

Report to Cabinet

Subject: DEFRA Air Quality Grant

Date: 23rd May 2019

Author: Scientific Officer, Public Protection

Wards Affected

Borough Wide

Purpose

Gedling Borough Council has been successful in bidding for DEFRA Air Quality Grant Fund to continue the ECO Stars Fleet Recognition Scheme, and expand the scheme to cover taxi and private hire vehicles. Members are asked to agree to the grant monies being expended in the manner set out in this report and to approve the establishment of the budget for this project.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1) Members agree to the Air Quality Grant Funding being used to continue with the ECO Stars Fleet Recognition Scheme and to the expansion of that scheme to cover taxi and private hire vehicles as detailed in this report.**
- 2) Approve the establishment of the budget for the ECO Stars project of £55,000.**

1 Background

- 1.1** The ECO Stars Fleet Recognition Scheme (Efficient and Cleaner Operations) is a free, voluntary scheme designed to provide recognition, guidance and advice to operators of commercial vehicles.

The scheme works by giving businesses, operating commercial vehicle fleets, the following support:

- Providing advice via the tailored action plan provided upon joining the scheme, members are given practical advice on changes to their current operating processes, which can reduce fuel usage, particularly in the urban area.
- Promoting a culture of efficiency and environmental responsibility, the schemes aim to improve the fuel management methods of fleet operators and increase the number of operators promoting eco-driving skills among their workforce, as well as increase the number of taxi, heavy duty and light goods van vehicles using clean fuel technologies.
- Each individual action plan, bespoke for the operator, will focus on fleet composition, a fuel management programme, driver skills development, vehicle specification/maintenance, the use of IT support systems and performance management.

ECO Stars rates individual vehicles and the fleet's overall road transport operation using star rating criteria, to recognise levels of operational and environmental performance.

- 1.2 There are now twenty eight ECO Stars Fleet Recognition Schemes throughout the United Kingdom; and five ECO Stars Taxi Schemes. ECO Stars has been recognised by DEFRA within guidance as “a mechanism to reduce emissions from freight traffic”.
- 1.3 The ECO Stars scheme is one of the key measures found in the Air Quality Action Plan for the A60 Mansfield Road.
- 1.4 The Gedling scheme started in 2012 with DEFRA Grant money to seed the scheme in Gedling Borough. Following the success of this, the scheme then expanded using Local Sustainable Transport Plan funding to cover the Nottingham Urban Area.

This funding lasted for a further 2 years; since then GBC has continued to fund the scheme, to a lesser degree, for the past three years; maintaining the existing member base whilst also providing a low level of recruitment to the scheme.

There are currently **112 members** operating over **7500 vehicles** in the Nottingham Urban Area.

- 1.5 The proposal is to re-focus the existing fleet recognition scheme towards Gedling Borough (and in particular our Air Quality Management Area) whilst also keeping the existing member base engaged; through reassessments.
- 1.6 The proposal for the Taxi Recognition Scheme is to use the lessons learnt from existing schemes in the UK to assist Gedling's licensed vehicle fleet to meet the challenges that are on the horizon operating in cities such as Nottingham.

Also GBC has a number of licensed vehicles that operate as 'specialised transport', this area has, in the past, been a hard to reach sector.

The scheme would work in the same way as the commercial fleet scheme but can also signpost vehicle owners to grants, which may be available from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) for example.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 We have been successfully in bidding for DEFRA Air Quality Grant funding to continue the scheme for a further year, and expand it into the area of our licensed taxi vehicles.
- 2.2 The grant funding available is **£55,000**.
- 2.3 The schemes will be delivered through a third party contractor, who will work alongside officers from Public Protection to deliver the project; in the timescale agreed with DEFRA.
- 2.4 An indicative breakdown of how the grant could be allocated is as follows:

1. ECO Stars Fleet Recognition Scheme

The level of funding for a twelve month ECO Stars Fleet scheme is £30,000 to include all contracted services described below:

| Item | Cost (£) |
|---|-----------------|
| New Operator Recruitment | 9000 |
| New Operator Assessment | 9000 |
| Existing Operator re-engagement and re-assessment | 6000 |
| Production of tailored road maps | 3000 |
| Publicity and Promotion | 1500 |
| Evaluation | 1500 |
| Total | 30,000 |

2. ECO Stars Taxi Recognition Scheme

The level of funding for a twelve month ECO Stars Taxi scheme is £25,000 to include all contracted services described below:

| Item | Cost (£) |
|--|-----------------|
| New Operator Recruitment | 10,000 |
| New Operator Assessment | 9,000 |
| Production of tailored road maps | 1,500 |
| Publicity materials for the scheme | 1,000 |
| The scheme launch and supporting publicity | 1,500 |
| Evaluation of the scheme | 2,000 |
| Total | 25,000 |

Total grant bid = £55,000

- 2.5 It is proposed members approve the funding being used in the manner described above and accordingly approval is given to establish the budget for the project.

Alternative Options

- 3.1 Members could choose to not accept the offer of grant funding. The scheme would therefore cease to operate in Gedling.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The funding is from a DEFRA Air Quality Grant for £55,000. All match funding for this project from will be in the form of “in kind” contributions which are predominantly made up from officer’s time. There is therefore, no effect on the NET budget.

5 Appendices

5.1 None.

6 Background Papers

6.1 Air Quality Grant bid papers are attached for information.

7 Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 To accept the Air Quality Grant offer from DEFRA.

7.2 To continue the ECO Stars Fleet Recognition Scheme within the Borough