

## **Proposal for DEFRA air quality grant allocation**

This proposal sets out Slough Borough Council's plans to support and encourage the uptake of Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs), focusing on Electric Vehicles (EVs) by the taxi trade in the borough. For the purpose of this project and for the avoidance of doubt, the term 'taxi' refers to both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles which are licenced with Slough Borough Council. This project will be effective in reducing a portion of road traffic emissions and will support the aims of the Slough Air Quality Action Plan to:

- 1) achieve a boroughwide NO<sub>2</sub> target concentration of <35µg/m<sup>3</sup> by 2028, and**
- 2) revoke all of Slough Borough Council's Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) by 2030.**

The measures set out in this paper are funded through a DEFRA revenue grant allocation of **£370,035** which is currently held in the Council reserves. It requires a comprehensive procurement business case and ECP approval to release funding. It may also require cabinet approval, therefore the project plan below is subject to these approvals before proceeding.

### **Alignment with Defra Grant Objectives:**

The project is in alignment with the objectives of the Govt Clean Air Strategy (2019) to reduce emissions from transport, and the Govt Environment Improvement Strategy (2025) which emphasises the governments ambition to reduce use of traditional internal combustion engine vehicles in favour of zero emission vehicles.

Dispersion modelling and source apportionment conducted for a baseline year of 2022 indicates that up to 19.0% of total road NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations is attributed to taxi emissions (hackney carriage and private hire), with AQMA 4 having the greatest contribution on average at 10.4%. At that time, 74.1% of the taxi fleet consisted of diesel vehicles, which has reduced to 41.6% as of November 2025. Coupled with the launch of an awareness campaign, it is anticipated that the updated package of measures will lead to continued air quality improvements by encouraging the replacement of vehicles with EVs from June 2026 onwards.

The project will complement the following projects to increase the provision of EV charging infrastructure in the borough:

- OZEV funded Rapid chargers (£157,500): From 2027, project to install seven rapid chargers for licensed electric vehicles funded by an OZEV grant award, which in conjunction with this project's behavioural change mechanisms, will lead to longer term air quality improvements.

- LEVI Project (£2.233m): From 2027, the Council will commence installations for LEVI (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure) funded on-street chargers focused on residents without off-street parking and fast/rapid charging hubs at competitive tariff rates across the borough to facilitate destination charging (including taxis).

### **Project components:**

The project consists of three main components, which includes:

- A 'Try Before You Buy' electric vehicle loan scheme
- A taxi driver charging cost support scheme
- Two awareness campaigns

Each of these components are explained in greater detail below. Appendix 1 provides detail on the cost breakdown of the grant, and Appendix 2 provides a draft project plan.

### **'Try Before You Buy' electric vehicle (EV) scheme**

This scheme is designed specifically for licensed taxi drivers. The scheme will allow up to 50 drivers to experience driving an electric taxi in real-world conditions for 30-90 days before making a financial commitment to purchase or lease an EV.

The aim is to reduce uncertainty, increase confidence, and accelerate the transition to zero-emission taxis, while supporting drivers with practical experience rather than theory alone.

Benefits for taxi drivers:

- Real-world experience: Drivers learn how EVs perform during long shifts, busy periods, and different weather conditions.
- Reduced financial risk: Drivers can test an EV without committing to large upfront costs or long-term finance.
- Lower running cost awareness: Drivers can see first-hand savings on fuel, maintenance, and servicing.
- Confidence with charging: Practical experience removes anxiety around range, charging times, and availability.
- Informed decision-making: Drivers make choices based on lived experience rather than assumptions or marketing.

The project will be delivered in collaboration with an experienced supplier to provide feasibility analysis and the provision of EVs for the trial scheme.

### **Taxi Driver Charging Cost Support Scheme**

The Taxi Driver Charging Cost Alleviation Scheme is designed to reduce the ongoing cost of electric vehicle charging for licensed taxi drivers, with a particular focus on drivers without access to private off-street parking.

The scheme recognises that while electric vehicles offer lower running costs overall, charging access and tariffs remain uneven, especially for drivers living in flats or terraced housing. To address this, the scheme will be delivered through two strands - one focusing on cross-pavement home charging and the other on support with charging costs.

#### **Cross-Pavement Kerbside Charging from Home**

This would enable taxi drivers without a private driveway to charge their electric vehicle at the kerbside outside their home, using a safe, council-approved cross-pavement charging solution.

Benefits for taxi drivers:

- Access to significantly cheaper charging than public chargers
- Greater convenience through overnight home charging
- Reduced reliance on public infrastructure and waiting times
- Improved viability of EV ownership for drivers without driveways

#### **Annual Charging Credit for Taxi Drivers**

This provides eligible taxi drivers with an annual charging credit (for 5 years), which can be used towards EV charging costs on approved public or partner charging networks. The credit is designed to offset higher public charging costs, particularly for drivers living in flats or properties where home charger installation is not possible.

Based on average energy efficiency and tariffs, a £700 credit would fund approximately 1,300 miles of driving per year, providing meaningful support for high-mileage professional drivers.

Benefits for taxi drivers:

- Direct reduction in annual operating costs
- Improved affordability of EVs for drivers without home charging

- Predictable, transparent support for energy expenses
- Reduced inequality between drivers with and without off-street parking

### **Awareness Campaign**

Two awareness campaigns are proposed:

**Awareness Campaign 1:** Promotion of EVs and myth busting with focus on fleet analysis results, targeting taxi trade:

- Digital advertising, and dissemination via channels including social media, relevant websites and local influencers
- Leaflets, banners and posters

**Awareness Campaign 2:** Promotion of EVs and myth busting with focus on newly installed charging infrastructure, targeting public and taxi trade:

- Outdoor advertising: including bus backs, bus stop and six sheet advertising
- Digital advertising, including social media, YouTube and Google Ads

### **Appendix 1: Financial Summary**

<b>Bid proposal</b>	<b>Amended allocation</b>
Running a “try before you buy” vehicle EV taxi loan scheme to demonstrate the benefits of owning an EV for up to 50 drivers between 30 – 90 days	£184,635
A taxi driver charging cost support scheme which existing taxi drivers with a licensed EV in Slough could apply to, for financial support with their operating costs.	£162,000
An accompanying awareness campaign to influence other taxi drivers through behaviourally informed communications and normalising EVs.	£20,000
Project Evaluation	£3,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>£370,035</b>

**Appendix 2: Project Plan**

Task	Planned Start Date	Planned Finish Date	RAG Status	2026												2027												2028											
				Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Early Engagement</b>																																							
Project initiation and detailed project plan	07/01/2026	28/01/2026																																					
Engage with Taxi Trade representatives	01/02/2026	28/02/2026																																					
Internal procurement and governance procedures	01/03/2026	30/09/2026																																					
<b>Awareness Campaign for Launch</b>																																							
Development of awareness campaign materials	01/07/2026	30/09/2026																																					
Awareness campaign 1 - promotion of EVs and taxi projects	01/09/2026	10/05/2027																																					
Awareness campaign 2 - promotion of EVs and taxi projects	01/09/2026	10/05/2027																																					
<b>Charging Cost Support Scheme</b>																																							
Launch EV taxi grant package	01/09/2026	01/09/2028																																					
Launch of cross pavement channel EV charging scheme for taxi drivers	01/09/2026	01/09/2028																																					
<b>Commence EV Taxi Trials</b>																																							
Procurement of delivery partners	01/05/2026	01/08/2026																																					
Launch of EV taxi trials (followed by report)	01/10/2026	07/10/2026																																					
EV taxi trial - 1 st wave of driver trials	08/10/2026	08/11/2026																																					
EV taxi trial - 2nd wave of driver trials	09/01/2027	10/02/2027																																					
EV taxi trial - 3rd wave of driver trials	10/02/2027	10/03/2027																																					
EV taxi trial - 4th wave of driver trials	10/03/2027	10/04/2027																																					
EV taxi trial - 5th wave of driver trials	10/04/2027	10/05/2027																																					
EV taxi trial - 6th (final) wave of driver trials	10/05/2027	10/06/2027																																					
Completion of EV taxi trials (followed by report)	10/06/2027	10/06/2027																																					
<b>Project Evaluation</b>																																							
Final programme evaluation	01/03/2028	30/12/2028																																					
Final reporting to Defra	01/07/2028	30/12/2028																																					