

Oxford ZEZ pilot amendment – four-week consultation

Consultation report

Document control

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1. Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council launched a zero emission zone pilot in February 2022 to improve air quality, cut carbon emissions, and move towards zero emission travel in Oxford.

In autumn 2024 Oxfordshire County Council consulted on the proposal to remove the end date of the 50 per cent discount for low emission petrol-electric hybrid private hire vehicles (PHVs) and for Hackney carriage vehicles (HCVs) licensed by authorities outside of Oxford (non-Oxford taxis).

A four-week consultation was undertaken and was available on the county council's digital Let's talk Oxfordshire platform from midday 22 November to 5pm 20 December 2024. Paper copies were available at Oxfordshire County Library.

The consultation was publicised by an email to just over 100 stakeholders; notices in county and city councils' e-newsletters; and an email to city and county councillors.

We received 109 responses, 107 online and two by email. Both of the email responses addressed wider issues than just the proposed change to the ZEZ pilot and are included in full in the appendix to this report.

2. Proposed change and reasons for it

The proposed change and reasons for it are outlined below.

Current scheme

The discount for low emission petrol-electric hybrid non-Oxford Hackney carriages and private hire vehicles (PHVs) is currently due to end on 31 July 2025. The discount is 50 per cent.

Proposed change

Remove the end date of the discount and instead **allow the discount to continue** indefinitely as long as the pilot is in place.

Reasons for the proposed change

Considering cost of living pressures, we don't think it is necessary or appropriate for this discount to end on the date originally specified, so we're now proposing the discount will continue for as long as the pilot is in place. This will:

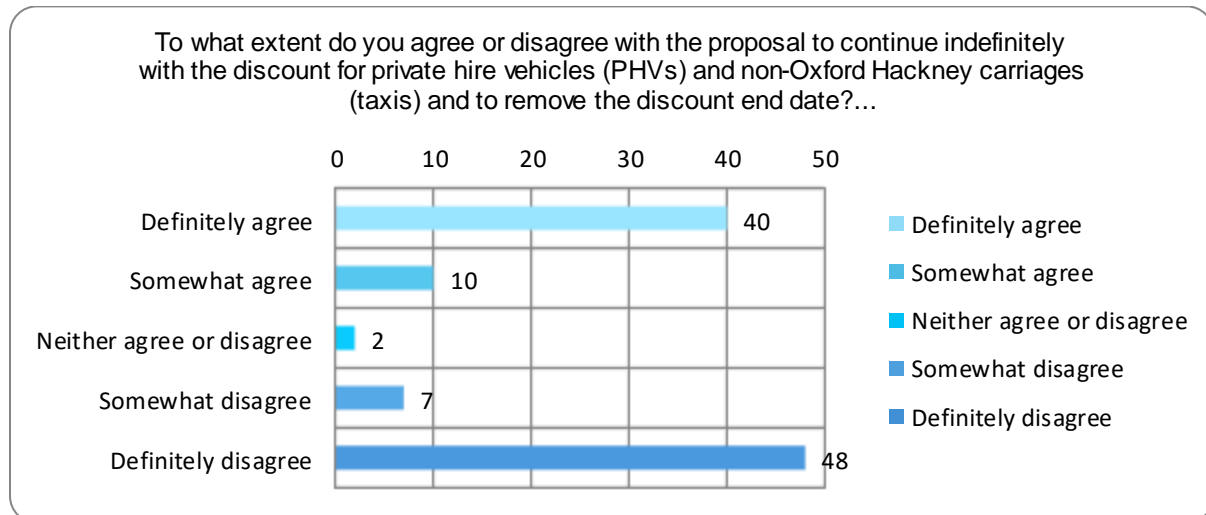
- provide relief from additional ZEZ charges for taxi and PHV users and operators, particularly for people with disabilities who may rely on PHVs and taxis for getting around
- provide clarity and assurance of costs for the remainder of the pilot scheme's operation for PHV and non-Oxford Hackney operators and their customers.

3. Results

We received 107 responses to the survey question:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to continue indefinitely with the discount for private hire vehicles (PHVs) and non-Oxford Hackney carriages (taxis) and to remove the discount end date?

Of the respondents, 50 people, or **47 per cent**, **definitely or somewhat agree** with the proposal to continue with the discount, while 55 people, or **51 per cent**, **definitely or somewhat disagree**. Two respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.



In their email response, Oxfordshire Cycling Network (OCN) did not directly state agreement or disagreement but were *“concerned about extending an extra discount to non-Oxford Hackney Carriages and all Private Hire Vehicles in the ZEZ above that already given to hybrid vehicles.”*

It should be noted that the proposal is only to remove the discount end date for low emission petrol-electric hybrid private hire vehicles (PHVs) and non-Oxford Hackney carriages. It does not propose to extend the discount to any other vehicles.

OCN stated they are more concerned about “driver behaviour” and propose that taxis and PHVs are “required to have speed limiters”.
(See OCN response in Appendix 7.2)

The email response from Royal Cars did not directly state agreement or disagreement but requested that:

- “private hire and county hackney vehicles, particularly those licensed in Oxfordshire, receive a **permanent discount for entering the ZEZ pilot zone.**” AND
- the council “grant **full exemptions for Oxford county-licensed private hire and hackney vehicles** in any future expansion zones.”

(See full response in Appendix 7.1)

4. Comments analysis

This chapter gives a concise account of the comments given in the survey.

4.1 Disagreement with the proposed change

Respondents had a variety of reasons for disagreeing with the proposal to continue with the discount. Objections included:

- Subsidising private sector bodies is viewed as an abuse of the tax system and detrimental to public services.
- Current subsidies to fossil fuel corporations are excessive and unwarranted.
- Polluting vehicles, including private hire and taxis, should not be allowed in Oxford's ZEZ regardless of circumstances.
- Electric cabs are available and should be used to reduce pollution.
- Non-zero-emission vehicles should pay the full daily fee without discounts.
- Non-Oxford licensed taxis are contributing to pollution and congestion and should not receive discounts.
- Discounts should only be considered for locally licensed private hires to support the local economy and emissions standards.
- Fees for entering the ZEZ should be a strong deterrent, not minimal amounts like £2 or £4.
- Zero emissions should be mandatory for all taxis, as they have a significant impact on local air pollution.

Some saw the continued discount as a deviation from the ZEZ pilot objectives:

There should be no exemptions for private businesses as this will disrupt their desire to invest in cleaner vehicles. The standard hybrid cars they use output tons of emissions.

It makes a mockery of the zez concept to have indefinite exceptions - especially when taxis will be disproportionately present in the zone compared to private vehicles (relative to the city as whole).

Their emissions are just as harmful as other vehicles, stop continually watering down your proposals.

Broadly but not vehemently against this, enough warning has been given, PHVs and taxis are operated by businesses and they should respond accordingly by evolving their fleet to EVs. As Oxford-licensed taxis are separately exempt, this is a sufficient allowance in my view for disability requirements.

Some respondents broadened their feedback to perceived driver behaviour:

They should have no privilege at all. They are frequently terrible selfish drivers, often without passengers or transporting their own family. Frequently flouting school streets regulations any way the (sic) can too.

As an ex-resident of Oxford who frequently visits, I reject this proposal. PHVs and Hackney Carriages are often responsible for the worst driving seen in Oxford, despite numerous claims from the council that responsible behaviour will be part of their access to restricted streets.

4.2 Agreement with the proposed change

People who agreed with the proposal to continue with the discount, recognised the benefits for people who rely on taxis and private hire vehicles, but comments also included concerns and suggestions. In summary:

- Transport costs are high, and services are limited.
- PHVs and taxis should be allowed to enter the ZEZ free of charge as they provide essential services for local residents and businesses.
- Given the current cost of living pressures, it is not appropriate to end the discount for PHVs and taxis at this time.
- There is a concern about creating too many exemptions, but the discount for non-Oxford PHVs and Hackney carriages should remain due to inclusivity considerations, especially for people with disabilities.
- Encouraging shared transport options, such as taxis, reduces the usage of private vehicles, benefiting patients and staff.
- Using taxis and public transport instead of owning a car can improve environmental outcomes and reduce the number of parked cars in town.
- It is beneficial to have a favourable environment for taxis in Oxford.
- Removing the discount end date helps prevent increased costs for taxi users.
- Taxis are a crucial part of public transport, and many vehicles registered post-2007 have minimal impact on air quality.

Some expressed the wish to extend the discount even further:

Do not tax at all transport is overpriced and limited

Being an Oxford Resident with disabilities that has to use a taxi to get around having to pay anything to go through the ZEZ is wrong as one has no other option. You are penalising residents with disabilities when you should actually be encouraging them to get out and about.

PHVs and Taxis should be allowed to enter the ZEZ free of charge as they are providing a service to local residents and businesses

Others noted that while supportive, they also had concerns about keeping the discount:

My view is that we need to remain mindful not to create too wide a scope for exemptions. As such, I would have concerns about a decision to make the discount for non-Oxford PHVs and Hackney Carriages permanent. However, I agree that, in the context of the cost of living and with considerations about possible impacts on inclusivity for people living with disabilities, now is not the right time to end the discount.

4.3 Other comments

Respondents were also given the opportunity to give any other comments by responding to the question *Is there anything else you would like to say about the ZEZ?*

Responses to this question included both strong support and opposition for the ZEZ. Supporters urged the council to expand the zone, and some proposed even stricter criteria for driving in the city centre. E.g.:

I can't wait for it to be expanded, but I wish it was a restricted access zone, with only disabled and time-restricted commercial loading access allowed. On principle I disagree with the pay-to-pollute model, as it benefits richer people who can afford to pay the charge or buy an electric car, as well as encouraging ongoing (electric) private car ownership rather than using public transport or active travel.

Please add a weight-based charge to the ZEZ, to reflect the greater harms done by heavier and larger vehicles through road damage, particulate pollution, and road danger.

Some doubted whether the ZEZ is effective. E.g.:

Vehicles delivering to businesses should also be allowed to enter free of charge - the ZEZ costs are simply passed on to the business in question increasing operating costs. This is just another way of applying tax to businesses. It does not reduce the Emissions or create a cleaner environment as the vehicles have to enter the zone to deliver, etc.

Does it really have any effect to the environment? Any vehicles, other than electric ones, that need to come to the ZEZ area will very likely need to come to this very small part of the three streets in which we are.

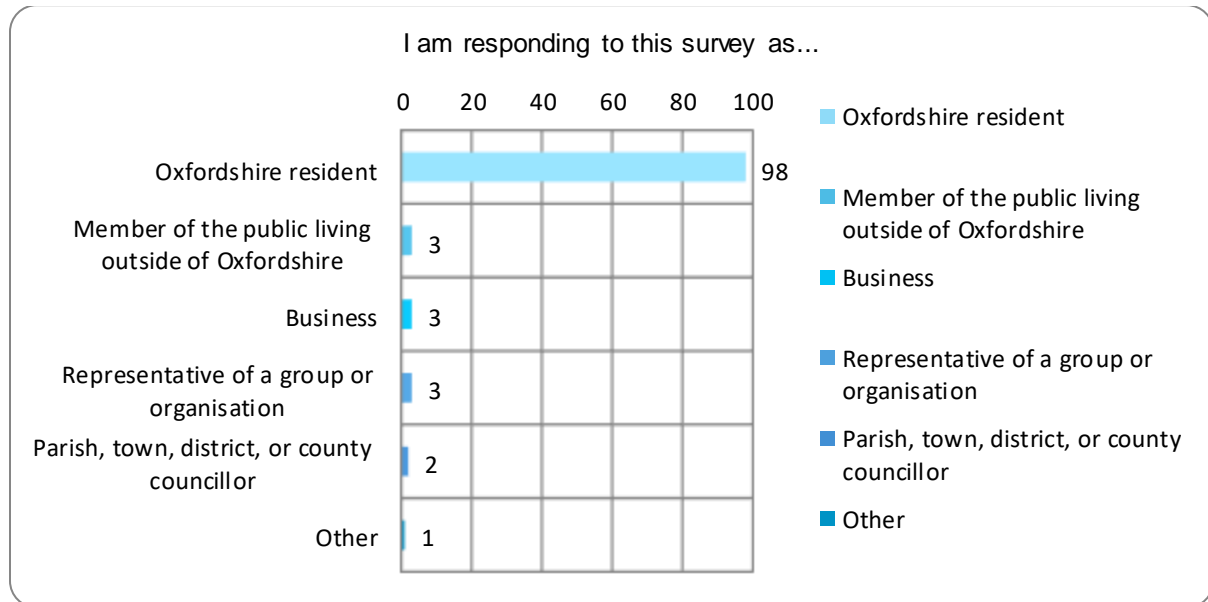
Some highlighted access to city centre and displacement of traffic. E.g.:

I am opposed as by its nature it is causing excess pollution elsewhere. Longer journeys in slow moving queues. Not everyone can afford an electric vehicle (most cannot in fact) and many cannot simply use public transport instead. A nice principle but execution is flawed.

Disabled should go free. It has stopped me going into Oxford now as I can not use public transport because I find it to painful. I really miss going to the he museum. I can't afford to pay the fee every time I want to go in

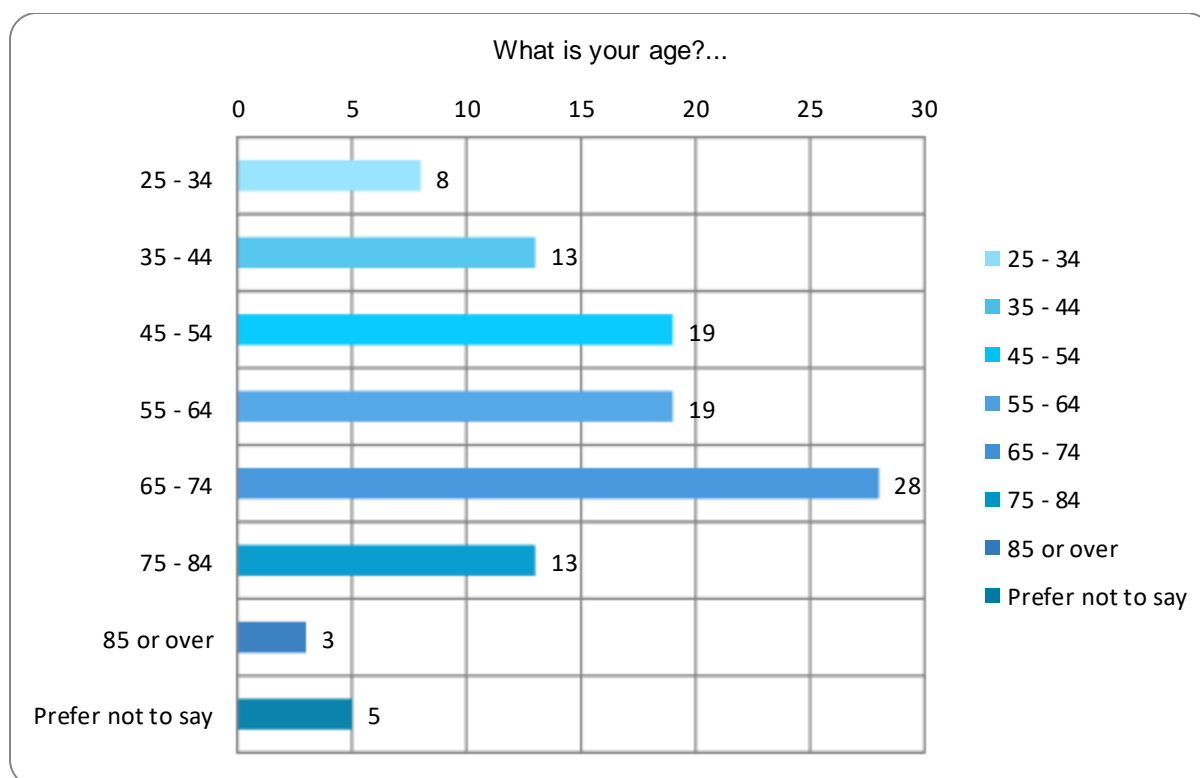
5. Respondent profile

There were 110 responses, including the two email responses. Majority were from Oxfordshire residents (98); 3 were members of the public living outside of Oxfordshire; 3 represented a business; 3 represented a group or organisation; 2 were councillors; and 1 identified as 'other'.



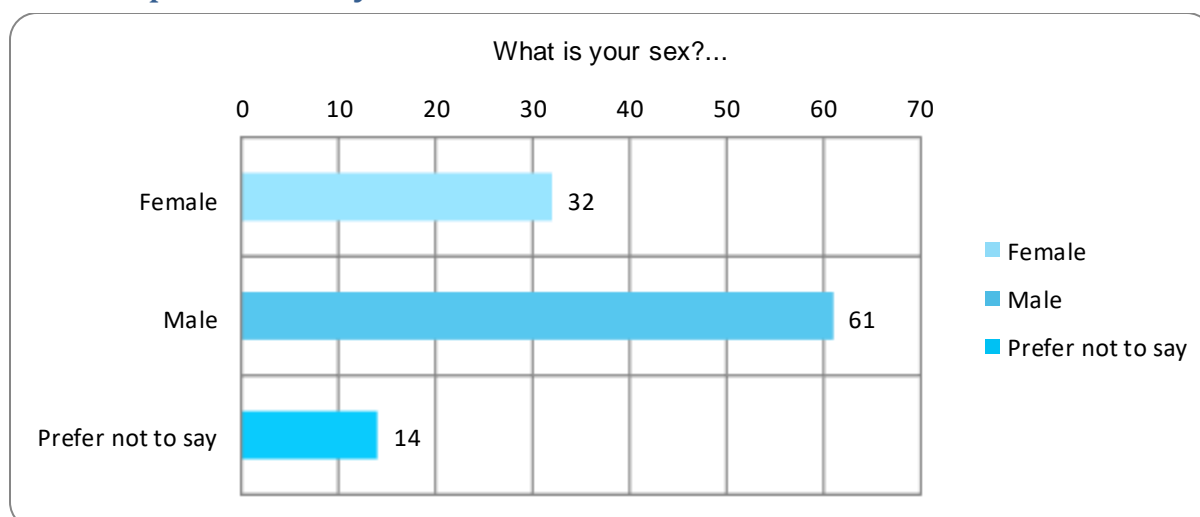
6. Demographic data

6.1 Respondents by age



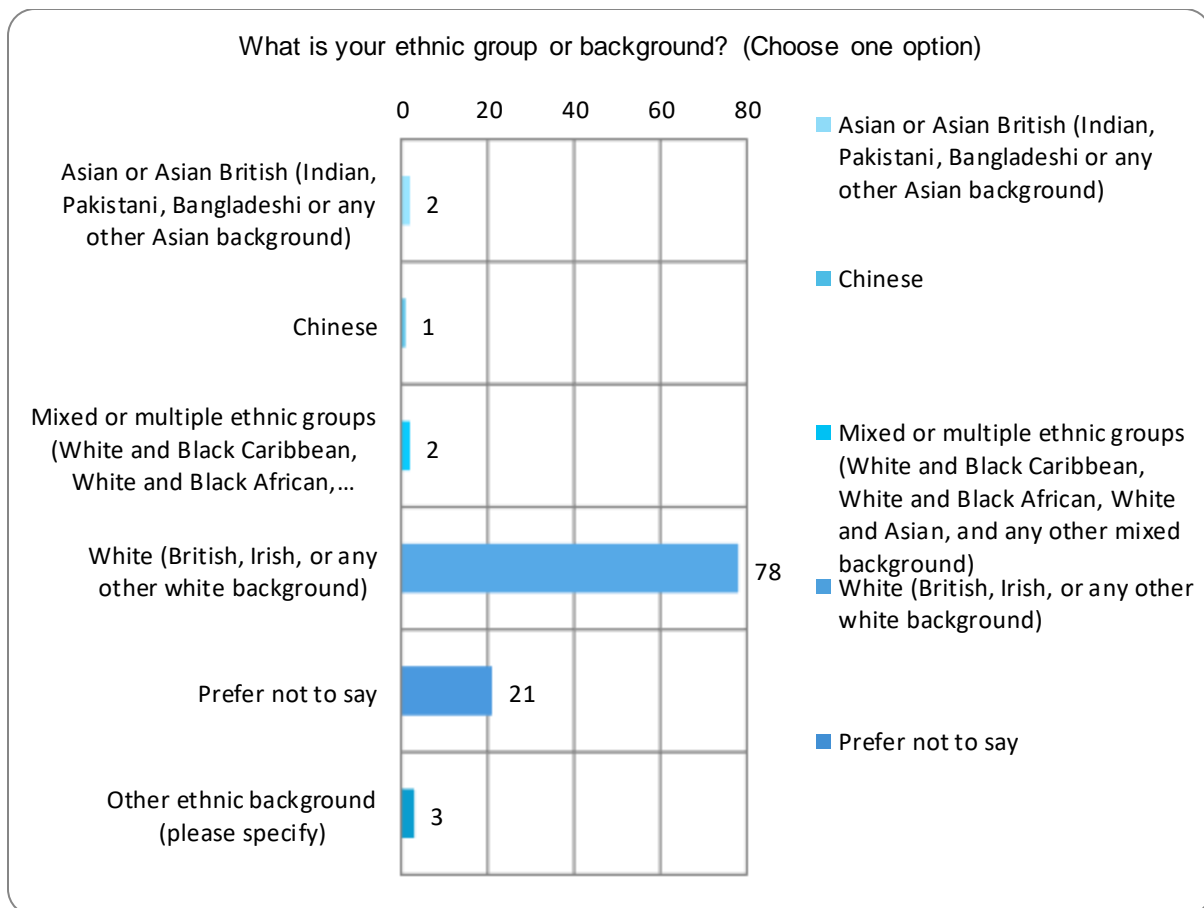
There were 108 responses to the question ‘*What is your age?*’. Over 58% of respondents were over 55 years old, while there were no respondents under 25.

6.2. Respondents by sex



Over half of the respondents, 57%, were male; just under 30% female; and 13% preferred not to say.

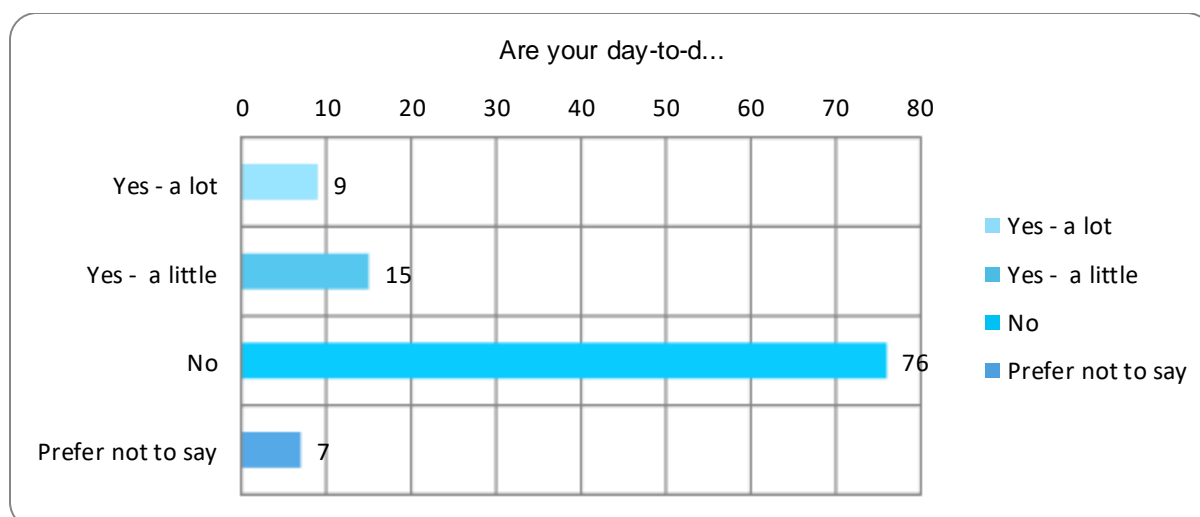
6.3. Respondents by ethnic background



107 people responded to the question about their ethnic background. Majority of the respondents, nearly 73%, were from a white background, while 26% preferred not to say.

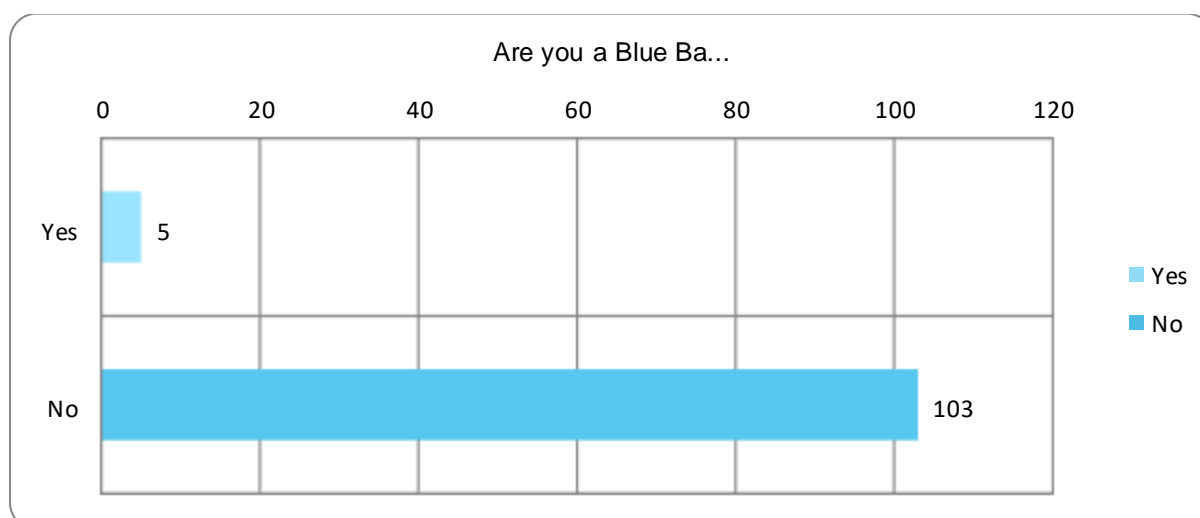
6.5. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a long-term illness, health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

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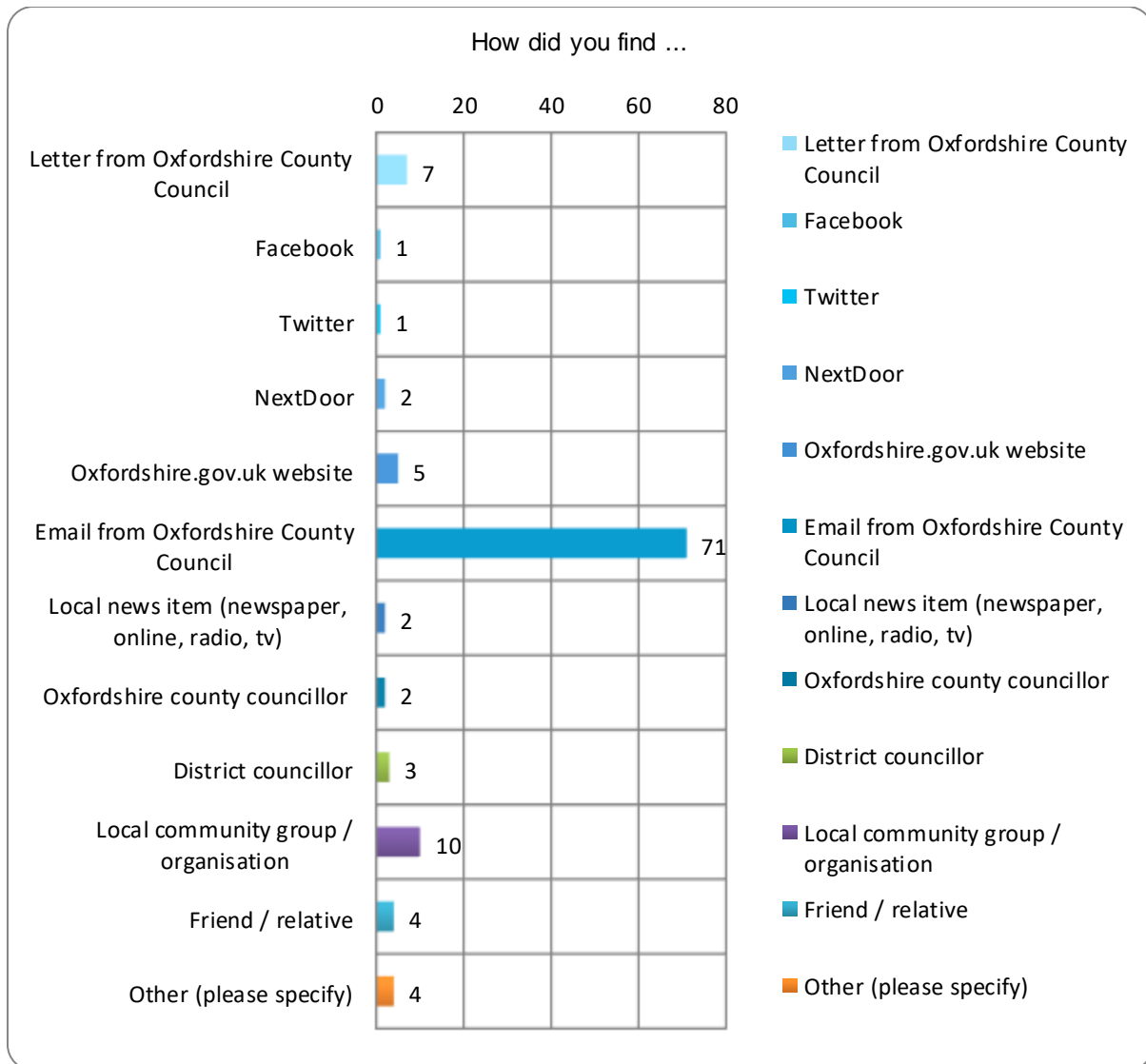
107 people responded to the question whether their day-to-day activities are limited because of a long-term illness, health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. 71% said no, while 14% said yes, a little. Just over 8% said yes, a lot; and just under 7% preferred not to say.

6.6. Are you a Blue Badge holder?



108 people responded to the question whether they were a Blue Badge holder. Five people said they were.

6.7. How did you find out about this consultation?



Majority of respondents had learned about the consultation from an email. This could comprise the stakeholder emails as well as county council and city council's e-newsletters where the consultation was promoted.

7. Appendix

7.1. Royal Cars response

Email 17 December 2024

Response to Oxford ZEZ Consultation – Request for Permanent Discount and Exemption for Oxford Private Hire Vehicles

Dear Consultation Team/Oxford ZEZ Team,

I am writing on behalf of Royal Cars in response to the ongoing consultation regarding the Oxford Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) pilot and potential future expansion. We understand and support the Council's objectives to improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions in Oxford. However, we would like to raise some concerns and propose adjustments that will ensure fairness and mitigate adverse impacts on the local trade, drivers, and customers.

1. Request for Permanent Discount in the ZEZ Pilot Zone

As a private hire operator serving Oxford and the surrounding areas, we request that private hire and county hackney vehicles, particularly those licensed in Oxfordshire, receive a **permanent discount for entering the ZEZ pilot zone**. While many of our drivers are transitioning to low-emission or zero-emission vehicles, this process is gradual and costly. A permanent discount would:

- Encourage further investment in low-emission vehicles by easing the financial burden on drivers.
- Maintain affordability for customers, particularly those who rely on private hire services as a vital transport option.

2. Request for Full Exemption in Any ZEZ Expansion Zones

We urge the Council to grant **full exemptions for Oxford county-licensed private hire and hackney vehicles** in any future expansion zones. The introduction of expansion charges could have significant negative effects:

- **Drivers:** Many drivers, already facing the pressures of rising costs, may find it unsustainable to continue operating within Oxfordshire. This could lead to reduced workforce availability.
- **Customers:** Private hire services play a critical role in providing accessible transport for residents and visitors, especially in areas not well-served by public transport. Expansion charges would increase fares, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups.
- **Trade:** Higher operational costs and reduced availability of private hire vehicles could hinder the city's overall mobility, impacting businesses and trade dependent on reliable transport.

Oxford's private hire sector is an essential part of the city's transport ecosystem. By granting exemptions for private hire vehicles, the Council would demonstrate its commitment to supporting local businesses and protecting essential services while balancing its environmental goals.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate further on this matter and to discuss how the transition to zero-emission transport can be achieved equitably. Thank you for considering our feedback and proposals.

Qasim Muhammed

Account Manager

Royal Cars

7.2. Oxfordshire Cycling Network



Response to consultation on Oxford zero emission zone pilot - taxi and private hire vehicles (PHV)

**proposed change
- December 2024 -**

This response is on behalf of the Oxfordshire Cycling Network (OCN), which includes members from 30 cycling and supporting organisations in the county. OCN represents the 250,000 people who cycle in the county (Sport England, only adults counted) and the 500,000 who would cycle if it was safe, convenient and pleasant (Dutch rates).

We support the concept of the Zero Emission Zone, and are please with the initial results. Motor vehicle traffic and both climate and toxic emissions have been reduced in the Pilot ZEZ area, and emissions have also been reduced in other areas across the city.

We recognise the role of taxis for private transport from A to B when other modes are not practical for people. 32% of Oxford households don't have a car, and sometimes a taxi will be a preferred choice to walking, cycling or public transport.

On the specific proposal presented, we are concerned about extending an extra discount to non-Oxford Hackney Carriages and all Private Hire Vehicles in the ZEZ above that already given to hybrid vehicles. These vehicles are likely to make more trips per day through the city centre than a private car, and therefore generate more emissions per day than typical for their emission class. A strong incentive to change to electric vehicles would be valuable to the health of the citizens of Oxford, and the other areas that these taxis and PHVs visit. Oxford Hackney carriages for example are already moving to an electric fleet and are exempt from charges.

We are more concerned about driver behaviour. While many taxi drivers drive responsibly, we frequently have reports from our members about ones who do not – particularly tailgating or close-passing cyclists in a dangerous fashion. Sometimes these are reported to the licencing authority, but this does not seem to result in effective action, or to the police, who often have not had the resources to take action, or there is insufficient evidence to take action.

Meanwhile, taxis are gaining an increasing number of special privileges to drive on residential streets and in shopping areas that are not available to other car drivers. For example, Taxis were permitted on several Low Traffic Neighbourhood streets, even though they were not included in a consultation about ANPR camera enforcement and emergency vehicle access.

We propose that to ensure the safety of residents and other vulnerable road users in these areas that taxis are required to have speed limiters. There are cheap and effective devices that improve safety for all road users, both inside and outside the taxi.

Robin Tucker

Chair

Oxfordshire Cycling Network

7.3 Consultation survey

Survey for the consultation on Oxford zero emission zone pilot: scheme change for private hire vehicles (PHVs) and for hackney carriages (taxis) licensed by authorities outside of Oxford (non-Oxford taxis)

We're consulting on a proposed change to the zero emission zone pilot (ZEZ pilot) in Oxford city centre. The proposed change applies to private hire vehicles (PHVs) and to Hackney carriages (taxis) licensed by authorities outside of Oxford (non-Oxford taxis).

If you would prefer to complete this survey online, it is available here:

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxford-zez-pilot-taxi-phv-updates>

Once you have completed this survey, you can return it to us for free (as no stamp is needed) by writing this address as **one line in the middle of the envelope**:

Freepost OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Please also write '**ZEZ pilot consultation**' on the top left corner of the envelope, so we can easily identify what is inside the envelope.

All responses must be received by **20 December 2024** when the consultation closes.

Alternative formats:

We know that some people can't, or find it difficult to, take part in online consultations or need things in a different format such as large print, Easy Read, audio, braille or a different language, to have their say.

If you, or anyone you know needs an alternative format of the survey or consultation document, paper copies of the consultation document or help with sharing their thoughts, please email: zez@oxfordshire.gov.uk or call Oxfordshire County Council's customer services team on **01865 792422**. Please note the council's customer services team are unable to answer any detailed questions about the consultations, but they can take your details and ask an appropriate member of staff to get in touch.

Introduction

We're consulting on a proposed change to the discounts in the Oxford zero-emission zone pilot scheme (ZEZ pilot). The proposed change applies to **all private hire**

vehicles (PHVs) and to Hackney carriages (taxis) licensed by authorities outside of Oxford (non-Oxford taxis).

The ZEZ pilot operates on nine streets in Oxford city centre. You can find out more about the scheme on our website at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/zez

Proposed changes

The proposed change and reasons for it are outlined below.

Current scheme	Proposed change	Reasons for the proposed change
<p>Remove discount end date</p> <p>The 50 per cent discount for non-Oxford Hackney carriages and private hire vehicles is currently due to end on 31 July 2025.</p>	<p>Remove the end date of the discount and instead allow the discount to continue indefinitely.</p>	<p>Considering cost of living pressures, we don't think it is necessary or appropriate for this discount to end on the date shown, so we're now proposing the discount will continue for as long as the pilot is in place.</p> <p>This will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide relief from additional ZEZ charges for taxi and PHV users and operators, particularly for people with disabilities who may rely on PHVs and taxis for getting around • provide clarity and assurance of costs for the remainder of the pilot scheme's operation for PHV and non-Oxford Hackney operators and their customers.

Q1 – I am responding to this survey as...

- Oxfordshire resident ☐
- Member of the public living outside of Oxfordshire ☐
- Business ☐
- Representative of a group or organisation ☐
- Parish, town, district or county councillor ☐
- Other ☐

1a - Please give the name of the business you represent

1b - Please give the name of the group/organisation you represent

1c - Please give your name and the parish or town/ward or division you represent

1d – If you answered other, please specify

Q2 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to **continue with the discount for private hire vehicles (PHVs) and non-Oxford hackney carriages (taxis) and to remove the discount end date?**

Definitely agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Definitely disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q3 - Comments on **private hire vehicles (PHVs) and non-Oxford hackney carriages (taxis) proposal**

Q4 – Is there anything else you would like to say about the ZEZ?

About you

We would like to know more about you so that we can understand more about our customers and residents, as it helps us to know if we are hearing the views of a wide range of people and communities.

These questions are optional.

All information given is anonymous and is governed by the [General Data Protection Regulations 2018](#).

Q5 How did you find out about this consultation? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ Letter from Oxfordshire County Council
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ NextDoor
- ☐ Oxfordshire.gov.uk website
- ☐ Email from Oxfordshire County Council
- ☐ Local news item (newspaper, online, radio, tv) Radio advert
- ☐ Oxfordshire County Councillor District Councillor
- ☐ Parish or town councillor
- ☐ Local community news item
- ☐ Poster / information in local library Local community group / organisation
- ☐ Friend / relative
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Q6 – What is your postcode? Please provide the first four or five digits of your postcode (but not the letters at the end). e.g. OX1 1 or OX14 5.

Q7 What is your age? (Choose one option) *

- ☐ Under 16
- ☐ 16 - 24
- ☐ 25 - 34
- ☐ 35 - 44
- ☐ 45 - 54
- ☐ 55 - 64
- ☐ 65 – 74
- ☐ 75 - 84
- ☐ 85 or over
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q8 What is your sex? (Choose one option) *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ I use another term (please state here)

Q9 What is your ethnic group or background? (Choose one option)

- ☐ Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or any other Asian background)
- ☐ Black or Black British (Caribbean, African, or any other Black background)
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, and any other mixed background)
- ☐ White (British, Irish, or any other white background)
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other ethnic group or background (please specify)

Q10 Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a long-term illness, health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? (Choose one option) *

- ☐ Yes - limited a lot
- ☐ Yes – limited a little
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q11 Are you a Blue Badge holder?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Data protection and privacy *

Under the Data Protection Act 2018, we (Oxfordshire County Council) have a legal duty to protect any personal information we collect from you. Oxfordshire County Council is committed to open government and this may include quoting extracts from your consultation response in our report.

We will not however, disclose the names of people who have responded unless they have provided consent. For this purpose, we ask that you are careful not to disclose personal information in your comments – for example the names of service users or children. If you do not want all or part of your response to be made public, or shared with councillors, please state below which parts you wish us to keep confidential.

View Oxfordshire County Council's privacy notice online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/privacy-notice

Q12 Please use this space to tell us if there is any specific part of your response you wish to keep confidential:

Stay in touch

We invite you to sign up to get regular email updates on news, events, and developments from across the county.

Q13 Would you like to sign up? We invite you to sign up to get regular email updates on news, events, and developments from across the county. Any contact details you provide will be separated from the feedback you have shared in this survey.*

- ☐ Yes, I'd like to receive updates about activities on Let's Talk Oxfordshire
- ☐ Yes, I'd like to sign-up to get regular updates on the county's news
- ☐ Yes, but I would only like to be kept informed about this consultation
- ☐ No thanks

Q14 If you have chosen 'Yes' for 'Would you like to sign-up?', please provide your email address below, so we can contact you and send a link to our sign-up page where you can tailor which communications you receive:

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions