

Statement to Parliament: EU Transport Council 5 December 2017

I attended the only formal Transport Council under the Estonian Presidency (the Presidency) in Brussels on Tuesday 5 December.

First, the Council noted the Presidency's progress report, summarising discussions to date at official level, on Phase One of the Mobility Package. Work has focused on proposals designed to improve the clarity and enforcement of the EU road transport market (the 'market pillar') and proposals on the application of social legislation in road transport (the 'social pillar'). I broadly supported the progress made, emphasised the UK's commitment to a constructive safety-first approach to updating the rules, but also registered concerns over the proposed extension of scope of part of the regulations to small vans.

Following this, the Council adopted 3 sets of Council conclusions:

- on progress in Trans-European Network-Transport (TEN-T) and Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)
- the Digitalisation of Transport
- the mid-term evaluation of Galileo, EGNOS and European GNSS Agency

Next, the Presidency held a policy debate on the 'road charging pillar' of the Mobility Package. The proposals to amend the existing Directives on HGV road tolls and user charges ('Eurovignette') and the interoperability of electronic road toll systems ('EETS') set out rules for charging vehicles using the road (but do not mandate such charging) and promote better functioning of charging across national barriers. The UK broadly welcomed provisions on improving the functioning and enforcement of electronic road tolling systems. However, the UK said we were opposed to proposals to broaden the scope of EU charging rules to include cars, and had concerns about the proposed phasing-out of time-based road charging and measures mandating hypothecation of revenues from congestion charging.

Following this, the Council noted the Presidency's progress report on official level discussions on Safeguarding Competition in Air Transport. The UK did not dispute the need for fair competition but urged caution on proposals for regulatory measures; it was important to avoid potential negative impacts on the liberalised aviation market, connectivity, consumers, and member states' bilateral aviation agreements with third countries.

Under Any Other Business, several items were discussed. Notably:

- Commissioner Bulc presented the Commission's recently published second phase of the Mobility Package, provided an update on the implementation of the extensive Aviation Strategy, alongside a Communication on Military Mobility, and noted progress on rail passenger rights negotiations

- Finland called for reconsideration of the Summertime Directive
 - Germany updated on the second high-level group on automated and connected cars
 - Poland drew attention to the 2018 International Maritime Days
 - France promoted her proposed declaration at the upcoming 'one planet' summit calling on the IMO to adopt an ambitious strategy for the decarbonisation of international shipping
 - Bulgaria presented transport plans for her incoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union
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News story: Minister holds inaugural Electoral Summit

The Summit brought together expert members from around the United Kingdom, including representatives from SOLACE, Electoral Commission, Association of Electoral Administrators and the Scottish Assessors Association, to provide additional impetus to the democratic engagement agenda.

This forum discussed a range of electoral matters, focusing in particular on how the government and the electoral community can best work together to promote democratic engagement, tackle electoral fraud and further modernise the electoral system.

The Minister for the Constitution, Chris Skidmore said:

Our partners in the electoral community play a vital role in identifying opportunities for engaging under-registered and vulnerable groups. I am delighted to launch the first Electoral Summit as part of our commitment to engaging with these key organisations.

This is imperative to help realise our ambitious aim of making the General Election in 2022 the most inclusive to date.

This work is guided by Sir Eric Pickles' comprehensive review, which made a number of recommendations for strengthening the integrity of the electoral process.

Press release: Santa backs Highways England's call to motorists to check their vehicles this Christmas

Santa Claus checks his sleigh to make sure it doesn't break down as he prepares to deliver presents to children the world over.

And the company responsible for motorways and main A-roads is urging people driving this Christmas to make sure their vehicles are also ready for seasonal travel.

Santa can be seen carrying out the vital checks on his sleigh in a special fun animation below – and he's got a little help from his festive friends including Rudolph!

[See our animation](#)

These checks include:

- checking that Santa has plenty of grip on his sledge – motorists should check their tyre tread to make sure it is within the legal limit
- making sure Rudolph's nose is shining bright – always make sure lights on the vehicle are working correctly before setting off
- making sure he feeds his reindeer before travelling – make sure that you always keep your tank at least one quarter full to avoid running out of fuel on your journey

Highways England's customer service director, Melanie Clarke, said:

This is a timely reminder from Santa and his festive friends that you should always check your vehicle before setting off.

But there is a serious point to this, too. Safety is our top imperative and we know from experience that almost half of breakdowns are avoidable and these can easily be averted with simple checks.

Christmas is always a busy period on the road network and we'd urge all motorists to make sure they do their bit to check their vehicle is roadworthy before setting off over the festive period.

She also highlighted that 99 per cent of motorways and strategic A roads will be roadworks-free in time for Christmas, meaning hauliers and motorists alike can enjoy last-minute shopping and delivery journeys with as little disruption as possible.

Latest statistics from Highways England show almost half of all breakdowns

are caused by simple mechanical problems which could be avoided with basic checks. Nearly a quarter are caused by tyre problems; meanwhile, 450 people were injured in incidents involving vehicles that weren't roadworthy over the course of a year.

And around 20 motorists break down every day because they have run out of fuel. There were 7,419 cases nationwide of vehicle breakdowns on the strategic road network due to lack of fuel.

The RAC is also backing the campaign and says that motorists should check their vehicle this Christmas, even if their journey is likely to be a short one.

RAC spokesman, Rod Dennis, said:

Just like Santa, millions of drivers can't afford a breakdown getting in the way of them reaching their destinations this Christmas.

So we're backing Highways England's call for drivers to give their vehicles a bit of 'TLC' before they set out on any long journey. Simply checking things like the condition of tyres could be the key to not wasting valuable time in the cold and wet this December, broken down at the side of the road.

Then, should the unexpected happen, motorists can be reassured by the fact that our patrols will be working tirelessly throughout the festive period to get them back on the move again as quickly as possible.

To help keep people moving this Christmas, Highways England has also produced a [handy pdf](#) showing people how to conduct basic vehicle checks before setting off this Christmas.

Those travelling over Christmas are also being reminded to make sure that they are prepared for an emergency by:

- charging a mobile phone and taking it with them in case they run into difficulty and need to use it in emergency circumstances
- taking warm clothing in the car with them in case of breakdowns
- taking food and drink in the car in case of any extreme weather

Motorists can head online to the [Think website](#) where they can watch bespoke videos showing how to carry out basic vehicle checks. Alternatively, follow Highways England on social media channels for more information.

Those wishing to find out more about driving on smart motorways can [view our webpage](#) for further information.

Drivers planning to use the Dartford Crossing are reminded to pay Dart Charge in advance or by midnight the day after crossing.

More information can be found on our website or by calling our information line (0300 123 5000) they can keep up to date with conditions on the roads.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Landmark for English Channel electricity link project](#)

Updated: Added further explanation of the milestone following feedback

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has issued a comprehensive decision for the IFA2 (Interconnexion France-Angleterre) project under the TEN-E Regulations, after it attained all of the required statutory consents in UK consenting regime.

The IFA2 interconnector is a 1,000mw high voltage direct current (HVDC) link, which will run from Normandy in France to Hampshire in England. The project is being carried out by National Grid IFA2 Ltd and RTE.



MMO Senior Marine Licensing Manager Matthew Kinmond said:

This is the first comprehensive decision from the MMO under the TEN-E Regulations and the first in the UK for a cross-border and multiple consenting regime interconnector project. It represents a major milestone for the IFA2 project.

Dave Luetchford Head of IFA2 from National Grid said:

Enhancing Great Britain's energy connection to France will bring a number of benefits, including increasing security of electricity supplies for both countries and providing opportunities for shared use of renewable energy.

Find out more about the [IFA2 project](#)

Find out more about [TEN-E Regulations](#)

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Find out more about the [IFA2 project](#)

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