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Drivers of nearly 700,000 cars in Greater London could be liable to pay the ULEZ charge when the zone is expanded this summer

Nearly 700,000 car drivers in Greater London could be liable to pay the £12.50 Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) charge when the scheme expands in August 2023, a freedom of information (FOI) request made by the RAC reveals.

As of 22 February 2023, DVLA data shows a total of 691,559 licensed cars in the whole of Greater London were either petrol cars first registered prior to January 2006 or diesel cars registered prior to September 2015 – the key dates for meeting ULEZ standards. This figure rises to 851,065 when counting all non-compliant vehicles, rather than solely cars.

But the number of drivers affected once the zone expands is likely to be far higher when taking into account vehicles entering from bordering counties such as Kent, Hertfordshire and Essex. TfL estimates that around 160,000* non-compliant cars a day currently drive in the area that will become part of the expanded zone later this summer. Drivers of affected vehicles who do not pay the £12.50 daily charge will a fine of up to £160.

To help mitigate the impact on drivers and businesses the Mayor of London has launched a £110m scrappage scheme which offers those eligible up to £2,000 towards buying a compliant vehicle**.

As of November 2022, TfL estimated*** the proportion of compliant vehicles within the whole of Greater London stood at 90.5%, up from 88.5% in May 2022. Outer London currently has the lowest proportion of ULEZ-compliant vehicles, with just 85% estimated to be meeting the standards as of January 2023****.

RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said:

“Cleaning up London’s air should undoubtedly be a priority, but the sheer number of vehicles that don’t meet ULEZ emissions standards in Greater London suggests there will be a massive financial impact on motorists and businesses through having to fork out £12.50 every day they drive in the zone.

“We desperately need more co-ordination between the Mayor and the Government to help small businesses, tradespeople, NHS staff and carers who have no choice but to drive into the expanded ULEZ for work purposes from outside Greater London. Consideration should also be given to those who work at night when public transport is greatly reduced in the outer boroughs.

“Changing to a compliant vehicle at such short notice simply won’t be something many will be able to afford, especially during a cost-of-living crisis

and at a time when second-hand car prices are so high.

“We need more creativity from London’s Mayor and his team to help people out as the current scrappage scheme is akin to using a plughole to drain an Olympic-sized swimming pool – it’s simply not big enough for the scale of the job.

“We believe he should consider introducing an additional one-year sunset period for certain key workers or a scheme where TfL partners with a leasing company to provide discounted, ULEZ-compliant vehicles to smaller businesses or traders, enabling them to avoid daily charges while still reducing roadside emissions.”

How do drivers find out if their vehicle is ULEZ-compliant?

A petrol car registered pre-2006 is unlikely to meet the minimum Euro 4 emissions standards, while diesel cars first registered prior to September 2015 will probably not meet the Euro 6 standards which means they would need to pay the ULEZ charge. Drivers should use [TfL’s vehicle checker](#) to find out if they need to pay or not. If they think the checker is incorrect, they should contact their vehicle’s manufacturer to gain proof of its Euro emissions standard which they can then use to challenge TfL.

Euro emissions standards were introduced in the 1990s to limit the level of pollutants emitted from a vehicle’s exhaust and have become stricter over the last 20 years for both petrol and diesel vehicles.

The original ULEZ scheme was introduced in April 2019 to cover central London before being expanded to the North/South Circular boundaries in October 2021.

* <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2022/may/tfl-seeks-views-on-expanding-world-leading-ulez-london-wide>

** <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/ultra-low-emission-zone/scrappage-schemes>

*** <https://www.london.gov.uk/foi-ulez-compliance-rates-jan-2023>

www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/expanded_ultra_low_emission_zone_six_month_report.pdf (including figure 4)

The press office email address is press.office@rac.co.uk and media centre is at media.rac.co.uk. **Please note:** the press office is unable to help with individual customer enquiries - please visit the [RAC contacts page](#) to find the right contact.

About the RAC

The RAC, an iconic UK brand, provides complete peace of mind to 13 million UK private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. As well as its premium nationwide breakdown assistance service – with an expert branded patrol workforce attending more than two million breakdowns every year – it offers a wide range of market-leading products across insurance, legal services, vehicle inspections and service, maintenance and repair. The RAC is also at the forefront in helping drivers make the switch to electric vehicles and leads in the development of new solutions for businesses and OEMs, partnering with the best in the motoring and mobility space.

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Contacts



RAC Press Office

Press Contact

press.office@rac.co.uk

Emails monitored during normal office hours. For breakdown queries, call 0330 159 0740

ISDN number on request