



Department for Transport

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My Lords,

I am writing in follow up to the points raised at the debate on 14 December on the statutory instrument to remove the car and trailer test (Category B+E). I would first like to thank my noble Lords who attended on the day for their contribution to the debate.

I thank my noble Lord Berkeley for his comments on driving licences, reversing and bridge strikes. I have written to him separately in response to those matters.

These regulations, and the additional two which permit third party authorised examiners to conduct the off road manoeuvres element of the test and the removal of licence staging to acquire a lorry and trailer licence, have been introduced urgently to help address the HGV driver shortage and reduce impacts on the supply chain network. They are part of a wider number of actions being taken to help alleviate the driver shortage and among the [32 interventions](#) the Government has already taken to tackle this issue.

The regulations now enable drivers who want to tow a heavier trailer to do so legally, with the correct entitlement on their driving licence.

I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate my commitment to road safety and reassure my noble Lords that we take very seriously the requirement to review the regulations in three years. In the meantime, my officials will keep under review interim data as it becomes available so we can assess any impacts of the changes. We will also assess the take up of the accredited training scheme and identify any mitigating impacts that have arisen.

The noble Lady Baroness Randerson made the point that roads have become busier since 1997 when the car and trailer test was introduced, however it does not necessarily follow that accidents will increase. Since 2010 there has been almost a year-on-year reduction in the total number of people who were included in the road casualty count. While any casualty is one too many, many factors play into the cause of an incident. Since 1997 we

have seen many improvements in vehicle safety design, including lane detection warnings, speed assistance, autonomous emergency braking, to name but a few.

The accredited trailer towing training that is being developed will provide all drivers who tow with core modules as well as sector specific modules that will support them to tow safely. Many drivers already had the entitlement to drive a heavier trailer without the need to take a test, and a test was not required for those who wished to drive a small trailer. This training will be available to all drivers and we will encourage all who wish to tow, regardless of size of trailer or previous entitlement, to undertake it.

Lord Rosser asked why, if there was no impact on road safety, we had continued to carry out the car and trailer test. The 'bonfire of regulations' in 2010, which my noble Lord referred to, took place during our membership of the European Union. At that time, we were obliged to meet the provisions of the various driving licence directives which harmonised testing and licence arrangements within the EU. We now have an opportunity to exercise our sovereignty and this allows us to increase the number of HGV tests available to improve the HGV driver shortage.

The Government will continue to support the #towsafe4freddie campaign and publish messages for motorists to ensure they undertake safety checks whenever they are towing.

I thank noble Lords for their scrutiny of this legislation. As mentioned in previous correspondence with the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee, I should be happy to meet again once the accreditation scheme has been developed further to discuss any questions you might have at that point in time. I will be placing a copy of this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Yours,
Charlotte

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON