

30 June 2025**TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL IN THE FORESTRY COMMISSION - UPDATE****Issue**

This paper provides an update on progress towards implementing the actions set out in the 'towards sustainable travel in the Forestry Commission' document which was agreed with the Executive Board in October 2024.

The purpose of this update is to:

1. Ensure continued awareness amongst the Executive Board on progress towards the previously proposed actions.
2. To ensure Executive Board awareness of the changes which are being incorporated into the new draft 'expenses' and 'sustainable travel' policies.
3. To outline the consultation process and next steps prior to implementation of these policies.

Background

The purpose of the 'towards sustainable travel emissions in the Forestry Commission' document was to establish a strategic approach to emissions reduction, enabling a considered approach to be taken on amendments to the existing tapering emissions policy for grey fleet vehicles. This policy measure has become unpopular with staff and increasingly out of step with both the pace of decarbonisation of our Forestry Commission fleet, as well as the wider net zero landscape.

Two interim measures have already been taken to pause the continued ratcheting down of allowable grey fleet emissions (these are currently held at 115g/km) to enable time for alternative policy development. A permanent solution is required.

Update

The focus on the actions from the 'towards sustainable travel emissions in the Forestry Commission' document over the past six months has therefore been on reviewing the existing travel and expenses guidance and developing two new 'expenses' and 'sustainable travel' policy documents. The purpose of these new documents is to:

1. Review the proliferation of existing travel and expenses guidance and remove duplication and inconsistency, with the aim of ensuring guidance is clear and accessible.

2. To embed the principles of sustainable travel in Forestry Commission policy. Previously these principles have been guidance (following the 'changing the way we work' project in Forestry England), rather than holding the formal status of policy.
3. To separate the transactional guidance relating to expenses policy from sustainable travel. Whilst both areas are interlinked, they are separate policy areas.
4. To implement the changes to grey fleet emissions policy. The existing tapering emissions policy will be withdrawn and replaced with a new mileage-based scheme from April 2026.

The new policy documents do not materially change the existing guidance, other than to address travel emissions reduction objectives. At the same time several other issues have been addressed.

Material changes to the existing policy guidance are as follows:

1. Implementation of a £1500 allowance for home installation of electric charging units for CAPES drivers and home-based workers with an allocated electric fleet vehicle. Annual costs expected to be circa £15k per year.
2. Replacement of the existing tapering emissions policy for grey fleet vehicles with a new approach that encourages higher mileage drivers (those exceeding 4,000 miles a year) into ZEV's and allows low mileage drivers to continue to use their personal vehicles.
3. References and processes relating to use of GPC's for expenses have been updated and amended to reflect removal of GPC's.
4. Updates to align with current HMRC rules for benefit charges (loyalty cards, cycle to work, pet and child care costs).

Next steps

Drafts of the two new policies have been written and are now currently going through internal technical consultation with finance, HR and other subject matter experts. The next steps for implementation are:

- 30th June to 14th July – Engagement and review with Forestry England, Forest Services and Forest Research
- 21st July to 11th August – Engagement with FCTU travel sub-committee
- September 2025 – Documents circulated to EB for review and approval
- October 2025 – Policy announcement

Other actions

To complement the implementation of the revised grey fleet emissions policy, a key enabling element of this is the review of the current CAPES company car scheme. This review remains a priority, however the recent changes to GPC usage have diverted resources from progressing this work. The review of the CAPES scheme will be progressed over the coming months, with options for outsourcing considered to progress this in a timely manner.

In addition to the CAPES review, work is in progress to implement telematics in the Forestry Commission vehicle fleet. This includes establishing the required data protection and use policies, identifying appropriate procurement routes and planning for FCTU engagement. It is expected that installation will commence in fleet vehicles from late autumn 2025.

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