



## The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Trailer and Towing Safety

**Wednesday 1 March 2023**

**10.30 – 11.30**

**Room S – Portcullis House, 1 Victoria Embankment, London SW1A 2JR**

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### **Present**

**Members:** Karin Smyth MP, Andrew Jones MP, Peter Dowd MP, Kerry McCarthy MP, Justin Madders MP.

**Secretariat:** Alicia Dunne (NCC).

**Attending:** Sarah Batchelor, (National Farmers Union NFU); DVSA, Tim Booth, (National Vehicle Crime Investigation Service (NaVCIS)); Frances Christian-Allan, (Tilly's Pass); Iain Geddes (Camping and Caravan Club), Jane Gurney (Tilly's Pass), Amanda Hornby (National Highways); Rebecca Hutton (NCC); John Lally, (NCC), Peter Lawton (SMMT); Stuart Lovatt (TyreSafe) Declan Pang (Road Hauliers' Association (RHA); Des Payne (British Horse Society), Anne-Marie Penny (National Highways); Steve Simmons-Jacobs (Independent Engineering Consultant/Tilly's Pass) Sarah Smithurst, MBE (NTTA), Martin Spencer (Caravan and Motorhome Club), Sarah Wigmore (Approved Workshop Scheme),

**In support:** Isobel Laing, Helen and Emily (Karin Smyth's office), Rachel Fisher (Department for Transport (DfT), Guy Hannan (DfT), Jessica Williams (DVSA), Robert Webb (DVSA), Philip Lapczuck (DVSA). Tom Cliffe, Head of Office to Minister Holden.

### **Apologies**

Jason McCartney MP Simon McGrath, Camping and Caravanning Club, Ian Hewlett, Camping and Caravanning Club, David Whitehead, NCC.

### 1. **Annual General Meeting**

- a) **Statement of Purpose:** Brings together parliamentarians, industry representatives and consumer groups to discuss and raise awareness of trailer and towing safety in the UK.
- b) **Election of Officers**  
Karin Smyth, MP was re-elected Chair of the APPG unopposed. The following members were elected unopposed to serve as officers:



Lord Bassam of Brighton, Jason McCartney MP, Sharon Hodgson MP, Andrew Jones MP, Nigel Mills MP.

**c) Income and Expenditure Statement:**

Income: The APPG on Trailer and Towing Safety had no income during the last year

Expenditure: The APPG on Trailer and Towing Safety had no expenditure during the last year.

**2. Welcome and introduction from Chair**

Chair of the Group, Karin Smyth MP, welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for their continued support.

She reported that since the last meeting work to keep safety issues at the front of the agenda continued including work to promote the new Trailer Training Awareness Accreditation Scheme, the summer Trailer and Towing Safety Campaign and the announcement of the long awaited draft Trailer Safety Action Plan which the Department for Transport will provide more details on later.

In recognition of the Group's work the Chair was pleased to welcome the Minister, Richard Holden MP to address the meeting and to provide an update on safety initiatives.

**3. Approval of the minutes of the last meeting held 3.02.2022**

The minutes of the last meeting were approved unanimously.

**4 Address by Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Roads and Local Transport) Mr Richard Holden MP**

The Minister thanked the Chair for the invitation to attend the Group meeting and to have the opportunity to acknowledge the work to date and specifically the Light Trailer Safety Action Plan and the Trailer Training Accreditation Scheme which is working to promote voluntary training in place of the B+E licence. The Minister stressed the importance of raising awareness of the training.

In relation to checks on trailers conducted by DVSA the Minister reported that 1700 checks had been completed between May 2022 and March 2023 and that checks would recommence from April. From January 2023 DfT advised that 153 training events had taken place and the social media posts helping drivers to stay safe on the roads had recorded 1m hits. DfT and DVSA would continue to gather data on trailer safety issues.

The Minister thanked the Group and the Chair for all their work in this important area of safety.

## 5. Reports and Updates

### a) Policy update - DfT

#### Trailer Safety Action Plan and Light Trailer Compliance Report

Rachel Fisher reported that a robust Action Plan would be published together with the [Light Trailer Compliance Report](#) following this meeting which would cover further checks on trailers and the introduction of a voluntary roadworthiness scheme. In addition, bi-annual surveys of O2 trailers would be carried out from April 2023 contribute to the trailer database.

The voluntary roadworthiness inspection scheme would operate in line with a written manual for tests to be undertaken by 3rd parties. DfT and DVSA will collaborate on the manual and the tests will be endorsed by DfT. The proposals are to be shared with Ministers along with a plan to develop the scheme.

#### Update on the consultation to change the date of first MOT and other enhancements

The deadline for responses on the proposals to change the period for MOTs from 3 – 4 years been extended to 22 March 2023. In addition, DfT are looking to see if roadworthiness requirements need to be extended to different vehicles such as electric hybrids. As of 1 March 2023, the consultation had attracted 3,000 responses.

Mr Andrew Jones MP said that it was also important to prioritise vehicle emissions as part of the consultation.

### b) Training and safety towing awareness – DVSA

#### Trailer Training Accreditation Scheme

Jessica Williams reported that the industry-led Accredited Training scheme launched just under a year ago in May 2022 and as at January 2023 had held 153 separate training events. Overall, however, the scheme needed to attract more regardless of their driving licence particularly as most of the events were for those towing for business purposes rather than for leisure.

#### New driver survey

A survey launched on 13 February targeted new drivers to find out about their confidence and ability in towing, knowledge of towing safely and awareness of the accredited trailer training scheme. The survey closes on 4 March.

Once results have been reviewed a similar survey focusing on more experienced drivers and towers will be conducted to gauge awareness and attitudes to training and help refresh the communications plan.

## Trailer and Towing Safety Campaign

Robert Webb reported on the communications activity which included a social media led campaign on the trailer training scheme, targeting the trade and leisure press and more recently on safe towing.

While DVSA's previous communications campaigns have focused on encouraging all motorists to tow safely, and the roadworthiness of the towing vehicle, the introduction of the accredited training scheme has widened the communications campaign to promote the importance of driver training and the routes that are available to ensure a lifetime of safe driving. This programme is due to launch in Spring and will focus on those whose employment includes towing for work and to raise awareness of and offer advice to those new to towing.

DVSA is also working to introduce new trailer related questions to theory test to recognise the change in legislation.

Robert was asked what targets had been set to raise awareness of trailer training. At present no targets or percentage of new drivers had been put in place. In response the Chair said that in light of the importance the Minister had placed on the campaign and the training scheme she will make representations to his office.

The Shadow transport team had expressed concerns about safety issues and the impact on the training provision on the training sector. In response Jessica Williams said she would check the data target and report back to the group.

The Chair invited questions to the department representatives. Sarah Smithurst (NTTA) observed that in her experience those towing for business purposes would engage with the training which was part of their employment. The Chair asked DVSA if they were collating data on those accessing the training from businesses as well as private individuals. In response Jessica confirmed that the majority of businesses are largely compliant with towing requirements➤

Tim Booth (NaVCIS) commented that the experience of those new to towing attending the training at the NCC Show at the NEC was positive. He also reported that drivers towing outside of the UK without the BE entitlement on their licence (post 12.21) were largely disadvantaged as the change in licence entitlement to tow was not recognised in Europe (~~or technically in Northern Ireland~~).

He asked if DfT/DVSA could recommend a marker is added to new driving licences where the driver has undertaken the new trailer training.

In response Jessica Williams confirmed that the trailer training was not mandatory so such a marker would not be required.

Stuart Lovatt (TyreSafe) asked if the 1700 trailer checks included checks on tyres and if this was added to the compliance report. In response Philip Lapczuck confirmed that tyres are included in the check but not in the report as a separate area but are added into the running gear section. It was suggested that tyres are separated out.

Francess Christian-Allan (Tillys) reported that her work in the agricultural and forestry sectors would indicate that a greater awareness of the trailer training was necessary and should be targeted by the scheme and DVSA.

**c) Round up of safety initiatives from stakeholders**  
Roadside Checks – Tim Booth NaVCIS

Tim Booth gave an overview of the recent day and night-time checks conducted with support from DVSA and others in the Group. The key findings were 50% overweight, missing breakaway cables, no tachographs, trailers not correctly secured➤  
Most caravans-car combinations stopped were compliant but there were issues in relation to tow bar connections.

Approved Workshop Scheme trailer servicing initiative – Sarah Wigmore (AWS)

Sarah Wigmore reported that the new trailer service schedule was set to launch using engineers with specific light trailer servicing training and experience. 30 workshops nationwide completed the relevant trailer training which will provide good national coverage. The service training comprises 55 separate points including gas and electrical checks and damp testing where applicable and highlights the workshops that have undergone additional training to establish knowledge and competence pertaining to the differences between touring caravans and other light trailers.

National Trailer and Towing Association (NTTA)

Sarah Smithurst reported that the Trailer Safety Week was set to take place 5-11 June 2023. This will follow a similar event in the USA and include compliance checks for all forms of trailer with support from the police. Support from members of the APPG to help raise awareness of the event would be welcomed.

It was agreed that NTAA would send information to the Secretariat to share with members to help raise awareness closer to the date.

A-Frames for towing

Earlier exchanges between DfT, DVSA and NaVCIS concluded that it would be beneficial to have a separate meeting outside of the APPG to help all parties understand and evaluate the impact of the safety issues involving A-frames. This meeting would consider the details supplied to the Group by Mr Maris and others and a further report prepared for consideration by the APPG at a later meeting.

## TyreSafe and Towing

Stuart Lovatt, Chair of the charity TyreSafe, gave an overview of the work programme to date and stressed that the Stats 19 data indicated that the condition of tyres are a contributory factor in vehicle accidents. He applauded the work of the Group and asked all to raise awareness of the importance of always checking the condition of trailer tyres. Details of the charity's initiatives can be found at [TyreSafe.org](https://www.tyresafe.org)

### 6. **Any other business**

#### Towbars

Sarah Smithurst (NTTA) alerted members of the Group to the importance of ensuring that towbars are correctly fitted by an experienced and trained provider. Greater awareness and a possible training programme could be considered by the Group.

#### Caravan Towing Guide

Alicia Dunne (NCC) reported that the new Caravan Towing Guide was now published and free to download from the [APPG website](#)

### **Concluding comments**

In drawing the meeting to a close the Chair observed that the variety of initiatives to increase awareness of the importance of safe trailers and towing was encouraging. The findings in the Light Trailer Compliance Report and the proposed Trailer Safety Action Plan would contribute to the work of the Group in addition to the DVSA towing campaign informing and educating new and existing drivers.

The Chair thanked everyone for the attendance. The date of the next meeting will be circulated shortly – likely to take place in the autumn.