



The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Trailer and Towing Safety

Thursday 3 February 2022

10.30 – 11.30

Virtual meeting via MS Teams

Present

Members: Karin Smyth MP, Peter Dowd MP, Richard Fuller MP, Carolyn Harris MP, Andrew Jones MP, Kerry McCarthy MP, Nigel Mills MP, Jessica Morden MP, and Lord Bassam of Brighton.

Secretariat: Alicia Dunne (NCC).

Attending: Tim Booth (NaVCIS), Freddie Cambanakis, DfT, Damien Currie, DVSA, Ian Geddes (Camping and Caravan Club), Donna and Scott Hussey (Parents of Freddie Hussey), Jane Gurney (Tilly's Trailers), John Lally, (NCC), Isobel Laing, (Karin Smyth's office), Ian Mangles, (DVSA), Jonathan Moore, (SMMT), Declan Pang (RHA) Des Payne (British Horse Society), Thomas Price, (NFU), Ray Pinder (NTTA), Michael Sedgwick, (DfT) Steve Simmons-Jacobs (Tilly's Trailers) Sarah Smithurst, MBE (NTTA), Martin Spencer (Caravan and Motorhome Club), Mark Winn, (DVSA), Sarah Wigmore (Approved Workshop Scheme), David Wood, (DVSA)

Apologies

Sir Roger Gale MP, Jason McCartney MP, Ian Hewett, (Camping and Caravanning Club), Stuart Lovatt, (National Highways), Amanda Hornby (National Highways), David Whitehead (NCC), Claire Rees (DfT)

Annual General Meeting

1. Election of officers

Karin Smyth, MP was re-elected Chair of the APPG. The following members were elected to serve as officers:

Richard Fuller, MP, Andrew Jones, MP, Kerry McCarthy MP, Nigel Mills, MP, Lord Bassam of Brighton, Jason McCartney, MP.

2. Approval of the minutes of the last meeting held 3.11.22

The minutes of the last meeting were approved unanimously.



3. Welcome and Introductions

Karin Smyth extended a warm welcome to all and thanked them for their continued support. She also extended her thanks to the Minister for her engagement with the Group and for taking time to address some of the key issues impacting on the work of the Group.

4. Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Transport – Baroness Vere of Norbiton

The Minister thanked the Chair for the opportunity to update the Group on key issues of interest to the Group. She confirmed that in taking the road safety strategy forward she would continue to work closely with the APPG.

Change to B+E driving licence entitlement for post-1997 licence holders –

This came into force on 16 December 2021 as part of a Government intervention to free up more tests for HGV drivers. The impact assessment of the legislative change is underway and whilst it is accepted that the change has raised safety concerns, it is intended that any data collated following the change will feed into and inform the review of the change after three years (2024).

Trailer Training Accreditation Scheme – the National Council for Accredited Training has been established with the support of the Department for Transport. The Scheme is comprised of a wide range of stakeholders including driving examiners, trailer association representatives, leisure and agricultural industry representatives and insurers. The Scheme is set to be launched in March 2022.

Trailer Safety Report

The Minister thanked the DVSA and others for their work in conducting the programme of light trailer safety checks across a challenging two-year period and for collating the relevant data. She observed that the findings were most interesting and noted that of the 3,813 trailers checked, caravans recorded the lowest prohibition rate at only 12% from the 730 inspected. This was very good news for the sector. She encouraged the Group to use the Report and the associated Action Plan (which was due to be published shortly) as an opportunity to work closely with DVSA to help identify groups to target and suggest ways to deliver relevant safety messages and improve compliance.

The Chair observed that the Report findings have recognized safety issues with certain sectors of trailer-users and was grateful that these had been identified. She also thanked DVSA for their work on this throughout the pandemic.

The Chair invited questions and observations. Steve Simmons-Jacobs (Tilly's Trailers) observed that in the workplace checking trailers was a 'work activity' for employers and employees and called for more coordination between DVSA and HSE to ensure that relevant messages could be delivered.

The Minister noted that she was interested to learn from Tim Booth (NaVCIS) about his work on safety checks, and in particular those that related to vehicles involved with business-related towing such as the recent safety check operation in Norfolk. Tim reported that it was essential that employers

and employees were aware of their responsibilities in relation to trailer and towing safety.

5. Reports

i) Trailer Safety Report

Michael Sedgwick (DfT) gave a short presentation on the conclusion of the light trailer safety checks as specified in the Trailer Safety Report which had been delayed due to the pandemic. A copy of the presentation is available on the APPG website.

The headline findings reported to the Group were as follows:

- 3,813 non-test trailers checked
- 730 caravans checked of which 85 (12%) were found to have a prohibitive defect
- 3,083 non-caravan trailers checked of which 1,530 (49%) found to have a prohibitive defect
- 60% of private trailers were found with a defect with 39% placed on an immediate prohibition
- Compared with other vehicles where the MOT failure rate is 33%, the checks revealed that:
 - 50% of PLGVs failed
 - 15% of HGVs failed
 - 12% of caravans failed

Next steps – The full report is with Ministers for consideration after which it will be released with a range of options to target specific sectors highlighted by the safety check exercise to have safety concerns. Parliamentary scrutiny will follow, and the views of Ministers will dictate the work plan for the Group.

The Chair invited questions from the Group. Ray Pinder (NTTA) commented that the requirement by insurers for caravans to be serviced on an annual basis may have contributed to the low prohibition rate.

Michael Sedgwick observed that the results of the safety checks exercise conducted on caravans dismissed the earlier view that older caravan trailers had not been regularly serviced.

Steve Simmons-Jacobs commented that in his view issues with breakaway cables were not minor infringements.

Jane Gurney commented that she had seen a massive improvement in the fitting and connection of breakaway cables on vehicles she had observed in the agricultural sector.

ii) Trailer Training Accreditation Scheme – DVSA

Mark Winn from DVSA gave an overview of the Scheme and confirmed that the framework will cover a wide range of trailers including those under 750kg. DVSA are working with organisations interested in becoming accredited bodies to deliver the training and some have well developed plans in place. Details will be shared with this Group as soon as they are ready. He also confirmed that DVSA are keen to keep the Group up to date with

developments but stressed that it was important to launch the Scheme first – estimated to be sometime in March.

The Chair reported that parliamentarians are aware that some driver training companies had lost business as a result of the legislative change and confirmed that they would press to keep the matter firmly on the agenda for review in 3 years.

iii) “Whatever you are towing make it SAFE” - Safety Campaign – DVSA

Damien Currie (DVSA) gave a short presentation on the current and planned campaign activity. A copy of the presentation is available to view on the APPG website. Key activities include:

- social media activity
- business focused messages to ensure employees carry out safety checks on the ‘need-to-know-before-you-tow’
- media coverage of the campaign urging drivers to review their safety checks before setting out.

The 2022/23 draft plan to include the following:

- promoting the training accreditation Scheme
- carrying out research with trailer users
- reviewing the road safety element of the safety checks data.

It is intended that the programme will be delivered through strong partnerships with stakeholders/ users and their relevant points of sale and presence at trade and public events. The Chair confirmed that many parliamentarians had welcomed the initiative and were keen to help promote the Scheme.

Other safety awareness

Roadside checks – NaVCIS

Tim Booth from NaVCIS gave a short presentation following a safety stop operation he attended in Norfolk. The vehicles stopped included a flat-bed trailer with a small digger being towed by an estate car on a local journey. The details recorded were:

- the total weight of vehicle combination exceeded the permitted weights for use in the UK by over 50%
- the ‘overload’ on the tyres for axle 3 exceeded the manufacturer’s maximum load rating of 1800 kgs across the axle by 58%
- a missing front nearside wheel arch on the trailer
- no working stop lights on the towing vehicle (car)
- no working lights on the trailer
- insecure load on the trailer-bed
- two defective tyres – both on the offside – on the towing car
- no breakaway cable fitted
- the lift plate fitted to the towbar bracket was secured with standard bolts
- tow ball secured to top of plate with towball bolts
- plate faces ‘peeling’ away from one another

The tow vehicle and trailer were seized immediately, and the driver and owner advised that a multi-agency prosecution will follow. Tim reported that it was the worst example of a non-compliant tow vehicle-trailer combination that he had seen.

The Chair commented that the aims and objectives of the APPG working in cooperation with the various government departments and agencies were to educate and inform trailer owners of the safety implications of towing loads which the DVSA SAFE campaign sought to deliver with the support of the Group.

The British Horse Society (BHS)

Des Payne reported that the Society was fully supportive of the training accreditation scheme and working with driver training companies to support their members and promote the scheme.

6. Work Programme 2022

The Chair reported that the content and recommendations set out in the Trailer Safety Report, once released, would largely dictate and inform the work programme for the forthcoming year.

The legislative change to driving licence entitlements for post 1997 licence holders and the trailer training accredited scheme will also provide a key focus for the group.

Chair's concluding comments

In drawing the meeting to a close the Chair observed that the change to the driving licence entitlement for post 1997 licence holders remained of great concern; the continuation and enhancement of the DVSA towing campaign informing and educating new and existing trailer owners was extremely welcome and the work of the APPG will continue and likely increase following the changes.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and confirmed that the presentations would be added to the website. A date for the next meeting will be circulated – likely to take place in early autumn. The meeting closed at 11.20am.