

National Clean Air Day: Cabbies for Clean Air



1. CABBIES ARE EXPOSED TO TWICE AS MUCH AIR POLLUTION AS PEDESTRIANS AND NINE TIMES MORE THAN A CYCLIST.
2. CABBIES ACROSS THE UK OUTLINE THEIR VIEWS ON THE AIR QUALITY DEBATE, ACKNOWLEDGING THE TRADE'S CONTRIBUTION TO AIR POLLUTION AND HOW THEY CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION GIVEN THE RIGHT SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT.

Global Action Plan and Calor, the UK's leading supplier of LPG and joint partner in Autogas Ltd, have come together to find out the views of the UK's taxi drivers on the air pollution challenge. The UK's first ever National Clean Air Day has a goal to improve the understanding of air pollution. Taxi drivers occupy a unique place in the air pollution crisis as they are exposed to significant levels of bad air as well being a primary source of harmful emissions.

Global Action Plan spoke to 19 taxi drivers in London, Southampton and Glasgow about their thoughts on air pollution, what concerns them and what some of the barriers were for them to move towards cleaner vehicles. Taxi drivers are concerned about the impact on their health while sitting in this environment for 8-12 hours per day.

The effects of this were summarised by London taxi driver, Theresa Johnson who said: "I have to do up my window because the fumes are actually choking me".

Drivers were worried about the health impacts on themselves and on the people in their communities, particularly children. UNITE leaders also voiced concern that air pollution is a very real workplace health and safety issue for their drivers.

Peter Bond, Senior Union Rep at Unite and London taxi driver said: "London taxis obviously contribute to the emissions problem in London with NOx and particulates and we have to accept that we

are part of the problem. We fully support initiatives to go to electric or zero emission capable vehicles but this has to be done alongside schemes that can help taxi drivers".

In terms of solutions, taxi drivers were clear that there remain significant barriers towards moving to electric or zero-emission vehicles. The principal factor is cost; a new back cab is around £45,000 but an electric solution is likely to be at least £60,000 which many taxi drivers will find unaffordable. All drivers said that charging infrastructure is key before cities could cope and that current charging estimates of 25 mins was too long. Range was also a factor with many drivers worried about losing business for fear of not getting their passenger to their destinations.

Rebecca Hart, Corporate Affairs Manager at Calor said: "It is important that the views of taxi drivers are understood and considered. Policies aimed at improving our air are rightly being prioritized, but taxi drivers need affordable and readily available solutions to bring their emissions down quickly and get older diesel models off the road. Calor believes LP-gas retrofit represents this affordable transition solution. At £10,000, retrofit to LPG will drastically reduce emissions on NOx, PM and carbon and is ULEZ compliant. The government's new Clean Air Strategy consultation points towards funding that would give taxi drivers support for retrofit which should be given serious consideration by politicians as part of an immediate solution to the air quality challenge".

Chris Large, Senior Partner, Global Action Plan added: "It is incredible to see the passion that cab drivers have for creating cleaner air in their cities, especially for the sake of children. They have some fantastic ideas for solutions and they clearly want to be a central part of the movement that cleans up air pollution".

Taxi drivers and unions such as Unite want to engage in open dialogue with local and central government to discuss policies which affect them and other road users. They know where the problems arise and are well placed to help come up with the solutions that will make life better for all road users. They stressed consulting them at an early stage of the decision making process on issues like charging infrastructure, where it's placed and how appropriate licensing can address congestion as it will save problems further down the line as policies are implemented.

Stuart Hope, London taxi driver concludes: "If someone wants to implement an idea then work alongside the taxi trade so we can actually be the solution and not the problem". His colleague, Peter Rose concurs: "What we need is the boroughs working together, with TfL and with the taxi trade, because there's nobody who knows the roads better than us. Let's get London moving, because moving traffic is less polluting".

Source: autogaslimited.co.uk

