



Department  
for Transport

# Examining the Maximum Speed Limit for Tractors on Public Roads

November 2013

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# Foreword

We are launching this open consultation, following a commitment in the Farming Regulation Taskforce Report, published in May 2011, to consult on the speed limit for tractors in Great Britain.

The agricultural industry is an essential part of the UK economy. The total Income from Farming was provisionally estimated to be just over £4.7 billion in 2012. Actions to maximise the efficiency of the agricultural industry, such as increasing the speed limit, will ease time delays for tractor drivers and increase productivity for farmers in the UK; in the long-term, productivity growth in agriculture allows farm commodities to be grown and harvested more cheaply.

As well as benefiting farmers, this benefits food manufacturers and consumers as most of these cost reductions are passed on to the non-farm economy as lower commodity prices.

That is why we are launching this open consultation, following a commitment to consult in the Farming Regulation Taskforce Report, published in May 2011.

Responses to questions set out here will help to examine whether the speed limits for conventional tractors are set at the right level. We are asking for additional evidence, which will help us make future decisions.

We look forward to hearing your views.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Goodwill', with a large loop at the top and a horizontal line across the middle.

**Robert Goodwill MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport**

# Executive summary

- 1.1 A report<sup>1</sup> of the Independent Farming Regulation Taskforce was published in May 2011 and includes recommendations that the Government examine the maximum weights of agricultural trailers and combinations and the maximum speed of tractors. These commitments fell under the Department for Transport's (DfT) remit.
- 1.2 The consultation to examine the maximum weights of agricultural trailers and combinations is being published separately, and can be found at [www.gov.uk/dft](http://www.gov.uk/dft). This consultation document concentrates on examining the maximum speed limit of conventional tractors.
- 1.3 The maximum speed limit for conventional tractors with or without a trailer is currently 40mph, as set out in the Road Traffic Regulation Act<sup>2</sup>. However, the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986<sup>3</sup> (the "C&U Regs") set out certain technical requirements for tractors and requires those that are driven above 20mph to meet certain requirements, including the fitment of brakes meeting truck standards, including Anti-lock Braking System (ABS). Most tractors do not comply with these requirements so legally can only be used at speeds up to and including 20mph.
- 1.4 The report noted that some stakeholders perceive the current restrictions imposed by these technical requirements (set in 1984) to be outdated and that an alteration to the speed restriction, raising it above 20mph, would maintain or improve road safety. Similarly, the report stated that the restriction does not reflect the capabilities of modern farm machinery, forcing farmers to drive unnecessarily slowly on public roads. This is said to cause unnecessary delay for farmers and is a nuisance to other road users. In other European Union (EU) member states conventional tractors can operate at 25mph (40km/h), and this suggests there might be a competitiveness issue where drivers in the rest of the EU can drive faster than UK tractor drivers.
- 1.5 The reason we are proposing changing the speed specified in the restriction to 25mph for these tractors is because the report recommended the Department for Transport raise the restriction to align it with countries in the EU where the limit is set at 40kmh, which equates to 24.85mph. This is in line with the maximum speed capability of conventional (known as "T1") tractors. A speed restriction higher than 25mph would increase the burden on the agricultural industry by bringing the sector in scope of other regulations and we therefore consider this would be counter-productive.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-farming-regulation-task-force-report>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/schedules>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1986/1078/made>

- 1.6 The Impact Assessment (IA) (Annex A) summarises the monetised costs and benefits by Option and Scenario. Please comment on the analysis of costs and benefits if you are able to and have some knowledge of the situation.
- 1.7 In this consultation we are seeking views on:
- a) Your preferred policy option or further options
  - b) The balance of costs and savings
  - c) Road safety costs
  - d) Implementation costs
  - e) Non-compliance
  - f) Impacts on road wear and tear
  - g) Fuel consumption
  - h) The impact on small firms
- 1.8 We welcome responses from anyone interested in the issues covered by the consultation document. We believe the following groups of stakeholders will have a particular interest:
- a) Agricultural workers and farming associations
  - b) Agricultural engineers
  - c) Haulage companies
  - d) Road safety groups
  - e) Government enforcement bodies or Police forces and organisations
  - f) Local authorities
  - g) Road users

# How to respond

The consultation period began on 7 November 2013 and will run until 30 January 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 at [www.gov.uk/dft](http://www.gov.uk/dft) or you can contact the Department if you would like alternative formats (Braille, audio CD, etc).

Please either complete the online survey or send consultation responses by email to [tractorspeedlimit@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tractorspeedlimit@dft.gsi.gov.uk) or post to Vehicle Speed Limits, 3/28, 33 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 4DR.

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.

## Freedom of Information

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.

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.

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.

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

The Department wants to consider evidence on all potential effects of raising speed limits before making a decision on what to do next. A summary of responses, including the next steps, will be published on [www.gov.uk/dft](http://www.gov.uk/dft). Paper copies will be available on request.

# Consultation questions

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

**Q.1** Policy option 1: Do nothing – this means not changing the law and the speed specified in the C&U Regs remaining at 20mph. Is this your preferred policy option? Please explain your answer.

**Q.2** Policy option 2: Increase the speed specified in the restriction to 25mph (40km/h). This is currently the speed limit in some other EU countries. Is this your preferred policy option? Please explain your answer.

**Q.3** Would you suggest the speed specified be different? Please specify your preference and explain your answer.

**Q.4** We welcome views from stakeholders about whether they feel the balance of savings and costs of different speed detailed in the Impact Assessment reflects their own experience or expectations.

**Q.5** Please provide any evidence on the frequency or severity of collisions on public roads involving conventional tractors which can only be driven at 20mph or less because they do not comply with the necessary regulations to drive any quicker, and whether an increase in this restricted speed on these roads would have an effect on road safety and other road users.

**Q.6** Please provide any evidence on what effects if any the policy will have on road wear and tear and road maintenance requirements.

**Q.7** Do you think there will be a direct transition cost of implementation which government or the private sector will incur as a result of the change to the speed restriction? Please provide any evidence or figures you may have.

**Q.8** Please provide any evidence on the impact of this proposal on fuel consumption.

**Q.9** How do you think the proposals will impact on small firms?

**Q.10** Do you think that an increased speed limit would lead to a shift from other modes of haulage into agricultural haulage?

**Q.11** Please provide any evidence you may have on the number of drivers of conventional tractors who fail to comply with the 20mph speed limit.

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



**Q.13** Do you think there is any need to review the speeds that agricultural motor vehicles other than tractors (e.g. combine harvesters) are subject to? If so, please provide your suggestions or comments.

# Annex B 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  
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Zone 1/14 Great Minster House  
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Email [consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto: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.