

## Information note on High-intensity Discharge (HID) Headlights

### What is a HID Headlight?

High Intensity Discharge (HID) headlights, also known as Xenon bulbs, have a slightly bluish tint and are much brighter than regular halogen headlights. HID headlights should only be fitted to vehicles for which they are compatible, otherwise the light beam can dazzle oncoming traffic. This is illegal under the Road Traffic (Lighting of Vehicles) Regulations.

### What is examined at the NCT?

Roadworthiness testing measures are in place to ensure that the lighting system in a vehicle is in full working order and correctly aligned for the safe performance of the vehicle. Under the European Roadworthiness Testing Directive ([2009/40/EC](#)), the National Car Testing Service (NCTS) is required to examine the condition and aim of headlights. This requirement is included in the [Road Traffic \(National Car Test\) Regulations 2017](#) and is reflected in the [NCT Manual](#). In relation to HID lights specifically, the NCTS checks that:

- A HID bulb, where fitted, is compatible with the headlamp.
- The HID headlight assembly (i.e. headlamp and bulb) is fitted with a functioning headlamp levelling system, either manual or automatic. If the vehicle has self-levelling built in to the suspension then this can be considered to fulfil the function of headlamp self-levelling.
- The headlamp cleaning device, where fitted, is operating correctly.

To view a detailed list of items checked and reasons for failure please refer to section 30 of the NCT Manual at the following link: [NCT Manual](#)

### I have retrofitted HID Headlights on my car. Will it fail the NCT?

HID headlamps may be retrofitted to a vehicle however, in order to pass the NCT, the retrofitted HID kit (i.e. lamp and bulb) must be type approved and the vehicle to which it is being fitted must be compatible for HID lamp usage i.e. the vehicle is approved to have a HID kit fitted. Your vehicle's original manufacturer will be able to clarify whether your vehicle is compatible for a HID kit or not.

**An approved headlamp kit retrofitted to an incompatible vehicle will result in NCT failure. The same applies to an unapproved kit retrofitted to a compatible vehicle. HID bulbs retrofitted into regular halogen headlamps is also classed as a reason for failure at NCT.**

### What is a Type Approved HID System?

On new vehicles, HID Headlights will be factory fitted and approved to European Type Approval Regulations i.e. they had to meet an acceptable safety/quality standard before sale across Europe. Such HID systems include a headlamp which is specially designed to accommodate extra bright HID bulbs, automatic headlamp levelling and headlamp cleaning devices. Headlights which are not level or dirty can temporarily blind oncoming motorists and deliver poor side vision.

### My car was factory fitted with HID's but they don't self-level. Will it fail the NCT?

There will be circumstances, especially with older vehicles, where HID headlights are fitted by the manufacturer yet no self-levelling devices, either manual or automatic, are evident. If a vehicle with factory fitted HID headlights has self-levelling built in to the suspension then this can be considered to fulfil the function of headlamp self-levelling. In cases where a self-levelling system is not in place, the owner must

present evidence from the original manufacturer that the vehicle was fitted with HID bulbs/headlamps *when originally manufactured* and that a self-levelling system was not part of this specification.

*This guide does not, and is not intended to, provide legal advice or to represent a legal interpretation of the law.*