



Department
for Transport

Lord Berkeley
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0AA

Baroness Vere of Norbiton
Minister for Roads, Buses and Places

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: baroness.vere@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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Dear Tony,

I am writing in follow up to the points you raised at the debate on 14 December on the statutory instrument to remove the car and trailer test (Category B+E). I should first like to thank you for your contribution to the debate.

You mentioned reports from people who had experienced delays in receiving their driving licence back from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). The quickest and easiest way to make an application to the DVLA is to use its extensive suite of online services. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their documents in a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application and the DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day. To help reduce waiting times for paper applications, the DVLA has introduced additional online services, recruited more staff, increased overtime working and has secured extra office space in Swansea and Birmingham. The DVLA has reconfigured its accommodation to safely maximise the number of staff onsite and is working hard to process paper applications as quickly as possible.

The DVLA prioritises applications for vocational driving licences, with staff from other areas of the business now trained to process vocational applications. Despite the increase in vocational driving licence applications and licence renewals, there are no delays in processing with all applications being processed within five working days, unless further medical checks are required.

You expressed concerns around HGV test candidates not being tested on their ability to reverse. I would like to reassure you the reversing exercises for HGVs continue to be assessed during the test. We recently introduced regulations that enable the off-road manoeuvres to be conducted separately, by authorised

third-party examiners, and before the on-road driving test. Test candidates must demonstrate they meet the required standard before they can take the on-road test.

I share your concerns that bridge strikes cause significant disruption to both the road and rail networks. The driving theory test includes questions on preventing bridge strikes. Drivers are responsible for knowing the height of the vehicle and, before starting a journey, should check the height of the cab and trailer. Network Rail, in conjunction with the Department for Transport and road haulage and passenger transport industry bodies, has published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) guidance for drivers, transport managers and operators.

You also mentioned mandatory and optional modules in the driving test and that preventing bridge strikes was an optional module. I believe you are referring to Driver Certificate of Professional Competence periodic training. Most professional drivers are required to undertake 35 hours of periodic training every five years. Drivers are able to choose the modules that are most appropriate for the type of professional driving they are engaged in. Mandating one course over others could mean that they do not undertake other training that might have more relevance at that particular time.

I thank you for your continued scrutiny and engagement with this legislation and I hope the above addresses your points raised during the debate. A copy of this letter is also being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Yours,
Charlotte

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON