

Sajad Khan

## Secretary of COLTA (City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association)

My name is Sajad Khan. I write the following statement on behalf of the Hackney Carriage (black cab) trade of Oxford. I represent COLTA which stands for 'City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association'. I have represented the trade for almost 7 years but I've been a driver of a black cab in Oxford for almost 23 years. In my following statement, I refer to the black cabs only as 'taxis' which are recognised as official taxis licensed by Oxford City Council.

The trade is on the path of transition to change our current diesel taxis to those that are electric and therefore zero emission capable. It's a privilege to be a part of this shift which will undoubtedly have a positive impact not only on the drivers but for the public of Oxford and far beyond.

The trade fully supports our local authority in its desire to make the whole of our fleet operating in zero emission capable taxis from 2025 onwards. We fully understand the health impact and therefore the necessity to change all of our current diesel taxis. You may not be aware that currently around 25% of our taxi fleet are zero emission capable cabs where the owners have made the change from diesel to electric taxis and for sure, this number is growing as we have in sight the year 2025 where 100% of our fleet will be zero emission black cabs.

We very much consider ourselves to be an integral part of Oxfordshire's transport infrastructure. To consider us otherwise will obviously be counter-productive. The black cabs have a historical significance in the UK dating back 300 years. To date, we continue to provide the public with a viable transport option.

Oxford has been and will continue to be a vibrant city with students and tourists visiting our great city year upon year. But for a city to function well it needs an effective and safe public transport system which will always include buses and taxis. It's very important to emphasise the word 'effective' when I mention public transport. This means that those forms of public transport like the buses and taxis need to be operating in and around Oxford city without any hindrance.

There is a push to reduce private car usage in Oxford which is absolutely necessary. A much needed push for the general public to be active like cycle or walk when and if they can. Incidentally like myself, many other black cab drivers are regular cyclists so we understand the importance of this. But along with this positive lifestyle change as I have mentioned, the city needs a working public transport system. Thousands of passengers get around Oxford by buses and taxis. Most of these passengers also drive but knowing the fact that public transport is readily available, they make a wise decision to use buses or taxis to get around.

The general public need to be confident and aware that they have a functional public transport system which meets their travel needs getting them from their pick up point to

where they need to be but efficiently. A gradual lifestyle change will then be possible. This is where the promotion of public transport is absolutely necessary.

The general public need to be given information in regular intervals about the availability of public transport and how on a personal level, people can make a positive impact to the environment if they choose to leave their car behind and cycle or walk. And for many passengers this isn't possible so rather than them picking up the keys and jumping in their vehicle, they are made aware that they have a better alternative which is public transport be it buses or taxis. And most importantly, the current taxi fleet which I have mentioned previously, are on the path in changing its fleet to zero emission capable taxis which is a huge positive change for Oxford. And on an individual basis, the passenger has done their bit to fight climate change and promote health.

But unfortunately, it doesn't help the paying passenger if certain schemes/projects which have been introduced in Oxford are impeding the movement of black cabs in particular. The recent introduction of LTNs (low traffic neighbourhoods) have certainly had an impact on our movements. This impacts the paying passenger directly as LTNs add on time and money to the paying passenger's journey. And it doesn't help in terms of trying to get people to leave their cars at home and use public transport. Taxis have always had the advantage of getting the general public from and to their destination as efficiently as possible. The public are fully aware of this fact. But the LTNs are a massive issue and the fact that it dents the confidence of the paying passenger knowing that their journey time will be increased having to sit in onerous routes trying to get to their destination or appointments which they regularly now miss.

The county council seem to be turning a blind eye to this very fact unfortunately. On one hand there is a great push to meet peoples travel needs and promote health to tackle climate change. But if public transport isn't considered to be a viable solution to tackle these issues then we are losing the battle. Black cabs in particular mustn't be considered a burden and obstacles mustn't be placed on our routes. LTNs are a perfect example of how we are brushed with the same broom and considered 'all the other traffic' when in fact, we should be considered as a solution to the climate problem we face and how we want to tackle it.

Just to finish I want to reiterate the point that we are on the path of changing our current black cabs to be zero emission capable ones. The investment is huge but the health benefits outweigh the financial burden in the long run. Of course the current scheme of LTNs doesn't help our confidence and this needs to be addressed.

By 2025, one hundred percent (100%) of our black cabs will be zero emission capable. We are a total of 107 in number and regulated. Yes authorities need to consider us as a solution to the climate issue not a burden.