

News story: Learner drivers will be allowed on motorways from 2018

Allowing learner drivers to have lessons on motorways will help to make sure more drivers know how to use motorways safely.

At the moment, you can only have driving lessons on motorways after you've passed your driving test. Some newly-qualified drivers take lessons through the voluntary [Pass Plus](#) scheme.

How the change will work

The change will apply to England, Scotland and Wales.

Learner drivers will need to be:

- accompanied by an approved driving instructor
- driving a car fitted with dual controls

Any motorways lessons will be voluntary. It will be up to the driving instructor to decide when the learner driver is competent enough to have a motorway lesson.

Trainee driving instructors won't be allowed to take learner drivers on the motorway.

Motorway driving will not be included in the [driving test changes](#) coming into force on 4 December 2017.

The change will only apply to learner drivers of cars – learner motorcyclists won't be allowed to have motorway lessons.

When the change will happen

The exact date in 2018 will be confirmed nearer the time.

The change will be well-publicised so driving instructors and learner drivers are prepared for the change, and other road users know what to expect. [The Highway Code rules on motorways](#) will also be updated.

Until the law is changed, it's still illegal for a learner driver to drive on a motorway.

Driving instructor vehicles and training

Driving instructors will be allowed to decide whether or not to keep their driving school roof-top box on during motorway lessons, based on the manufacturer's instructions.

However, the car will still need to [display L plates on the front and rear](#) if the rooftop box is removed.

It will be up to the instructor whether or not they keep their driving school roof-top box on – but the car will still have to display L plates on the front and rear

Guidance for driving instructors

DVSA won't give driving instructors extra training on providing motorway lessons, but [learning materials](#) and the [car driving syllabus](#) will be updated to incorporate motorway lessons.

DVSA will also work with driving instructor associations and Highways England to provide extra guidance and advice for driving instructors.

Preparing drivers for a lifetime of safe driving

The changes are being made to allow learner drivers to:

- get broader driving experience before taking their driving test
- get training on how to join and leave the motorway, overtake and use lanes correctly
- practise driving at higher speeds
- put their theoretical knowledge into practice

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on Kenyan elections](#)

Tuesday was an historic day for Kenya, with millions of Kenyans turning out to vote in the general election. The United Kingdom warmly congratulates President Kenyatta on his re-election. The UK and Kenya are longstanding friends and close partners. We look forward to building on our strong relationship, working together to advance our shared prosperity and security and to support Kenya's development, for the benefit of all.

We commend the people of Kenya for their commitment to democracy and salute those who worked tirelessly and courageously towards holding credible elections, often in difficult circumstances. In the spirit of President Kenyatta's words yesterday, now is the time for Kenyans to work together in

peace to build their nation and forge their shared future. We join the Kenyan people in mourning those who have died, calling on those with influence to exercise restraint at this difficult time to ensure calm, and to honour the Kenyans who turned out in such number to vote to determine their future.

[Press release: Inside the international suitcase: The UK's top holiday exports revealed](#)

As millions of people fly away for the summer break, so do British goods as latest figures show sunglasses, swimwear and ice-cream are big exports, accounting for more than three quarters of UK holiday goods.**

Latest HMRC statistics show the UK exported more than £302 million worth of holiday goods (2016), including £160 million worth of sunglasses, £93 million worth of swimwear and £16 million worth of ice-cream. UK flip flops are also a big summer hit, with £8 million worth exported around the world.

DIT helped to secure billions of pounds in export opportunities over the past year, setting up 11 trade working groups across 16 countries to strike trade deals and strengthen commercial ties with key trading partners.

Now the International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox is encouraging other UK businesses to seize the exciting opportunities posed by trade with the rest of the world after Brexit.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

From ice-cream to swimwear, you can find UK holiday exports in travel destinations around the world. Last year alone, more than £300 million worth of these goods have been sold to shoppers across the globe showing increasing demand for home-grown summer essentials.

As an international economic department, we are supporting British business to take advantage of the growing global markets after we leave the EU and design a trade relationship in Britain's national interest. There has never been a better time for our dynamic and innovative businesses to export their goods and services abroad.

Overall latest trade statistics show that UK exports of goods and services have increased – exports stand at £547.6 billion, up 5.8% on 2015.

The UK also attracted more foreign direct investment projects than ever

before (year 2016 to 2017). With more than 2,200 projects recorded, the post-referendum figures show an increase of 2% the previous year.

Global markets

In regards to trade, the European Commission states that 90% of global growth in the next 20 years will be outside the EU. In promising news for trade deals, outside the EU some of the biggest markets for holiday exports include South Korea, Australia, UAE, Hong Kong and the USA.

Sunglasses remain one of the top holiday exports, with £3.8 million worth sold to Hong Kong, £4.6 million worth of UK swimwear to the USA and more than £1.4 million worth of flip-flops sold to non-EU countries.

Card games are another must-have holiday item and £3.7 million of UK playing cards exported to non-EU countries last year, with £2.1 million heading to Australia.

Holidaymakers across the world are also keeping cool with British ice-cream with £1.3 million heading to non-EU countries.

Through [great.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/great), the government gives UK businesses access to millions of pounds' worth of potential overseas business, helping them start or increase exporting with a 'matching service' for global buyers and lists thousands of export opportunities at a click of a mouse.

DIT has also doubled [UK Export Finance's](#) risk appetite to £5 billion, to ensure no viable export deal fails due to lack of finance and insurance.

Notes to editors

****The worldwide exports of sunglasses, swimwear and ice-cream in 2016 equates to £269.6 million.**

The UK exported £302.2 million of the following holiday goods:

- sunglasses
- swimwear
- playing cards
- inflatable balls
- ice cream
- travel sets
- flip flops

This is not an exhaustive list of all holiday goods.

Further information

Contact the DIT Media and Digital Team on 020 215 2000.

Follow us: @tradegovuk or [gov.uk/dit](https://www.gov.uk/dit)

Press release: Government crackdown on misuse of laser pointers

The government is today (12 August 2017) launching a call for evidence into the regulation of laser pointers, including the potential value of retail licensing schemes, advertising restrictions, and potential restrictions on ownership in order to address serious public safety concerns.

The move comes in response to an increase in laser incidents in recent years. A survey of UK ophthalmologists reported over 150 incidents of eye injuries involving laser pointers since 2013, the vast majority of these involving children.

In addition, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has reported an increase in incidents of laser pointers being directed into the cockpits of helicopters and planes on take-off and landing. Last year an Air Ambulance helicopter pilot was rendered temporarily blind by a laser attack that could have had catastrophic consequences.

The government is seeking responses from business groups, aviation and transport bodies, retailers, health bodies, and the general public, to identify and tackle the problem, while enabling legitimate businesses to continue to trade.

The government will consider the potential advantages and disadvantages of licensing schemes, advertising bans, and an awareness raising campaign to educate people about the dangers of laser pointers. The government is already working with online retail sites such as Amazon to ensure that where unsafe laser pointers are identified they are removed from sale.

Under current regulations, only laser pointers that are considered safe for their intended use should be sold to consumers. However, there is evidence that these regulations are not always adhered to, and there have been reported cases of high-powered lasers being sold – sometimes unwittingly – for general use. Licensing schemes exist in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Sweden and the United States of America. The government will look at the case for a similar scheme that could be rolled out in the UK where the retailer or consumer must apply for and obtain a licence for a high-powered laser pointer.

Business Minister, Margot James, said:

Public safety is of the utmost importance and we must look carefully to make sure regulations are keeping up with the increased use of these devices. Whilst we know most users don't intend any harm, many are not aware of the safety risks and serious

health implications of shining laser pointers directly into people's eyes. Used irresponsibly or maliciously, these products can and do wreak havoc and harm others, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

That's why we want to hear from business groups, retailers and consumers about the best way to protect the public from this kind of dangerous behaviour and improve safety.

Professor John O'Hagan of Public Health England, said:

This consultation will allow us to explore what more can be done to minimise the risks associated with lasers available to the public. Mislabelling of products, counterfeit products, imports of powerful devices from the Far East and cheap novelty products bought innocently on holiday can put consumers, and particularly children, at risk of eye injuries.

Brian Strutton, General Secretary of the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA), said:

When a laser is shone into a pilot's eye, they experience a bright flash and a dazzling effect. This can distract them and leads to temporary loss of vision in the affected eye. Startling, dazzling and distracting a pilot at a critical stage of flight has the potential to cause a crash and loss of life. This is especially a problem for helicopters, which operate close to the ground and are sometimes single pilot operations.

There is also a growing concern that, as the power of available lasers increases, the possibility of permanent damage being caused to pilots' and passengers' eyes increases.

We would like to see the laser threat taken very seriously before there is a fatal accident and BALPA therefore supports the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in their call for evidence.

The call for evidence is launched today and will be open for responses for 8 weeks, closing on Friday 6 October.

Under Article 225 of the Air Navigation Order (ANO) (2016), "A person must not in the United Kingdom direct or shine any light at any aircraft in flight so as to dazzle or distract the pilot of the aircraft". This is a summary only offence; the maximum penalty for this offence is a fine up to £2,500.

In addition, Article 240 of the ANO has been used to prosecute offenders who have shone a laser at an aircraft. Under this provision, "a person must not

recklessly or negligently act in a manner likely to endanger an aircraft, or any person in an aircraft". This legislation is not an effective tool for the police because in practice, it is very difficult to prove endangerment of an aircraft. This means the powers and penalties this offences comes with are not able to be used.

Laser beam attacks against the rail network are also an increasing concern. Records from British Transport Police show that between 1 April 2011 and 31 October 2016, a total of 466 laser incidents were recorded. This equates to approximately 85 incidents per year. We believe these incidents are under-reported since these offences are not currently recordable as a crime.

There are also some reports of laser beam attacks against motor vehicles and sea vessels however, as with rail, the true extent of the problem is less well defined in the absence of a specific offence to deal with laser pointers.

Laser pointers are readily available within the UK and from sellers overseas via the internet, high street shops and markets. They are also easy to buy abroad and bring back to the UK. If high-powered laser pointers are marketed for general use Local Authority Trading Standards officers have existing powers to require these products to be removed from the market.

Press release: Huge export win to China for UK food producers in England and Northern Ireland

A lucrative new export deal with China will bring a £200 million boost to the UK food industry and support 1,500 jobs, Food Minister George Eustice announced today.

Taking advantage of the growing demand for our food and drink in China, seven new businesses in England and Northern Ireland have secured access to export pork – including three producers who, in a first for the UK, will export pig trotters.

These new agreements will support around 1,500 jobs across the country and come after it was revealed this week UK food and drink exports reached £10 billion for the first half of 2017.

Food Minister George Eustice said:

“China is a hugely important market for our world-class food industry and by opening up access even further, more UK businesses can take advantage of the growing appetite for our food and drink.

“British food is produced to the very best standards of welfare, quality and safety and this growth in exports to China is creating more jobs and opportunities for our premium pork producers who can guarantee quality from farm to fork.”

Demand for our food and drink is growing in China, with the total value of exports rising by a third to £438m in 2016.

In particular, demand for UK pork has doubled in terms of value over the last three years. Nine producers already export to China and generated £43m last year.

The new agreements include approval to export from five sites in Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, County Antrim and County Tyrone – meaning Northern Ireland will take advantage of this export success story for the first time.

The announcement follows ongoing work by government officials and ministers in the UK and China. It was welcomed in Northern Ireland where the devolved administration has been working alongside Defra and the local pork industry to gain access to China. Northern Ireland’s Chief Veterinary Officer, Robert Huey thanked Defra for securing access. He said:

“This is very welcome news for the Northern Ireland pig sector and for our wider agri-food industry and I look forward to the commencement of exports to China. The deal represents a major boost worth in excess of £10m for the local pork industry.

“This follows concerted effort by Defra supported by the government and industry in Northern Ireland. By recommending approval, the Chinese authorities have recognised the rigorous standards Northern Ireland has in place to produce our high-quality, safe and wholesome pork. We place a clear emphasis on traceability at the heart of our production and processing and recognise that a joined up, safe and efficient food supply is essential.”

Northern Ireland Office Minister Chloe Smith MP said:

“I welcome today’s news that seven UK businesses, including companies based in Northern Ireland, have secured market access for the export of pork to China. It is an exciting example of what the Northern Ireland agri-food sector and, indeed, export market can be, and of what we can achieve in terms of trade, jobs and new opportunities as we build an economy that works for everyone.”

The UK industry’s high-welfare, quality-assured, sustainably produced stance puts it in a strong position in China, which is predicted to remain the world’s largest net importer of meat.

Dr Phil Hadley, AHDB’s International Market Development Director, said:

“We are absolutely delighted this new deal has been agreed with China, which will support jobs and create opportunities for UK pork producers for years to come.

"This agreement with China comes hot on the heels of this week's announcement that a £34 million deal has been agreed to export UK beef to the Philippines. It is great to hear so much positive news around exports of UK meat and is a testament to the hard work being done to promote the UK food industry on a global stage."

Notes to editors:

- For more information call Defra press office on 0208 026 3116
- To find out how to export visit www.great.gov.uk
- You can read the full International Action Plan for Food and Drink on Gov.uk here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-food-and-drink-international-action-plan-2016-to-2020>
- HMRC figures released on Thursday 10 August 2017 reveal total food and drink exports grew by 4.5% in 2017, compared to the first six months of 2016, to reach £10bn.
- Total pork exports to China, including offal, were worth £74m last year.
- This latest boost comes after the UK Government announced a £34 million export deal for UK-produced beef to the Philippines this week.
- Defra and AHDB worked in close collaboration with Export Certification Limited, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), DAERA in Northern Ireland, the FSA, Scottish and Welsh Government and the other UK levy boards to secure the deal, which was awarded when inspectors saw first-hand the UK's high animal welfare and food safety standards.
- Trade from these sites will begin once the administrative processes at both the Chinese and UK ends have been completed. Exports are expected to start within two to four weeks.
- These additional approvals are expected to be worth £200m of exports over the first five years of trade.
- The UK Government is committed to driving exports for UK produce. Defra's Food is GREAT campaign plays a key role in this, driving the demand for UK produce around the world and increasing positive public perception of our food and drink. China is one of the key markets in the International Action Plan for Food and Drink, which will see Government and industry working together to boost food and drink exports over the next five years.