



Black cabs could vanish from London, report warns

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**Black cabs could vanish from London, report warns**

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**The black cab will vanish from the capital's streets by 2045 if something is not done to reverse decline in the trade, according to a report.**

The study, by think tank Centre for London, said measures including simplifying [the Knowledge](#) , [external](#)– the memorisation of the roads in the city – would “reflect the reality of modern taxi operations”.

TfL said it would soon be publishing a new Taxi and Private Hire Action Plan “to ensure black cabs continue to play a vital role in the capital's transport system”.

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Steve McNamara, the general secretary of the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association (LTDA) said the report was a “worst case scenario prediction”, and said he hoped it was preventable by TfL.

## The Knowledge

Introduced in 1865, mastering the Knowledge can take up to four years and involves learning all the streets within a six-mile (9.65km) radius of Charing Cross.

Centre for London suggests Transport for London (TfL) should make the exam less complex, simpler to study and easier to complete.

“The course duration should reduce as a result of removing outdated and unnecessary aspects of the Knowledge,” the report said.

Mr McNamara of the LTDA said: “The knowledge is needed to keep a gold standard, we still need to be the best in the world, but the testing itself needs to be modernised.”

He suggested the exam became digitised, and broken down into modules, to make it more manageable.

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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3syHHGzkF\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3syHHGzkF_s)

He added: “It's still relevant and important to know where you're going. There's no comparison with a sat nav.”

But Mr McNamara said the process had not been updated since the second World War, and “in that time the world has changed massively”.

The Centre for London report also suggests a number of financial benefits to the trade be introduced, including interest-free loans to help new drivers buy cabs.

Mr McNamara said taxis currently cost £75,000, but this increases to £100,000 when bought on finance. He agreed with the report and called for a system similar to Scotland, where taxis can be purchased through interest-free loans.

The report also recommends establishing a 10-year strategy to recruit and retain drivers, as well as finding better ways to share information and data.

It notes that “London’s Black Cab trade has declined dramatically over the past decade”, with the Covid 19 pandemic “accelerating the rate of decline”.

Figures show that more than a quarter of all black cabs on the roads before the pandemic are no longer in operation.

A TfL spokesperson said: “We recognise that black cabs play a vital role in the capital’s transport system.

“We will soon be publishing a new Taxi and Private Hire Action Plan to ensure they continue to play a role in ensuring Londoners can move around the capital safely, sustainably and efficiently.

They added: “TfL has already provided more than £50m in funding to the taxi trade across a range of initiatives to encourage taxi vehicle owners to retire their older, more polluting vehicles and encourage the uptake of clearer, greener vehicles.

“As a result, we are very proud that more than 60 per cent of the taxi fleet is now zero-emission capable and the fleet will be part of our transport system for the foreseeable future.”

## Iconic

Mr McNamara said: “What we’re hoping with this report is that the Mayor recognises this is where we’ll be without action, and we’re hoping he’ll take action before any of this happens.”

He called on the Mayor to recognise black cabs as part of London’s public transport system, and asked for more freedom to travel around London.

“If we can’t access the roads – then it’s not cost effective for our journeys,” he said.

He pointed to the exclusion of black cabs from certain roads in London, and the problems caused [by Low Traffic Neighbourhoods \(LTNs\)](#).

“This report says we are iconic in London, it’s true,” he added.

“The phone boxes are gone, the police officers are gone, it’s just us and the buses left. But the Mayor needs to recognise us as more than just an icon.

“Driving a cab around London is still a great career – people can earn a lot of money.

“Let’s confine this report to the annals of history.”

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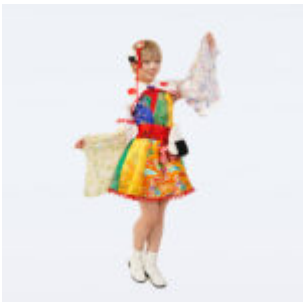
Idol

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