



Department
for Transport



Department
for Work &
Pensions



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

To the UK Logistics Sector

We wish to begin by expressing our thanks to you, our road haulage key workers, who throughout this past 16 months have provided a vital service to the COVID-19 response, keeping food, medicine and other vital goods moving around the country. Your dedication and hard work is greatly appreciated.

The driver shortage is well documented and its impacts on the wider economy are becoming more evident. We know the challenges are serious and whilst it is for industry to lead, we are here to help. We have been urgently working across Government and with you on a package of measures to support recruitment and retention within the industry. We're pleased to set out the following actions that we are taking to tackle the shortage.

We know that increasing the availability of HGV driver testing is key. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) continue to develop measures to maximise testing capacity and tackle the backlog. DVSA has already increased throughput from 1,150 successful passes a week pre COVID to 1,500 by overtime and allocating additional staff into testing.

Further measures can sustain this increase and potentially raise it to 2,000 successful passes a week. The Department for Transport (DfT) will therefore consult about the delegation of the off-road manoeuvres as part of the Heavy Goods Vehicle driving test, which would increase overall testing capacity. DfT will also consult about issuing provisional licence entitlements to drive articulated lorries at the same time as issuing provisional licence entitlements to drive rigid lorries. This would allow candidates to move directly to taking articulated lorry tests, without also having to pass a rigid lorry practical test.

These are practical improvements which we think could speed up recruitment and we are seeking your views on them with a view to regulatory changes as early as possible this year. They would provide a more efficient testing process longer term and are examples of changes we could make with the increased sovereignty over our decision-making that Brexit has provided. We will also consider changes related to requirements for newer car licence holders to take

extra tests to drive car/van and trailer combinations, with a view to consulting about removing this extra test requirement. This could also provide more testing capacity to be used for Heavy Goods Vehicle tests.

We know that the costs of training can be a barrier both to new entrants and business. A number of proposals to support the training of heavy goods vehicle drivers have been put forward. We wish to support the sector in overcoming barriers to people wishing to join this sector of the economy. We are reviewing the proposals for financial support made by industry sources to boost the supply of drivers.

We are already supporting lorry driving training in the context of apprenticeships. This includes the revised Large Goods Vehicle Driver apprenticeship standard, which will be available from 2 August. This new version will be supported by an increased funding band of £7,000, and further support on offer includes the Department for Education's current incentive payment to employers of £3,000 for every apprentice, of all ages, hired as a new employee from 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021. A second proposed apprenticeship, Urban Driver, is currently being considered for future development and a further new standard, Transport and Warehouse Operations Supervisor, is also expected to launch in the coming months.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is supporting returning to driving and helping jobseekers become HGV drivers where appropriate. Increased communications to work coaches and to jobseekers are in progress. We continue to work with industry to collaborate on content that promotes working in the haulage sector for JobHelp, our virtual platform to advise and guide people looking for work. A DWP driver training pilot is underway, as part of the wider Road to Logistics scheme and we encourage industry to access their local jobcentre plus network.

Large numbers of EU nationals have settled status or pre-settled status in the UK and continue to be an important part of the lorry driving workforce. But for the future workforce we will need to develop people resident in the UK as opposed to specifically providing visas for this group of workers.

For the short term we have announced a relaxation to drivers' hours rules given the current urgent situation, this will provide haulage operators with increased flexibility to manage deliveries and alleviate some the pressures being experienced. We will be launching a short, targeted Call for Evidence to consider whether longer relaxations would be appropriate. This complements a relaxation of supermarket delivery hour restrictions to further support the industry. Work is also progressing on increasing collaboration in the food sector.

While we focus on increasing the supply of drivers into the industry, any success in this area will need to be supplemented by action to improve retention of drivers. Here we seek to support industry-led action. We will reinvigorate work on lorry parking with trade and driver representatives with a view to working with businesses, Highways England and via planning to improve the quantity and quality of overnight facilities and access to facilities during the day.

We confirm support for an industry-led proposal for a Year of Logistics. We also confirm support for the promotion of good practice in the sector, envisaged by unions and trade representatives. We commend the International Road Transport Union's driver charter.

We know businesses are under severe pressure at the moment and adapting business models. It is going to be critical for the medium term that business practices change recognising the end of free movement, the need for more diversity on the workforce, how drivers are trained and pay and conditions for drivers. Market mechanisms will be the predominant way in which this shortage is resolved.

We appreciate the time and resource provided by parts of the industry in engaging with the government on these issues. We are committed to our officials together and with key other government departments meeting industry representatives, including Logistics UK, RHA and Unite on the labour shortage issues during the coming weeks.



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