

# A new direction for HGV Drivers

## Addressing HGV drivers shortages and related supply chain issues

January 2022

### Chair's foreword

It's quite clear that HGV drivers play an essential role in the supply chains that support almost every aspect of modern life. Last year we saw what happens when a shortage of HGV drivers causes these supply chains to breakdown – some empty shelves, some closed petrol stations, and some disrupted services.

Several issues coalesced to create that situation. The impact of the pandemic and leaving the EU were contributing factors, however a pre-existing chronic shortage of HGV drivers amplified these acute issues and was a key underlying cause of the supply chain problems.

To safeguard future supply chains the government and industry must work together and address the chronic ongoing shortage of HGV drivers. This report sets out 11 recommendations which we believe will improve drivers' experience, prospects, recruitment, and retention in order to meet that goal.



## 1. Acute and chronic driver shortages

A shortage of hauliers and related logistics issues have led to businesses across Wales and the UK reporting difficulties in moving goods. This has led to **widespread concern** around supply chains, **fuel shortages**, **empty shelves** in supermarkets and many other associated issues

**1.** When setting out the Committee's work programme, Members decided to hold a short, sharp inquiry on this matter as a priority. The Committee held a **public consultation** in the autumn, and took oral evidence from the Minister for Economy on **11 November** and from hauliers, business organisations and trade unions **on 9 December**. Members also commissioned the Senedd's citizen engagement team to undertake engagement work directly with current and former HGV drivers - a summary of this work can be found on this **report's page** of the Committee's website.

### Causes of the shortage

**2.** There has been a historic shortage of drivers and wider logistics workers in the UK for many years. The Road Haulage Association **believes** there was a pre-pandemic shortage of around 60,000 drivers. However, **Logistics UK** has stated that the combination of the end of EU membership and the end of the EU transition period, along with the COVID pandemic, "*transformed this shortage into an acute crisis.*" The existing issues were compounded further when HGV driving tests were paused during the pandemic, causing a backlog and a 10 week wait for an examination.

**3.** The UK Government, Welsh Government and **industry** have been working together to tackle the acute shortages by introducing a number of measures which include: recruiting new drivers and bringing former HGV drivers back into the industry, introduce temporary seasonal work visas, , bringing in additional support e.g. from the **military** to carry out driving tests, and temporarily **relaxing regulations**. During the Committee's evidence session, hauliers representatives reported that these measures were having an effect in increasing drivers numbers and reducing supply chain issues.

**4.** Sally Gilson **told** Members that while there were still some shortages, things had eased a little and the Road Haulage Association were now getting more positive answers from their

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members when asked about the shortages. Andrew Potter from the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport **told** Members:

*"I think we are seeing improvements and the situation getting better, but there are still areas where things can improve."*

Chris Yarsley also **referred** to Logistics UK's **2021 Skills Report** published on 6 December, which highlights that "there is cause for cautious optimism that the situation will improve."

**5.** Whilst Members are pleased to hear that measures taken to date to clear the backlog of driver training and testing are paying dividends, the Committee is concerned that shortages still exist and the pre-existing shortage highlights problems within the sector that need to be addressed.

**6.** One of the HGV drivers who was spoken to as part of the Committee's engagement work said:

*"The age demographic of drivers is now into the late 50 so in the next 10-12 years most drivers in this country will have retired, why on earth would any young person want to go into the haulage industry. Any child of a driver will know how shit it is as they never saw their father. It's dirty, shit pay, stuck in traffic, treated like a second-class citizen, spoken to like shit, continually hassled by office clerks who can't even drive a car, VOSA and the Police. Made to wait in cold, damp, drafty corridors with no facilities while the warehouse takes hours to tip you. Shit pay."*

**7.** Another driver expressed similar feelings, saying:

*"It's disgusting we are treated like animals no descent facilities hours are very unsociable no work life balance most drivers end up divorced",*

and going on to say:

*"To earn around minimum wage is not enough of an incentive to basically give up your life and be away from your family from Sunday to Friday".*

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8. Pete Robertson from the Food and Drink Federation Cymru, **described the challenge:**

"We need people to want to come and work in these sectors. Is it a job? Is it a career? Is it a profession? Is it a calling, if you like? And so, where we are at the moment, at best case, it's a job and really it needs to be a career—there needs to be aspiration."

9. Andrew Potter from the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport **agreed** that HGV driving wasn't

*"seen as a particularly attractive proposition for many"*

and also told Members:

*"retention is key to dealing with the crisis, because it's all well and good training people, but if they all leave in six months' time, we're back where we started."*

10. Members took a large amount of evidence around the experience of being an HGV driver from hauliers themselves, unions and industry. It is clear to Members that if we are to tackle the entrenched shortage then HGV driving must be seen as an attractive career option, and that is not the case at the moment. The Committee share the view that HGV driving should be seen as a viable and valuable career where drivers can enjoy their work and where there is a clear route of progression and career development opportunities.

11. In this short report the Committee makes eight recommendations around apprenticeships, continual professional development and improving the HGV driver experience which are aimed at achieving that aim. This fits with the Committee's ambition of a Wales where people can enjoy working in high quality jobs, but also with the key ambition that these improvements will make driving HGVs more attractive in order to alleviate the chronic ongoing shortage.

## 2. Apprenticeships and continuous professional development

### Apprenticeships

12. The Committee heard a lot of support for HGV driver apprenticeship programmes from both industry and directly from drivers. Many schemes' pair an apprentice with an experienced

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driver to ensure the passing on of industry knowledge. A particular scheme that received a lot of praise from drivers was the 'Warehouse to Wheels' apprenticeship scheme.

**13.** Sally Gilson of the Road Haulage Association **expressed** enthusiastic support for apprenticeships:

*"I absolutely love apprenticeships; I think they're a perfect way, especially for younger people, to get into the sector".*

Sally told Members that a lot of work had been undertaken to improve training schemes in Wales in the past year, and as a result more Road Haulage Association members were starting to engage with apprenticeships programmes. She also **told** Members that because of the increased uptake

*"we need to try and create more apprenticeship providers that can actually do this training."*

**14.** There was a strong feeling emerging through the evidence that apprenticeships could be used as part of an effort to turn HGV driving into a career. Paul Slevin from Chambers Wales **told Members**

*"if we can create a situation where careers are created that are attractive and show progression, I think the whole apprenticeship scheme is fundamental to the success of it".*

However he warned this would be a long process.

**Recommendation 1.** The Welsh Government should work with industry as a matter of urgency to develop HGV drivers Apprenticeship programmes and support the industry to increase the number of training providers available to ensure sufficient provision is available as demand increases.

## **Continual professional development**

**15.** Alongside their driving licence, HGV drivers must also hold a **Certificate of Professional Competence**. Obtaining this certificate requires 35 hours of training and drivers must be re-certified every five years.

**16.** There is disquiet amongst drivers about the content of the training course for the certificate. As one of the drivers interviewed as part of this inquiry said

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*"The ethos is good, to professionalise the industry, but the curriculum doesn't really teach you anything. Drivers begrudge going when it doesn't give them anything worthwhile."*

Others called for it to be scrapped entirely. Mary Williams from Unite the Union echoed some of these views by stating that

*"what we found, when talking to our members, is that they don't really see a lot of the modules that they do within the course as being relevant to their actual daily work."*

**17.** Chris Yarsley acknowledged this disquiet, but told the Committee that Logistics UK Members see the certificate as *"a valued thing"* and that they feel it is important *"to have continual professional development"* for drivers. Chris also informed Members that the certificate derives from EU law (now EU retained law). so it can now be reviewed and that the UK Department for Transport was undertaking surveying in the industry around this.

**18.** The Committee agrees that continuous professional development for drivers is a positive, and Members think that training and development should help drivers progress though their career. However the Committee feels that there is strong evidence that the curriculum of this training should be updated.

**Recommendation 2.** The Welsh Government should engage the UK Government around the content and quality of HGV drivers' continuous professional development training to ensure any new programme is high quality, useful to drivers and relevant to Welsh drivers and industry.

## 3. HGV driver experience

### Facilities and driver safety at rest stops and overnight parking

**19.** There was broad agreement from representatives of the haulage industry, unions and drivers that facilities at rest and overnight stops were in need of vast improvement. The poor quality of rest areas both put people off joining, and lead to drivers leaving, the industry.

**20.** Drivers interviewed as part of this inquiry raised serious concerns about a general lack of places to park, the facilities where there were places to park, and their safety when parked up. All drivers saw the facilities at rest stops and service stations as sub-standard and not fit for purpose. Drivers complained of broken showers, broken tiles, and dirty wash facilities. Evidence about driver safety was particularly shocking to Members. Some quotes from driver interviews that illustrate these issues well are:

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"I would never change from being a day driver to driving overnight, service station facilities are atrocious and the risk of being robbed when you are parked overnight means I'd never consider it."

"There are not enough stops or parking as it is, we're 50,000 drivers short, imagine the problem when they're back on the road!"

*"I've been robbed over 10 times. It's a horrible thing to admit but you expect it. The last time they slashed three holes in the curtain big enough to drive a vehicle through, half my load was on the layby ready to be stolen. Even the police see it as an occupational hazard. As drivers we just accept it."*

**21.** Sally Gilson from the Road Haulage Association **also raised concerns around facilities** saying

*"whilst they're parked up, quite often, they don't even have access to somewhere nice to sit; they don't have access to toilets. So, again, that's something that we've got to review".*

Andrew Potter **told Members** that the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport is particularly concerned about *"the facilities for drivers and parking facilities."* Chris Yarsley **told Members** that parking was Logistics UK's number one issue.

**22.** Andrew Potter told Members about work undertaken by the UK Government to survey facilities in England and the Chartered Institute of Logistics **felt this should be replicated** in Wales:

There isn't a Welsh Government survey of parking sites. And that kind of thing would be a really easy quick win for the Government to do. It wouldn't take that long to complete. You'd know where parking sites were, what facilities were there, and that as a starting point lets the industry know where those facilities are.

**23.** Chris Yarsley **described a system** of standards Logistics UK had worked on with the European Union and other partners where facilities were rated for comfort with stars and for safety with padlocks. He also told the Committee that

*"The International Road Transport Union, which represents the haulage associations from across the world, but also in the European Union, has its*

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*own classification system. So, we don't need to reinvent the wheel here; we just need to see what's available, see if it's applicable."*

**24.** Mary Williams from Unite agreed that there needs to be a set of standards for facilities. She felt that planning regulations should take this into account **saying**:

"when large distribution centres or even new retail parks are being considered for construction, and planning applications are submitted, they should include facilities for drivers, and that means planning rules need to be looked at. Planning applications for developments should have a compulsory element for lorries to be able to park and facilities should be provided."

**25.** Currently there is a lack of diversity with the HGV driver workforce being largely made up of white men. Sally Gilson thought that safety was one of the issues behind this and **told Members**

*"We haven't touched on diversity yet, but if we are going to start attracting more women into the job role, we need to make them far more safe and secure, and that's obviously not just for women, that's for everybody. As I mentioned earlier, the security levels around truck stops are just not there."*

**26.** The Committee is concerned about the poor quality of rest and over night stops for HGV drivers. Members were particularly shocked to hear that HGV drivers view theft and possible violence as an occupational hazard. Members also agreed that improving safety would make the industry more attractive to women which would help with recruitment.

**27.** The Committee believes urgent cooperation is needed between Welsh Government, hauliers, local authorities and the companies who manage service stations and other rest stops to improve facilities. Members support calls for an audit of rest facilities across Wales, the establishment of a voluntary standards scheme so drivers can identify the quality of a stop and to encourage the improvement of facilities and in the longer term for the incorporation of standards in planning regulations.

**Recommendation 3.** The Welsh Government should carry out an audit of rest facilities for drivers and create a national inventory similar to that available for England.

**Recommendation 4.** The Welsh Government should urgently work with partners to improve HGV driver rest provision in areas where it is found to be lacking.

**Recommendation 5.** The Welsh Government should work with hauliers, local authorities, drivers representatives and rest stop operators to introduce a voluntary standards system which indicates to drivers the comfort level and security of rest stops and consider how to encourage their uptake.

**Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should update planning policy so that planning permissions granted to warehouse facilities and other developments expecting regular deliveries or collections (e.g. industrial estates and retail parks) are required to provide high quality driver facilities. It should also consider whether building regulations can be used to drive up standards in new facilities.

## 4. HGV drivers' work hours and conditions

**28.** Members felt there was somewhat of a disconnect between the evidence provided by HGV drivers via the Committee's engagement work and the evidence received from the haulage and wider industry representatives. Whilst everyone was in agreement that poor quality rest and overnight facilities was an issue of concern, HGV drivers raised specific concerns around hours and conditions at drop off and pick up points which members did not feel were reflected in the evidence given by both haulage companies and representatives of industry.

### Driver hours

**29.** There are strict safety rules around driving hours. Drivers work a 17-week block, known as a reference period. An HGV driver must not exceed an average working week of 48 hours across the 17-week reference period. However, technically under these rules drivers can work up to 60 hours in a single week as long as the overall average is 48 hours or less per week over the whole reference period.

**30.** Drivers who took part in the Senedd Citizen Engagement team's work on this issue described how employers push them to work 60-hour weeks and then stand them down, or give them shorter runs, towards the end of the 17-week block to ensure that the average does not exceed 48 hours per week. Drivers agreed that working 60 hours a week was physically draining and results in fatigue, illness, and high levels of stress.

**31.** One driver referred to this as 'beasting'. saying:

*"It's the beasting. The legislation which allows companies to beast us, and they take maximum advantage of that."*

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**32.** Mary Williams from Unite also raised concerns about driver's hours and particularly around derogations in the legislation which allow hours and reference periods to be extended. Mary told Members that there was scope to amend the legislation and that

*"there's a will across the industry, from drivers and operators, to look at it in more detail and at what is possible and what the statutory obligations should be for drivers".*

**33.** Chris Yarsley from Logistics UK told Members that driving hours are strictly bound by legislation and that

*"Anything that goes beyond that is a serious road safety issue" and that if drivers are "being told to go over their hours, they really do need to make somebody aware of that."*

Sally Gilson from the Road Haulage Association told the Committee that their members who make sure their drivers don't exceed the weekly average in a given week are better at retaining their drivers.

**34.** Members were pleased to hear that both Logistics UK and the Road Haulage Association thought that driver hours would improve in the future. However the Committee was extremely concerned to hear that the drivers engaged felt whilst their rotas were set in line with the letter of the law, those setting them regularly flouted its spirit. Drivers felt front loading hours in this way creates a safety concern and makes HGV driving less attractive as a career.

**35.** Members are aware the UK Government is **planning** to carry out a review of all retained EU law. Given the evidence received from the drivers and their representatives, Members would expect Welsh Government to be fully engaged with any review of relevant legislation which impacts the working conditions of HGV drivers. Welsh Government should engage with the sector and drivers to ensure any new or amended legislation works for drivers operating in Wales.

## Reception and treatment of drivers at destinations

**36.** Mary Williams from Unite told Members

*"We have reports of retail warehouses and distribution centres where their own facilities for their own drivers are great, but the facilities for drive-in drivers and external drivers ... are dismal. Small rooms next to inadequate toilets—it's that sort of thing."*

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This view was also shared by some of the drivers who were interviewed as part of the Committee's engagement work.

**37.** However Pete Robertson of the Food and Drink Federation told the Committee that from his personal experience

*"delivery drivers were given full access to the facilities on site" and in terms of the food and drink industry "Each business will be trying to look after its inbound supply".*

Paul Slevin echoed these comments and **said** Chambers Wales were not aware of any drivers being mistreated and he would be shocked if a driver was being abused at the point of delivery.

## **Disconnect**

**38.** There is clearly a disconnect between the evidence from hauliers and the industry and the experience reported by drivers and their representatives both around how driver's hours are scheduled and the reception of drivers where they pick up or drop off goods. The Committee is of the strong opinion that this discrepancy needs to be addressed.

**39.** Whilst haulage firms are private companies and the facilities who receive drivers are also largely privately run, Members are of the view that industry and Welsh Government should work together to ensure that high standards of facilities are consistently available to HGV drivers across Wales.

**Recommendation 7.** Welsh Government should engage with the UK Government on any review of legislation which affects the working conditions of HGV drivers. As part of this Welsh Government should engage with the sector and drivers in Wales to ensure their voices are heard in the review.

**Recommendation 8.** Haulage companies should ensure their drivers feel the hours they are asked to drive are safe.

**Recommendation 9.** Anyone managing a facility that receives drivers should ensure they are aware of the experience of those drivers when on their premises.

## **5. Freight strategy**

**40.** Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021 states that the Welsh Government will

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*"work with the UK Government, the sector and other partners on a Logistics and Freight Plan for Wales."*

Andrew Potter of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport **told the Committee**

*"I think that we also need to make sure that freight appears in the regional transport plans. Going back a few years, when we did have regional transport consortia, a lot of their focus was on passenger transport only, and I think only one of the regional consortia ever had a freight plan for its region. We need to make sure that we don't just plan nationally for freight, but that we do plan regionally for freight as well to make sure that local decisions don't have an impact at a wider scale."*

**41.** Members are pleased that a commitment to create a new logistics and freight plan is included in Llwybr Newydd and agree that freight planning needs to be undertaken on a national and regional level. The Committee believes that this work should be prioritised as a result of the HGV driver shortage and related logistics problems facing Wales. Members believe a new freight plan based around the recommendations set out in this report could be a solution to the chronic HGV driver shortage.

**Recommendation 10.** The Welsh Government should expedite development of a freight plan which incorporates the recommendations from this report. Regional freight plans should be developed in harmony with the national strategy.

**Recommendation 11.** The Welsh Government should set out a timeline for the development of the freight plan and keep this committee informed.