



Paul Davies MS
Economy, Trade & Rural Affairs Committee

26 April 2022

Dear Paul,

Please find attached our response to your letter of 4 April following the appearance by the Deputy Minister for Art & Sport and clarification of her response to the Committee's debate on your report "A new direction for HGV drivers".

I can confirm we will use devolved powers such as education and training, highways and transport, and town and country planning, where possible to improve the availability of driver training, roadside facilities / rest areas and facilities at freight customer premises in Wales.

As stated during the debate in the Senedd, we continue work closely with industry and have adapted existing employability and skills programmes to expand the availability of funding for training for lorry drivers. These include the Personal Learning Account and ReAct programme. Our Apprenticeship Programme has a number of logistics-focused options, one being the Level 2 and 3 in Driving Goods Vehicles.

Furthermore, we have committed to develop a new Logistics and Freight Plan for Wales under our Wales Transport Strategy. We will work with the UK Government, the sector and other partners to develop this plan and ensure we incorporate the recommendations from the committees report into this plan.

Any future investment into training or road facilities will be subject to funding availability from our annual budget settlement. The Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip has spoken to me regarding the committees request to bring forward the issue of the audit of driver facilities in Wales.

I have asked my officials to move this work forward as a priority and I will write to you again once this work has been completed with a copy of our published findings.

Yours sincerely,

Vaughan Gething AS/MS
Gweinidog yr Economi
Minister for Economy

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should work with industry as a matter of urgency to develop HGV drivers Apprenticeship programmes and support the industry to increase the number of training providers available to ensure sufficient provision is available as demand increases.

Response: Accept

Driver training, testing and vocational licencing is not devolved to Wales in the same way as DVLA and DVSA are not devolved organisations, so Welsh Government's ability to intervene in this area is limited.

We continue work closely with industry and have adapted existing employability and skills programmes to expand the availability of funding for training for lorry drivers. These include the Personal Learning Account and ReAct programme. Our Apprenticeship Programme has a number of logistics-focused options, one being the Level 2 and 3 in Driving Goods Vehicles, which offers a medium term option for employers.

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that

The Welsh Government should engage the UK Government around the content and quality of HGV drivers' continuous professional development training to ensure any new programme is high quality, useful to drivers and relevant to Welsh drivers and industry.

Response: Accept

We are doing what we can to support the industry despite the majority of powers relating to these issues not being devolved. We continue to work DVLA, DVSA, DWP, training providers and industry to ensure the highest possible standards are held when it comes to continuous professional development training.

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that

The Welsh Government should carry out an audit of rest facilities for drivers and create a national inventory similar to that available for England.

Response: Accept

We will factor this into our new Logistics and Freight Plan for Wales commitment under the Wales Transport Strategy.

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 4
The Committee recommends that

The Welsh Government should urgently work with partners to improve HGV driver rest provision in areas where it is found to be lacking.

Response: Accept

We were disappointed to learn that the £32.5m of new funding to improve lorry parking facilities will only be made available for England but will continue to work with the UK Government to ensure the sector is given the support it needs to continue delivering for the whole of the UK.

We will work with the UK Government, the sector and other partners on improving HGV driver rest provision where it is found to be lacking as part of our Logistics and Freight Plan for Wales.

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 5
The Committee recommends that

The Welsh Government should work with hauliers, local authorities, drivers representatives and rest stop operators to introduce a voluntary standards system which indicates to drivers the comfort level and security of rest stops and consider how to encourage their uptake.

Response: Accept

We will work with the UK Government, the sector and other partners to look into a voluntary standards system which indicates to drivers the comfort level and security of rest stops and consider how to encourage their uptake as part of ongoing engagement with our stakeholder and the Logistics and Freight Plan for Wales.

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 6
The Committee recommends that

The Welsh Government should update planning policy so that planning permissions granted to warehouse facilities and other developments expecting regular deliveries or collections (e.g. industrial estates and retail parks) are required to provide high quality driver facilities. It should also consider whether building regulations can be used to drive up standards in new facilities.

Response: Accept

We have extended the relaxation of curfew times for deliveries to provide more operational flexibility. We will ensure freight and logistics are integrated into wider transport and land-use planning policy at local, regional and national levels

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that

Welsh Government should engage with the UK Government on any review of legislation which affects the working conditions of HGV drivers. As part of this Welsh Government should engage with the sector and drivers in Wales to ensure their voices are heard in the review.

Response: Accept

We continue to work with the UK Government on reserved legislation which affects the working conditions of HGV drivers to ensure the sector and its drivers in Wales are given the support they need to continue delivering for the whole of the UK.

We have regular contact with the Welsh branches of the Road Haulage Association and Logistics UK to gather industry intelligence on industry issues and feed this back to UK Government.

In the longer term, there is an opportunity to reverse the problems that have been building in the industry over many years and to create a more sustainable and resilient sector that offers fairer pay and working conditions for drivers. The UK Government's stopgap measures should not undermine this longer term aspiration.

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that

Haulage companies should ensure their drivers feel the hours they are asked to drive are safe.

Response: Accept

HGV driver hours are a reserved matter for the UK Government and the Secretary of State for Transport. We continue to work with the UK Government to ensure the sector is given the support it needs to continue delivering for the whole of the UK. We continue to encourage UK Government to consult the industry to make longer term efforts to create a more sustainable and resilient UK haulage sector that offers fair pay and working conditions for drivers.

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that

Anyone managing a facility that receives drivers should ensure they are aware of the experience of those drivers when on their premises.

Response: Accept

The Highway Code, road safety and vehicle rules are a reserved matter for the UK Government and the Secretary of State for Transport. We have committed to strengthen relationships between the Traffic Commissioner, Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency and Welsh Government to improve safety across the sectors under the Wales Transport Strategy. We will also work with the Traffic Commissioner and Freight and Logistics sector operators to improve understanding of safety issues and compliance

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 10**The Committee recommends that**

The Welsh Government should expedite development of a freight plan which incorporates the recommendations from this report. Regional freight plans should be developed in harmony with the national strategy.

Response: Accept

We have committed to develop a new Logistics and Freight Plan for Wales under the Wales Transport Strategy. We will incorporate this recommendation from this report into the plan.

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 11**The Committee recommends that**

The Welsh Government should set out a timeline for the development of the freight plan and keep this committee informed.

Response: Accept

The Logistics and Freight Plan for Wales will be complete by 2024, with decarbonisation at the heart of the document. We will keep committee informed of its progress.

Financial Implications

None