

Defra funded Electric Vehicle Taxi Project

Following the Environment and Sustainability Committee Meeting on the 5th July where the Committee agreed to approve the amended project scheme, the legal opinion required by Defra with regard to the State Subsidy and Control Regulations was issued to Defra on the 24th of August with a view to Defra deciding whether the project could continue.

To date there has been no response from Defra. A reminder message was sent to Defra on the 15th November which has not yet been responded to.

The Environment and Sustainability Committee were concerned that the project did not facilitate accessible vehicles, it was explained that one London style Low Emission Capable vehicle was included in the project, but this was designated for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council due to demand amongst licenced drivers. These vehicles cost considerably more, and the project budget can only support the provision of the one London style vehicle to Epsom. The vehicle types on offer are reflective of the vehicles that drivers were utilising in Spelthorne at the time that the grant was applied for. Due to Spelthorne's Licencing Policy when the grant funding was applied for in 2020 Spelthorne's taxi fleet did not include London style vehicles, which are the only accessible zero emission capable vehicle that is widely available to taxi drivers on a hire arrangement as Spelthorne's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licencing Policy did not allow them to be licenced.

The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licencing Policy has been amended as below to improve this situation in the future and the policy allows a reduced fee for accessible vehicles to try and encourage better uptake amongst drivers.

A report was taken to the Licencing Committee on the 12th July 2022 to inform the Committee members of the project and to facilitate low and zero emission vehicles and improve accessibility which allowed the licencing of electric vehicles as taxi's in Spelthorne as an amendment to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licencing Policy, and the licencing of London style cabs ("London LTI, Fairway and Metrocab or similar style of vehicle), for use as a Hackney Carriage. It was identified that these vehicles are wheelchair accessible, and by licencing them the accessibility of Hackney Carriages in Spelthorne could be improved.

The project will not be able to continue until approval is received from Defra who are providing the project funding.

Claire Lucas
Principal Pollution Control Officer