

Air quality



Driving
the UK
forward



Top lines

- Coaches and buses are already sustainable and environmentally friendly ways to travel and are part of the clean air solution
- Clean Air Zone strategies that target coaches and buses but not cars will not tackle the root cause of poor air quality
- Coaches and buses should only be required to meet emission standards or pay a charge in areas where cars and taxis are also required to meet emission standards
- Local authorities with emissions requirements should follow Portsmouth's example and make funding available to operators who regularly enter the Clean Air Zone, not just those located within the zone so they can invest in new vehicles or retrofit solutions
- Ensuring local attractions and areas have coach friendly facilities will enable more visitors to travel by coach, which will reduce car travel and congestion and improve air quality

Background information

The Government's Clean Air Strategy 2019 introduced Clean Air Zones as one of the methods local authorities could implement to improve air quality. The framework means that buses and coaches are charged in every class of zone, with public cars only brought into scope in the final class, which targets all vehicles. Thus a large number of Clean Air Zone strategies are proposing to introduce charges for non compliant coaches and buses, but not cars. These strategies penalise those who have already opted for an environmentally sustainable option and do not target the root cause of poor air quality, increased levels of congestion.

CPT's Coach Strategy called on Government to create a new class of Clean Air Zone that will enable local authorities to charge cars without charging coaches and buses. We are also urging Government to create a national clean air fund to support coach operators to invest in new vehicles or to retrofit existing vehicles to meet Clean Air Zone requirements.

Increasing modal shift away from the private car and onto buses and coaches will significantly reduce harmful transport emissions. Improving journey times and reliability by giving bus priority on our networks will encourage more people to use the bus and dramatically reduce the emissions caused by congestion. For more details read our Bus Priority Toolkit document.



Figures and statistics

- One coach full of passengers is capable of removing up to 50 cars off the road¹
- A 15% increase in coach passenger journeys could remove 47 million cars off the road²
- A diesel car emits seven times the amount of nitrogen oxides per passenger compared with a coach at 100% occupancy in an urban environment³
- Due to the manufacturing process of electric cars and the frequency of usage over its life, a zero emission vehicle still produces more carbon emissions than public transport⁴
- A fully loaded bus is able to remove 75 cars off the road

What needs to happen

- 1. Coaches and buses should only be required to meet emission standards or pay a charge in areas where cars and taxis are also required to meet emission standards**

Clean air strategies which target coaches and buses and not cars are not addressing congestion which is the root cause of poor air quality and increased levels of emissions. Passengers travelling by coach and bus have already opted for a sustainable travel option and this needs to be recognised in all local clean air strategies.

Example: On the 1 June 2021, Birmingham launched a Class D Clean Air Zone (ie one that also charges private cars). It will operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and charges all non-compliant vehicles driving into the zone.

- 2. Local authorities need to ensure coach operators can access local funding to help them invest in new vehicles or retrofit solutions**

The average age of a coach is 25 years, and for many operators the introduction of Clean Air Zones will mean they will be looking to upgrade their fleet earlier than originally planned. Many operators also lease their fleet, with the average contract lasting for 10 years. Additionally, Covid has had a detrimental impact on coach operators' ability to invest in new vehicles or retrofit options. It is therefore vital that local authorities looking to implement a Clean Air Zone ensure coach operators can access funding to help them ensure their fleet is compliant. This includes coach operators who might not be based in the zone but who travel in frequently.

¹ CPT Research

² Based on 500m passenger journeys made by British people by coach each year pre-pandemic

³ Zemo Partnership

⁴ KPMG Future of Road Pricing



Portsmouth City Council - is offering grants to coach operators who regularly drive into the area. Operators can access £15,000 per non-compliant vehicle to retrofit, or to purchase or lease a new compliant vehicle. Applicants do not need to be based in Portsmouth but will need to provide evidence of how regularly they enter the Clean Air Zone, which should be 2 days or more per week.

Bradford Council – are offering a grant of up to £16,000 per vehicle to retrofit or to replace with a new compliant vehicle. There will also be a small amount of exemptions for local SMEs located within the zone and those undertaking educational or charity work and operators with alternatively fuelled vehicles will be given access to an alternative fuel centre (advanced fuel centre at Bowling Back Lane).

3. Coach friendly facilities

Coach travel is frequently hampered by poor access and general coach facilities. Improving coach access to locations will enable more operators to run more coach trips to them, which will reduce the number of cars on local roads and improve air quality. For further information on coach friendly facilities, read our Coach Friendly Toolkit.