



Traffic Commissioners
for Great Britain

Annual Report to the Secretary of State 2021-22



Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain: Annual Report to the Secretary of State 2021-2022

(For the year ending 31 March 2022)

Annual report presented to the Secretary of State pursuant to Section 55 of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981.

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Transparency Data: Information relating to the salaries, spending, gifts and hospitality of traffic commissioners is published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Foreword by the Senior Traffic Commissioner

Introduction 2022

As we draft this report, the country, and the industries, which we regulate, are facing the longer-term impact of the pandemic. Those businesses face a number of evolving challenges. The traffic commissioners have worked hard to ensure that service users have been given the support and advice they require so that they continue to provide safe and effective transport services for the benefit of the country.

We continue to explore how the service can be improved further and to support economic recovery. The pandemic understandably changed priorities over the last two years, but progress has been made towards the target for determining applications within 35 working days from receipt. This is despite the receipt of a higher-than-average number of applications, during the course of the year. The number of cases coming before traffic commissioners at public inquiry has also returned to pre-pandemic volumes, demonstrating our ability to evolve to new challenges. It remains our priority to ensure that unsafe operators are not able to operate on GB roads.

Previous reviews identified a number of structural barriers to service improvement, not least in terms of financial and legislative reform. Inevitably, suggestions for further improvement will flow from the latest tailored review of our functions. From our involvement in the review, we are confident that we are well placed to deliver our strategic objectives, effective governance, and the sharing of data. We look forward to working with Government on the mechanisms required to further streamline the service, for the benefit of users and the wider public.

The development of improved information technology systems and processes has continued even during the period of the pandemic but realising further benefits will require legislative change. Those benefits might include the introduction of interim licences for passenger service vehicle operators and fee reform to rebalance the contributions made by different sized operators.

Industry recognised the leadership provided by traffic commissioners during the pandemic. For example, we worked closely with local authorities and devolved Governments authorities on changes to the registration of local bus services, to the benefit of industry and bus users. We will use that positive experience to work with stakeholders as other initiatives, such as The National Bus Strategy, introduce further significant changes in services and how they are registered.

The Roads Policing Review has allowed opportunity to strengthen the information available to us particularly at application stage, but there is an obvious need to review whether the processes relating to Goods Operating Centres are relevant to the modern world and actually deliver protection of the environment. Change has the potential to benefit business and to influence environmental improvements.

In due course, we look forward to engaging with the review of Arm's Length Bodies as part of the Public Bodies Reform Programme to assist the sponsorship function. Traffic commissioners remain committed to using their specialist skills and knowledge in support of the Department's aims.

Lastly, we pay tribute to our colleague, Nick Denton, who retired as a traffic commissioner in May 2022. His skills and considerable contribution to the jurisdiction will be difficult to replace. The West Midlands needs a dedicated traffic commissioner so we hope that an expedited recruitment campaign will find a worthy successor.

Our purpose

The Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain (TCs) are independent regulators for the goods vehicle and public service vehicle (PSV) industries and their professional drivers.

Collectively, we act as a non-departmental tribunal and licensing authority, sponsored by the Department for Transport (DfT). Our mission is to promote safe, fair, efficient and reliable passenger and goods transport through effective licensing and regulation of the commercial vehicle industries.

Our shared vision is for traffic commissioners to be recognised by our stakeholders as providing proportionate, accountable, consistent and transparent decision-making - a model of independent regulation.

What we do

We work to keep Great Britain's roads safe by licensing and regulating the commercial vehicle industries. With DfT, its agencies, the police and industry stakeholders we support the compliant, licensed operation of goods vehicles and PSVs. We do this by:

- publishing guidance and directions regarding the operator licensing regime and tribunal activities
- holding regulatory hearings to examine evidence and take proportionate action to maintain safety standards and promote fair competition in the industry
- holding conduct hearings to examine evidence and take proportionate action to ensure professional driving standards are upheld
- targeting tribunal resources so that the most serious cases are dealt with quickly and fairly
- delivering efficient, digital licensing services to responsible new applicants and compliant operators
- liaising with other regulatory bodies to identify and share knowledge around non-compliance
- educating and communicating with industry about the value of compliance and the licensing regime

Traffic commissioners seek to reduce regulatory burdens and support compliant businesses. The following statistics are unable to record the instances where the advice or assistance provided by individual traffic commissioners has resulted in improved compliance and road safety.

Overview: regulation & industry

Domestic freight (UK registered vehicles)

- 77% of domestic freight moved by road¹
- 136 billion tonnes kilometres moved¹

International freight (UK registered vehicles)

- 1,842 million tonnes kilometres moved¹



Local bus services (prior to the pandemic)

- 4.5 billion local bus service passenger journeys²
- 57% of all public transport journeys²



Employment

- 1.57 million people employed in Transport and Storage³

Our licensing work⁴

- 70,319 valid goods vehicle operator licences
- 623,757 goods vehicles authorised
- 6158 valid PSV operator licences
- 88,582 passenger vehicles authorised
- 15,748 operator licence applications and variations processed
- 14,551 local bus registrations processed



Our regulatory work⁴

- 1392 public inquiries determined
- 309 preliminary hearings held
- 57 Senior Team Leader (STL) interviews held
- 13,654 vocational driver cases closed



¹ Department for Transport, Transport Statistics 2021

² Department for Transport Annual Bus Statistics year ending March 2020

³ Data published by Office for National Statistics, Employment by industry, 17 May 2022

⁴ Figures represent the period 2021-22 as set out in the statistical section of this report.

Our objectives for 2021-23

Performance against key objectives

At the halfway point for the Strategic Objectives 2021-23⁵, progress has been made towards all of our targets. The challenges faced by the industry and the administration due to the pandemic have inevitably limited the progress made in some areas, priorities have been focussed on business recovery and ensuring that the traffic commissioners can continue to deliver an effective licensing role and regulation for service users.

Inter-dependencies

The traffic commissioners recognise that they do not operate in a vacuum. They are highly reliant on the support provided by the Department for Transport (DfT), the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) and our other stakeholders.

That inter-dependency is even more evident when the traffic commissioners' different functions are the subject of review. The commissioners hope that decisions arising from these exercises can be made quickly and that implementation will follow soon after. Delayed decision making restricts the ability to effectively regulate and improve services and to realise the opportunities for improved efficiency.

Business Recovery

The benefits of collaborative working are evident through the agreement of an updated Service Level Agreement (SLA) in 2021, setting out what traffic commissioners and the users of their services can expect from the support provided by DVSA.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to dominate the work of the traffic commissioners during the last 12 months. It is right to acknowledge the high level of applications received since May 2020. The 16,462 applications received in this year is higher than the average number that could be expected, but it is not unprecedented, as recently as 2007/08 there were 17,223 applications received during the year. It is important to acknowledge the support received from the DfT and DVSA in providing the traffic commissioners with additional staff to process applications. This additional resource is vital if we are to move towards the challenge of determining applications within an average of 35 working days so that transport businesses can thrive.

The Office of the Traffic Commissioners (OTC) has streamlined as much as possible and is working at high levels of efficiency. The traffic commissioners themselves have operated at capacity, within the constraints of their resources and the legislative framework. Applicants also need to take responsibility for ensuring that applications can proceed as quickly as possible. It is for that reason that the Senior Traffic Commissioner has published extensive guidance. We will continue to refresh other published advice, but applicants must also help themselves.

The SLA recognises that transport operations need to realise business opportunities in such a challenging environment. The service must be meaningful to users, so traffic commissioners

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-commissioners-strategic-objectives-for-2021-to-2023>

have reviewed the reporting measures to ensure that they reflect this. The 35-day target now applies at the point at which authority is provided to an operator, including the grant of interim authority.

This target helps give certainty to applicants, whilst ensuring that non-compliant operators are taken off the road as soon as possible. The traffic commissioners are therefore pleased that the 35-day target for goods operations has been acknowledged by the DVSA within their Business Plan. They would also like to see similar prominence given to PSV applications and the target to list public inquiry cases within 12 weeks of a commissioner identifying the need for a hearing to take place.

As has been reported for a number of years, the fee structure for the operator licensing system requires a thorough review to ensure that it is equitable and suited to the demands of a modern licensing and regulatory regime. Traffic commissioners hope that progress in this area can be made during 2022/23.

If the 35-day target set by the DfT following the Triennial Review of 2015 is to be achieved and then maintained, the enablers set out in that review and anything that arises from the current Tailored Review must also be delivered.

In the meantime, the traffic commissioners do require assurances from DVSA regarding the wider estate strategy for the Office of the Traffic Commissioner. The Strategic Objectives include a commitment to audit and assess the current tribunal accommodation to ensure that it is fit for a modern regulatory tribunal. During the coming years, building leases will need to be renewed and as these are finalised, they must conform to the agreed standards, and remain accessible to both staff and service users. Commissioners hope that this work will be reported against by reference to the standards in the SLA.

There is a need for upgraded IT to assist in the transformation of the Office of the Traffic Commissioners and the work of the traffic commissioners. Within the tribunal space, the Office of the Traffic Commissioner requires good IT support to realise the benefits of digitalisation, learning from the steps taken during the pandemic.

Better Targeted Regulation

Significant progress in this area is dependent on work being undertaken elsewhere. The outcome of the Tailored Review commissioned by the DfT will be especially important to determine whether significant change and improvements can be made. Traffic commissioners are disappointed that publication of the review report has been delayed, but will continue to work with the DfT on any realistic recommendations contained within it.

Similarly, the commissioners are keen for the conclusion of the exercise which the DVSA undertook regarding the structure of the Office of the Traffic Commissioner and any decisions to be taken as a result of OTC Transformation.

Delivery of relevant and workable proposals from these reviews, the introduction of Tribunal Rules and other legislative change (see below), are essential so that significant improvements can be realised.

In the meantime, the traffic commissioners continue to work closely with various enforcement agencies to try and improve the evidence available to them. For instance, they have contributed

heavily to the Roads Policing Review, jointly chaired by the DfT and Home Office, working with the National Police Chiefs' Council and other agencies. Although this work is on-going, the work to encourage statutory objectors to lodge opposition to applications on conduct grounds will help to ensure that commissioners have better information available to effectively fulfil the gatekeeping role, which is so vital to the integrity of the system.

Helping compliant businesses

The role of the commissioners is fundamentally about road safety through regulation. As well as taking action against the non-compliant, they also seek to offer greater assistance to compliant businesses to enable them to thrive.

To assist in the education of those managing transport businesses and more widely, the traffic commissioners are endeavouring to ensure greater transparency in their functions and decision making. Where decisions are made in writing, they contain the reasons and are being published on the Traffic Commissioner GOV.UK site, so that they may be read by a wider audience:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/traffic-commissioners

Key decisions, which contain important educational or deterrent messages are highlighted to attract wider circulation in the trade press and the attention of subscribers to the GOV.UK service. The decisions cover a wide range of different issues and allow industry to continue to learn and to avoid recurring pitfalls.

The traffic commissioners are also exploring how the reasons behind decisions might be published within the weekly 'Applications and Decisions' and 'Notices and Proceedings'. Details of drivers who appear before a commissioner at a hearing are also being published⁶ to assist employers in identifying if their drivers are sanctioned by a commissioner for conduct issues. The level of detail is dictated by data legislation but is sufficient for an employer with access to a driver's record to identify them.

Our objective is to use the limited traffic commissioner resource in a way which maximises its impact. One important method is the use of direct email messaging. Recent initiatives include messaging to highlight issues connected to the haulage of third-party trailers, and the continuing need for operators to develop good practice to avoid bridge strikes.

Working in partnership with our stakeholders is also important. This has been particularly evidenced through work with the DfT and DVSA on communications with operators, for example related to drivers' hours, as well as messages sent on behalf of other Government departments on requirements for travel into the European Union. Traffic commissioners have also contributed to best practice guides for DVSA and others. We were particularly impressed with the work leading to the DVSA Blog: 'Beyond the brake test – are you taking action?' posted on 10 February 2022⁷, which offers an excellent insight into brake testing and components and were pleased to draw this to the attention of industry.

Analysis has shown that when messages are released by traffic commissioners it results in positive traction due to the high level of trust placed in the service. Our email delivery service provider has commented on the high levels of engagement that the campaign to educate new operators receives, which compares favourably with other Government campaigns.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-decisions-made-about-the-conduct-of-professional-drivers>

⁷ <https://movingon.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/10/beyond-the-brake-test-are-you-taking-action/>

Within the past year the commissioners have established a social media presence to offer an extra way to reach those who are not currently engaged. This will form an important part of our communications going forward.

Operators must also help themselves. Commissioners have noticed that there are many cases of licences being revoked due to operators not engaging with the traffic commissioners or failing to keep their details up to date. If the Office of the Traffic Commissioner does not have the correct contact details, important messages will not be received by the operator. There are too many cases where a transport manager has been removed from a licence and the operator later claims that they did not even know that the individual had resigned.

Any operator receiving correspondence from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner must give it priority and ensure a full response is made by any deadline stated. The resulting loss of an operator's licence by not doing so, will have an avoidable negative impact on businesses and, at the very least, will incur unnecessary costs in reapplying for a licence.

Legislative Change

The commissioners continue to use their specialist knowledge and expertise to assist the DfT and DVSA in the development of policy, and the legislation which delivers that policy.

This work has included advising on the legislation produced to deliver the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and specifically the extension of operator licensing to light goods vehicles that carry goods for hire or reward internationally.

The commissioners offered expert opinion and insight as to how the policies could be translated into an effective regulation and on their practical application. The work undertaken has led to the successful implementation of the changes and is another example of the positive benefits of collaborative working across the different authorities for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

In addition, commissioners consulted with stakeholders within the industry to understand their perspectives on the new legislation and the changes required from the Senior Traffic Commissioner's Statutory Directions and Statutory Guidance to deliver it.

The development of the technology around autonomous vehicles has seen traffic commissioners contribute to the consultations undertaken by the Law Commission and to work with the DfT and industry around the regulation required for these new vehicles. Commissioners look forward to the introduction of the pilot schemes for these vehicles in the coming months.

The commissioners wish to see progress on the recommendations set out in the Department's Triennial Implementation Plan of 2015. In addition to the need to introduce interim licensing for the PSV industry and Tribunal Rules, the commissioners see real benefit in reviewing the environmental requirements which apply to goods vehicle operators only. There appears to be real opportunity to reduce the regulatory burden on those operators and where existing planning laws offer the necessary protections for local residents. The cost and reach of advertising for a single day, coupled with the limited power of the traffic commissioners with regards to environmental considerations, can give both false expectations to representors and cause avoidable delays in the determination of applications for businesses to start operating. It is now the time to pivot the regulatory regime to actually address the environmental challenges facing Great Britain.

There are other opportunities to introduce a more progressive regulatory system. There is a general public interest in the safety of our roads, but it would be impossible for regulators to police every operator and every vehicle, at all times. Operators must be able to trust their competitors to comply with the same safety standards, otherwise they will no longer compete on a level playing field. Improvements in the standards of restricted licence holders will ensure that they more closely align to those for standard licences.

Traffic commissioners and their small policy team were central to the solution which will allow GB operators working on music concerts, sporting and entertainment events to continue to lead in international cultural tours. In the same way, they have provided technical advice on the legal position relating to the operation of longer semi-trailers. Threats to the potential implementation of the extension of licensing to international van operators were avoided through the intervention of our policy team. We have been required to advise officials on diverse topics such as employment law, health and safety duties, the legal tests pertaining to independence, common law and Convention rights on the fairness of proceedings, detailed statutory interpretation of the 1995 Goods Act and 1981 PSV legislation, with accompanying Regulations, the applicability of tariffs to regulatory interventions, to name but a few. Traffic commissioners have been considered as a model for the regulation of autonomous vehicles.

In addition, traffic commissioners have continued to lead discussions with DfT officials and those in the devolved Governments, representatives of operators and the local authorities to ensure that there is flexibility in the registration requirements and around the implementation of Bus Open Data in England.

Local bus services

The provision of local bus services has been affected throughout the year by the pandemic. Even with the relaxation of restrictions, operators continue to face challenges as patronage remains below March 2020 levels and with uncertain future demand. These challenges are also faced by the local authorities who seek to ensure communities are served by reliable public transport.

Traffic commissioners have reacted with speed, working with operators, local authorities and the DfT to meet these challenges. The guidance issued on local services has been updated throughout the year to reflect the changing situation and to provide the necessary support to the industry, whilst balancing the needs of passengers as represented by the local authorities. Traffic commissioners wish to thank the various parties for their support and cooperation in this area.

The commissioners continue to work with the DfT and DVSA on how the Bus Open Data Service (BODS) can assist them in their role of regulating the performance of bus services. As that service becomes more established the benefits can be fully realised. It is hoped that those benefits will include more cases of poor performance being referred to traffic commissioners for consideration.

In the meantime, the traffic commissioners are working with DfT and others to ensure that operators comply with the regulations for open data and identify those operators who do not engage or comply with their obligations.

The planned work on reviewing how poor performance is measured has taken longer than planned. The last two years have hardly been typical. However, informal discussions have been

held with several stakeholders and a Call for Evidence is due to be published shortly to gather wider views from stakeholders.

Within the local bus service industry there will be significant change as a result of enhanced partnership schemes and franchising. This will lead to a number of local authorities who choose to take responsibility for the registration of local bus services. The Office of the Traffic Commissioner will need to respond to the changes this will necessitate.

Summaries from England, Scotland and Wales

As in previous years we have collated the collective observations of the traffic commissioners into defined narrative sections. Adopting this format, the following sections again combine those themes and observations of the traffic commissioners.

Traffic commissioners for England

Sarah Bell, Tim Blackmore, Nick Denton, Gerallt Evans, Kevin Rooney, Richard Turfitt

Entrants to the Road Haulage Industry

Elsewhere in this report there is reference to the increase in new applications being received for goods vehicle operator licences. In August 2021 the traffic commissioners undertook a survey of new operators, seeking to understand the reasons for this increase.

Understanding market trends, in order to be able to react to them, is important for the traffic commissioners in their efforts to support the industry. Amongst the information acquired the survey found that the largest individual factor for making an application was from businesses that previously ran smaller vehicles growing in size and a requirement for larger goods vehicles.

Another interesting finding from the survey was that two thirds of new operators are confident that they will expand their businesses within the next five years and so require authority for more vehicles. This demonstrates the current level of confidence in the freight industry.

The Decision-Making Process

Throughout the course of the year the traffic commissioners have published a number of decisions related to the more complicated and serious cases heard at public inquiries. By publishing these decisions, the commissioners hope to give more insight to the reasons behind their decision-making, and how they must balance the risk that the operator or driver presents, against the backdrop of challenging economic conditions that affect many operators.

Traffic commissioners do not take decisions to remove operators, transport managers and drivers from the industry lightly. They appreciate the impact on individuals and, in some cases, the wider community. Gross or repeated failures are likely to lead to severe action being taken by a traffic commissioner. The ultimate deterrent action is only taken where the level of non-compliance is such that continued access to the industry presents too high a risk to road safety, or to ensure fair competition for those operators who take the time and expense to run compliant and safe businesses.

The commissioners are mindful of the importance of their gatekeeping role to prevent people and businesses returning into the industry who have committed gross or repeated failures. Checks undertaken by the licensing teams acting under instruction from the traffic commissioners contribute directly to road safety. This can be evidenced through the number of applications that are refused as set out in tables 3 and 10. Many of these refusals are a direct result of the checks undertaken by the licensing team and the identification of matters of concern.

The evidence of non-compliance referred to the commissioners highlight the importance of operators and transport managers maintaining effective risk-based management systems. It is estimated that 85% of roadside fines for infringements could be avoided if the driver had performed a walkaround check before beginning a journey.

Certificates of Professional Competence (CPC)

Transport managers play an essential role in a successful transport operation. They have a statutory responsibility to continuously and effectively manage the transport operation. To do so, they must be equipped with the relevant knowledge to fulfil their obligations.

The legislation states that a person must attain their qualification in their country of residence. Traffic commissioners have noted a number of people presenting certificates issued outside of the United Kingdom, despite the person having been resident in the UK for a number of years.

The traffic commissioners do not accept a certificate of convenience. Transport managers who have gone to another country because they find the exams easier can expect close scrutiny of their applications to see whether they can meet the requirement to effectively and continuously manage transport operations in Great Britain. The commissioners want to maintain robust standards and will continue to take action against deficient operations and management.

Load Security

Traffic commissioners have worked to raise awareness of the need for operators and drivers to ensure the safety and security of their loads. The unsafe loading of vehicles poses a serious risk to other road users and pedestrians. Commissioners are particularly concerned with the number of cases referred to them where tipper vehicles have been poorly loaded and not correctly sheeted.

The Health and Safety Executive has a range of useful resources available to operators and we recommend that operators make use of the various resources available, particularly taking note of the factsheet on sheeting. This, and other resources are available at:

www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/information/sheeting.htm
www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/resources.htm

Operators are reminded that the Upper Tribunal has highlighted the need for operators to know of their obligations and be aware of the guidance available to them. They can be taken to have read that published material.

Maintenance

Those providing maintenance services for operators have an important role in ensuring that the vehicles operated on our roads are safe to do so. There is no current requirement for maintenance providers be formally qualified. There is a general expectation that individual contractors are competent, but that may not be the case. As vehicle engineering becomes more complex, there is an obvious argument for individual contractors to have formal qualifications so that standards can be maintained and a level playing field be retained for all operators.

Traction Only Services

In several high-profile cases this year it has been suggested that some trailer suppliers (including those based offshore) are avoiding responsibilities to ensure safe operation of trailers on GB roads. The lack of adequate arrangements regarding regular and frequent brake testing has been a prominent failing. The potential impact on British roads is significant and the traffic commissioners have felt the need to issue several warnings regarding this to companies involved in this type of third-party trailer operation.

For the avoidance of doubt, operators providing traction-only services to third-party trailers are responsible in law for the condition of that trailer when in use. Transport managers are also required by law to manage the transport operation continuously and effectively. The operator's licence requires "*satisfactory facilities and arrangements for maintaining the vehicles used under the licence in a fit and serviceable condition*". In that context, "vehicles" includes any trailer (including those from abroad) being drawn. An operator providing traction-only services must have trailer authority on that licence and must specify an inspection period. The trailer provider is likely to have its own inspection periods, which should be based in part on the age and characteristics of the trailers and work involved. However, the operator needs to satisfy themselves that it is appropriate. The operator must ensure that any trailer it operates meets the stated frequency for inspection. If the operator cannot satisfy themselves that a suitable assessment has taken place, then the operator must make their own assessment, as per the declared intervals.

Operators involved in this type of work should refer to the current DVSA Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness, the link to the brake testing guidance, and may be further assisted by reference to the IRTE publication: Roadworthiness: Industry Best Practice for third party trailer operators, which includes a suggested "Co-operation request letter to trailer owner".

Responsible suppliers of trailers have already taken the advice of DVSA to ensure that operators have access to relevant information which indicates the annual test expiry, the date of the last Preventative Maintenance Inspection, for trailers not fitted with electronic brake performance monitoring the date of last roller brake test and to confirm that this was laden, and contact details for reporting of defects. Drivers may also require additional training on conducting an effective walk-around check.

Driver Welfare

The availability and health of professional drivers is rightly a matter of national concern given the reliance placed on the transport industries. There have been considerable efforts to address the shortage of professional drivers during the past year. Responsible operators recognise that this cannot be at the expense of safety, which places those same drivers and other road users at risk. There have been a number of studies published on the impact to driver reaction times, including issues such as reduced sleep.

Like many contributing to the national effort during the pandemic, operators and drivers continued to work during the uncertainty of the pandemic and as to how the virus was transmitted. The Contingency Statutory Document issued in advance of the pandemic identified features which might be taken into account when managing operations during the restrictions. The decrease in traffic at least during the first lockdown has been reported extensively, but so have the efforts of those who worked at the front line during that period. Those efforts should not be under-estimated, and the majority of operators and drivers did so in a compliant manner,

deserving of the trust placed in them by traffic commissioners, on behalf of the British public.

We take this opportunity to recognise the additional pressures placed on drivers. HSE's publicly available guidance describes stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'. It recognises that those suffering from stress may not be best placed to make decisions about necessary control measures. The pandemic led to considerable change in usual work patterns, but the safe management of drivers has always been fundamental to road safety. As a consequence, drivers must feel able to report issues with their health and to talk about their problems. Driving can be a solitary job, placing drivers at even greater risk.

Goods vehicles are essential for delivering products upon which our economy and society rely, but those vehicles are useless without qualified and healthy drivers. As a society, we must not lose sight of the importance of the driver and that driver's welfare; that includes their mental health. That challenge needs to be recognised across an industry, and where it may be harder to challenge societal expectations and gender stereotypes.

Traffic Commissioner for Scotland

Claire Gilmore

As the country emerges from the shadow of the COVID pandemic, our industries here in Scotland are working hard to meet the challenges of delivering in the 'new normal'. The increase in new entrants to the haulage industry seen by colleagues across GB is reflected in Scotland and, despite challenging economic circumstances, there is positivity and optimism for the future on the part of operators of heavy goods vehicles.

The challenges faced by the PSV industry are different, the pandemic having significantly impacting passenger numbers and confidence. Traffic commissioners will continue to support operators where we can as they continue to deal with fluctuating patronage and the changes in services.

Throughout the year, I have continued to work with my fellow commissioners to update and develop guidance for our industries. I adopt the comments of my English colleagues and would, as ever, urge readers to note them.

Issues such as the driver shortage, and the shortage of other skilled staff to support our industries, remain a challenge across GB despite recent efforts to increase numbers. Access to properly equipped high quality maintenance services, particularly for operators in rural parts of Scotland, is often limited. We must strive to ensure that proper roller brake testing facilities can be accessed regularly, and without difficulty, wherever operators are located. Such access is imperative for road safety.

We have now returned to business as usual with our regulatory work in OTC Scotland. Nonetheless, we continue to use technology to our advantage in delivering effective, value for money, services. Some public inquiries and hearings therefore, where appropriate, will continue to be held remotely making best use of tribunal resources.

The volume of devolved Scottish work undertaken by my office has remained consistent this year. However, the additional pressures on my office in administering the temporary local bus service registration arrangements have continued to impact as we have tailored ongoing

support for PSV operators returning services to the road. Discussions regarding the potential for Scottish Government support for my devolved functions remains ongoing.

I referred last year to the opportunities for modernisation of the bus registration process, and I am engaging with colleagues in Transport Scotland as we look to see what improvements can be made to the current system. Work on developing the regulations and guidance which will support the implementation of much of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 also continues and my office will continue to support Transport Scotland with that work.

Low Emission Zones are soon to be introduced in Scotland's four major cities. Operators will need to be aware of the new requirements and ensure that they comply with them. Failure to do so may impact on their reputation.

As our industries move beyond the challenges of the pandemic there is much to look forward to. There are exciting innovations in vehicle technology and Scotland has seen the first autonomous bus service in the UK, CAVForth, begin to operate. I have no doubt that Scottish operators will continue to innovate and to run high quality, compliant, transport operations in the coming year.

Maintaining road safety and ensuring fair competition, as ever, remain my priorities and I look forward to working with operators, partners and industry stakeholders in the to ensure those are delivered.

Traffic Commissioner for Wales

Victoria Davies

The transport industry in Wales has worked incredibly hard to recover from the effects of the pandemic during this reporting year. So too have the dedicated OTC staff members who support me.

I am pleased to report that public inquiry, driver conduct and preliminary hearing numbers are almost at pre-pandemic levels in Wales once again, despite resourcing pressures faced by the compliance team throughout the year. Although a recruitment exercise was successful in recruiting another bilingual caseworker earlier this year, this coincided with the loss of the team's most experienced caseworker. Another recruitment campaign is currently underway and I hope that OTC Wales will have the full staff complement of 3 bilingual caseworkers, along with senior team leader and secretarial support, by this summer.

My colleagues in England have already commented on the continuing issues caused by the national driver shortage, and associated concerns about drivers' welfare. I echo those comments and am particularly concerned about the worsening situation as to the shortage of PSV drivers in Wales, where the position appears to have got markedly worse than in England and Scotland over the past 6 months. Recent industry estimates indicate a shortage of PSV drivers in Wales of 20% in March 2022, compared to 13% in September 2021. As the lead traffic commissioner on driver issues, I have engaged in initiatives exploring how to address the shortage, including the UK Government's Review of the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence regime. Both industry and government recognise that there is more work to be done to address this problem, without compromising the high standards that we all expect from our professional drivers.

The easing of restrictions this year has allowed me to engage face to face with the industries that I regulate and other key stakeholders in Wales. This is an important part of my role helping me to understand the issues facing the bus and freight industries in Wales, but also enabling me to explain to operators and others what my priorities and concerns are as regulator. Educating industry and supporting compliant operators are key objectives for me and I intend to work closely with Welsh Government officials and others over the coming year to pursue further opportunities to do that. This year I have spoken at conferences and events organised by Logistics UK, the Road Haulage Association, the Confederation of Passenger Transport Cymru, the Welsh Freight Council, Wales Road Transport Advisory Group, and the Welsh Public Sector Fleet Group. I was delighted to be invited to attend a multi-agency vehicle enforcement operation initiated by Gwent police targeting commercial vehicles at the DVSA Coldra site during this reporting year. It was a great example of partnership working involving organisations, including the police, DVSA, Newport City Council, and HSE, who share a commitment to road safety.

This year I have liaised closely with the Welsh Government, local authorities, and the bus industry to address bus registration issues posed by the pandemic. I have also engaged with the Welsh Government on bus policy issues and as part of the Bus Partnership Group. The Welsh Government recently unveiled plans to bring forward legislation to change the way bus services are delivered across Wales. I look forward to discussions with officials about proposals for bus reform, particularly in the context of bus registrations, over the coming months.

Acknowledgements

It has been a difficult year once more in the goods vehicle and PSV industries, with costs increasing and shortages affecting all operators, so we would like to acknowledge the hard work of our compliant operators in keeping our GB roads as safe as possible.

Traffic commissioners are the only tribunal sponsored by DfT. We operate within a unique structure, which requires a deep knowledge of the work and an understanding of the nuances associated with the exercise of judicial functions. We, therefore record our appreciation to Duncan Price, Deputy Director, Road Freight Regulation and his team as the sponsorship function transfers within DfT's Motoring and Freight Directorate. We look forward to continuing that close working with the Deputy Directors responsible for Motoring Services Sponsorship, Rosie Snashall and Kate Warren. Those officials know the value which stakeholders place on the independence of the decision-making process and how it has provided great flexibility during the last two years. Traffic commissioners are committed to high-quality decision making and the application of robust standards. This extends to the licensing function where the requirements are set by Parliament.

We thank the OTC staff who provide our support, the DVSA examiners, and others elsewhere who demonstrate their dedication to safer roads despite the challenging times.

Pre-Covid figures suggest that the targets set by the Traffic Commissioners' strategic objectives can be achieved and the listing of cases compares favourably with other tribunals. Innovations in the tribunal process require reliable IT. However, this can only be achieved with the right staff in place. Roles at all grades require a degree of specialism and a thorough understanding of statute, guidance and operational documents. Successive reviews have recognised that recruitment can take up to six months, meaning it can take one year before a competent candidate is in post. Any significant amount of turnover represents a risk to the effectiveness of the whole function. The time to recruit and then retain qualified staff remains a real challenge. We therefore recognise the efforts of Marian Kitson, DVSA's Director of Enforcement who has worked closely with Commissioners in preparation for the introduction of international operators of light goods vehicles into the licensing system. She and her team recognised the considerable pressures on the scheme and have worked to ensure that the OTC has sufficient flexibility to meet the challenges of extending licensing and in reducing the backlog left by the pandemic and increase in applications.

We again thank our Deputy Traffic Commissioners, who have offered considerable support to their full-time colleagues. Deputy Traffic Commissioners allow for flexibility within the jurisdiction and can be deployed to relieve particular pressures or backlogs, so we were sad to see the departure of Jayne Salt from that role.

By the time of publication of this report, our valued colleague, Nick Denton, will have retired from his full-time post as Traffic Commissioner for the West Midlands. We are delighted and relieved that he will remain as a Deputy Traffic Commissioner. In his long and rich career, he has served twenty different Secretaries of State in different roles. He was also seconded to be private Secretary to the Leader of the House of Commons, worked for six months in the European Commission, followed by four and a half years as First Secretary (Transport) in UKREP Brussels and then three years in Montreal as the UK's representative at the International Civil Aviation Organisation. He was appointed as a Traffic Commissioner in 2012. He first sat in the London and Southeast area before moving to the Birmingham office, where he has enjoyed the support of a small and close-knit team. We would like to thank him for his substantial contribution to our work.

Risk Assurance Statement

This is the first time that the Audit & Risk sub-committee of the Traffic Commissioner Board has contributed an assurance statement to the Annual Report to the Secretary of State. This development reflects an increasing maturity in our governance arrangements and has allowed a welcome opportunity to audit our risk management processes against the Orange Book: *Management of Risk Principles and Concepts*.

The Traffic Commissioner's risk culture is defined, communicated, and promoted through the Governance Policy Guidance⁸ and is periodically assessed by the Audit and Risk sub-committee, utilising established audit and reporting methods (including exception reports relating to the delegated functions). Overall oversight is exercised by the Traffic Commissioner Board, but with designated traffic commissioner leads in areas such as Quality Assurance and Data. There are also agreed plans for continuous improvement in other areas such as the provision of IT systems, through DVSA. Traffic commissioners continue to be supported by DVSA technical teams and during the last year, this has delivered improved management information, in support of Board decision making.

One of the particular characteristics of the Traffic Commissioner Board structure is highly developed scrutiny with the object of avoiding unintended consequences. Emerging risks are identified in the development of policy. Traffic commissioners now enjoy the benefit of a dedicated Grade 7 Policy Manager and an established Corporate Office, although staffing remains an issue. In addition, policies relating to the judicial functions are the subject of statutory consultation, which further assists in decision making by the Traffic Commissioner Board.

The Audit and Risk sub-committee meetings are attended by senior Office of the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) staff (employed by DVSA). There are published policies in respect of individual traffic commissioner performance, although limits as to how those apply to the exercise of judicial functions. OTC staff are employed by DVSA with separate HR arrangements, but delegations can be removed from individual staff members. The Audit and Risk Quality Assurance Working Group is used to communicate functional standards and monitor adherence. It meets every two months at present.

The ability to undertake dynamic assessment of risks and the consideration of mitigating actions was fully tested within the context of the pandemic and the changing circumstances during the recovery process. The risk appetite, but more importantly the ability of the Traffic Commissioner Board to respond to risks, is to a large degree dictated by the relationship with the sponsoring Department and the Executive agency delegated to support commissioners. There has been considerable work to improve the latter relationship through the sharing of immediate risks. The risk management arrangements recognise the limited influence which the Traffic Commissioner Board has in respect of spend, recruitment and the deployment of resources.

In summary, a robust quality assurance and reporting scheme has been developed, with further work required to ensure its consistent implementation across the different areas of the business. Risks are subject to scrutiny by the Audit and Risk sub-committee. That draws on the OTC risk register to inform the high-level risk register prepared on behalf of the commissioners. We have made considerable progress in managing data risks, which will inform the approach to wider risk management, and we will continue to feed into DVSA's assessment of risk. Traffic commissioners have taken a view regarding external accreditation of the licensing services in

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/collections/traffic-commissioners-administrative-policy-guidance

favour of a scheme which is fit for the whole business.

The Audit and Risk sub-committee has also identified the need for a more formal reporting process whereby higher-level risks are communicated to the sponsoring Department. At present traffic commissioners use the statutory Annual Report to communicate the risks faced and our response. We anticipate that the Public Body Reform programme will offer a potential vehicle to examine other processes, but, as the approach to risk management matures further, there will be a need for Audit & Risk sub-committee members to undertake professional development.

Gerallt Evans

Chair of the Audit and Risk sub-committee and Traffic Commissioner for the North-West of England

Statistics

Please note that some of the statistics set out in the tables are compiled manually by OTC staff. This can result in the potential for minor inaccuracies occurring within the statistics. To minimise the potential for inaccuracies the figures have been subject to a validation exercise undertaken by OTC managers who have provided the traffic commissioners with their assurance that the figures are accurate to the best of their knowledge.

In particular, we draw your attention to the footnote in Table 13 relating to Local Bus Service Registrations and the accounting error identified in annual reports prior to 2021.

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TABLE 1: GOODS VEHICLE OPERATORS - LICENCES CONTINUED AND IN ISSUE

	Type of Licence				Total number of licences in issue	Total continuations sought	Continuations not sought
	Year	Restricted	Standard National	Standard International			
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	6305	4641	2346	13292	1809	426
	2020-21	6330	4457	2158	12945	1869	355
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	5116	4116	1380	10612	1458	305
	2020-21	5100	4097	1309	10506	1597	337
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	4995	3470	1111	9576	1368	308
	2020-21	5038	3482	1075	9595	1478	330
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	4406	2550	1187	8143	1086	287
	2020-21	4454	2536	1123	8113	1218	335
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	3994	2932	1095	8021	1061	203
	2020-21	3942	2819	968	7729	1150	231
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	5424	3564	1379	10367	1475	343
	2020-21	5473	3504	1325	10302	1500	332
Scotland	2021-22	2608	2413	579	5600	807	168
	2020-21	2632	2413	568	5613	903	201
Wales	2021-22	2533	1742	433	4708	673	170
	2020-21	2536	1783	406	4725	711	160
Total	2021-22	35381	25428	9510	70319	9737	2210
	2020-21	35505	25091	8932	69528	10426	2281

TABLE 2: GOODS VEHICLE OPERATORS - NUMBERS OF SPECIFIED VEHICLES ON LICENCES

	Specified vehicles by type of licence				Total number of specified vehicles	Certified copies of UK Licence for the Community
	Year	Restricted	Standard National	Standard International		
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	17342	37188	20420	74950	7780
	2020-21	17040	36000	18983	72023	7762
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	13929	31261	15088	60278	5699
	2020-21	13641	30439	14746	58826	5738
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	13464	27208	12431	53103	4525
	2020-21	13179	27062	11784	52025	4462
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	12678	20385	9359	42422	4455
	2020-21	12750	20111	8853	41714	4389
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	10095	21282	10373	41750	3404
	2020-21	9786	20658	10078	40522	3529
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	13733	28740	11655	54128	4831
	2020-21	13684	27839	11118	52641	4657
Scotland	2021-22	6403	20031	5539	31973	2454
	2020-21	6489	19845	5424	31758	2419
Wales	2021-22	5661	11236	3401	20298	1528
	2020-21	5627	10877	3274	19778	1465
Total	2021-22	93305	197331	88266	378902	34676
	2020-21	92196	192831	84260	369287	34421

Note: UK Licence for the Community replaced Community Licences in December 2020.

The operator is also issued with an office copy and certified copies which have to be carried in vehicles on international journeys.

TABLE 3: GOODS VEHICLE OPERATORS - APPLICATIONS FOR NEW LICENCES AND TO VARY LICENCES											
	Year	Number of applications processed		Number of licences issued in full		Number of applications refused		Number of applications withdrawn		Number of licences issued with environmental restrictions	
		New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	1533	1836	1329	1771	194	65	128	96	5	10
	2020-21	1347	1595	1229	1544	111	51	102	75	14	7
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	892	1251	789	1224	94	27	85	64	2	2
	2020-21	764	1059	689	1030	73	29	74	52	5	3
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	762	1054	654	1013	98	41	62	54	3	4
	2020-21	758	933	664	910	82	23	56	37	6	5
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	838	1001	728	958	103	43	94	56	8	7
	2020-21	734	913	613	858	119	55	106	65	30	25
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	869	875	769	850	95	25	53	35	4	4
	2020-21	722	806	612	771	102	35	46	46	10	9
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	871	1285	769	1267	92	18	83	49	7	8
	2020-21	772	1070	700	1048	62	22	67	51	22	12
Scotland	2021-22	383	602	345	585	38	17	26	29	1	0
	2020-21	313	515	273	507	33	8	25	24	5	4
Wales	2021-22	347	411	309	395	36	16	29	21	1	0
	2020-21	324	369	284	355	37	14	23	20	3	2
Total	2021-22	6495	8315	5692	8063	750	252	560	404	31	35
	2020-21	5734	7260	5064	7023	619	237	499	370	95	67

TABLE 4: GOODS VEHICLE OPERATORS - RESULTS OF OPPOSED APPLICATIONS FOR NEW LICENCES AND FOR PUBLISHABLE VARIATIONS TO LICENCES

	Number of applications received			Number of applications processed		Number of applications opposed		Opposed applications issued in full		Opposed applications issued with restrictions	
	Year	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	1704	1956	1533	1836	16	25	6	6	5	10
	2020-21	1690	1805	1347	1595	16	17	3	7	4	4
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	997	1267	892	1251	8	8	1	5	2	2
	2020-21	924	1195	764	1059	3	7	1	5	1	0
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	829	1113	762	1054	9	9	1	4	3	4
	2020-21	896	1050	758	933	4	11	1	5	3	3
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	898	993	838	1001	25	25	2	12	8	7
	2020-21	935	1004	734	913	29	23	7	6	13	13
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	929	909	869	875	6	9	0	2	4	4
	2020-21	864	895	722	806	11	4	2	3	4	1
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	935	1236	871	1285	18	19	2	6	7	8
	2020-21	953	1240	772	1070	11	11	5	4	3	3
Scotland	2021-22	384	590	383	602	5	2	0	2	1	0
	2020-21	391	601	313	515	3	6	0	1	2	4
Wales	2021-22	373	411	347	411	4	7	2	4	1	0
	2020-21	381	437	324	369	1	3	0	2	1	1
Total	2021-22	7049	8475	6495	8315	91	104	14	41	31	35
	2020-21	7034	8227	5734	7260	78	82	19	33	31	29

TABLE 4 (CONTINUED)							
	Year	Opposed applications refused		Opposed applications withdrawn		Number of applications heard at Public Inquiry	
		New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	2	4	3	5	1	2
	2020-21	5	0	4	5	0	0
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	0	1	5	0	0	0
	2020-21	0	2	1	0	0	0
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	4	0	1	1	1	0
	2020-21	0	1	0	2	1	0
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	7	2	8	4	1	4
	2020-21	3	1	4	5	1	0
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	2	2	0	1	1	1
	2020-21	3	0	2	0	0	0
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	3	2	6	3	2	1
	2020-21	2	0	1	4	0	0
Scotland	2021-22	2	0	2	0	2	0
	2020-21	1	0	0	1	0	0
Wales	2021-22	0	0	1	3	0	0
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2021-22	20	11	26	17	8	8
	2020-21	14	4	12	17	2	0

TABLE 5: GOODS VEHICLE OPERATORS - COMPLAINTS AGAINST EXISTING OPERATING CENTRES

	Year	Total licences reviewed where complaints received	Number called to public inquiry	Continued without change	Continued with new restrictions	Removal of operating centre
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	4	2	0	4	0
	2020-21	3	0	1	0	2
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	6	1	0	6	0
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	5	0	4	1	0
	2020-21	3	0	0	3	0
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	5	1	1	3	1
	2020-21	5	0	4	1	0
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	2	0	2	0	0
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	6	0	2	4	0
	2020-21	1	0	0	1	0
Scotland	2021-22	2	0	1	1	0
	2020-21	1	0	1	0	0
Wales	2021-22	2	0	1	1	0
	2020-21	1	0	1	0	0
Total	2021-22	30	4	9	20	1
	2020-21	16	0	9	5	2

TABLE 6: GOODS VEHICLE OPERATORS - ACTION TAKEN AT PUBLIC INQUIRY FOR NON-COMPLIANCE									
	Year	Number of public inquiries completed	Licence revocations	Licence suspensions	Curtailment or conditions imposed	Notification of formal warning	Disqualification of licence holder under Section 28	Disqualification of transport manager	No action taken
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	135	50	13	43	25	12	25	7
	2020-21	85	40	19	44	16	9	22	4
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	167	56	6	60	43	10	24	7
	2020-21	72	16	2	20	42	3	1	6
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	104	19	12	37	64	6	3	5
	2020-21	91	31	8	31	48	13	8	16
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	194	70	29	46	35	19	16	19
	2020-21	88	27	15	23	17	13	8	4
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	101	40	16	20	21	20	18	10
	2020-21	68	27	12	19	13	19	22	2
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	105	30	6	14	46	6	12	10
	2020-21	66	16	3	9	32	2	4	4
Scotland	2021-22	60	20	2	15	19	6	10	5
	2020-21	26	3	5	11	11	0	2	4
Wales	2021-22	54	17	5	6	23	3	11	4
	2020-21	31	7	4	7	17	3	4	2
Total	2021-22	920	302	89	241	276	82	119	67
	2020-21	527	167	68	164	196	62	71	42

Note: the figures in the last seven columns may not equal the number of public inquiries completed, as more than one action may be taken against a licence holder.

TABLE 7: GOODS VEHICLE OPERATORS - RESULTS OF UNOPPOSED NEW AND VARIATION APPLICATIONS HEARD AT PUBLIC INQUIRY													
	Year	Number of applications determined at public inquiry		Applications granted as applied for		Applications granted in part		Applications granted with conditions		Applications refused		Applications withdrawn	
		New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations	New licences	Publishable variations
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	53	40	18	13	3	5	0	0	30	18	2	4
	2020-21	39	21	14	6	3	3	10	1	12	10	0	1
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	40	26	20	14	3	1	0	0	16	11	1	0
	2020-21	36	14	16	7	3	0	1	0	12	5	4	2
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	24	34	16	19	0	2	0	0	6	10	2	3
	2020-21	26	10	14	5	1	1	0	0	10	4	1	0
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	70	50	32	21	10	1	1	0	17	23	10	5
	2020-21	59	38	29	19	4	3	4	0	17	16	5	0
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	42	23	18	12	3	2	0	0	20	8	1	1
	2020-21	29	16	18	8	0	1	0	0	11	7	0	0
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	28	34	14	22	0	4	0	0	14	8	0	0
	2020-21	29	4	19	3	0	0	0	0	10	1	0	0
Scotland	2021-22	31	17	24	8	0	3	0	0	7	5	0	1
	2020-21	22	8	11	3	1	1	4	1	6	2	0	1
Wales	2021-22	27	11	18	6	3	2	11	0	5	3	1	0
	2020-21	12	1	9	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0
Total	2021-22	315	235	160	115	22	20	12	0	115	86	17	14
	2020-21	252	112	130	51	12	9	20	2	80	46	10	4

Note: this table only shows applications that were heard at public inquiry whereas table 3 shows the total number of applications determined.

TABLE 8: BUS AND COACH OPERATORS - LICENCES CONTINUED AND IN ISSUE						
	Year	Restricted	Standard National	Standard International	Total number of licences in issue	Total continuations sought
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	225	323	267	815	117
	2020-21	267	335	280	882	131
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	347	354	268	969	141
	2020-21	409	366	279	1054	147
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	363	365	211	939	155
	2020-21	422	375	214	1011	133
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	237	284	332	853	135
	2020-21	264	300	358	922	115
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	173	215	173	561	80
	2020-21	198	211	174	583	81
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	249	291	240	780	110
	2020-21	274	298	240	812	114
Scotland	2021-22	196	362	128	686	112
	2020-21	229	370	133	732	120
Wales	2021-22	212	198	145	555	84
	2020-21	248	205	153	606	81
Total	2021-22	2002	2392	1764	6158	934
	2020-21	2311	2460	1831	6602	922

TABLE 9: BUS AND COACH OPERATORS - DISCS IN ISSUE

	Year	Restricted	Standard National	Standard International	Total discs
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	327	5521	4784	10632
	2020-21	387	5687	4845	10919
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	510	6816	5114	12440
	2020-21	597	6125	5812	12534
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	519	6349	3853	10721
	2020-21	603	6348	3995	10946
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	357	12846	5741	18944
	2020-21	388	10960	8346	19694
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	244	4463	2786	7493
	2020-21	274	4432	2700	7406
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	385	6436	4925	11746
	2020-21	419	6429	4923	11771
Scotland	2021-22	284	6216	4463	10963
	2020-21	332	6187	4434	10953
Wales	2021-22	325	2417	2901	5643
	2020-21	375	2468	2914	5757
Total	2021-22	2951	51064	34567	88582
	2020-21	3375	48636	37969	89980

TABLE 10: BUS AND COACH OPERATORS - APPLICATIONS FOR NEW LICENCES AND TO VARY EXISTING LICENCES											
	Year	Number of applications processed		Number of licences granted in full		Number of licences granted with less than applied for		Number of applications refused		Number of applications withdrawn	
		New licences	Major variations	New licences	Major variations	New licences	Major variations	New licences	Major variations	New licences	Major variations
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	60	76	35	60	1	1	11	5	14	11
	2020-21	87	81	43	68	0	0	21	3	23	10
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	76	65	35	55	0	0	22	0	19	10
	2020-21	102	76	44	67	3	1	31	3	27	6
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	73	51	40	43	1	0	21	3	12	5
	2020-21	76	93	45	85	3	0	15	2	16	6
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	70	74	40	62	0	1	20	1	10	11
	2020-21	93	66	43	61	2	0	26	3	24	2
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	57	44	34	39	0	0	11	0	12	5
	2020-21	73	42	34	35	0	1	20	2	19	5
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	69	49	35	44	0	0	18	3	16	2
	2020-21	61	58	38	49	0	0	12	0	11	9
Scotland	2021-22	45	52	22	46	0	0	10	2	13	4
	2020-21	49	51	30	46	1	0	8	1	11	4
Wales	2021-22	39	38	20	33	1	0	5	2	14	3
	2020-21	39	39	30	29	1	0	5	2	4	8
Total	2021-22	489	449	261	382	3	2	118	16	110	51
	2020-21	580	506	307	440	10	2	138	16	135	50

Note: figures included applications treated as withdrawn because the fee had not been paid

TABLE 11: BUS AND COACH OPERATORS - RESULTS OF APPLICATIONS HEARD AT PUBLIC INQUIRY													
	Number of applications determined at public inquiry			Applications granted as applied for		Applications granted in part		Applications granted with conditions		Applications refused		Applications withdrawn	
	Year	New licences	Major variations	New licences	Major variations	New licences	Major variations	New licences	Major variations	New licences	Major variations	New licences	Major variations
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	1	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
	2020-21	4	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	4	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
	2020-21	9	7	1	3	1	1	0	0	5	3	2	0
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	4	5	1	4	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0
	2020-21	9	3	3	1	0	1	2	0	4	1	0	0
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	5	5	4	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
	2020-21	6	2	4	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	2020-21	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	8	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	0
	2020-21	6	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0
Scotland	2021-22	5	2	2	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0
	2020-21	3	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Wales	2021-22	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
	2020-21	5	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Total	2021-22	30	19	11	12	1	2	1	0	15	4	2	0
	2020-21	46	15	17	7	3	2	7	0	16	6	3	0

Note: this table only shows applications heard at public inquiry whereas table 10 shows the total number of applications determined.

TABLE 12: BUS AND COACH OPERATORS - SPECIAL RESTRICTED PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLE OPERATOR LICENCES

	Year	Licence applications processed	Licences issued	Applications refused	Applications withdrawn and grants not taken up	Licences continued at five-year review date	Licences not continued at five-year review date	Total number of licences in issue
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	1	1	9
	2020-21	2	1	1	0	0	0	10
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	2	0	0	2	2	1	9
	2020-21	5	0	0	4	1	2	12
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	1	0	0	1	1	0	5
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	2	1	0	1	0	0	4
	2020-21	3	1	0	2	0	0	3
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	2020-21	2	0	1	2	0	0	1
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	1	2	2
	2020-21	1	0	0	2	0	2	4
Scotland	2021-22	1	0	0	1	1	0	37
	2020-21	4	4	0	1	9	1	38
Wales	2021-22	0	0	0	0	2	0	8
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Total	2021-22	6	1	0	5	8	4	75
	2020-21	17	6	2	11	10	5	81

Note: the figures in columns 2-4 may not equal the figures shown in the 'licence applications processed' column, as applications may have been carried over from the previous year or carried forward into next year.

TABLE 13: LOCAL BUS SERVICE REGISTRATIONS - LIVE, NEW, VARIATIONS AND CANCELLED LOCAL BUS SERVICES 31 MARCH 2020 31 MARCH 2019

	Year	Live local bus registrations	Applications processed		Applications accepted		Refused	Withdrawn	Existing registrations cancelled
			New	Variations	New	Variations			
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	1696	191	1785	191	1785	0	0	205
	2020-21	1861	177	2448	177	2448	0	0	193
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	2477	436	2292	436	2292	0	0	742
	2020-21	2770	324	3842	324	3842	0	0	375
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	2679	487	1952	487	1952	0	0	560
	2020-21	2847	258	2393	258	2393	0	0	254
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	976	102	779	102	779	0	0	138
	2020-21	1029	26	1611	26	1611	0	0	31
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	1136	117	1332	117	1332	0	0	524
	2020-21	1532	153	1789	153	1789	0	0	138
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	1977	214	2010	214	2010	0	0	219
	2020-21	2028	207	3240	207	3240	0	0	200
Scotland	2021-22	2130	192	1714	192	1714	0	0	209
	2020-21	2153	249	3478	249	3478	0	0	295
Wales	2021-22	1194	59	889	59	889	0	0	50
	2020-21	1198	39	1483	39	1483	0	0	35
Total	2021-22	14265	1798	12753	1798	12753	0	0	2647
	2020-21	15418	1433	20284	1433	20284	0	0	1521

Notes: The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic resulted in a large number of urgent and temporary variations. These were initially for a specified time-period but as the pandemic developed the expiry date was changed, and then left open to be determined. This may have a minor impact on the accuracy of the figures detailed in the table but the numbers are expected to settle in future years.

It has been identified that the total number of live local bus registrations have been presented incorrectly by the Office of the Traffic Commissioner for a number of years. Services running in multiple local authority areas have been recorded multiple times, e.g. a service running between the West Midlands and Staffordshire has been presented as two services when it should have been counted as a single service. This has now been rectified and accounts for the significantly lower figure for the years following 2019/20.

TABLE 14: FLEXIBLE BUS REGISTRATIONS

	Year	Received	Accepted	Refused	Withdrawn	Varied	Cancelled
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	18	20	0	1	10	2
	2020-21	30	42	0	0	25	7
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	6	12	0	0	8	1
	2020-21	40	27	0	9	20	2
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	17	17	0	0	0	5
	2020-21	7	7	2	0	4	0
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	3	3	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	3	4	0	0	2	0
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	6	6	0	0	2	1
	2020-21	30	29	0	1	0	9
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	3	2	0	0	2	0
	2020-21	7	7	0	0	5	2
Scotland	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	1	1	0	0	0	0
Wales	2021-22	11	12	0	0	5	1
	2020-21	15	15	0	1	2	3
Total	2021-22	64	72	0	1	27	10
	2020-21	133	132	2	11	58	23

Notes: The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic resulted in a large number of urgent and temporary variations. These were initially for a specified time-period but as the pandemic developed the expiry date was changed, and then left open to be determined. This may have a minor impact on the accuracy of the figures detailed in the table but the numbers are expected to settle in future years.

TABLE 15: BUS AND COACH OPERATORS - NUMBER OF STANDARD, LARGE AND COMMUNITY BUS PERMITS ISSUED

	Year	Standard Bus Permits Issued by			Total	Large Bus Permits	Community Bus Permits
		Traffic Commissioners	Local authorities	Designated bodies			
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	542	315	481	1338	0	28
	2020-21	256	275	133	664	0	42
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	329	315	202	846	1	15
	2020-21	555	157	137	849	8	35
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	367	147	255	769	1	4
	2020-21	220	108	184	512	0	3
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	638	226	449	1313	75	20
	2020-21	673	118	290	1081	22	23
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	238	187	155	580	9	0
	2020-21	232	168	71	471	1	20
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	512	337	325	1174	1	55
	2020-21	533	235	299	1067	6	19
Scotland	2021-22	143	152	121	416	3	10
	2020-21	137	105	90	332	2	10
Wales	2021-22	71	58	72	201	21	3
	2020-21	157	44	41	242	6	11
Total	2021-22	2840	1737	2060	6637	111	135
	2020-21	2763	1210	1245	5218	45	163

Note: The numbers of permits issued by local authorities or designated bodies cannot be verified. A small number of permit issuing bodies have been unable to provide returns, or have provided incomplete returns to the traffic commissioners. The figures provided for permits issued by the traffic commissioners are correct.

TABLE 16: BUS AND COACH OPERATORS - ACTION TAKEN AT PUBLIC INQUIRY FOR NON COMPLIANCE (UNDER THE PUBLIC PASSENGER VEHICLES ACT 1981)

	Year	Number of public inquiries completed	Licence revocations	Licence suspensions	Reduction of vehicles authorised on licence	Other conditions imposed on licence	Formal warning given	Disqualification of licence holder under the 1985 Act	Disqualification of transport manager	No action taken
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	6	3	0	3	0	0	1	2	0
	2020-21	8	4	2	3	0	0	0	3	0
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	12	5	0	4	0	2	0	1	1
	2020-21	8	3	0	2	0	6	0	0	1
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	14	4	2	6	0	6	1	0	0
	2020-21	14	3	3	2	1	12	1	0	0
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	14	2	3	6	0	2	0	1	1
	2020-21	14	3	1	4	0	2	2	1	4
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	4	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
	2020-21	23	8	0	4	0	5	2	3	2
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	6	2	1	1	0	2	0	2	0
	2020-21	12	6	0	1	0	4	0	5	0
Scotland	2021-22	7	2	0	1	0	3	0	1	1
	2020-21	5	1	0	0	2	3	0	0	1
Wales	2021-22	8	5	0	0	0	2	2	5	0
	2020-21	6	2	1	2	0	3	1	1	0
Total	2021-22	71	24	6	23	0	18	4	12	3
	2020-21	90	30	7	18	3	35	6	13	8

Note: the figures in the last 8 columns may not equal the number of public inquiries held, as more than one action may be taken against a licence holder.

TABLE 17: LOCAL BUS SERVICES - ACTION TAKEN AGAINST OPERATORS (UNDER THE TRANSPORT ACTS 1985 AND 2000)

	Year	Number of public inquiries	Restrictions imposed on licences under Section 26 of the 1985 Act	Penalty imposed under Section 155 of the 2000 Act*	Formal warnings given	No action taken
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	1	0	0	0	1
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	1	0	0	1	0
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0
Wales	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	2	0	0	1	1

Note: the figures contained in the last four columns may not equal the number of public inquiries held, as more than one action may be taken against an operator.

* In Scotland action is taken under Section 39 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001.

TABLE 18: PUBLIC INQUIRIES

	Year	Traffic Commissioners	Deputy Traffic Commissioners	Total
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	81	127	208
	2020-21	74	83	157
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	147	87	234
	2020-21	123	23	146
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	56	91	147
	2020-21	73	81	154
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	206	82	288
	2020-21	122	90	212
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	143	13	156
	2020-21	135	9	144
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	131	22	153
	2020-21	105	13	118
Scotland	2021-22	79	27	106
	2020-21	42	23	65
Wales	2021-22	52	48	100
	2020-21	18	40	58
Total	2021-22	895	497	1392
	2020-21	692	362	1054

TABLE 18A: PRELIMINARY HEARINGS AND SENIOR TEAM LEADER INTERVIEWS

	Year	Preliminary hearings	Senior Team Leader interviews	Total
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	61	5	66
	2020-21	44	2	46
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	47	13	60
	2020-21	21	8	29
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	44	6	50
	2020-21	25	5	30
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	41	2	43
	2020-21	25	0	25
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	47	21	68
	2020-21	26	14	40
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	37	0	37
	2020-21	28	0	28
Scotland	2021-22	18	9	27
	2020-21	4	13	17
Wales	2021-22	14	1	15
	2020-21	5	4	9
Total	2021-22	309	57	366
	2020-21	178	46	224

TABLE 19: BUS, COACH AND LORRY OPERATORS - APPEALS TO THE UPPER TRIBUNAL

	Year	Number of appeals made	Number of appeals heard	Number of appeals withdrawn	Number of appeals successful or partially successful
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	8	6	3	1
	2020-21	14	5	1	2
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	8	5	1	1
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	4	1	0	0
	2020-21	9	4	2	0
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	7	3	1	1
	2020-21	7	2	2	0
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	4	2	1	1
	2020-21	6	7	2	0
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	8	3	3	0
	2020-21	6	1	1	0
Scotland	2021-22	2	1	0	0
	2020-21	1	1	0	0
Wales	2021-22	4	1	0	0
	2020-21	6	2	1	1
Total	2021-22	37	17	8	3
	2020-21	57	27	10	4

Note: the number of appeals heard cannot be directly compared to the number of appeals made in the year, as some of the appeals heard will have been made in the previous year, and some may still be pending.

TABLE 20: LARGE GOODS VEHICLES AND PASSENGER CARRYING VEHICLES DRIVER CONDUCT CASES - ACTION AGAINST DRIVERS

	Total	Total cases closed	Licences refused	Licences revoked	Licences suspended	Licences granted	Verbal warning	Routine warning letters		Refer on application	No action taken	Called to a hearing
								Endorsable	Non-endorsable			
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	1,894	625	14	50	176	37	302	0	110	584	282
	2020-21	1,804	559	14	84	13	21	518	2	59	536	126
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	2,388	438	16	84	82	32	873	156	135	730	252
	2020-21	1,811	390	12	70	71	34	522	56	139	546	222
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	1,931	432	84	101	498	44	273	109	99	277	437
	2020-21	1,062	286	51	99	458	32	275	91	144	154	289
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	1,924	531	24	51	123	58	452	20	146	525	233
	2020-21	1,311	445	12	57	22	52	300	18	39	371	232
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	1,398	395	31	92	160	81	185	10	45	397	443
	2020-21	1,059	269	13	100	72	7	159	19	54	366	153
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	1,595	344	12	41	146	34	299	3	72	649	226
	2020-21	1,232	344	12	33	36	23	191	0	55	534	227
Scotland	2021-22	1007	188	18	117	89	84	80	23	67	352	387
	2020-21	908	200	8	78	47	44	81	46	68	329	208
Wales	2021-22	779	182	19	25	266	25	113	22	28	87	166
	2020-21	634	138	6	18	120	16	105	28	42	135	92
Military	2021-22	738	171	0	0	11	0	325	0	76	158	0
	2020-21	621	208	0	1	5	1	219	0	101	123	0
Total	2021-22	13654	3306	218	561	1551	395	2902	343	778	3759	2426
	2020-21	10442	2839	128	540	844	230	2370	260	701	3094	1549

TABLE 21: APPLICATIONS FOR THE RETURN OF IMPOUNDED VEHICLES

	Year	Number of vehicles impounded	Number of applications received and processed	Granted		Refused		Appeals to Upper Tribunal			
				with hearing	without hearing	with hearing	without hearing	made	heard	withdrawn	successful
Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	5	5	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Eastern Traffic Area	2021-22	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Western Traffic Area	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	4	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area	2021-22	4	4	0	0	3	1	1	1	0	0
	2020-21	3	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
West Midlands Traffic Area	2021-22	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Western Traffic Area	2021-22	4	4	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0
	2020-21	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland	2021-22	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wales	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2020-21	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2021-22	19	19	1	0	17	1	1	2	0	0
	2020-21	17	12	3	0	5	0	0	0	0	0

Note: the number of applications received and processed may be greater than the number of vehicles impounded as more than one application may be made for the return of a vehicle where there is a dispute regarding the ownership of a vehicle.

Contact Details

Further details about the commissioners and their other publications can be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/traffic-commissioners>

Licensing Statistics

(tables 1-5 and 8-14)

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Bus Permit Statistics

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Regulatory Statistics

(tables 6-7 and 16-21)

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