Bioptics - Current GB driving standards

Current GB driving standards
Bioptics are not currently acceptable for driving in Great Britain. Those needing to use bioptic devices to meet the eyesight standard for driving are doing so without DVLA’s knowledge or consent. This means that their licences may be invalid and there could be serious insurance implications.

The current standards for visual acuity for car and motorcycle drivers are (a) the ability to read a car number plate (post 01/09/2001 font) from a distance of 20 metres in good light with corrective lenses if needed and (b) a visual acuity of at least Snellen 6/12. Drivers must wear spectacles or corrective lenses whilst driving if these are needed to allow them to meet the legal standards, but this does not include the use of bioptic devices.

In addition to meeting the above standards for visual acuity, car and motorcycle drivers must also have a horizontal field of vision of at least 120° (with at least 50˚ on either side of fixation), other than in exceptional cases when adaptation to a permanent stable loss of visual field can be demonstrated and this has been approved by DVLA. Bioptic devices can affect the field of vision to an extent that this visual field standard cannot be met.

Secretary of State’s Honorary medical advisory panel
The issue of bioptic devices and driving has been considered at meetings of the Secretary of State’s Honorary medical advisory panel on driving and visual disorders. Whilst understanding the desire to enhance independent mobility in people with reduced visual ability, the panel’s main concern is for road safety, with a responsibility both to road users and pedestrians. Panel considers it is important to seek the views and experience of this aid to vision in relation to driving from other European member states and elsewhere. It would be inappropriate for a single Member State to make a unilateral decision without consulting closely with other member states and examining in detail the clinical evidence that was available.