

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

November 2012

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1. Foreword

The freight and logistics sector is an essential part of the UK economy, vital to UK businesses of all sizes and sectors. It is also an important business in its own right. The output of core logistics activities in 2009 accounting for almost 9% of UK Gross Value Added (GVA) and around 7% of total employment.¹

The sector is already extremely competitive, with many small firms and very slim profit margins of around 1-3%.² Any actions to improve the sector's productivity will result in cost reductions that can in turn be recycled for much-needed investment in capital and innovation across the sector. It will also translate into reduced costs of production and transport of goods, and reduced prices for the consumer.

Improving conditions for growth in the logistics sector is critical to the Government's growth agenda. Raising HGV speed limits on single carriageway roads could lead to quicker journeys and lower costs for the sector, aiding economic growth as well as reducing frustration for the many drivers who find themselves stuck behind slower-moving lorries on busy roads unable to overtake. However there are also some unwanted consequences of greater speed – both in terms of the environmental impacts and the potential effects on road safety. So we are launching this open consultation, following a commitment to consult in 'The Logistics Growth Review – Connecting People with Goods', published in November 2011.

Responses to questions set out here will help to examine whether the speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t is set at the right level. We are asking for additional evidence, which will help us make future decisions on this matter.

I look forward to hearing your views.



Stephen Hammond MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport

¹ Office of National Statistics (ONS).

² <http://www.plimsoll.co.uk/industry-report.aspx?industry=road-haulage>

2. Introduction

1. The current speed limit on single carriageways for HGVs over 7.5t is 40 mph. The speed limit for smaller HGVs (those between 3.5t and 7.5t) is 50 mph. Vehicle speed limits are prescribed under provisions in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA).³
2. It is thought that the 40 mph speed limit causes unnecessary cost to vehicle operators, congestion, avoidable overtaking collisions and creates an uneven playing field for businesses. Lengthy ‘platoons’ of traffic are said to develop behind HGVs over 7.5t who adhere to the 40 mph speed limit, causing following drivers to become frustrated and make unsafe overtaking manoeuvres.
3. Trade associations in the freight sector have asked to see the limit for the larger HGVs over 7.5t increased because they are interested in time benefits for operators. Other benefits include levelling the playing field between hauliers so that those who obey the law are not penalised. A significant proportion of larger HGVs currently disobey the current speed limit and drive faster than 40 mph on these roads. DfT statistics on monitored free-flow roads estimate that around 70% of HGVs travel over 40 mph⁴, meaning that those that currently travel above the maximum speed limit have a competitive advantage. The average free-flow speed⁵ for HGVs which has remained relatively stable in recent years, is approximately 45 mph⁶ on non-built up single carriageway roads.
4. The Impact Assessment (IA) summarises the monetised costs and benefits by Option and Scenario. When responding to the consultation, please comment on the analysis of costs and benefits, giving supporting evidence wherever possible. This is an open consultation with no preferred option. Please suggest any alternative options and highlight any possible unintended consequences of the options which are given.
5. It has not been possible to assess the effects on road safety if vehicle speed limits for HGVs over 7.5t are increased on single carriageway roads.⁷ There may be more serious collisions due to increased speeds but there could also be less frequent collisions due to fewer hazardous overtaking manoeuvres performed by vehicles travelling behind slow HGVs. We therefore welcome any sources of information on the effects of HGV speed on collision rates and casualties that would enable a better assessment of road safety.

³ At Third Reading Stage of the Scotland Bill on 24 April 2012, the Government brought forward amendments to give Scottish Ministers the power to regulate the speed of all classes of vehicle. The Scotland Bill received Royal Assent on 1 May and is now the Scotland Act 2012. This consultation therefore focuses on England and Wales.

⁴ See: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/tables/spe0101>

⁵ The average speed a motorist would travel if there were no congestion, bad weather, etc.

⁶ Statistics are collected for HGVs as a whole. HGVs under 7.5 represent less than 20% of the HGV fleet.

⁷ More detail on why this has not been possible is in the IA at **Annex A**.

6. If additional information cannot be obtained, and regulations are changed to increase the speed limit, one of the options available to us is to set an early review date on regulations. This would allow for a detailed examination of collisions associated with the change of maximum speed and support early action should consequences be significantly different from those foreseen. We would plan the resources required to identify outcomes at an early date. A baseline would be established to measure the change against and data (STATS19) collected by the Police would be used to monitor in the years following any change and prior to the revocation date. We have assessed the data sources and consider it would enable us to analyse developments and make further decisions.

7. Modelling results in the attached IA indicate that there would be a small cost to society as a whole in the form of environmental impacts. These include local air quality impacts through increases in NO_x and PM₁₀⁸, and local noise impacts. Please find more details in the IA.

8. There may be a risk that some freight switches from rail and water to HGVs. We have not allowed for this in the model in the IA and we are not able to quantify this risk.

9. The effect on road maintenance requirements of HGVs travelling at a higher speed on single carriageway roads is not known. If this were to change the requirements for maintenance then this could impose some additional costs on the Highways Agency and local authorities. However, as the options only increase the speed of HGVs over 7.5t of which about 70% already travel above 40 mph, and as we do not currently expect the number of HGVs on the road to increase, this is anticipated to be negligible.

10. In July 2012, the Department launched a consultation into updated local speed limit guidance to help local authorities to improve safety on their roads. It is considering, among other things, the possibility of making it clearer that compliance with air quality limits could be a factor in the choice of speed made by local traffic authorities. The consultation closed on 5 October 2012 and revised guidance should be issued shortly.

11. In this consultation we are seeking views on:

- a) Whether to increase the speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t to 50 mph
- b) Whether to increase the speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t to 45 mph
- c) Any further options not identified in this document

12. We are also asking for more information on:

- a) Evidence that could enable assessment of additional collisions caused by or involving HGVs over 7.5t on single carriageway roads if speed limits were increased
- b) Air Quality
- c) Noise impacts

⁸ PM₁₀ is particles measuring 10µm or less. This standard was designed to identify those particles likely to be inhaled by humans, and PM₁₀ has become the generally accepted measure of particulate material in the atmosphere in the UK and in Europe.

- d) Behaviour changes for all classes of vehicles
- e) A modal shift in freight transport
- f) Road maintenance requirements
- g) Local authorities reducing speed limits on non-trunk primary routes
- h) Printed public information

13. 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

14. This consultation pack includes:

- a) This consultation paper
- b) The government's Consultation Principles (**Annex A**).

3. The questions

15. For each question below please explain the reason(s) for your preference and provide evidence when available.

Policy options, costs and savings

Q. 1 Policy option 1: Raise the national speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t from 40 to 50 mph on single carriageway roads. Is this your preferred policy option? Please explain your answer.

Q. 2 Policy option 2: Raise the national speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t from 40 to 45 mph on single carriageway roads. Is this your preferred policy option? Please explain your answer.

Q. 3 Do you consider there to be any additional policy options, or variants of policy options 1 and 2? If so, please explain fully and provide any evidence you may have.

- For example, only increasing the speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t on single carriageways where the national speed limit applies, and retaining the 40 mph limit at other times

Q. 4 In your opinion does the current 40 mph speed limit cause any of the following: unnecessary costs to vehicle operators; congestion; avoidable overtaking collisions; an uneven playing field for businesses; or anything not mentioned in this list? Please explain your answer and provide any evidence you may have.

Q. 5 We welcome views from HGV operators and trade associations about whether they feel the balance of savings and costs of extra speed detailed in the Impact Assessment reflects their own experience or expectations?

Road safety effects

Q. 6 If the speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t is not raised on these roads, collisions as a result of 'platooning' could continue. If it is, the frequency of collisions could decrease due to a reduction in 'platooning', though on the other hand the severity of collisions could increase.

Do you have any opinion or evidence on the effect of 'platooning' on road safety, or on the frequency or severity of collisions involving HGVs on single carriageway roads and what effect an increase in their maximum speed limit on these roads would have on safety? If so, please provide it in response to **Q. 6**.

Q. 7 Do you have any opinion or evidence on what effect an increase in the maximum speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t on these roads would have on non-HGV vehicle speeds such as car speeds?

Air quality, noise and health impacts

Q. 8 The Department invites information on where there are single carriageway roads which are subject to the national speed limit, or are signed at 50 mph, in areas where there are air quality problems.

Q. 9 What impacts, if any, do you think there will be to the following if an increased speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t on single carriageway roads is introduced?

- a)** Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). Local authorities may have specific evidence on the effect on AQMAs in their authority;
- b)** EU air quality standards⁹;
- c)** Noise levels;
- d)** Areas currently identified as noise hotspots¹⁰

Q. 10 If as a result of either of the policy options being implemented there was a reduction in 'platooning' do you think there would be a significant impact on:

- a)** Noise
- b)** Air quality

Q. 11 Do you think either of the policy options goes against the underlying principles of the EU Environmental Noise Directive¹¹ or of the Noise Policy Statement for England?¹²

⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/quality/standards.htm>

¹⁰ <http://services.defra.gov.uk/wps/portal/noise> for the noise maps

¹¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/noise/directive.htm>

¹² <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13750-noise-policy.pdf>

Q.12 Do you think that all of the potential health and social costs of the policy options have been considered in the Impact Assessment? Please provide details if you think costs have not been included.

Other impacts

Q. 13 Do you believe an increase in speed for this class of vehicle on these roads will cause more HGVs over 7.5t to use single carriageway roads, which do not currently?

Q. 14 Do you think some freight may switch from rail or water to HGVs, if the speed limit is increased on these roads for these vehicles?

Q. 15 Do you think that there may be added wear and tear on these roads if the speed limit is increased for these vehicles? Local authorities may have specific comments or evidence, with regard to roads in their authority.

Q. 16 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 1/06.¹³ Do you think that the increase in the national speed limit for HGVs over 7.5t on single carriageways, would make it more likely that local authorities would introduce more local speed restrictions, and if so on which roads?

Q. 17 If you are an organisation that provides information and you believe that an increased speed for this class of vehicle on single carriageways would incur costs for your organisation in the form of publicity or conversion costs please indicate what these may be. Also please advise whether these costs would be reduced given a lead-in time between announcement and policy implementation as a result of costs being rolled into existing plans.

4. How to respond

16. The consultation period began on 9 November 2012 and will run until 1 February 2013. 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 at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations> or you can contact the vehicle speed limit team at the below addresses if you would like alternative formats (Braille, audio CD, etc).
17. Please either complete the online survey or send consultation responses by email to lorryspeedlimit@dft.gsi.gov.uk, or post to Vehicle Speed Limits, 3/23, 33 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 4DR
18. When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of a

¹³ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/local-speed-limits-guidance/>

larger organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

19. If you have any suggestions of others who may wish to be involved in this process please contact us.

Freedom of Information

20. 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.
21. 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.
22. 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.
23. 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

A summary of responses, including the next steps, will be published within three months of the consultation closing on 1 February 2013. 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 on the Better Regulation Executive website at <https://update.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/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 consult with those who are affected;
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy; and
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected