



Office for  
Low Emission  
Vehicles

# £20m Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Tax Scheme

## Guidance for participants

March 2015

The Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) is a cross Government, industry-endorsed team combining policy and funding streams to simplify policy development and delivery for ultra low emission vehicles. OLEV currently comprises people and funding from the Departments for Transport (DfT), Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and Energy and Climate Change (DECC). Its core purpose is to support the early market for electric and other ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs). OLEV is based in the Department for Transport and this document is published by The Department for Transport.

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 We have begun a period of change in the way we power our motor vehicles, a period which will provide hugely significant opportunities for the UK to grow its economy, improve our environment and deliver people the independence and mobility they want.
- 1.2 The UK government is committed to grasping this opportunity. Our vision is that by 2050, almost every car and van in the UK will be an ultra low emission vehicle (ULEV)<sup>1</sup>, with the UK at the forefront of their design, development and manufacture, making us one of the most attractive locations for ULEV-related inward investment in the world.
- 1.3 It was announced in April 2014 that the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) would make at least £20m available for an Ultra Low Emission Taxi Scheme.<sup>2</sup> This scheme forms part of the £500m package to grow the market for ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) from 2015-20.
- 1.4 The scheme will be open to local authorities UK-wide and funding will be made available through a competitive process in which local authorities will submit bids which will be evaluated against a published set of defined criteria.
- 1.5 We will provide funding to successful bidders for three elements:

## *Feasibility Phase*

- **Feasibility studies** for local areas, to identify how funds can be used strategically and in a value for money way to best suit taxi and private hire drivers, users and the local population;

## *Delivery Phase*

- **Taxi Top-up Grants** to provide funding above the level of the plug-in car grant towards eligible, purpose-built, ultra low emission taxis in winning local areas, to support the purchase of vehicles; and
- **Infrastructure** for ultra low emission taxis and private hire vehicles, to support drivers and fleets in the local area.

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<sup>1</sup> A ULEV is any car which qualifies for the plug-in car grant - <https://www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants/overview>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ultra-low-emission-vehicles-in-the-uk-measures-to-support-use-and-development-2015-to-2020>

## 2. Key Details

### Impact

- 2.1** The Ultra Low Emission Taxi Scheme (referred to as “the Scheme” for the remainder of this document) will aim to:
- **Increase the uptake of ultra low emission taxis** [i.e. vehicles which can be hailed in the street or hired at taxi ranks]
  - **Encourage the use of ULEV cars for private hire** [i.e. vehicles which you have to pre-book]
  - **Improve air quality in urban areas** – Taxis are a significant contributor to the UK’s air quality problems due to the amount of time they spend driving with and without passengers. Their use is also often focused in urban areas that have poor air quality.
  - **Encourage investment in the UK automotive industry** – We want to encourage entrants to the ULEV taxi market to manufacture vehicles in the UK.
  - **Influence the uptake of ultra low emission passenger cars** – through exposing more of the population to the benefits of ultra low emission vehicles.

### Who can apply?

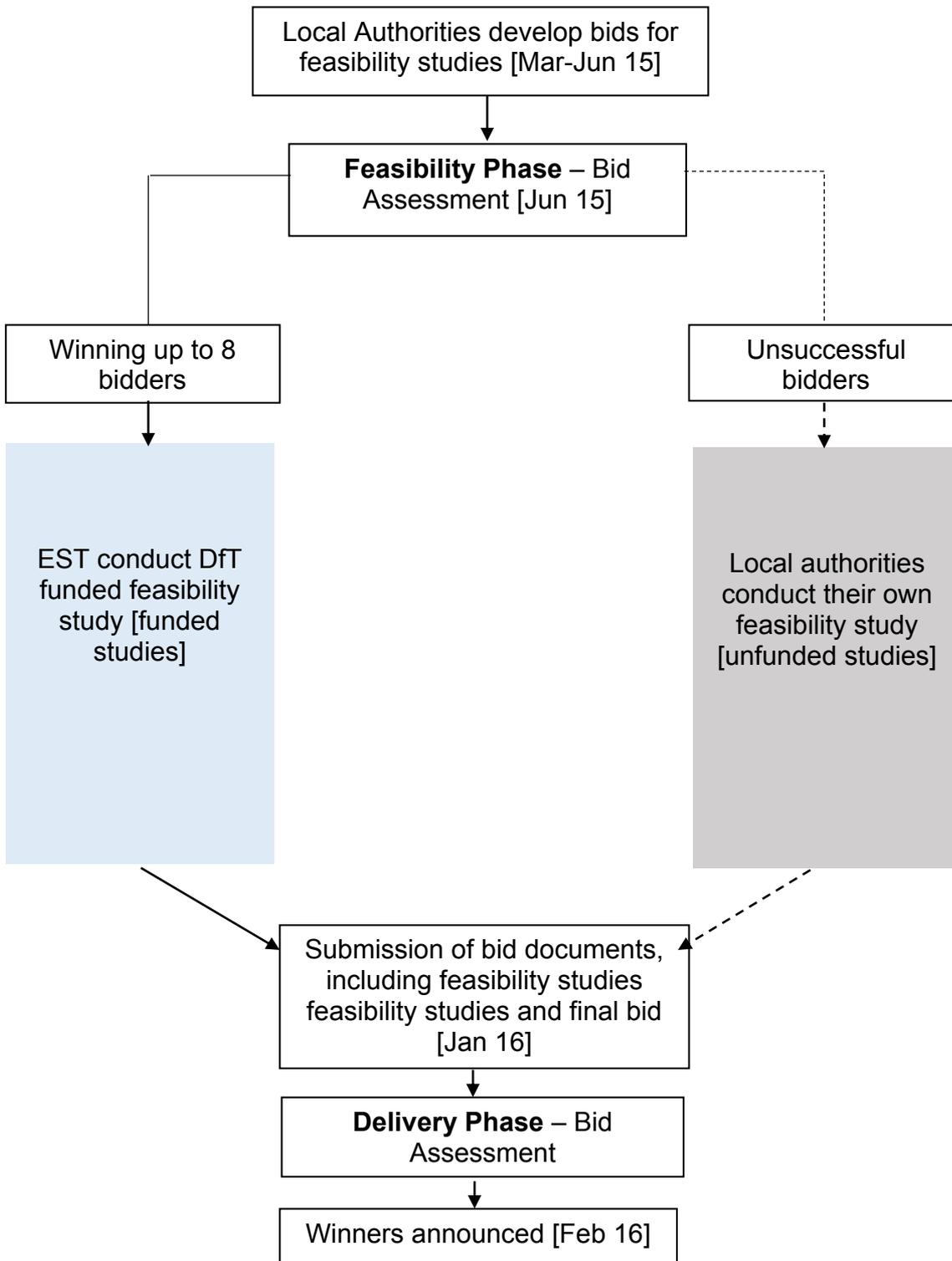
- 2.2** The Scheme is open UK-wide and combined authorities, integrated transport authorities, and local transport authorities. For the remainder of the document the term ‘local authorities’ refers only to these entities. District councils with taxi licensing responsibilities should work through their combined authority, integrated transport authority or county council.
- 2.3** We intend the ultimate beneficiaries of the Scheme to be not just local authorities, but taxi drivers and companies themselves – who will directly benefit from reduced prices when buying ultra low emission taxis, and from a dedicated infrastructure network.

### Bidding process

- 2.4** There will be two distinct phases to this scheme, and two points at which an authority can bid for funding:
- **Feasibility Phase** – funding for up to eight feasibility studies provided by the Energy Saving Trust (EST);
  - **Delivery Phase** – funding for vehicles and infrastructure, based on feasibility study recommendations.

- 2.5** The Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) will fund up to eight feasibility studies [funded studies], which will be provided by EST. These will be offered to up to eight local authorities who meet the minimum standard specified in the assessment criteria, or those eight with the highest score if more bids are received. Local authorities who choose to use a different provider, or who are unsuccessful in securing one of the eight OLEV funded feasibility studies are welcome to conduct or source their own feasibility studies at their own cost [unfunded studies].
- 2.6** There is no limit on the number unfunded feasibility studies bids we are open to receiving. However, we expect a maximum of around 10 local authorities to be successful in securing funding through the Delivery Phase.
- 2.7** All funded and unfunded feasibility studies will need to be completed by 31 December 2015. Local authorities must submit a recent, up to date feasibility study alongside bid documents for the Delivery Phase (more detail on what this should contain is provided in section 3.2).
- 2.8** Delivery phase bid documents will be assessed against a second published set of assessment criteria. A final assessment process will then take place, after which winners will be decided and funds released according to the plans submitted and agreed with OLEV.
- 2.9** Applications containing funded and unfunded feasibility studies will be assessed on an equal basis during the Delivery Phase assessment. There is no guarantee that those who have been successful in securing a funded feasibility study will be successful at the Delivery Phase. Each bid will be assessed on its individual merits.

## Bidding Process Diagram



## Key Dates

- **12 June 2015** – Deadline for receipt of Feasibility Phase bids
  - **July 2015** – Announcement of local authorities who have secured funded studies.
  - **July 2015** – Funded and unfunded studies begin to be conducted by local authorities in partnership with feasibility study providers.
  - **November 2015** – Delivery Phase bid forms published online
  - **31 December 2015** – Conclusion of feasibility studies
  - **31 January 2016** – Deadline for Delivery Phase bids
  - **February-March 2016** – Announcement of local authorities who have securing funding in the Delivery Phase
- 2.10** Any changes to this published timetable will be communicated to local authorities with as much notice as possible.
- 2.11** Bid documentation for the Delivery Phase will be published by November 2015. We will alert all potential bidders and stakeholders in advance of this happening.

### Top-Up Grant

- 2.12** Each feasibility study will make a recommendation as to the number of top-up grants which a local authority could make available in the period 2015-2020. For those local authorities successful in the Delivery Phase, this money will be paid in arrears on proof of purchase on a quarterly basis. We will ask local authorities to provide a list of those vehicles which have received top up grant funding. All recipients will need to complete a very short survey [to be provided to successful bidders], and the collated responses will need to be provided to OLEV quarterly.
- 2.13** There will be an opportunity to re-evaluate the number of top-up grants required on an annual basis. At this stage, the local authority will be required to report back on uptake and confirm or revise their projections for the subsequent year.
- 2.14** These quarterly reviews will also take into account any changes in the Plug-in Car Grant and any impact that might have on the Taxi Top-Up Grant. Local authorities will be given the opportunity to revise their bid for top-up grant funding to reflect this. More information on how the top-up grant will work is provided in section 3.9-3.20.

## Available budget

- 2.15** £20m is available between 2015-2020 for this scheme. In the Delivery Phase of the scheme, local authorities will be invited to bid for funding for the financial years 2016-2017 to 2019-2020.
- 2.16** There will be no caps on bids. However, where the total top-up and/or infrastructure funding sought exceeds £5m, the feasibility study should demonstrate how a bid can be scaled down below £5m, whilst still offering proposals which meet the scheme criteria and policy objectives. This will allow a range of bids to be considered by OLEV should we receive any bids for a significant proportion of the total £20m. We will provide more detail of the scaling we expect to see when the Delivery Phase application forms are published.

## State Aid

### Local authorities

- 2.17** In providing funds to support successful bids we will not be engaged in an economic activity. As such, the funding of authorities itself will not engage State Aid and no approval for the provision of funds is required at that stage. However, the subsequent use of funds by local authorities in relation to the top-up grant and infrastructure grant may engage State Aid, dependent on where and what local authorities plan to install. Therefore, we expect to see consideration of the State Aid implications of the grants within bids. We will take the thoroughness of such consideration into account when allocating funds.
- 2.18** Any infrastructure recommendations made in the feasibility study will need to have considered state aid implications as to their installation. This is particularly relevant if recommendations relate to land not owned by the bidding authority.

# 3. Nature of Funding

## Feasibility Phase

- 3.1** Initial bids will be for OLEV funded feasibility studies [funded studies] for your local area. Conducted by the Energy Saving Trust (EST), these will include a thorough review of the taxi and private hire vehicles and usage in the local area. They will also consider network installation, operation and electricity and supply side factors.
- 3.2** The studies will look to:
- Understand the local taxi and private hire markets;
  - Determine the number and type of chargepoints or refuelling infrastructure required;
  - Establish strategic locations to maximise utilisation of the infrastructure, with reference to grid capacity;
  - Propose a number of taxi top-up grants [see 3.9] that a local area would fund on a yearly basis
  - Propose solutions to local challenges; and
  - Maximise value for money
- 3.3** The output from each of the feasibility studies will be a report containing a bespoke action plan for the local area. This will contain a proposal for the infrastructure and vehicle support the area needs to support the transition to ultra low emission private hire vehicles and taxis.
- 3.4** There will be a limited number of these feasibility studies available and the process of obtaining one will be competitive. Local authorities who secure the highest score, against the published assessment criteria [section 4] will secure funded studies.
- 3.5** We will be limiting the number of funded feasibility studies to eight. Local authorities are also welcome to fund and conduct their own feasibility study, by themselves or in conjunction with another body. We are imposing no limit on the number of local authorities who can do this and submit a bid for funding at Delivery Phase.
- 3.6** It is vital that any independently conducted feasibility study performs the same function as the funded feasibility studies and examines the same aspects as listed above in 3.2. Any independently conducted feasibility study which fails to address these criteria will be judged negatively at the Delivery Phase assessment.
- 3.7** The feasibility studies will need to be completed by December 31 2015. The timescale has been designed to allow a comprehensive review to be conducted of the local area and its taxi, private hire and infrastructure needs.

- 3.8** Once completed, either funded or unfunded feasibility studies will form a key part of the bid documentation for the Delivery Phase assessment. The feasibility study report must be submitted with the Delivery Phase application form, which will be released nearer the date, and both elements will be assessed against a set of published criteria, to be released nearer the date.

## Taxi Top-Up Grant

### Plug-in Car Grant

- 3.9** OLEV currently provides a Plug-in Car Grant, which offers 25% off the purchase price of an eligible ultra low emission car, up to a cap of £5,000.<sup>3</sup> This will go up to 35% from 1 April 2015. For a car to qualify for the Plug-in Car Grant, manufacturers need to demonstrate that the vehicle meets the scheme requirements. These include the need to be an M1 class vehicle, emit less than 75g CO<sup>2</sup> per km, and meet minimum speed and range criteria. The full scheme guidelines are available here.<sup>4</sup> [Please note it is due for update in March 2015]. All ULEV taxis will be eligible for this grant.
- 3.10** The plug-in car grant is designed to bridge a significant percentage (up to 40%) of the cost difference between a ULEV car and an equivalent diesel / petrol car to encourage the purchase of ULEV models at this early stage of the market. In our view this grant is sufficient to incentivise the purchase of a ULEV **car** for any private or business use, including as a taxi or private hire vehicle. For this reason, and to avoid breaching state aid limits, we will not be providing any funding over and above the plug-in car grant for any car currently listed on the PICG eligible vehicle list.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.11** This includes a number of vehicles which qualify for the plug-in car grant and are used as private hire vehicles. Because the eligible costs of these vehicles do not change simply because they are being used for a commercial purpose, state aid restrictions mean that we are unable to provide ultra low emission private hire vehicles with a top-up grant.
- 3.12** For the purposes of the top-up grant, our criteria depend on model and structure, not use. Many licensed hackney carriages across the UK are regular cars. Leeds City Council, for example, class a Toyota Avensis, among others, as an eligible hackney carriage vehicle.<sup>6</sup> Our focus for the taxi top-up grant is not on vehicles such as this, but on those vehicles which require purchase support due to the higher costs they incur in development and manufacture – as a result of the structural accommodation they make for accessibility, and, in the case of ULEV purpose built taxis, ultra low emission status.

### Top-up grant

- 3.13** By contrast, the costs associated with ULEV purpose built taxis are higher. By 'purpose' built, we mean a vehicle which is built primarily for

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants/overview>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plug-in-car-grant>

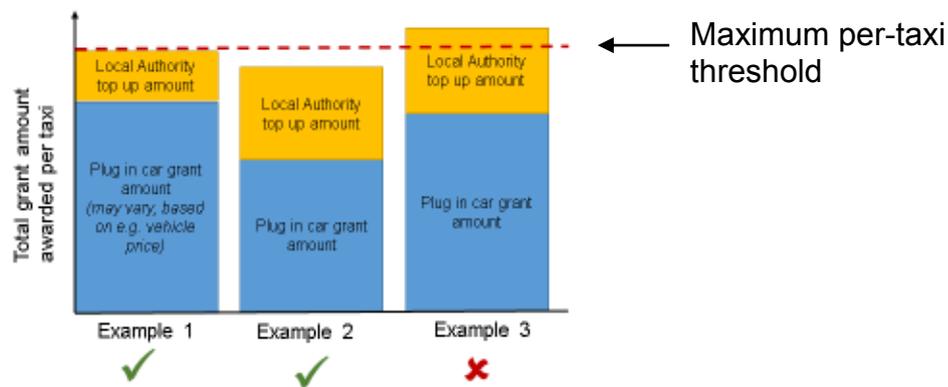
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants/eligibility>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Approved%20List%20of%20Saloon%20Vehicles.pdf>

use as a taxi and meets a high standard of accessibility criteria. We are therefore proposing to provide funding for local authorities to ‘top-up’ the plug-in car grant at point of purchase of these eligible taxis.

- 3.14** To avoid the burden associated with seeking individual state aid clearances, we are going to seek State Aid clearance for a maximum level of support that can be provided from central government funds per taxi. So, in effect:

**Plug-in Car Grant + Top-Up Grant = Maximum per-taxi threshold**



- 3.15** As noted in the administration section below, the local authority will be required to administer the top-up grant funding, and is free to organise this distribution– at whatever level they choose up to the maximum per-taxi threshold.

- 3.16** The grant will be administered by local authorities at the point of vehicle licensing. However, we would on a case by case basis consider alternative means of distributing the grant if a strong individual proposal is put forward.

**Per-taxi threshold – value**

- 3.17** Ultra low emission, purpose-built taxis are due to reach the market in volume from 2017 onwards. There is currently insufficient pricing information available to define a per-taxi threshold. Without clear information about the cost and pricing of a vehicle, we will not be able to gain state aid clearance.

- 3.18** We will gain more information about cost as vehicles are developed in 2015, and will be in a position to notify to the European Commission the grant values by year end. We will release the value of the per-taxi threshold as soon as we can confirm it, and in advance of the Delivery Phase application period. By way of guidance, based on current assumptions, we expect it to be in the region of £8000, but we need to go through the State Aid process to confirm the value.

- 3.19** For the avoidance of doubt, the per-taxi threshold will remain constant throughout the life of the Scheme (2015-2020). During this period, it is possible that the PiCG element will reduce. Local authorities will be

informed of any changes in advance, and given the opportunity to increase their “top-up fund” bid.

- 3.20** So, in a hypothetical situation, local authority X and Y could begin the period providing £3,000 on top of the £5,000 PiCG. If the PiCG is reduced from £5,000 to £4,000, local authority X could decide to keep the top-up grant at £3,000, providing a total of £7,000 subsidy in that area. Local authority Y, on the other hand, could decide to increase their top-up grant to £4,000, in order to maintain the total level of support at £8,000 in their local area. Either situation is eligible, and for local authorities to decide, as long as the sum total does not exceed the maximum per-taxi threshold. All these values are indicative.
- 3.21** Local authorities are free to provide extra funding to the top-up grant as long as this comes from a separate, non-government source of funding.

### Qualifying vehicles

- 3.22** The PiCG applies to all qualifying cars regardless of their use. All qualifying ULEV cars used as taxis or private hire vehicles will automatically receive it.
- 3.23** Only purpose built taxis will qualify for the top-up grant. They will need to demonstrate the following criteria:
- Whole vehicle type approval as a wheelchair accessible vehicle
  - Demonstration that the vehicle meets a minimum set of accessibility and wider criteria as specified in the Plug-in car grant application guidance<sup>7</sup>.
- 3.24** In order for a purpose-built taxi to qualify for the top-up funding they must, as a pre-requisite, demonstrate that they meet the requirements of the PiCG. In addition, they will need to meet those requirements specific to purpose-built taxis. OLEV will collate a list of the vehicles which meet the criteria and are eligible for top-up grant funding. This list will be made available to all winning local authorities in 2016, and all updates communicated to them.

## Infrastructure

- 3.25** Feasibility studies will make recommendations as to the infrastructure requirements of an area in supporting the introduction of ultra low emission private hire and taxi fleets. Funding will be made available for infrastructure on the basis of feasibility study recommendations, ensuring strategic deployment and value for money.
- 3.26** OLEV will fund 75% of the cost of a chargepoint. The funding contribution will be capped at:
- £37.5k for chargepoints of 43KW and over
  - £7.5k for any chargepoint of 7-42 KW

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<sup>7</sup> The revised Plug-in car grant application guidance will be published at end March 2015 on this page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plug-in-car-grant>

- 3.27** Bids for wireless charging will be considered on a case by case basis.
- 3.28** Domestic chargepoints will not be supported as funding is available through a separate scheme – the Electric vehicle Homecharge scheme.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.29** We would expect hydrogen fuel cell taxis to use the early network of publicly accessible hydrogen refuelling stations which is being established with support from OLEV from 2015. If the feasibility study identifies a specific need for separate hydrogen refuelling infrastructure to support the taxis, we will consider bids to fund this on a case by case basis, in line with broader OLEV strategy.
- 3.30** In order for infrastructure to support the taxi and private hire trades effectively, we expect any infrastructure installed through the Scheme to be available to the private hire and taxi trades only. We would need to see a compelling case to fund infrastructure which was also open to the public.
- 3.31** We expect the feasibility studies to outline what type of infrastructure would be most appropriate given local capacity, value for money, the duty cycles of local taxi and private hire drivers, and demand. OLEV will only fund infrastructure recommended through the feasibility study, in the locations suggested.
- 3.32** Local authorities who consider innovative improvements to their offer such as infrastructure booking systems, or other ways to ensure that taxi drivers can ensure they are able to charge when they need to will be looked on favourably.
- 3.33** It is a condition of the funding that any chargepoint must be maintained in a serviceable condition for 3 years from installation, and that data on its usage be supplied to OLEV for the same 3 year period on a quarterly basis in a standard format.
- 3.34** We will notify bidders if there is any change to this requirement. The monitoring requirements for infrastructure in the Scheme are the same as the requirements for other OLEV infrastructure schemes.

## Review points

- 3.35** We are currently planning to hold only one application period for the Scheme. Local authorities will be expected to put in a bid for long term funding and will be given the opportunity to review and revise their bids on an annual basis, to allow them to respond to changes in the market (e.g. introduction of new models) or pricing changes.
- 3.36** In the event that significant unallocated funding remains, or more funding is made available, we may open a second application window later in the period. We will give authorities as much notice as possible if the decision is taken to open a second application window.

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<sup>8</sup>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/413009/EVHS\\_GUIDANCE\\_FOR\\_PUBLIC\\_v1.6\\_1\\_.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413009/EVHS_GUIDANCE_FOR_PUBLIC_v1.6_1_.pdf)

## Administration

- 3.37** Only local authorities will be eligible to bid for funds in this scheme. It will be the responsibility of these local authorities to procure infrastructure and manage the distribution of funds to taxi drivers who wish to apply for a top-up grant.
- 3.38** It is for local authorities to decide what the most locally appropriate administering entity is. However, it must be able to do two things:
- Collaborate with local authorities who control taxi and private hire licensing across the bidding area; and
  - Have the capacity to administer the taxi top-up grant to drivers and companies in the bidding area.
- 3.39** They will need to demonstrate the capacity to liaise with the licensing authorities in their bidding area, local taxi and private hire trades, as well as work effectively with the provider to develop a comprehensive feasibility study.
- 3.40** Joint bids will be accepted if a lead authority is identified and the necessary data and contacts can be easily provided to the feasibility study provider. This will need to be demonstrated at the point of application.

## Links between OLEV £500m schemes (2015-2020)

- 3.41** The Scheme is a discrete scheme, which aims to make specific provision to taxis and private hire vehicles across the local area.
- 3.42** Whilst we welcome bidders to take part in other OLEV schemes, participation in other schemes will not influence the assessment process for the Scheme. Bids will be judged solely on the stated assessment criteria for each phase. This includes those who are taking part in the City Scheme, the competitive process for which has already begun.
- 3.43** However, we will require local authorities to make careful provision regarding infrastructure – with assurance that any infrastructure bid through the Scheme is not also bid for through OLEV's infrastructure schemes. This will be a condition of funding and will have to be evidenced.

# 4. Assessment criteria

## Feasibility Phase

- 4.1** Feasibility study bids will need to demonstrate to us that a local area is well equipped to take advantage of both the study and the benefits the study will deliver to the local area.
- 4.2** We would like bidders to do this by showing progress and evidence against a set of key criteria, listed below. A Feasibility Phase proforma is available on the OLEV website alongside this publication.
- **Ambition** [30%] – We will reward those local authorities who go further than any other in their plans for transforming fleets of taxis and private hire vehicles in their area. This could incorporate planned reviews or changes to licensing arrangements – or evidence of thought about long term change, beyond 2020 in the local area.
  - **Local Commitment** [25%] – We want to award feasibility studies to those areas which have already made progress in getting key local decision makers on board – evidencing wide support for the measures which an ultra low emission taxi scheme would introduce into the area. This includes engagement with local taxi and private hire companies, with evidence of their sign-up.
  - **Analysis and Evidence** [20%] – We would like local authorities to indicate their plans for fleet transformation in the local area. This can take the form of total number of ultra low emission taxis to be introduced, or a percentage of the total number of vehicles in a local area. We would also like an indication of the population of your local area, and to know how many taxis and approximate numbers of private hire vehicles and companies in operation.
  - **Air Quality** [25%] – We would like local authorities to indicate how the introduction of an ultra low emission taxi scheme in their area would help to combat specific air quality issues.

## Feasibility Study Bid Phase - Assessment Criteria

Ambition  
30%

- 5 - Comprehensive measures
- 4 - Comprehensive but with some issues
- 3- Some good ideas but room for improvement
- 2 - Some Issues
- 1 - Major Issues
- 0 - No consideration

Local  
Committment  
25%

- 5 - Comprehensive measures
- 4 - Comprehensive but with some issues
- 3 - Some good ideas but room for improvement
- 2 - Some Issues
- 1 - Major Issues
- 0 - No consideration

Evidence and  
Analysis  
20%

- 5 - Comprehensive measures
- 4 - Comprehensive but with some issues
- 3 - Some good ideas but room for improvement
- 2 - Some Issues
- 1 - Major Issues
- 0 - No consideration

Air Quality  
25%

- 5 - Comprehensive measures
- 4 - Comprehensive but with some issues
- 3 - Some good ideas but room for improvement
- 2 - Some Issues
- 1 - Major Issues
- 0 - No consideration

## Delivery Phase

- 4.3** Local authorities will be asked to submit a completed feasibility study as part of a bid for funding in the Delivery Phase. Bid documentation will be published nearer the date.
- 4.4** The assessment for the Delivery Phase will not just be quantitative. Feasibility studies and wider bid documentation will need to demonstrate evidence against a set of criteria as set out below:
- Feasibility studies will be assessed against the following three criteria:
    - i. **Impact** – this will take into account what proposals the feasibility study makes and the degree to which it will achieve the Ultra Low Emission Taxi Scheme’s policy objectives, as stated at the beginning of the document
    - ii. **Deliverability** – This will assess whether the ambition expressed within a bid is supported by plans to implement measures effectively within the timescale of the scheme, and whether there is both the local support and mechanisms in place to execute proposals.
    - iii. **Value for Money** – Those areas which are able to make Government funding go further will be rewarded. This could relate to infrastructure and/or the taxi-top up grant. This includes local authorities who are able to match fund a greater contribution or draw on other sources of funding.
  - **Air Quality** – We would like local authorities to indicate how implementing an ultra low taxi scheme in their area would help to combat specific air quality issues. In this final bid stage we want to see demonstration of how the feasibility study relates to and furthers current and future local air quality strategy.

## Final Bid Phase - Assessment Criteria

Feasibility Study  
75%

- 5 - Comprehensive measures
- 4 - Comprehensive but with some issues
- 3- Some good ideas but room for improvement
- 2 - Some Issues
- 1 - Major Issues
- 0 - No consideration

Air Quality  
25%

- 5 - Comprehensive measures
- 4 - Comprehensive but with some issues
- 3 - Some good ideas but room for improvement
- 2 - Some Issues
- 1 - Major Issues
- 0 - No consideration

Feasibility Study  
75%

Air Quality  
25%

Impact

Deliverability

Value for Money