

News story: MOT fails could be avoided by basic car maintenance

Nearly 50% of all faults found on MOTs could be avoided by carrying out regular, simple checks and maintenance, like replacing bulbs, wipers and tyres.

Between April 2015 and March 2016, nearly 1 in 5 cars taken for their MOT had problems with lighting and signalling – including simple problems such as blown bulbs.

Top reasons for MOT failures between April 2015 and March 2016

Type of defect	% of MOTs where the defect was found
Lighting and signalling	18.9%
Suspension	13%
Brakes	10%
Tyres	7.7%
Issues affecting the driver's view of the road	7.2%

Tips to avoid a fail and stay safe

Check that brakes work smoothly, tyres are legal, headlights and other lights work, windscreen wipers and washers work, and the driver's view of the road is clear of any obstruction.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is urging drivers to carry out regular, simple checks on their vehicles to avoid MOT fails and the accidents that defects cause.

Make sure that:

- brakes work smoothly and that the vehicle doesn't pull to one side
- tyres are correctly inflated, have no cuts or bulges, and that they all have at least 1.6mm of tread
- headlights and other lights work – give them a tap to check they're not loose or damaged and check the colours are correct and match
- windscreen wipers and washers work
- the driver's view of the road is clear of any obstruction, such as stickers, toys or air fresheners

Car defects contributing to accidents

The [2015 road casualties report for Great Britain](#) shows that car defects were a contributory factor in 1,131 accidents.

Over 75% of defects that contributed to accidents were either braking or tyre

issues.

The MOT is there to help avoid this and help you keep your vehicle safe to drive. However, you need to follow the standard to pass the MOT all year round.

Safe to drive at all times

DVSA Chief Executive, Gareth Llewellyn, said:

DVSA's priority is to help you keep your car safe to drive on our roads.

Don't wait until your MOT to find out if your car needs attention. Make sure your car is properly maintained and safe to drive at all times.

Carrying out regular checks on lights and tyres will help you to stay safe and legal, as well as saving you time and money when your car's MOT is due.

Find out more about [getting an MOT](#).

The [MOT testing data for Great Britain for 2015 to 2016](#) has more information about why other types of vehicles fail their MOT.

[News story: Britain, coalition and Iraqi forces to maintain momentum in campaign against Daesh, Defence Secretary says](#)

Speaking in Iraq, where local Iraqi and Coalition forces recently scored a major victory in the fight against Daesh in eastern Mosul, Sir Michael welcomed the progress made in defeating Daesh in Iraq.

Sir Michael saw how Britain's commitment to training Iraqi forces, which was stepped up last year is having an effect in the fight against Daesh. Numbers of Iraqi Security Forces trained by UK and Coalition personnel has increased threefold since October 2016, with around 3,000 Iraqi forces now being trained every month, 10,000 troops have been trained since the end of October 2016, increasing the Iraqi force's skills and ability to defeat Daesh.

With operations to clear the western approaches to Mosul already underway, Sir Michael met with the Prime Minister, President and Defence Minister of Iraq, and the Prime Minister and other representatives of the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq, to take review campaign progress and planning

During his visit, Sir Michael also met with UK personnel training Iraqi security forces. Britain leads the Coalition's training programme in Iraq, and so far has helped to train nearly 40,000 troops. The training in countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is proving to be vital, as Daesh have booby trapped many parts of eastern Mosul during its occupation. Iraqi forces have been using their training to dispose of these crude devices, allowing their forces to advance and civilians to safely return to their homes. This training will also prove essential when forces move into the heavily mined and densely populated neighbourhoods of western Mosul.

The liberation of eastern Mosul marked a major victory for Iraqi forces, who Sir Michael praised for their patient and deliberate operation, taking care to minimise the risk to civilians. The RAF also played an important role in the Iraqi victory, providing sustained close air support to Iraqi troops. RAF Reaper aircraft played a particularly vital role, delivering precision attacks on Daesh extremists engaged in street fighting, while also using its advanced sensors to alert Iraqi ground forces to the presence of civilians.

Residents in eastern Mosul are already returning to their homes, with over 29,000 having done so in recent weeks. The liberation has also enabled more than 23,000 children to return to school and continue their education.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Iraqi forces, supported by Britain and the Coalition, have made strong progress in the fight against Daesh. We're keeping up the momentum with operations to liberate western Mosul due to start shortly.

This will be a more complex fight in a densely populated urban environment. Britain will continue playing its part providing precision strikes, vital intelligence, and training Iraqi forces to deal with explosive devices planted by Daesh.

Sir Michael also announced that Britain will send a UK military officer to help lead NATO's newly established training mission in Iraq, from July this year. The new NATO training and capacity building team will help the Iraqis in dealing with the threats they face, including to counter Daesh improvised explosive devices. The UK has already contributed £1 million to help establish NATO's presence in Baghdad, which will provide expert advice on defence issues to the Iraqi Government.

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Press release: Search underway for UK's first Small Business Commissioner

- Commissioner appointment an important measure in tackling late payment issues
- Expected to be based in Birmingham, the Commissioner will be a national champion for small businesses

Applications are open to become the UK's first Small Business Commissioner – a high profile role supporting small businesses in payment disputes with their larger customers.

The successful candidate will provide general advice and information, handle complaints about payment issues and direct small businesses to existing dispute resolution services. Recent findings from the payment processor Bacs report that nearly half of the UK's small-to-medium sized businesses experience late payment, with £26.3 billion owed to them in total.

Applications open today (12 February 2017) and run until Monday 13 March 2017. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is looking for candidates who have credibility with both small and large businesses; can advise parties in resolving disputes; and who have an appetite to become a national spokesperson for small businesses affected by payment issues.

The final appointment decision will be made by the Secretary of State, supported by a panel which will include Mike Cherry, the National Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses.

Small Business Minister Margot James said:

We all rely on the UK's 5.5 million small and medium sized businesses for jobs, goods and services, and an unfair payment culture that hurts these firms has no place in an economy that works for all. This is why we are looking for an exceptional individual to help smaller firms resolve payment disputes and champion a culture change in how businesses work together.

Addressing the barriers businesses face when scaling up and growing is an important part of a modern Industrial Strategy, and this appointment will play an integral role in ensuring small businesses have the support they need to thrive and grow.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

I am delighted to be invited by the Secretary of State to be part of the selection process for the Small Business Commissioner. There is simply no excuse for a business culture where supply chain bullying or poor payment practice are acceptable. FSB research shows that poor payment practice is on the rise, causing 50,000 business deaths each year.

Small firms need a Commissioner who will make a meaningful difference to the £26bn currently stuck in bank accounts as payments outstanding to SMEs. He or she must be given the powers and resources to tackle this, to step in to save small firms whose livelihoods are under threat, and to promote a prompt payment culture right across the economy.

The Small Business Commissioner, expected to be based in Birmingham, is just one part of a package of measures designed to tackle this and drive a real change in the UK's payment culture. Regulations coming into force in April 2017 will require big businesses to publically report on the time taken to pay their suppliers, and guidance to help large businesses comply with these changes was published last month. This will shine a light on poor payment practices and allow suppliers, including small businesses, to make informed decisions about who they do business with.

[Ruth calls for immediate review of](#)

reevaluation of business rates

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- Ruth calls for immediate review of revaluation of business rates

12 Feb 2017



Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson has written to the First Minister calling on her to launch an urgent review into the revaluation of business rates.

It comes after Ruth was inundated with letters from businesses across Scotland who are facing huge increases in their rates, with some now having to pay four times more than they did previously.

A full scale reform plan for the business rates system is currently being prepared by former RBS executive, Ken Barclay.

However, firms and trade bodies are warning that the revaluation will come into force prior to that plan, and that an emergency review separate to that is therefore required.

One business owner complained that the hike in rates was “unsustainable for a small business and proves yet again how those in authority are divorced from reality.” Another said the rise in their business rates would inevitably lead “to the slow death of our business.”

It points to a growing crisis facing many small businesses, that if not addressed, could lead to closures and job losses.

In her letter Ruth also asked Nicola Sturgeon to heed the warning of the Scottish Tourism Alliance, who this week voiced their concerns about the increase in rates facing some businesses.

They too have called on the SNP to review the ‘disproportionate valuations being imposed’ on many businesses.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“Over the past few days I have been inundated with letters from businesses who are worried and angry about the impending rise in their rates.

“Some of them are facing three or four fold increases which is the difference between them making a profit, and having to close down.

“These shops, hotels and restaurants are vital to our economy, providing much needed jobs in many areas of the country, and we cannot afford to see them simply go out of business.

"That's why I've called on Nicola Sturgeon to listen to the voices of these businesses and the Scottish Tourism Alliance and launch an urgent review into these rate increases.

"The amounts that are being asked for are clearly unsustainable and if immediate action is not taken then we risk seeing a huge amount of damage done to our economy."

A pdf of the letter sent to the First Minister can be found here:

www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Letter-to-FM-business-rates.pdf

Below are some excerpts of the letters received by Ruth regarding the increase in business rates:

"I very much hope that you will be able to convince the powers-that-be to re-think these exorbitant rises. If they are imposed, I have no doubt that many people will be forced out of business which will lead to even greater redundancies. These rises must be reconsidered."

The Ship Inn, Stonehaven

"The new Rateable Value produced by the revaluation process is proposed as £27,200. This will take us above the threshold for the Small Business Bonus Scheme's Rural Relief giving us a Non Domestic Rates bill of £12,675.20 from 2017/18. A 338% increase on 2016/17. Without action many small, particularly rural, businesses face a difficult or bleak future. In turn many areas of Scotland, particularly rural areas, will face job losses and a contraction of the local economy."

Argyll Hotel, Cambeltown

"No one doubted a rates rise, but these rises are unsustainable and cannot be absorbed by our businesses or passed onto our customers. Most of us are owner-occupiers of small businesses who took the premises on because we could make a living from them. With such extreme rate rises this will no longer be the case. Re-investment in our businesses will be extremely difficult with knock-on effects on staff morale, customer satisfaction and ultimately turnover. Local job losses or closure is our only recourse. As business owners we all share a common optimism but on this occasion we all agree that the impending rate rises will result in a slow death for our businesses."

Reds Restaurant, Portobello

"After speaking to other business owners locally, I have found many similarly minded to me. We now reluctantly have to look at our options, and if financially things do not ease, we may have to close the business after the final three years of our lease and hand the hotel back to our landlord as we will be unable to make the required investment in the property to secure its future. At the point that we return the hotel to the landlord, I believe that the hotel will close permanently which will result in the loss of 30 jobs locally, and this is down to the final nail which is the business rates increase..."

Stotfield Hotel, Lossiemouth

The letter from the Scottish Tourism Alliance to Nicola Sturgeon regarding business rates can be found [here](#).