

Press release: Traffic commissioners report on improved service to industry and better targeting of the most serious offenders

The Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain have used their latest [annual report](#) to highlight progress in reducing application processing times.

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the average time for a decision reduced from over 11 weeks to just over 7 weeks.

In addition, 90.2% of digital licence applications were granted within seven weeks against the published service standards provided.

Operators and applicants who apply digitally should now benefit from time savings, swifter correspondence and an intuitive application process that's designed to make sure more complete information is provided.

In his foreword to the report, the Senior Traffic Commissioner for Great Britain, Richard Turfitt, says the regulators' approach better supports innovation and economic growth. He goes on to add that whilst there is relative safety on our roads this does not mean there is room for complacency when it comes to compliance standards.

In 2017/18, the commissioners held 971 hearings into businesses reported for safety or licensing breaches, taking action to prevent the most serious offenders from running vehicles in the future.

The annual report reflects on the real and potential consequences of failing to keep vehicles properly maintained, using the example of an operator who is trusted to transport schoolchildren.

The report says: "It will be hard for anyone to understand why some operators believe it is acceptable to take our children to school in vehicles that are plainly dangerous.

The commissioners call on those responsible for procurement to make sure quality and compliance are foremost in their considerations.

The regulators expect compliance from every operator, saying: "There is no place in our industry for the people who operate vehicles this way and we take decisive action when these licence holders are brought to our attention."

Their role as gatekeepers to the industry and the importance of maintaining a level playing field also feature prominently in the report.

"The vast majority of HGV and PSV operations are committed to running safe

vehicles and working within the rules,” the regulators state.

“A licence holder is entitled to assume that when they bid for work, a competitor will not be able to get that contract as a result of cutting corners, especially where safety is concerned.”

The commissioners recognise the efforts of operators who work hard to meet safety and licensing standards and set out their commitment to engage with business at industry events and meetings.

“Operators who get things right – who abide by the daily discipline of carrying out checks and completing paperwork – need reassurance and guidance to stay compliant,” the report points out.

However, in dealing with those in the ‘long under-performing tail’ of the industry, the commissioners find the underlying causes to be poor management and a failure to access proper guidance.

They urge transport managers – who occupy a key role in the industry – to keep their knowledge and skills up to date through refresher training. But they also remind businesses to make sure the transport managers they employ are doing the job properly – otherwise they could lose their permission to run vehicles.

The report examines the other activities commissioners have been focusing on in order to deliver their strategic objectives. This includes:

- working to reduce the time it takes to get serious offenders to a hearing for potential action
- publishing average application processing times on GOV.UK
- publishing their written decisions on GOV.UK
- commissioning a study of how effective their sanctions are

The report concludes by reinforcing the critical role played by others in support of traffic commissioners. It recognises the importance of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in providing evidence for sound regulatory decisions to be made. The report also addresses the need for proper resourcing of the Office of the Traffic Commissioner.