

Edinburgh cab drivers given one-year reprieve from needing to sell off old vehicles

Cab drivers in Edinburgh have been given a one-year reprieve from possibly needing to sell off their old vehicles.

Councillors voted on Monday to approve a waiver to the city's hire vehicle age and emissions policy, meaning cabs older than a decade are still allowed to travel on city streets.

Under the city's hire car regulations, as of 2021, any petrol cabs or private hires need to be 10 years old or less, and either comply with Euro 6 emissions standards or be Euro 5 and retrofitted to meet council requirements.

However, every year since 2020, the council has approved a four year extension to this time period, meaning the maximum age of a cab or private hire car on city streets is 14 years.

Every six months after a vehicle passes ten years old, it needs to go through an inspection to make sure it is still in compliance with the city's regulations.

A report by officers to councillors said that some members of the taxi trade had found difficulty in finding vehicles that meet the city's current age and emissions standards.

SNP councillor Norman Work asked council officer Andrew

Mitchell: "Was there any sort of timescale for this? There have been these extensions. Was there any idea how long it would go on for?"

Mr Mitchell said: "The initial target was 2021. The pandemic intervened, and the committee quite rightly gave an adjustment to the timeline.

"So the final timeline for Euro 6 then became 2023. The vast majority of the fleet has been compliant for quite some time.

"A smaller number [of drivers] have struggled, either for financial reasons or various other reasons."

Regulatory Committee convener, Liberal Democrat councillor Neil Ross, asked: "Over two thirds [of vehicles over ten years old] have failed their first presentation for testing.

"I know there have been efforts made to encourage compliance with these older vehicles, but I'm wondering if there's anything else that could be done to incentivise better presentations?"

He said: "You're in the territory of, if you repeatedly fail, then you bring the operators to committee.

"It's not something we've done except in fairly extreme examples. But if you're testing them twice a year, and they're still turning up for their annual tests and failing, I struggle to see [what can be done]."

Another council officer, Catherine Scanlin, added: "What we're finding on testing is that it's wear and tear of the rest of the vehicle. And with the best will in the world, it's very very difficult, and very expensive in the main, to keep on top of that.

"So when they're coming for tests, even when the vehicles are prepped, they can't foresee some of the issues.

“Historically, older vehicles were passed down the line to new people coming into the trade. That’s not possible with these vehicles.

“Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the operator to ensure that vehicle is fit for public service. It is a challenge, and it’s difficult. Even the best maintained vehicles – it’s a challenge for them as well.”

The report also said that a report would come to the committee in the near future updating on the council’s progress towards a 100% wheelchair accessible taxi fleet.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter