

PE1856/B

Petitioner submission of 26 April 2021

Although welcomed, the national funding from the Scottish Government quite simply isn't enough. For many drivers and operators, the assistance through the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Fund was the first financial help they have been able to access. Our survey of members, prior to the announcement of the fund, has demonstrated that a significant numbers of drivers and operators in the trade had been eligible for no or little previous financial help. Many operators continue to face significant ongoing running costs with those who have recently upgraded vehicles to Low Emissions Standards reporting overheads in excess of £1,000 a month. The SG has failed to offer any financial assistance for operators to meet these costs. A £10,000 grant for each operator providing financial support equal to the support given to other small business owners through SG schemes such as Small Business Grant Fund and Strategic Framework Business Fund would help to address the lack of support offered. The financial impact on the trade continues to be severe. Drivers regularly report takings of less than £20 a day for working shifts in excess of 12 hours. Many drivers are being forced from the trade due to a lack of financial support. It is clear that with the trade's dependence on hospitality, tourism and business travel it will be one of the last sectors to recover from the current economic crisis. More help must be given to those who have, are and continue to be refused other funding. Without help many operators and drivers will not survive. On a positive note we welcome the commitment from Transport Scotland and look forward to hearing from them about taking this initiative forward. The impact of Covid on the taxi trade should be well understood. Pre-Covid plans must take this pandemic and its impact on the trade into account and the previous plans must be adjusted to take cognisance of the present extremely challenging circumstances.

We understand that the £10,000 was made available primarily for LPG retrofit as the exhaust retrofitting is just now coming on stream. LPG has had poor uptake for a number of reasons. It costs £12500, of which the operator is liable for £2500 after a maximum £10k grant (80%).It would be of huge benefit if the Energy Savings Trust could increase the current award of £2500. For example, London ran a decommissioning scheme recently, attracting £10k per cab. Doubling the incentive to £5k would allow an operator the opportunity to purchase a Euro 5 cab (£8k - £10k) from London, with a view to having an exhaust retrofit done at a cost of approx. £1000 to achieve Euro 6. That would be a huge help, especially for older operators or those who will not be able to access finance. There is widespread agreement in the trade that the exhaust retrofit offers the best solution. The only caveat being that the retrofit can only be carried out on Euro 5 cabs. We believe the Scottish Government should show leadership on this and issue clear national guidance.