



The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Trailer and Towing Safety

Annual General Meeting

Monday 3 February 2020

15.30 – 17.00

MacMillan Room, Portcullis House, London SW1A 2LW

Present

Members: Karin Smyth MP, Nigel Mills MP, Richard Fuller MP

Secretariat: Alicia Dunne (Deputy Director General, NCC), Duncan Kenyon (Policy and Public Affairs Executive, NCC).

Invited: Thangam Debbonaire MP, Bill Esterson MP, Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Tim Booth (NaVCIS), Dr. Joanne Edwards (AECOM), Ian Hewlett (Camping and Caravan Club), Donna Hussey (Parent of Freddie Hussey), Scott Hussey (Parent of Freddie Hussey), Archie Hussey (Brother of Freddie Hussey), Jane Gurney (Tilly's Trailers), Stuart Lovatt (Highways England), Amanda Lowe (Highways England), Jonathan Moore (SMMT), Antony Ovens (Department for Transport), Des Payne (British Horse Society), Ray Pinder (NTTA), Adam Poulson (DVSA), Thomas Price (National Farmers Union), Michael Sedgwick (Department for Transport), Katharine Slocombe (The Office of Karin Smyth MP), Sarah Smithurst, MBE (NTTA), Martin Spencer (Caravan and Motorhome Club), Paul Stonebridge (House of Commons), Sarah Wigmore (Approved Workshop Scheme).

Apologies

Sharon Hodgson MP, Bill Wiggin MP, Simon McGrath (Camping and Caravanning Club) Sir David Amess MP

1. Election of Officers.

Karin Smyth MP was elected Chair of the APPG. Nigel Mills MP, Richard Fuller MP, Baron Bassam of Brighton and in their absence but with their express permission, Sir David Amess MP, Sharon Hodgson MP were all elected as officers.

2. Introduction from Chair.

Karin Smyth MP welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Apologising to the APPG for the cancellation of the last meeting she explained that this was due first to the prorogation of Parliament in October and then the General Election at the end of 2019.



Karin emphasised the importance of trailer safety and commended her constituents, Donna and Scott Hussey, who have continued to campaign on the issue despite the tragic circumstances that led to the creation of this APPG. Karin said she hoped the future work programme (later discussed – see item 4) would improve the knowledge and understanding of Parliamentarians on issues related to trailer safety, and help inform future decisions on trailer related legislation.

3. Presentation on Trailer Safety Report

Michael Sedgwick and Antony Ovens from the Department for Transport (DfT) gave an overview of the Trailer Safety Report which was created as a result of the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Act (2018) and that AECOM were commissioned to collect the data to go into the report. This included secondary literature reviews from international studies.

The Department estimate that if the UK were to implement a mandatory licensing and testing scheme, it would cost £129.3M in the first year and £74.2M from the second year onwards. After reviewing the data, the Department for Transport have announced that no scheme be introduced at this time.

However, Michael emphasised that data gaps on the safety of light trailers are still of concern and the DVSA are continuing with the programme of 2,000 trailer checks which started last year. DfT also accept that a number of improvements to trailer safety can be done without legislation, including increasing the knowledge questions on towing in the driving test, but this does not rule out the option for mandatory testing in the future if there is qualitative and quantitative evidence to support it.

DfT also recognise that although Highways England (HE) are playing a key role in raising awareness of safe towing practices through the National Towing Working Group (NTWG), the DfT can also play a key role. Adam Poulson from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) announced that a voluntary trailer testing forum was to be established and invited all those running voluntary testing schemes or with an interest in such schemes to contribute to an initial scoping conference call. Draft Terms of Reference for the forum were currently awaiting sign off internally, with draft documents including a best practice guide and checklists to be circulated after the initial scoping meetings – early to mid-March. The timescale for the forum to complete its work is 6 months during which it is hoped it will provide a useful hub for sharing best practise on safe towing.

In response Karin Smyth welcomed the DfT report and stated that it was the objective of the group to keep the report and its findings under close scrutiny.

Karin welcomed the Minister, Baroness Vere of Norbiton, and thanked her for her interest in the subject. The Baroness stated that trailer and towing safety was an important road transport and safety issue. She highlighted that there was a broad range of sectors affected and acknowledged that people use trailers both for work and leisure so it is important to look widely at the issues. The Minister thanked the Hussey Family for continuing to help raising awareness of trailer safety and the members of the APPG for their contributions to the Report. Whilst

the Report concluded that trailer safety testing would not be introduced at this time, the Baroness emphasised the importance of collating clear evidence and she hoped there would be a full complement of data after the summer. The Baroness encouraged those present to share relevant GDPR compliant data to assist in this exercise.

Trailer Safety Report Questions

Karin invited those present to raise questions on the Report with the representatives from the DfT.

- Richard Fuller MP asked the Department officials if it was possible to identify the specific data gaps missing from the Report. Michael explained it had not been possible to collate a full data set within the 12-month deadline set in the legislation to deliver the Report. He also explained that the existing STATS19 form did not record key details of incidents involving light trailers, including whether contributory factors relating to an incident related to a towing or towed vehicle. He also confirmed that the STATS19 form is currently under review.

- Richard Fuller MP asked if the report had taken into consideration off-road accidents/incidents, and if a comparison had been made between those countries outside the UK where trailer testing is mandatory. Michael responded that DfT through the compilation of the report had sought information on off-road accidents and a limited data set appears on page 19 of the report.

In relation to international comparisons Michael confirmed that the EC had conducted some research into trailer safety at the same time as the UK trailer safety report was compiled. The EC recommended that compulsory trailer testing and registration should be considered by the European Parliament. The UK, however, have some concerns around the conclusions of the research given the available data, and whilst it can be helpful to have an overview of what other EC member states are considering in relation to transport and road safety policy, any decision for the UK would not simply follow the decision of other member states.

- Nigel Mills MP asked if it was possible to compare the cost of drone registration with the likely costs for trailers. Michael confirmed that these are separate areas of policy, and such a cost comparison had not been included in the terms of reference of the report. Karin added that the costs of registration would be considered separately.
- Ray Pinder (National Towing and Trailer Association) asked if there were any other negatives or barriers to introducing mandatory registration of trailers other than the costs. Michael responded that proportionality had been a key factor. When asked if this was the most effective way of spending tax-payers money Michael responded that it was a matter for the Minister to determine what was

deemed to be an effective use of funds.

- Sarah Smithurst (NTTA) commented that a cost could be apportioned to the annual number of road accidents and the resources needed to deal with them.
In response Michael reported that Highways England have already costed this for the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and a decision whether to introduce registration would not be made solely on the number of casualties incurred on the road. As reported earlier the collation of data to show causation was key.
- Tim Booth (NaVCIS) commented that the cost of the drone registration scheme was a home office/counter-terrorism issue rather than a road safety matter. He then asked about HGV trailers leaving the UK to travel in Europe that are not covered by the electronic permit system. He was concerned that trailers were at risk if they were not carrying the correct paperwork in line with the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Act.
Michael confirmed that the DfT report had looked at trailer safety whilst the issue of permits to travel for HGV and other relevant trailers was covered by the Act. Any concerns about the permit requirements for trailers travelling outside of the UK was a matter for DVLA and he agreed to take the matter up with DVLA outside of this meeting.
- Ian Hewlett (Camping and Caravanning Club) commented on the importance of addressing driver behaviour and education and how the B+E test and the B96 test might be used in this regard. He also questioned whether it was possible to offer a small incentive to those wanting to tow to undertake training. The experience of the consumer clubs was that training can make a real difference. Baroness Vere recognised the importance of this and thanked Ian for raising the point.
- Karin asked DfT about the progress on reviewing the Stats 19 form. Michael confirmed that this was ongoing and that elements from the responses to the trailer safety report had been included in the review.
- Sarah Smithurst (NTTA) asked where data collated from trailer tests carried out by NTTA members should be sent.
Antony confirmed that if the data was GDPR compliant and labelled correctly it should be sent directly to the DfT at their email address – (the group agreed earlier to share email addresses).

A number of general questions and comments followed.

- Stuart Lovatt (Highways England) commented on the national review of STATS19 and stressed that the data should differentiate clearly between commercial and leisure towing to better understand the scale of the problem.



Stuart also stated that Highways England were happy to continue to chair the NTWG and engage with the different organisations and businesses to remind them of the importance of ensuring that those who towed for businesses had access to effective training.

In response Karin reported that she had had a helpful discussion with HE about not duplicating the work streams covered by both groups, and how she it was important to make the best use of the expertise and resource available. She confirmed that she was also keen to see HE continue with the NTWG and deliver a complimentary work programme.

- Jane Gurney (Tilly's Trailers) commented that there are a number of towing issues affecting the agricultural sector, and particularly the cost and the success rate of workers in the sector gaining a B+E licence. She suggested that a half-day training exercise for agricultural workers who believe that they are already familiar with the basics of towing may help raise standards amongst this sector.
- Baroness Vere concluded by saying that the whole subject of trailer safety was complicated and that gathering appropriate evidence of causation, sector by sector, coupled with delivering a mix of awareness, education and training would help DfT decide whether light trailer registration was necessary. Donna Hussey reminded the APPG that it was an unchecked faulty commercial trailer that had led to the loss of her son's life.
- Tim Booth (NaVCIS) reminded the group that the regular trailer safety roadside checks that he assists with ensures that where failures are recorded these are sent to HE under the Driving for Better Business scheme so that they can contact the relevant employers and advise them of the Towing for Better Business Scheme.

On behalf of the Group, Karin thanked the Baroness for her support and interest in the work of the group.

4. Work Programme of the APPG

Karin Smyth advised the group that a proposed work programme had been circulated to the group. She emphasised that there were three clear workstreams – raising awareness amongst the towing communities, addressing driver error and behaviour; and sharing best practice and incident data through formal DVSA trailer safety checks and the Voluntary Testing Forum. It will not duplicate the work of the NTWG.

It was also an objective of the work programme to raise awareness of trailer safety amongst parliamentarians and to host an awareness campaign that can be used with relevant businesses in constituencies to improve safe towing practices.

At the next APPG meeting in May, the agenda will include a discussion on trailer safety within the equine sector, with a focus on horseboxes.



Representatives from the relevant organisations will be invited to present. Karin suggested that future meetings could also be a useful platform to highlight specific data gaps and identify other ways to collate data.

Future meetings will also cover regular updates from the 'Towing for Better Business' scheme managed by Highways England as part of the NTWG, a progress report from the Voluntary Testing Forum and the data from the ongoing DVSA trailer checks.

Sara Smithurst (NTTA) suggested that the focus on horseboxes could be used as a pilot exercise for raising awareness amongst Parliamentarians.

In reply Karin explained this was a starting point to help focus on a specific area, helping Parliamentarians to scrutinise current practices. Trailer and towing safety across all sectors will be included in future meetings.

5. AOB

Karin thanked all for attending and wished everyone a safe journey home.

The date of the next meeting will be circulated shortly.

The meeting closed at 16.40.