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To: All MPs

2 October 2021

Dear Colleague,

Given the issues we have seen at petrol pumps in recent days, we are writing to outline what we have done and are doing about the current fuel supply issues.

We should begin by saying that there are ample fuel stocks in this country and the public should be reassured there are no shortages at the refineries or storage areas. Like countries around the world, we are suffering a temporary, Covid-related shortage of drivers needed to move supplies around the country, including a shortage of around 350 drivers in the fuel industry.

We have managed this situation for months in the fuel sector, but unprecedented demand in recent days, caused by a selective briefing to the media, has seen many forecourts impacted.

While the fuel industry informs us that demand is expected to return to its normal levels in the coming days, it's right that we take precautionary steps. These include relaxing competition law to aid fuel re-supply, authorising temporary extensions to the validity of drivers' specialist certification related to the transport of fuel and providing military drivers to assist. Government has also, on 29 September, deployed a reserve fleet of fuel tankers. The fleet is driven by civilians and will provide additional logistical capacity to the fuel industry.

The fastest way back to normality is a return to normal purchasing patterns. Government and industry continue to encourage people to refuel in line with their usual buying habits.

We are also working hard to address the shortages in the wider heavy goods vehicle (HGV) road haulage sector. It's important to note that this is an issue impacting all of Europe – and indeed beyond – largely as a result of coronavirus and the impact this has had on our ability to conduct HGV driving tests.

The Government understands the challenges caused by the HGV driver shortage are serious and is working across departments and with industry to address these issues.

The Government is already increasing the availability of HGV driver testing. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) are continuing to develop measures to maximise testing capacity and reduce the backlog of tests. Through use of overtime and utilising additional staff into testing, DVSA have already increased the number of vocational tests available per week to 3,000 compared to 2,000 pre-COVID.

On 10 September, we announced measures to streamline the testing process through removing the need for car drivers to take an additional test to tow a trailer, delegating the conduct of the reversing manoeuvres in the HGV test to trainers and removing the need to hold a Category C licence to train to drive an articulated vehicle. These measures will free up space in the testing system and make up to 50,000 more HGV driving tests available each year.

We are already supporting lorry driver training through apprenticeships. This includes the revised Large Goods Vehicle Driver apprenticeship standard which is now available and supported by a funding band of £7,000. The apprenticeship is available to people of any age who are seeking to retrain and widens the accessibility of this route of entry into the industry.

We are also working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus who are supporting returning to driving and helping jobseekers become HGV drivers where appropriate. A DWP driver training pilot is underway, as part of the wider Road to Logistics scheme and we encourage industry to access their local Jobcentre Plus network.

Jobcentre Plus are making the Flexible Support Fund available to those who are currently unemployed or are in receipt of Universal Credit. It can be used to provide a grant to help those that hold a Category C or C+E licence but need to renew their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC).

To further support the industry tackle the issues caused by the HGV driver shortage we announced further measures on 25 September. These include training up to 4,000 new HGV drivers through skills bootcamps and the adult education budget.

Alongside this, 5,000 HGV drivers will be able to come to the UK in the run-up to Christmas, providing short-term relief for the haulage industry. The recruitment for additional short-term HGV drivers will begin shortly.

Visas will not be the long-term solution to the problem, and reform within the industry is vital. 99% of the workforce is male, with 14% aged 60 or over. In return for Government support in the short-term, we expect the industry to improve pay and conditions, which – for too long – have been undercut by workers from abroad. We must ensure we have resilient domestic workforce here in the UK, to avoid problems such as the current one in the future.

Nearly 1 million letters have been sent to drivers who currently hold an HGV driving licence, to thank them for their vital role supporting our economy, and to encourage those who have left the industry to return. The letter sets out the steps the road haulage sector is taking to improve the industry, including increased wages, incentives such as flexible working and fixed hours. We have already seen an encouraging response with industry being inundated with enquiries and huge hits on their websites.

The Government will do whatever it takes to ensure preparations for Christmas remain on track, while supporting the industry to undertake overdue and much needed reform.

Yours ever,



**THE RT HON GRANT SHAPPS MP**  
Secretary of State for Transport



**THE RT HON KWASI KWARTENG MP**  
Secretary of State for Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy

## Summary list of Government interventions delivered to tackle the lorry driver shortage and current fuel supply issues

### Support and training for new HGV drivers

1. Department for Education investing up to £10 million to create new skills bootcamps to train up to 3,000 more people to become HGV drivers as announced 26/09/21.
2. New £7,000 Large Goods Vehicle Driver apprenticeships launched 2 August 2021
3. Expansion of DWP driver training pilot delivered through Jobcentre Plus to bring job-seekers into the industry.
4. Accelerated development of new Urban Driver Apprenticeship for Category C driving.
5. DfT provided grant funding to Road to Logistics (a national, not for profit, logistics training organisation) who are working with the Welsh Government and HM Prison Service to train ex-offenders to drive lorries as well as supporting the Jobcentre Plus pilot.
6. Additional Government funding for both medical and HGV licences for any adult who completes an HGV driving qualification accessed through the Adult Education Budget in academic year 2021/22.
7. DfT provided grant funding to Think Logistics who, with Career Ready, are working to attract young people to the profession.

### Expanding HGV driver testing capacity and improving licencing processes

8. DVSA has increased the number of vocational driving tests from 2,000 a week pre-pandemic to 3,000 by overtime and allocating additional employees into testing as well as re-directing capacity from car & trailer tests to HGV tests.
9. Regulatory changes on BE test requirements, staging of HGV tests and reversing manoeuvres stand to increase the number of HGV tests by over 5,300 per month when implemented later this year following consultation and the entry into force of new legislation helping to increase total annual capacity by 50,000 tests.
10. Recruitment campaign launched 16 August for 40 new vocational examiners
11. The MOD is providing 20 Defence Driving Examiners to be trained and redeployed to conduct civilian tests with the DVSA until the end of the year.
12. New legislation to allow delegated driving examiners at the three emergency services and the MOD to be able to conduct driving tests for one another.
13. DVLA operational prioritisation to process provisional HGV driving licences in 1 to 2 weeks and put processes in place to speed those up further. Most drivers applying to renew their HGV licence can continue driving while their application is being processed.

### Attracting drivers back to the sector and improving conditions

14. Public messaging and direct letters to existing HGV licence holders not driving professionally (i.e. those who do not hold a Driver CPC card) to encourage them to consider returning to HGV driving.
15. Support for industry-led communications efforts to promote and improve the image of sector including industry-led proposal for Year of Logistics, the promotion of good practice in the sector and International Road Transport Union's driver charter

16. Review of lorry parking and facilities by National Highways.
17. Flexible support funding for Job seekers and those on Universal Credit who hold an HGV licence towards the costs of obtaining Driver Certificates of Professional Competence required for most professional lorry or bus driving.

#### Increasing efficiency in existing supply chains

18. Temporary extension of drivers' hours to allow short-term extra flexibility to the industry until 31 October 2021.
19. Relaxation of late-night delivery restrictions to supermarkets, food retailers, and distribution centres in England advised by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities until 31 January 2022 providing greater operational flexibility.
20. Visas for 5,000 foreign HGV drivers to work in the UK in the run-up to Christmas, providing short-term relief for the haulage industry.

#### Fuel supply

21. Extension of ADR (Dangerous Goods) licence validity for those expiring between 27 September 2021 and 31 December 2021 until 31 January 2022, providing immediate relief to the shortage of fuel drivers by permitting affected drivers to maximise their available capacity instead of being taken out of circulation for refresher training purposes.
22. Targeted communications to ADR licence holders through the Training Advisory Panel Secretariat to make ADR members aware of the extension to ADR licences validity periods and to encourage their members and all ADR driver training providers to increase their capacity for providing the full initial ADR driver training courses.
23. Military tanker drivers are being inducted and are supporting fuel hauliers to be able to keep making deliveries to where it is needed most, as directed by industry.
24. Deployment of reserve tanker fleet to provide additional capacity to industry contingency arrangements.