

News story: Government to review driving laws in preparation for self-driving vehicles

The government has commissioned a detailed review of driving laws to ensure the UK remains one of the best places in the world to develop, test and drive self-driving vehicles.

Roads Minister Jesse Norman today (6 March 2018) announced the start of a 3-year review by the Law Commission of England and Wales and the Scottish Law Commission to examine any legal obstacles to the widespread introduction of self-driving vehicles and highlight the need for regulatory reforms.

The work will be crucial in examining how current driving laws – designed with traditional motoring in mind – can support the next generation of vehicles.

Key aspects will be adjusting traditional laws to reflect the fact self-driving vehicles of the future will not have a ‘driver’ or perhaps even a ‘steering wheel’ like traditional cars and also consider some of the criminal offences involved.

The review is part of the Future of Mobility Grand Challenge set out in the government’s [Industrial Strategy](#).

Roads Minister, Jesse Norman said:

The UK is a world leader for self-driving vehicle research and development, and this work marks an important milestone in our continued commitment to the technology.

With driving technology advancing at an unprecedented rate, it is important that our laws and regulations keep pace so that the UK can remain one of the world leaders in this field.

The Law Commissions’ joint project will examine difficult areas of law in order to develop a regulatory framework that is ready for self-driving vehicles.

The project will review and answer key questions, such as:

- who is the ‘driver’ or responsible person, as appropriate
- how to allocate civil and criminal responsibility where there is some shared control in a human-machine interface
- the role of automated vehicles within public transport networks and emerging platforms for on-demand passenger transport, car sharing and new business models providing mobility as a service

- whether there is a need for new criminal offences to deal with novel types of conduct and interference
- what is the impact on other road users and how they can be protected from risk

Law Commissioner Nicholas Paines QC said:

British roads are already among the safest in the world and automated vehicles have the potential to make them even safer. Provided our laws are ready for them.

We'll now start consulting widely on how the law should work with this new technology and develop reforms which enable the use of self-driving vehicles in the years to come.

Scottish Law Commissioner Caroline Drummond said:

Automated vehicles could have a big impact on the way we live and work so it's important that, UK-wide, we have a legal system which can accommodate them.

Jesse Norman announced the review during a visit to the GATEway project in Greenwich. The project, which is led by the UK's TRL, has worked on a number of innovative trials and demonstrations, including an autonomous delivery pod with Ocado and an automated valet parking trial.

Rob Wallis, CEO of TRL said:

We are seeing a global revolution in transport, transforming how we will travel in the future. Connectivity, electrification, automation and shared mobility are the 4 main themes driving this innovation.

Regulation, safety standards and vehicle insurance models all have a key part to play in enabling change, whilst giving society confidence that these new products and services can be introduced safely. The GATEway project, led by TRL, is providing vital scientific insight to help shape future regulatory standards and to better understand public perceptions associated with these new mobility solutions.

The GATEway project is now entering its final phase which will see a fleet of automated pods providing a shuttle service around the Greenwich Peninsula to understand public acceptance of, and attitudes towards, self-driving vehicles.