



Department
for Transport

Examining the Speed Limit for HGVs over 7.5 tonnes on Dual Carriageway Roads: A Consultation Document

July 2014

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Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR
Telephone 0300 330 3000
Website www.gov.uk/dft
General enquiries: <https://forms.dft.gov.uk>

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Foreword

The freight and logistics sector is an essential part of the UK economy employing around 2 million people. Improving the conditions for growth in the logistics sector is a key element of the Government's growth agenda. To facilitate this, it is my aim, where possible, to free professional hauliers from unnecessary regulation and to get freight moving more efficiently on our roads.

I have already announced the decision to raise maximum speed limits for HGVs over 7.5 tonnes (t) on single carriageway roads from 40 to 50 mph. This consultation explores the option to increase the current maximum speed limit for those vehicles on dual carriageways from 50 to 60 mph alongside that change. I am committed to making both changes work safely and work for people using roads in different ways.

Many dual carriageways in urban areas and some elsewhere are subject to lower local limits or the 30 mph urban limit. Other dual carriageways are major trunk links, built close to motorway standards. So the use and function of dual carriageways can vary - and they can be important for driving, riding, walking and the people living by them.

The national speed limit for cars on all purpose dual carriageways is 70 mph, with some other classes of larger vehicle (such as most vans and coaches) being limited to 60 mph. Changing the speed limit for HGVs of more than 7.5t to 60 mph would align their limit on dual carriageway roads to match the limits for coaches, cars and vans when towing a caravan or a trailer and smaller goods vehicles (including most vans). The revised limit would match the capabilities of modern vehicles more closely.

The current speed limit just does not work. It is broken by about 80% of HGV drivers at any particular time when they are not constrained by other traffic or the road layout. It is implausible that it could readily be made to work without a disproportionate effort.

The assessment of the proposal considers it unlikely that the proposed change in the speed limit change will result in actual speeds changing significantly.

However the proposed increase to a more credible speed limit will end the risk (albeit relatively remote) of professional drivers being penalised under the criminal law for a behaviour the vast majority of them are doing. The change would allow for enforcement and sanctions to be targeted more effectively.

Responses to questions set out here will help to examine whether the speed limit, on dual carriageway roads, for HGVs over 7.5t is set at the right level, or should be increased as proposed. Your response will help my Department make future decisions on this matter.

I look forward to hearing your views.

Claire Perry MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The maximum speed limit for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) over 7.5 tonnes (t) on dual carriageway roads is currently 50 mph, as prescribed in Schedule 6 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, which applies to England and Wales. Vehicle specific speed limits are devolved in Northern Ireland and in Scotland allowing the limits there to be different from the rest of Great Britain. This consultation therefore only considers the speed limit in England and Wales.
- 1.2** We are consulting about whether to increase that 50 mph limit to 60 mph, alongside the change we have announced of the national speed limit for these vehicles on single carriageways from 40 mph to 50 mph. Neither of these limits apply where there are lower local speed limits or the standard urban 30 mph limit.
- 1.3** Dual carriageway roads cover a range of standards of roads ranging from those built to similar standards as motorways (for example the A3 between London and Portsmouth and part of the A14 between the A1 and the M1/M6) to lower standard routes with local 50 mph maximum speed limits applying to all vehicles using them. Dual carriageways in urban areas are usually covered by 40 mph or 50 mph local speed limits or the default 30 mph speed limit for lit roads in built-up areas.
- 1.4** On dual carriageways the actual average speed at which HGVs, such as articulated lorries, travel in free flow conditions (when they are not held up by other traffic or obstructions such as junctions, hills or bends) is 53 mph¹. More than 80% of HGVs to which the 50 mph applies exceed it in free-flow conditions².
- 1.5** 53 mph is also the average speed observed on motorways for these HGVs in free flow conditions, even though the legal speed limit for larger HGVs on motorways is 60 mph. Free flow

¹ This is based on 2012 observed speed data. It excludes observations for 2-axle rigid HGVs, around two thirds of which weigh less than 7.5t.

² See: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/tables/spe0101>

traffic data shows that 99% of articulated lorries travel within that speed limit. A major reason is that their speeds are limited to 56 mph (90km/h) as required by EU legislation.

- 1.6** It is implausible that lorries will travel faster on all purpose dual carriageways than on motorways in free flow conditions, because motorways have fewer obstacles and are built to higher standards. So the forecast effect is that there would be minimal change on the ground if the dual carriageway speed limit were to be increased to match the motorway limit at 60mph. It suggests that the main effect of the current lower 50 mph dual carriageway speed limit for HGVs is to criminalise common-place driver behaviour. In doing so it risks contributing to bringing other road traffic regulations, particularly speed limits, into disrepute.
- 1.7** The systematic and rigorous enforcement of the current 50 mph speed limit is difficult and establishing a credible deterrent for the 50 mph limit would not be a reasonable call on finite police resources. It is more difficult to automate using cameras than road speed limits. If a lot more enforcement did occur it would involve the disproportionate targeting and punishment of these drivers.
- 1.8** Some parts of the package of measures planned to accompany the change in the single carriageway limit for HGVs more than 7.5t from 40 mph to 50 mph are also relevant to dual carriageways. They would be applied to dual carriageways too, if their limit were raised from 50 mph to 60 mph. In particular the more rigorous and systematic approach to driver conduct proceedings would be applied to offenders breaking a revised 60 mph limit. In practice this would be likely to involve very few cases, as there is a 99% compliance rate with the equivalent 60 mph lorry speed limits on motorways.
- 1.9** If the HGV speed limit for dual carriageways were retained as 50 mph, offenders would be referred by DVLA to driver conduct hearings in the same way as offenders referred to the hearings for exceeding the new 50 mph limit on single carriageway (because the offences share an offence code). For HGV specific speed limits the Department is keen to project a clear message that the new limits are modern and reasonable and that drivers breaking them could face significant sanctions. A disproportionately low 50 mph on all purpose dual carriageways would complicate that clear message.

- 1.10** The Department's existing circular about local speed limits advises local authorities about where local speed limits applicable to all traffic can be put in place. Limits can be used for sections of dual carriageways where there is significant development and poor design features. The circular also identified (in a departure from its predecessor) that where there is a possible risk of air quality limits being exceeded, then this itself could be an important factor in the choice of the speed limit for the road. HGVs would still have to obey the maximum speed for the road if it is set at a lower speed than 60 mph.
- 1.11** Speeds will also be determined by speed limiters which are required on most HGVs and must be set at 56 mph. If a 60 mph HGV speed limit were set on all purpose dual carriageways it would therefore (like the HGV motorway speed limit and indeed some coach speed limits) be slightly higher than the standard speed limiter setting. A further alternative (which would in practice work very similarly to a change to 60 mph) would be to change the 50 mph HGV limit on all purpose carriageways to 55 mph, very close to the speed limiter threshold, although this would create yet another different speed limit.
- 1.12** The current speed limit of 50 mph is largely ignored. Even though actual behaviour on dual carriageways is unlikely to change as a result of changing it, the removal of this widely flouted limit may help the credibility and observance of other speed limits. It would also stop drivers relying on breaking this piece of road traffic law as they go about their business.
- 1.13** Because we do not predict a change in free-flow speeds as a result of the change in maximum speed limits, we do not predict any monetised costs or benefits. However, changing the speed limits would be a deregulatory move, and would make the speed limit more credible, legitimising the behaviour of professional drivers. We would also expect a very substantial increase in compliance, which would generate some small beneficial side-effects in the form of fewer proceedings being required to deal with offenders.
- 1.14** Because we do not predict a change in free-flow speeds as a result of the change in maximum speed limits, we do not predict any change to greenhouse gases, other environmental impacts or in the amount of road freight.

- 1.15** Please note we are not seeking views about the change in the single carriageway speed limit for HGVs from 40 mph to 50 mph. This is planned to take effect in early 2015 and has already been consulted about. Any change to the limit on dual carriageways, which this consultation concerns, would be introduced at the same time in early 2015.
- 1.16** In this consultation we are seeking views on:
- a. Doing nothing – retain the existing 50mph limit for HGVs over 7.5t on dual carriageways
 - b. Increasing the speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t to 60 mph
 - c. Whether 55 mph would be a reasonable alternative
 - d. Any further options not identified in this document
- 1.17** We are also asking for more information on:
- a. Local authorities reducing speed limits on non-trunk primary routes
 - b. Printed public information
- 1.18** We welcome responses from anyone interested in the issues covered by the consultation document. In particular:
- a. Trade associations
 - b. Haulage companies
 - c. Government enforcement bodies or Police forces and organisations
 - d. Road safety groups
 - e. Local authorities
 - f. Road users
- 1.19** To ensure that we clearly understand your views and to facilitate the analysis of consultation responses, the Department encourages the use of the online questionnaire. If however you would prefer to respond by email or paper copy, please use the template provided.
- 1.20** This consultation pack includes:
- 1 This consultation paper
 - 2 The Government's Consultation Principles (Annex A)

2. The questions

Where applicable, for each question below please choose one option only and explain the reason(s) for your preference and provide evidence when available.

Q1. Please indicate which of the following categories best represents your interest in this consultation

- Trade association (please provide details)
- Haulage company
- HGV driver
- Government enforcement body, police force and similar organisations (please provide details)
- Road safety group (please provide details)
- Local authority (please provide details)
- Road user
- Other (please provide details)

Policy options, costs and savings

Q2. Please consider the following policy options

Policy option 1: Do nothing; retain the existing 50mph limit for HGVs over 7.5t on dual carriageway roads

Policy option 2: Raise the national speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t from 50 to 60 mph on dual carriageway roads

Policy option 3: Raise the national speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t from 50 to 55 mph on dual carriageway

Other: Do you consider there to be any other policy options or variants on Options 2 or 3?

Please indicate your preferred option

- Policy Option 1 (Do nothing)
- Policy Option 2 (Raise speed limit to 60mph)
- Policy Option 3 (Raise the speed limit to 55mph)
- Other

Please give your reason for choice of Option 1, 2 or 3, or if you consider there to be other options, please explain fully and give any supporting evidence you may have

Q3. Do you think the balance of savings and costs of changing the speed limit detailed in the Impact Assessment reflect your own experience or expectations?

Yes

No

If 'No' please explain your reasons

Q4. Are there any positive or negative impacts of the current speed limit other than those referred to in the Impact Assessment?

Yes

No

Please explain your answer and provide any evidence you may have.

Q5. Do you think that HGVs would be unlikely to increase their speed on dual carriageways as a result of this proposal?

Yes

No

Please give your reasons

Q6. Do you think an increased speed limit to 60mph on dual carriageway roads will lead to more HGVs over 7.5t using dual carriageway roads than do currently?

Yes

No

Please give your reasons

Are there any other impacts?

Q7. Local authorities have powers to alter speed limits on the local road network, including non-trunk primary routes, in line with guidance set out in Setting Local Speed Limits, DfT Circular 01/2013. Do you think that the increase in the national speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t on dual carriageways, would make it more likely that local authorities would introduce more local speed restrictions?

Yes

No

If 'yes' please give details of which roads

Q8. If you are an organisation providing information to the haulage industry or other road users, do you think your organisation would incur publicity or conversion costs in addition to those related to the speed limit change on single carriageways as a result of the proposed speed limit increase on dual carriageways?

Yes

No

If 'yes' please indicate what these may be.

3. How to respond

- 3.1** The consultation period began on 24th July 2014 and will run until 5th September 2014. Please ensure that your response reaches us before the closing date. If you would like further copies of this consultation document, it can be found on the DfT website or you can contact the vehicle speed limit team at the below addresses if you would like alternative formats (Braille, audio CD, etc).
- 3.2** Please complete the online questionnaire or please complete the consultation response template provided and send by email attachment to lorryspeedlimit@dft.gsi.gov.uk or by post to Vehicle Speed Limits, 3/23, 33 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 4DR
- 3.3** When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of a larger organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.
- 3.4** If you have any suggestions of others who may wish to be involved in this process please contact us.

Freedom of Information

- 3.5** Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.
- 3.6** If you want information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

- 3.7** In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.
- 3.8** The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Next Steps

- 3.9** A summary of responses, including the next steps, will be published in due course, following the consultation closing on 5th September 2014. Paper copies will be available on request.

Annex A: Consultation principles

The consultation is being conducted in line with the Government's key consultation principles which are listed below. Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

If you have any comments about the consultation process please contact:

Consultation Co-ordinator
Department for Transport
Zone 1/14 Great Minster House
London SW1P 4DR
Email consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Consultation Principles

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- departments should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.