, Bolton, Bury, Fareham, Gateshead, Guildford, Middlesbrough, New Forest, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Rochford, Rotherham, Rushmoor, Salford, Stockport, Surrey Heath, Tameside and Trafford. Additionally, a further 33 councils have been ordered to bring their air quality up to legal standards, although any initiatives would fall short of implementing a Clean Air Zone. In October, 10 of those councils – Basingstoke and Deane, Dudley, Leicester, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Portsmouth, Reading, Sandwell, Solihull, South Gloucestershire and Wolverhampton, – the Government announced would have access to funding to implement measures including bus retrofits, improved road signalling and behavioural change campaigns. Eight of those

33 councils – Bolsover, Bradford, Broxbourne, Leicester, Liverpool, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Portsmouth and Stoke-on-Trent – have been ordered to carry out more detailed studies outlining how they would tackle more persistent air quality problems they have identified. Finally, the remaining 18 councils in the so-called 'third wave' of 33 local authorities have been told that they were already operating within air quality legal limits or had not found any measures to bring compliance sooner than early next decade with DEFRA adding that the councils would be expected to "maintain their work to reduce pollution levels and improve the quality of the air". Those towns and cities are: Ashfield, Blaby, Bournemouth, Burnley, Calderdale, Cheltenham, Kirklees, Oldham, Oxford, Peterborough, Plymouth, Poole, Sefton, Southend, South Tyneside, Sunderland, Wakefield and Walsall.

Q: What are the plans for Clean Air Zones in Scotland?

A: The Scottish Government has outlined plans to have four Low Emission Zones in place to address air quality in the country by 2020, with the first to be established in Glasgow becoming operational at the beginning of 2019. Other Zones will follow in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee, although details have yet to be announced. Glasgow's Low Emission Zone initially applies to buses before being extended to all vehicle types by the end of 2022. The entry standard is Euro 6/VI for diesel vehicles and Euro 4 for petrol-engined models. Non-compliant vehicles will be excluded from entering the zone and will be issued with fixed Penalty Notices with the level of fine yet to be announced by Scottish Ministers.

Q: What are the plans for Clean Air Zones in Wales?

A: In spring 2018 the Welsh Government launched a consultation on the introduction of Clean Air Zones in areas with poor air quality. At present, only Cardiff City Council and Caerphilly County Borough Council have been directly mandated by the UK Government in Westminster to consider introducing a Clean Air Zone. Plans are currently being compiled by both local authorities. However, through the consultation the Welsh Government can consider whether any other local authorities in Wales should implement similar schemes.



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