



## FORUM REFLECTS STRENGTHENING AUTHORISED TESTING FACILITIES MARKET

Welcome to your first ATF e-bulletin highlighting important issues, sharing progress on your ideas, updating you on recent announcements and finding solutions to improve things in the future. A big thank you to all those who attended the ATF forum on the 27th February; we had a very good turnout with around 80 ATF and prospective ATF operators in attendance. We are grateful for those of you who contributed and volunteered to help trial improvements.

Goods vehicle and PSV testing has gone through some significant service provision improvements in recent times following the decision to move testing closer to the customer through the development of a GB-wide ATF network.

It was pleasing to hear that on the whole, ATF operators were happy with the service provided by VOSA and the way we are working well together. It was also clear at the meeting that you were satisfied with the way that VOSA

has committed more resource to help ATFs during the set-up process and in day-to-day operations. We'll continue to develop this with your help in the future.

Some of the issues and concerns that you raised at the forum - such as increasing service level flexibility, improving IT support and providing incentives for customers to take tests at non-VOSA sites - are already being addressed and updates are provided below. We are also looking to the future, developing Next Generation Testing (NGT) with positive engagement between VOSA inspectors and ATFs very much a part of day-to-day life.

If you have any issues and concerns, please let us know by contacting your local management team or by emailing us at [TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk](mailto:TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk). By working together we can all ensure that the transition process continues to be handled smoothly and successfully.

## RESPONDING TO YOUR FEEDBACK

**Thank you to everyone who responded to our survey following the forum meeting. We have listened to your feedback and have taken actions to address the concerns that you raised.**

***You said: "We want VOSA to stimulate demand for ATFs"***

In July, VOSA's Chief Executive Alastair Peoples expressed satisfaction over VOSA's progress in accelerating its Next Generation Testing strategy. There is now a healthy level of interest from new and prospective ATFs testing all categories of vehicles.

The ATF network continues to grow with the 250th ATF site being opened on the 30th

August – that's 178 open access and 72 third-party sites. An important milestone was also reached in July with 54% of tests now being carried out at non-VOSA sites - up from 27% from the time the first ATF opened in January 2010. VOSA committed to transferring the majority of core testing services to non-VOSA sites by March 2013 and has achieved this.

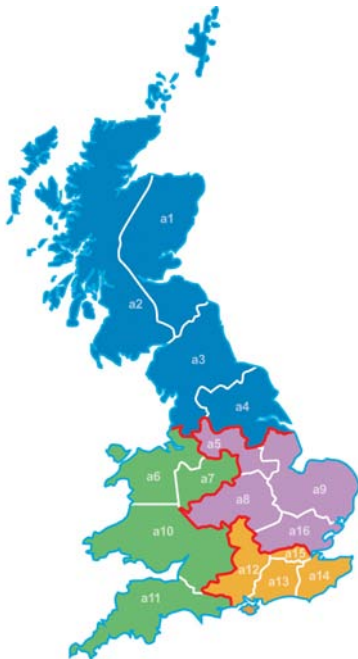


In order to assess the likely provision of ATFs, VOSA reviewed the catchment areas of VOSA test stations. The review has demonstrated sufficient market interest in ATFs of all categories of vehicles to cease bus and lorry testing at VOSA test sites in Cowes, Hereford, Leicester, Pontypool, Redruth, and Swansea by March 2013. The timing will allow existing ATFs to increase numbers of testing periods, reorganise working arrangements in good time, and allow new ATFs to meet the standards and start operating.

Service provision for testing is also being reduced at a number of VOSA sites – for example at Beverley, Gillingham and Grantham. The reduction in service provision is dependant on the proportion of tests conducted at a VOSA testing station and the local ATFs combined. If less than half of the total numbers of tests are conducted at VOSA sites over a 3-month period then the opening hours of the VOSA site may be reduced.

## Find your nearest ATF service soon to be launched

VOSA is currently working to develop a web tool to assist operators in finding their nearest ATFs. The service has been developed for VOSA's contact centre, enabling agents to promote ATFs as a priority when customers call about test bookings. A trial of this service will be starting this month.



A find your nearest ATF tool will also be published on the Government's new central website, GOV.UK, after its launch in October. The benefits the tool will bring to operators include savings on fuel costs, a reduction in greenhouse emissions and reduced wear and tear on the road network as a result of shorter travel times.

We will make a further announcement when this service becomes operational.

## Imperial Commercials share their test booking system with ATFs

When High Wycombe-based Imperial Commercials developed a new test booking system to improve efficiency booking in third party operators, they soon realised other ATFs might also benefit.

Commercial Director, Neil Jacob is delighted by how well the new test booking system is working: "The original system we had was just a basic spreadsheet that was not easy for our staff to use. Our solution was to develop a diarised booking tool to easily manage both the lane and tester's time. This allows us to book the smallest of time slots and gives us the flexibility to book multiple days in a week and multiple testers on a single day."

He continued: "At present we have concentrated our efforts on making sure the system works and is effective at our own sites. We are happy to discuss the system with any ATF operator who may be interested and have recently presented it to VOSA management."

"Our experience with VOSA staff is that they have been helpful and professional. We are soon to open two new ATFs and are pleased to be cooperating with VOSA staff on Next Generation Testing. It is crucial to the success of our ATF ventures that we have a great working relationship with VOSA testing staff."

If you're interested in finding out more about the booking system, please contact Mr Jacob at [neil.jacob@imperialcommercials.co.uk](mailto:neil.jacob@imperialcommercials.co.uk).

**You said: "We want more support in understanding payments coming into and out of our pre-funded accounts"**

We had some very constructive debate at the forum concerning ATFs' need for greater pre-funded account transparency. VOSA do offer an online service for pre-funded accounts which allows you to check your balance.

To apply for online access, a person named on the account should email [webbookings@vosa.gov.uk](mailto:webbookings@vosa.gov.uk), providing:

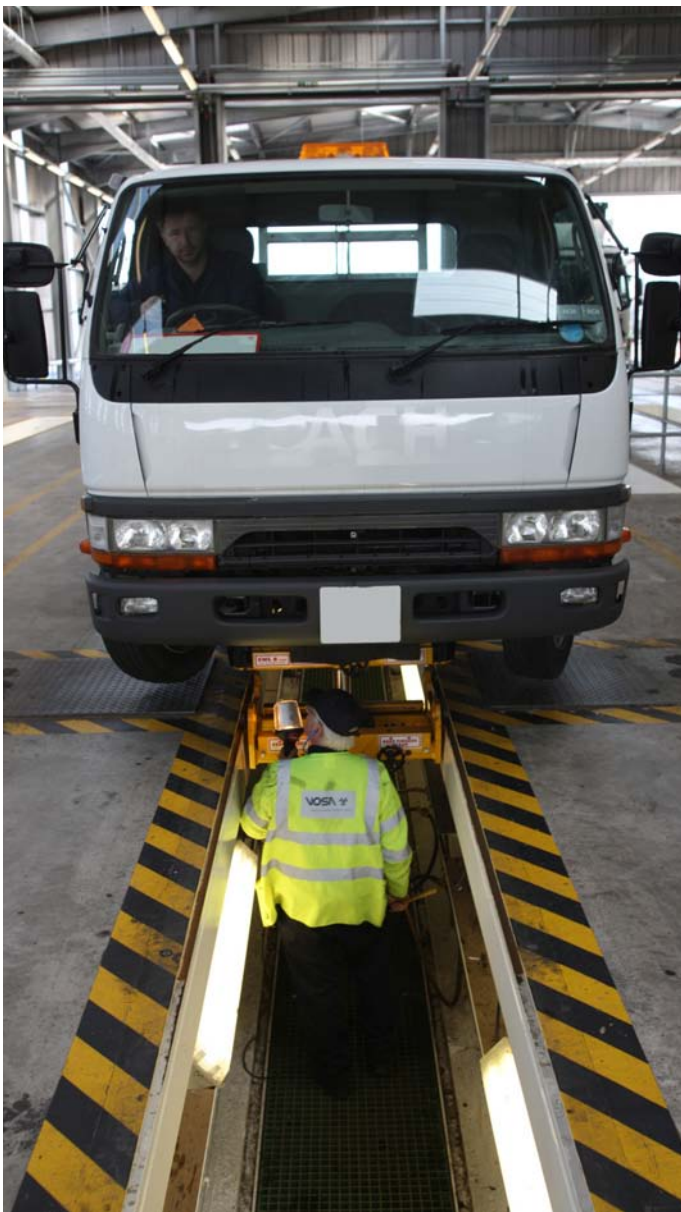
- ▶ Your pre-funded account number
- ▶ Your company name and addresses

If you've forgotten your pre-funded account number, please ring **01792 454389**.

At VOSA we're currently reviewing our customer guidance materials and registration process and will be involving ATFs in this work.

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**You said: "We want VOSA to give us greater flexibility of working"**



A prototype has already been trialled for two months with detailed and constructive information gathered from ATF operators and VOSA staff. The prototype included VOSA examiners from Avonmouth working in partnership with ATFs in their area to create a business relationship and partnership which mirrors the way in which VOSA and ATFs want to work in the future.

The participants were prototyping:

- ▶ Provision of flexible testing periods to ATFs
- ▶ An electronic means of capturing test results and ATF information to replace the paper form used currently
- ▶ Support functions (IT, technical and personal) required to support a mobile workforce
- ▶ Vehicles (both cars and vans of varying models) provided for inspectors to travel to ATFs
- ▶ Provision of laptops in order to support a mobile workforce
- ▶ Ideas for new corporate clothing

We have collected feedback from the participants, both staff and ATFs, throughout the two months of the prototype. This feedback is being used by the project team to develop the priorities when designing our future testing service.

Next Generation Testing (NGT) is all about creating a comprehensive design for the future of testing by introducing more flexible arrangements between VOSA and its ATF partners.

## VOSA to look at rules on booking cancellations

One of the issues raised at the forum was the 8 day notice period ATFs are required to give when cancelling bookings. VOSA introduced this rule to enable the effective management of resources and to improve our forward planning.

Some of you felt that this period was too long as it reduces your flexibility in a demand-fuelled private sector where things can change at very short notice. We recognise your concerns and are committed to investigating the possibility of aligning the short term cancellation policies for both VOSA stations and ATF sites.

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## Dangerous goods testing at ATFs

A VOSA workshop was held to discuss the issues raised at a local haulage conference concerning customers being unable to secure requested booking dates for ADR's at VOSA stations and ATF's. The workshop was attended by representatives from the trade to enable all issues to be raised and discussed. The outcome was successful and an agreed short term solution has been implemented.

The workshop highlighted that in some areas there was an issue about whether ADRs are classed as dangerous goods. The concern centred around the health and safety implications of testing a vehicle that contains, or is thought to contain, hazardous substances.

The VOSA team stressed that ADRs are not automatically classed as dangerous goods. The basic rule to apply is, if a vehicle / trailer is presented unladen, has been purged and can provide a purge certificate it is classed as non-dangerous.

As a reminder, an email has been forwarded to relevant parties supported by an updated training pack for delivery to ATF site managers. If you have not received your activation pack, please contact us at [TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk](mailto:TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk) and we will send you one.

## Would you like to host driving tests?

If you meet the criteria, the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) may be interested in conducting lorry and bus practical driving tests from your ATF. All expressions of interest will be considered but DSA's priority is areas where VOSA have made a 'cease testing' announcement in relation to a site shared with DSA.

A minimum requirement for testing to take place would be an off road manoeuvring area of 66m x 11m.

To find out more, please email [Customersites@dsa.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Customersites@dsa.gsi.gov.uk).

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***You said: "We want more engagement from VOSA to put our views forward"***



At the ATF forum we discussed the best way to keep you informed about important issues. From the responses to our survey, the majority of you wanted a regional forum once a year with regular contact via email.

So to this end, VOSA is in the process of arranging forums in seven locations (Ilminster, Cardiff, Birmingham, Altrincham, Ipswich, Hounslow and Glasgow) which will be held in November 2012, to discuss improvements to our testing services and to address your ideas or concerns.

We will be confirming the dates shortly and sending out invites. Please drop us an email at [TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk](mailto:TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk) to put forward agenda items or register your interest.

# ATF E-BULLETIN

Please let us know if the information in this e-bulletin is valuable to you and if so, how often you'd like to receive it. You can do this via our inbox.

Many thanks to those of you who volunteered to become more practically involved in making improvements and trialling ideas; we have your details on record. In fact some of you may already have been contacted by VOSA staff.



## VOSA ALERTS

**SUBSCRIBE**

VOSA Direct

Please also remember that the only way to get regular ATF VOSA alerts with timely reminders about policy changes, consultations or service changes is to subscribe to VOSA Direct.

Please continue to feed back your suggestions and areas of concern. Your comments will help us improve the ATF experience and of course we will keep you informed on the latest developments.