

# Trailer Registration Guidance

**Moving Britain Ahead**

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# Executive summary

- 1 The Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Act 2018 is a key part of the Government's preparations for transport arrangements following the United Kingdom leaving the EU in April 2019.
- 2 The Government carried out a public consultation alongside the passage of this legislation last year. The consultation and Government response can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/haulage-permits-and-trailer-registration>
- 3 Through the Trailer Registration Regulations 2018, a trailer registration system has been established allowing trailer keepers to register trailers to the standards outlined in the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (see below for further information on the 1968 Convention).
- 4 From 28 March 2019, the same date as the 1968 Convention comes into force for the UK, it will be prohibited to use unregistered trailers in certain categories on international journeys to, or through, a foreign country that has ratified the 1968 Convention. This prohibition applies to commercial trailers with a gross weight over 750kg and all trailers with a gross weight over 3,500kg. Unregistered trailers may also be subject to enforcement action while abroad from this date.
- 5 The registration system is operated by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). The fee to register a trailer is £26. This scheme - and the prohibition referred to in paragraph 4 - will be introduced regardless of the outcome of negotiations with the EU as the 1968 Convention will be coming into force for the UK in any event.

# 1. Background

## Historic registration status of trailers

- 6 The UK has not traditionally required the registration of trailers. A trailer unit, whether a large commercial unit or smaller private use trailer, has only needed to display the plate bearing the registration mark (commonly known as the registration number) of the registered towing vehicle.
- 7 Trailer registration is commonplace throughout much of continental Europe and it is often compulsory to display the separate registration number of the trailer.
- 8 This discrepancy between continental European standards and UK standards has sometimes been a source of disruption for trailers used for international haulage. While this has generally not had a significant impact, it has caused disruption on certain European routes for UK freight.

## The Road Traffic Conventions

- 9 The Conventions on Road Traffic were introduced to facilitate international road travel and increase safety by establishing common traffic rules.
- 10 The UK has ratified the 1926 Paris Convention, the 1949 Geneva Convention and, in March 2018, the 1968 Vienna Convention. The 1968 Convention has been ratified as part of the Government's preparations for leaving the EU in April 2019 and it will come into force for the UK on 28 March 2019.
- 11 Ratification will allow us to issue International Driving Permits to ensure that UK motorists can continue to drive in all EU member states whatever the outcome of negotiations.
- 12 The UK is already well aligned with the much of the 1968 Convention. However, one notable area of difference between the 1949 and 1968 Conventions is that the latter allows for enforcement against unregistered trailers, in addition to unregistered motor vehicles.

## 2. Using a trailer internationally

### Up to 27 March 2019

- 13 As outlined, the UK has not required the registration of trailer units. This will remain the case up to and including 27 March 2019.
- 14 Keepers of trailers that are in scope of the scheme will be able to register them ahead of the requirements coming into force. It will not be compulsory to display a registration number for a registered trailer or carry its registration document while in the UK during this time.

### From 28 March 2019

- 15 On 28 March 2019, the 1968 Convention will come into force for the UK. From this date, unregistered trailers undertaking international journeys to, or through, foreign countries that have ratified the 1968 Convention may be subject to enforcement action both in the UK and on the international leg of the journey. More detail regarding this can be found in the Enforcement section of this guidance.
- 16 Registration will not be compulsory for any trailers used solely for domestic journeys or for trailers used solely for journeys between the UK and Ireland.
- 17 The 1968 Convention has been ratified by all EU Member States except Ireland, Spain, Cyprus and Malta<sup>1</sup>. Trailers used solely for journeys between the UK and any of these countries would not need registration under these regulations and international enforcement action would not be permitted.
- 18 Trailers being used on international journeys to or through any EU Member State which has ratified the 1968 Convention may be subject to enforcement if they are not registered and as such using an unregistered trailer for a relevant journey will be prohibited. Registration will be compulsory for the following categories of trailers:
  - Commercial trailers with a gross weight over 750kg
  - All trailers with a gross weight over 3,500kg, including non-commercial trailers
- 19 The weight to be considered is the gross weight of the trailer, also known as the maximum permissible mass. This is specified by the manufacturer and it means that this is the maximum weight the trailer is allowed to be when fully loaded. It is the unladen weight of a vehicle plus the maximum permitted payload. This weight and the unladen, or "empty weight", will be recorded on the trailer registration document.

### Commercial trailers

- 20 Engagement with industry on the practicality of existing enforcement action has been

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<sup>1</sup> A full list of contracting parties to the 1968 Convention can be found at:  
[https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XI-B-19&chapter=11&Temp=mtdsg3&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XI-B-19&chapter=11&Temp=mtdsg3&clang=en)

integral to the development of this scheme. Enforcement action previously undertaken has been almost entirely focused on commercial trailers.

- 21 A trailer is a commercial trailer if it is used primarily:
- for the commercial transport of goods or passengers' belongings, whether for hire or reward or any other purpose; or
  - in relation to another paid occupation.

### **Non-commercial trailers**

- 22 As the 1968 Convention does not distinguish between commercial and non-commercial trailers, it is possible - but the Government considers it very unlikely - that there will be a change in enforcement action abroad regarding non-commercial trailers weighing between 750kg and 3,500kg. Extensive industry engagement and consideration of the practicality of enforcement of the Convention has underlined the setting of the scope of compulsory registration.
- 23 The Government has no desire to add burden by requiring non-commercial trailers to be registered where this is not needed. Previous instances of enforcement abroad have been focused on commercial trailer units and we are not aware of any intended change to this approach.
- 24 It is important that the system and legislation underpinning the trailer registration scheme is flexible enough to account for any changes in enforcement action that may be taken by countries that are also part of the 1968 Convention. As such, optional registration will remain open to all trailers with a gross weight over 750kg. However, the Government does not recommend at this time, that non-commercial trailers with a gross weight below 3,500kg used for only non-commercial purposes should be registered with the DVLA.
- 25 As a result, compulsory registration only applies to the largest non-commercial trailers which are already subject to additional requirements and scrutiny. Industry consultation with the non-commercial sector has highlighted that there are a minimal number of non-commercial trailers with a gross weight over 3,500kg.
- 26 If a trailer is to be used for both commercial and non-commercial purposes on the same journey, it would be subject to compulsory registration if the primary use on that journey is commercial.
- 27 The trailer registration service designed by DVLA includes a series of questions to determine whether or not registration is needed, and advises the customer when the trailer in question does not fall within the scope for compulsory registration. This allows customers to make an informed choice regards with to their responsibilities.
- 28 We will continue to work closely with the industry to monitor the approach to enforcement and provide further advice should this be necessary.

## 3. The registration process

- 29 The trailer registration system will launch on gov.uk in January 2019. Further information and additional guidance will be published by the DVLA in due course.
- 30 As outlined above, compulsory registration will apply to trailers used for international travel to, or through, a foreign country that has ratified the 1968 Convention. This will apply to commercial trailers with a gross weight over 750kg and all trailers with a gross weight over 3,500kg. The same registration process will apply for all trailers.
- 31 Registration applications will require a secure Government Gateway account. This will allow for the ongoing maintenance of trailers within the keepers' fleet through a secure portal.

### Registering a trailer

- 32 To register a trailer, the keeper, or an individual authorised by the keeper, must complete the registration process offered by the DVLA. This will be in the form of a digital registration system. There will also be an assisted digital service allowing keepers who are unable to use the online service to register over the telephone.
- 33 Following consultations with industry and user engagement, the Government is introducing a system which will minimise the administrative requirements associated with registering a trailer.
- 34 The information required to complete an application is as follows:
  - a. the name of the keeper;
  - b. the address in the United Kingdom of the keeper;
  - c. the manufacturer of the trailer;
  - d. the chassis number of the trailer;
  - e. the permissible maximum mass of the trailer; and
  - f. the unladen mass of the trailer.
- 35 The accuracy of the information recorded within the register is crucial to ensure that a trailer can be correctly identified and its registration status is easily confirmed. Ensuring that all this data is correct will minimise the risk of disruption. As such a registration may be refused or an inspection of the trailer may be necessary if incorrect information is submitted.
- 36 Applications which do not contain all of the required information will not be accepted and a registration number will not be issued to such trailers.
- 37 Following the completion of an application an electronic notice of registration will be issued. This will confirm the name and address of the registered keeper, the chassis number of the trailer and the registration number assigned to the trailer. This electronic notification will allow the keeper of the trailer to obtain a registration plate



for the registered trailer, but is not a permissible document to use when undertaking international journeys subject to compulsory registration.

## Fees

- 38 A registration fee of £26 will be payable when a trailer is registered. This will be payable on completion of the registration application and may be paid online by credit or debit card. Multiple registration applications can be paid for in one transaction.
- 39 The fee has been set on a cost recovery basis to cover the operation and administrative cost of the system.
- 40 Any application to register a trailer which is not accompanied by payment of the outlined fee will be rejected.

## Change of keeper

- 41 From the responses to the consultation, we recognise that a trailer may be kept and used by several different individuals or organisations during its life. It is important that all information recorded within the register is correct, including the details of the keeper.
- 42 **When a registered keeper disposes of a registered trailer, by sale, for scrap or any other means, they must notify the DVLA.** This notification must confirm the date the registered keeper ceased to be the keeper of the trailer and, if applicable, the name and address of the new keeper. Once this notification has been made the trailer will be removed from the keeper's online trailer account with DVLA.
- 43 The new keeper may subsequently make an application that they be recorded in the register as the registered keeper of the trailer. A fee of £21 will be payable for the issuing of a new registration document to the new registered keeper.
- 44 **The new keeper is not required to become the registered keeper of the trailer if it will not be used on journeys to, or through, foreign countries who have not ratified the 1968 Convention.** However, if they wish to use the trailer for international journeys to, or through, a foreign country that has ratified the 1968 Convention, it is necessary to first become the registered keeper.

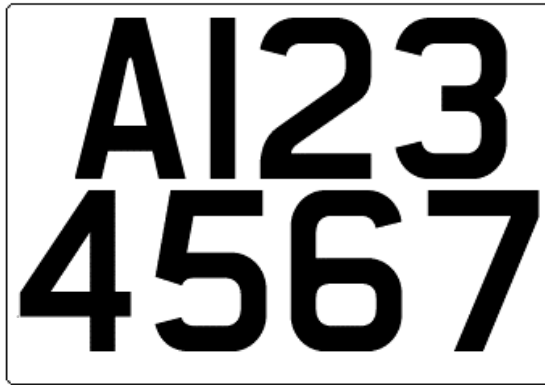
## 4. After you've registered

### Registration Certificate

- 45 Following the completion of a registration, a trailer registration number will be assigned to the trailer. This registration number will be unique to the trailer in question and cannot be transferred to other trailers within the same fleet.
- 46 An electronic notification will be issued immediately following registration, confirming the registration number of the trailer and the details associated with the registration. This will be issued to the registered keeper's email address, where one is provided. This electronic notification will allow the keeper of the trailer to obtain a registration plate for the registered trailer, but is not a permissible document to use when undertaking international journeys subject to compulsory registration.
- 47 Following this the trailer registration certificate will be issued. This will be dispatched to the address given on the registration application within five working days.
- 48 The registration certificate will be a secure document. The original certificate must be kept with the registered trailer at all times. This will ensure that upon inspection both within the UK and on international journeys the registration status of a trailer can be confirmed.
- 49 The registration certificate will be valid for 10 years from the date of issue. This 10-year period will be reset following any subsequent new certificates issued. It is prohibited to use a registered trailer in a foreign country that has ratified the 1968 Convention with an expired registration certificate. The registration certificate may be renewed free of charge when it is due to expire.
- 50 If a registration certificate has been destroyed, lost or stolen, or any of the information is no longer legible, the registered keeper must notify the DVLA and pay £10 for a replacement certificate. .

### Registration Plates

- 51 As outlined following registration, registered keepers will receive a digital confirmation of their registration enabling them to obtain a registration plate to be fitted to the trailer.
- 52 Trailer registration numbers will comprise of 8 characters - one letter followed by seven numbers. This will be displayed in the form of one letter and three numbers followed by a group consisting of four numbers. An example is shown below.



53 Once a trailer has been registered and a plate obtained it must be fixed to the trailer detailed in the registration from 28 March 2019. Trailer registration plates will be available for purchase from authorised suppliers. You can locate your nearest authorised registration plate supplier using the tool below.

<https://www.gov.uk/number-plate-supplier>

54 **The trailer registration plate must be displayed in addition to the registration plate of the towing vehicle.**

55 From the responses to the consultation we recognise that the appropriate location to affix this additional registration plate will vary from trailer to trailer. As such the regulations allow for some flexibility in displaying this additional plate.

56 Where possible the registration plate must be attached to the rear of the trailer with characters in the vertical position, and in a location as far as reasonably practical from the position of the registration plate of the towing vehicle. If it is not possible to attach the additional plate to the rear of the trailer, then a trailer registration plate must instead be displayed on both sides of the trailer.

57 The plate must not be attached to the trailer in any way that may make the registration number or any of the characters of the number difficult to read.

58 The trailer registration plate must be visible in normal daylight and as such the retrofitting of lighting to the secondary, trailer registration plate is not required. This does not change the requirement to light the registration plate of the towing vehicle.

59 The full specification for the registration plate can be found in Schedule 2 to the Trailer Registration Regulations 2018 at the link below.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/1203/contents/made>

60 To avoid any risk of enforcement action abroad, it is recommended that the UK's recognised distinguishing sign - 'GB' for the UK under the 1968 Convention - should always be displayed alongside a trailer registration plate. This should be a separate sign or sticker next to the trailer plate.

61 The GB sign or sticker must not be displayed on the trailer registration plate. This should be a separate sticker or sign next to the trailer plate."

## 5. Enforcement

### In the UK

- 62 From 28 March 2019, it will be prohibited to use an unregistered trailer for international journeys to, or through, a foreign country that has ratified the 1968 Convention. This applies for commercial trailers with a gross weight over 750kg and all trailers with a gross weight over 3,500kg.
- 63 The scheme will be enforced domestically by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency. The enforcement of this regime will be managed to ensure that only trailers used for relevant international journeys are subject to enforcement.
- 64 The regime will be primarily enforced by the application of fixed penalty notices (FPNs). The levels of the penalty can be found in the below table. Where multiple offences have been identified in one instance of enforcement, multiple FPNs may be issued.

<b>(1) Provision creating offence</b>	<b>(2) General nature of offence</b>	<b>(3) Penalty</b>
Regulation 5	Keeping or using a trailer that has not been registered under those Regulations on a journey to or through a foreign country that is a contracting party to the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Traffic.	£100
Regulation 19(1)(a)	Using a registered trailer with an expired registration document on a journey to or through a foreign country that is a contracting party to the 1968 Convention.	£100
Regulation 19(1)(f)	Failing to produce a trailer registration document when required to do so	£100
Regulation 19(1)(g)	Failing to fix a registration plate on a registered trailer in accordance with those Regulations	£100
Regulation 19(1)(h)	Displaying a trailer registration mark on a trailer that is not assigned to that trailer	£100
Regulation 20	Keeping or using an incorrectly registered trailer on a road.	£100
Regulation 21	Keeping or using a registered trailer on a road with a registration mark that is obscured.	£100
Regulation 22(a)	Wilfully obstructing a person carrying out an inspection of a trailer under those Regulations.	£300

**Table 1 Fixed Penalty Notice levels**

- 65 The registered keeper or user of a registered trailer may be required to produce the registration document for the trailer at any point on or after 28 March 2019 at the request of an examiner or stopping officer carrying out any function in relation to the

trailer or towing vehicle.

- 66 Inspections may be undertaken by examiners to determine if the trailer is registered or that the details recorded in the register for the trailer are correct.
- 67 An inspection may also be required if this is necessary to confirm the details of any registration. If such an inspection finds the details to be incorrect, registration may be refused or the registration mark/number may be withdrawn.

## Internationally

- 68 The benefits of the 1968 Convention, including the free movement of traffic, are only guaranteed for trailers weighing more than 750kg if they are registered.
- 69 Enforcement is ultimately a matter of domestic law in the contracting parties to the Convention. Engagement with industry on the present experience of enforcement has underlined that this can be extremely costly and disruptive to international operations.
- 70 Enforcement action may include a refusal of access, impounding of trailer units and the issuing of fines to users of unregistered trailers. The impact of this may range from a small delay to several days waiting for the release of a trailer from impounding.
- 71 The Department is aware of fines ranging between €100 and €1,000. These may be issued at roadside for immediate payment or face a trailer being held until the fine has been paid in full.