



Department
for Transport

Lord Hampton
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Lord Davies of Gower
Minister for Maritime, International and Security

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Dear Lord Hampton,

Automated Vehicles Bill 2nd Reading – Follow Up Letter

Following the recent 2nd Reading debate on the Automated Vehicles Bill held on 28 November, I am writing to provide further clarity and detail on the points you raised in the debate and address questions where through time constraints and volume of issues, I could not respond directly in my closing speech.

User-In-Charge

You raised some concerns about in the nature of the user-in-charge role.

Some self-driving technologies may only enable vehicles to drive themselves for part of a journey. For example, if the self-driving technology only works for motorways, there would need to be a human to drive at the start and end of the journey.

The Bill allows for this use case and provides the user-in-charge with immunity from traffic offences arising from how the vehicle is driven. The user-in-charge can turn their attention away from the road and for example might be able to view content through the vehicle's built-in infotainment apparatus.

The Bill makes detailed provision so that the transition of control between the user-in-charge and vehicle can be managed safely. For example, authorisation requirements must provide that the transition demand be multi-sensory, and that the transition period be long enough to regain awareness and resume control.

We will retain flexibility to amend or clarify which activities a User-In-Charge is permitted to undertake. This will allow us to respond to developments in the technology and our understanding of the relative risks.

The Highway Code was amended in 2022 to add a section on self-driving vehicles. This provides information to drivers on the use of, and responsibilities regarding, self-driving vehicles. Further amendments will be considered as necessary.

Further detail on Authorised Self-Driving Entity (ASDE) and No-User-In-Charge Operators (NUIC operator)

You asked for details about the ASDE and NUIC Operator roles – including examples, responsibilities and checks on competence.

ASDEs are the companies that vouch for the safety of the self-driving vehicle and are responsible for how they drive. They might be a vehicle manufacturer, a software developer, or a partnership between the two.

NUIC Operators are responsible for overseeing journeys made by self-driving vehicles that have no responsible person on board. Their role will be similar to that of a fleet operator, with responsibilities including monitoring the location of vehicles and dealing with breakdowns.

The Bill requires licensed operators to meet requirements of good repute, financial standing and professional competence to run the service. For example, the operator may be required to give details of the ratio of staff to vehicles, how staff will be trained and supervised, and the rest breaks that will be provided.

To demonstrate competence, the Law Commissions recommended that the applicant should submit a documented safety management system, defining individual roles with clear responsibilities and competence requirements for each.

The intention is that, at first, some of the details around these requirements will be contained in guidance. However, as learning develops further, more specific requirements may be placed into regulations.

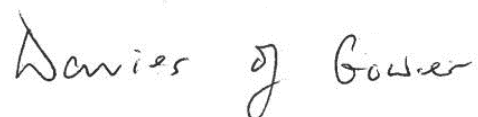
Safety Investigation- Bus Operators and Investigation

You raised a question around whether the capability allowed through safety investigations in this Bill replaces independent investigations that can currently be conducted by bus operators. The intention is for statutory inspectors to undertake safety investigations to identify learnings that will positively influence the continued development and deployment of self-driving vehicles.

This will not stop bus operators undertaking their own internal investigations if they see fit. However, if requested, they must provide evidence to inspectors for the purpose of a safety investigation.

Once again, I thank you for your interest on these issues and for their participation in the debate. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with my office to request further information.

I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Davies of Gower".

LORD DAVIES OF GOWER