

[Press release: Traffic commissioners report on improved service to industry and better targeting of the most serious offenders](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[News story: UK Hydrographic Office 2017-2018 Annual Report released](#)

The UK Hydrographic Office has released its Annual Report and Accounts for 2017 to 2018.

In addition to its performance report, accountability report and financial

statements, the document contains information about the organisation's transformation to become a marine geospatial information agency and a number of case studies that showcase its work.

You can download and view the document using the links below:

- [UK Hydrographic Office Annual Report and Accounts for 2017 to 2018 \(interactive version\)](#)
- [UK Hydrographic Office Annual Report and Accounts for 2017 to 2018 \(PDF\)](#)

The UKHO is an executive agency and operates as a trading fund within the Ministry of Defence. This paper was laid before Parliament in response to a legislative requirement or as a Return to an Address and was ordered to be printed by the House of Commons.

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[Collection: Nitrate vulnerable zones](#)

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) are areas designated as being at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution. They include about 55% of land in England.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) reviews NVZs every 4 years to account for changes in nitrate concentrations.

This collection of guidance explains:

- how to find out if your land is in an NVZ
- transitional arrangements until 31 July 2019 (if your land was in an NVZ for the first time in 2017)
- NVZ rules
- NVZ and cross-compliance requirements
- how to prevent water pollution from your farm

[Detailed guide: Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designations 2017 to 2020: rules and appeals](#)

Find out if your land is in an NVZ

Use the [interactive map](#) to find out if your land is in an NVZ.

Your farm may be completely or partly in an NVZ. NVZ boundaries are drawn around whole fields, so there are no fields that are only partly in an NVZ.

Restrictions apply to each field that's in an NVZ.

Contact the [Environment Agency](#) if you have difficulty checking online or need a printed map.

Outcome of appeals

You can no longer appeal a decision to include land in an NVZ as part of the 2017 to 2020 designation process. The appeals process has finished and some land is no longer in an NVZ.

If your appeal was successful, you must still take steps to [prevent water pollution](#).

Transitional arrangements

If your land was in an NVZ for the first time in 2017, you did not have to comply with NVZ rules straight away. The rules are being phased in from 1 January 2018 to 31 July 2019.

These transitional arrangements meant you did not have to comply with any NVZ legal requirements until 1 January 2018.

These arrangements also mean you have until 31 July 2019 to comply with some of the rules on:

- [storing slurry and poultry manure](#)
- [spreading manufactured fertiliser](#)
- [equipment you can use to spread slurry](#)
- [spreading some types of organic manure](#)
- [separating slurry](#)

See the [guide to cross compliance in England 2018](#) for details of how these rules are being phased in. You'll find the guidance you need under SMR 1: Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) on pages 39 to 48.

Contact the Farming Advice Service (FAS)

Contact [FAS](#) for information about using nitrogen fertilisers and manures in NVZs, and other cross compliance requirements.