

Minutes of East of England Freight Council 23 January 2025

Introductions:

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed upon.

Secretary's report and key national updates:

The Council want to hear more on local issues, for example, the fallout of Cambridge's Sustainable Travel Zone. It has been confirmed that this initiative has been 'shelved'.

An update for the Council on the 4.25t regulation consultation was provided. The consultation was launched on 24 December looking at further issues that potentially hamper the uptake of ZEVs, due to the increased weights of the batteries pushing the vehicle classification from vans into heavy goods.

Logistics UK responded:

- Agree that vehicles between 3.5t and 4.25t should be tested under the van testing regime and not the HGV regime
- Agree that these vehicles are exempted from mandatory fitting of a tachograph

ACTION: Members are encouraged to respond to the consultation before 3 March, which can be found [here](#).

Public affairs update:

- Policy win with Fuel Duty freeze
- The launch of the UK Logistics Network report
- Launch of the Industrial Strategy Green Paper
- Lower Thames Crossing Parliamentary reception
- Food 7 Cymru

Regional Update

With Maersk moving operations from Felixstowe, members asked questions about how the containers are going to be returned to their former port.

Lower Thames Crossing 'poised to be approved'.

Guest Speaker – WSP

Challenges and Solutions in Logistics and Transport Infrastructure

The logistics and transport sectors face significant challenges across agriculture, construction, housing, infrastructure, and alternative fuel provision. These issues are exacerbated by inefficient planning, limited infrastructure investment, and a lack of long-term strategy.

Agriculture

Delivering to farms is increasingly inefficient due to weight limits on rural roads, often imposed to protect villages. For example, 7.5-tonne limits force hauliers to take longer routes, adding time and costs. Suffolk's transit routes exacerbate the problem by excluding farm deliveries. Additionally, rural infrastructure, underdeveloped post-WW2, lags behind, leaving farms poorly connected and reliant on outdated road networks.

Construction and Housing

New housing developments create logistical challenges, particularly in rural areas. Minor roads are clogged due to insufficient planning, with relief roads introduced after housing occupancy. Developer-built roads are unsuitable for heavy vehicles, and increased traffic limits space for freight. Access to these areas is hindered by fines or restricted entry points, while construction vehicles struggle to manoeuvre. There is an urgent need to integrate transport planning with land-use development to address growing traffic volumes and freight congestion.

Infrastructure for Alternative Fuels

The transition to electric vehicles (EVs) and alternative fuels is hampered by inadequate infrastructure. Charging facilities are designed for cars rather than lorries, with issues such as limited power supply, long charging times, and impractical charging leads. Suffolk's EV trials highlight some success but remain insufficient to meet demand. Hydrogen is viewed as a better alternative for heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), offering lighter weight and reduced charging requirements. However, limited availability and high costs of hydrogen and other alternative fuels, such as biomethane and HVO, deter adoption. Lessons can be drawn from Scandinavian models, where government support and tax incentives eased the transition to alternative fuels.

Planning and Policy Gaps

A lack of strategic planning and long-term commitment undermines progress. Local and national governments often overlook hauliers' needs, leaving them out of critical transport planning. Poorly conceived infrastructure, such as Lincolnshire's single-carriageway ring road, highlights the short-sighted approach. Similarly, expansions like Yarmouth Docks are inadequately supported by road infrastructure. Without future-proofing and resilience planning, the logistics sector remains constrained.

Barriers to Transition

Uncertainty over government direction and inconsistent policies deter private investment in alternative technologies. The focus on EVs neglects more suitable solutions, such as hydrogen shipping. High electricity costs and insufficient guidance further complicate the transition. Public transport deficiencies in rural areas push more vehicles onto roads, worsening congestion and emissions.

Driver Facilities

Driver facilities are inadequate, with councils often rejecting proposals for expansion. Time restrictions and inefficient siting add to the problem. Innovative solutions, like repurposing road project compounds into lorry parks, could alleviate this.

Recommendations

- Infrastructure Investment: Develop resilient, future-proofed road networks with freight in mind. Prioritise rural areas and growth zones
- Alternative Fuels: Support hydrogen and biomethane through subsidies and decentralised fuel provision
- Integrated Planning: Align transport and land-use planning to address freight access and housing growth impacts
- Government Support: Provide clear, long-term policies and incentives to drive the transition to alternative technologies
- Driver Support: Establish efficient, accessible facilities along key routes.
- Without decisive action, the industry risks inefficiency, higher costs, and declining sustainability

Budget and Comprehensive Spending Review

Logistics UK is keen to gather members' feedback on the following questions:

1) What announcements in the Budget did members welcome and what are the biggest concerns?

- NIC increase results in the costs being passed onto the consumer
- Employment rates have dropped because of NIC increases
- Affects an organisation's long-term contract bidding processes
- Restrictions on employing new members of staff
- When companies look to save, they look at headcount. Administration and support staff will most impacted, drivers and Transport Managers are safe

Looking ahead to the Comprehensive Spending Review:

1) What priority asks should Logistics UK consider including in its submission to government?

- Business property relief – the withdrawal of investment into family businesses
- Employment Rights Bill: Workers rights from day one is problematic. Dealing with tight margins, organisations cannot afford to have workers who are inefficient/unwilling to learn
- Double-cab pickups – has there been a review of this?

2) Are there any areas where government departments or agencies could find savings through efficiencies or improvements in services?

- Make current user systems more freight friendly, for example, Director's signature for O Licence online
- Planning and regulation

Speed Limits

Questions:

1) Have members experienced any changes to speed limits in their area recently? What has been the impact of these?

- The implantation of 20mph speed limits, in areas where they are suitable, are more fuel efficient and safer. However, blanket 20mph speed limits are not the solution
- PCNs are considered a cash-making scheme for TfL
- People will avoid 20mph zones
- The standard of driving has significantly dropped
- Confusion whether the speed restriction zones are legitimate. It has been reported that villages are taking it upon themselves to enforce speed limits (A14 at Stowmarket was a reported example)
- The blanket 20mph speed limits in Ely, it is felt, was not efficiently consulted on
- Fuel efficiency, alongside safety, is considered they key takeaway of these actions
- Support for 50mph limits for sustainability
- Support for lower speed limits on smaller, rural roads where a single track can be dangerous for inexperienced drivers
- Technology helps to keep speeds, but concern noted for sensory overload
- Are vulnerable road users more likely to step out when they see a slow-moving vehicle?

2) Have members experienced any increased speed limit enforcement activity? (across any speed limits)

- Yes, without consultation and seemingly spontaneously

Road Regulation Issues - Graduated Driving License

1). What impact would the possible restrictions have on operations if newly qualified drivers faced restrictions on what they could do?

- Night-time black box restrictions are problematic
- In December, 'night' falls at 5pm – consideration on the definition is needed
- Regionally, the majority of people require a car to work, and so restrictions would affect their ability to work
- Younger drivers need to see HGV driving as a genuine career path from the age of 18, not 21
- Younger drivers improve by experience. If accessibility is restricted, so is their ability to experience real-life road conditions
- Driver retention is better with younger drivers

2). Do members believe that newly qualified HGV drivers pose a greater risk to road safety?

- No – no influx of accidents from that age group. Younger drivers are believed to be safer than older drivers, who may have picked up bad habits or 'skill fade'
- Consideration should be given from insurance companies to encourage new drivers into the profession

ACTION: Case studies of young drivers are welcome from members for Logistics UK's [Generation Logistics campaign](#) – please find the form to submit attached

Road Regulation Issues - Drivers Domestic Hours

- 1). Would members support a definition of a fixed calendar day for 'working day'?
 - No – how can you calculate overnight?
 - Open questions posed around the exemptions and derogations that would be needed although it was noted that exceptions may open up less reputable companies to take advantage
- 2). Is the current definition of 'duty' sufficient? If not, what would members prefer to see?
 - Questions were raised about the definition of 'duty' and contrast to the EU
 - A technicality allows drivers to be on duty for 22 hours, with obvious safety implications
- 3). Would members prefer to see a more precise definition of 'adequate rest'? If so, what?
 - Yes – along the same lines as EU (9 or 11 hours)
 - The biggest cause of accidents in the road freight industry is fatigue
- 4). What demonstrable benefits would members gain if domestic hours recording was permitted via an app?
 - Analysis through an app is good, but implementing tachographs is better

AOB

Review of Section 88 needed.

Traffic Commissioner – assessment checks of routes are fine, but what happens when drivers are diverted from their planned route? TCs are saying that operators must have sat-nav systems that can produce live routes, that consider limitations, weight restrictions, etc. when drivers are taken off their pre-planned route. Members believe such technology does not exist.

Clarification needed from DfT about ADI assessors being required to instruct or assess Cat B – needs to be a broader range.

Attendees

John Burbridge, Turners (Soham)
Ed Barker, AIC
Ian McCann, Norfolk County Council
Chris Welch, Welch Group
Justin Waite, Vetspeed
Kelly White, Truck (UK)
Warren DiDuca, Medlog
Joe Addison, Glazewing
Ali Kefil, M Group Services
Tidus Ward, Norwich City Services
Kevin Barcroft, CMS Supatrak

Ryan Clay, Foactory Services UK
Andy Belcher, For Farmers UK
Adam Goode, Murphy Plant
Jamie Sands, Welch Group
Chris Francis, Turners (Soham)
Darryl Harwood, GAP Group
Tim Ridyard, Ashtons Legal
Bethany Windsor, Logistics UK
Ellis Shelton, Logistics UK
Sandy Neisig-Moller, WSP
Helen Corina, Norfolk County Council