

South Central Freight Council minutes

Wednesday 18 October 2023

09:30 – 13:00

DoubleTree by Hilton Newbury, North Berkshire, RG20 8XY

INTRODUCTION

- The meeting was chaired by Paul Needle from Smith & Sons (Bletchington) Ltd.
- The minutes of the last meeting were approved.
- Members were reminded by the Secretary about the competition law compliance guidance and referred members to the full details on page 5 of the Policy Report.

Report back from the Modal Councils

- Members received a report back from Road, Rail, Air, Water and Shippers Councils.

Report back from the Working Groups

- Members received a report back from the Warehouse, Van Policy, Environment Working Groups and Engineering Forum.

Secretary's Report

- Members were updated on other issues not on the main agenda including: Logistics UK's Autumn Statement, Direct Vision Standard, Longer Semi-Trailers and the delays to the Smart Tachograph 2.

REGIONAL ITEMS

- Ellis Shelton updated members that Oxford ZEZ had launched a consultation asking for operators views on the proposed changes to the Oxford ZEZ pilot. The proposed changes include continuing discounts for business vehicles indefinitely, and keeping the ZEZ pilot charges at their current level by removing the planned increase in daily charges from 1 August 2025. Logistics UK have responded to the consultation, welcoming the continuation of the current charging levels.
- Operators fed back that some companies had already switched to zero emission vehicles in anticipation of the 'Zero Emission' area expanding. As well, members questioned whether or not zero emission vehicles were exempt from traffic controls. John Disley, Oxfordshire County Council, confirmed that traffic controls are not exempt, to which members responded that this could be a concession that would indefinitely help the sector.

EXTERNAL PRESENTATION

- John Disley, Oxfordshire County Council, Head of Transport Policy, Environment and Place, presented to the Council to discuss and seek input on OCC's area weight restriction work in Oxford.
- John noted that the complexity of weight restrictions meant it was not possible to achieve the initial goal of the study, to identify restriction proposals at a countywide level. A key reason for this was the need for much more granular local data, particularly HGV origin-destination data, to understand local HGV movements and issues (especially relating to local access).
- Members stated that the problem with weight restrictions is that you end up with more vehicles going to one singular area, rather than just one larger vehicle. Members used the case study of Berkshire as an example. They reported that that they now have to deliver five times a week, rather than two to three times a week. Offering their thoughts on the role that Councils could play to aid operators, members called for improved local

co-ordination between Local Councils to, for example, lessen the impact of diversion routes. It was deemed paramount that Councils address where diversions force vehicles onto local roads.

AGENDA ITEMS

A1 Windsor Framework & Border Target Operating Model

- Michelle Gardner introduced and gave an overview of the 'Windsor Framework & Border Target Operating Model' agenda item. Michelle stated that the Windsor Framework is an international agreement between the UK and EU on the movement of goods from GB to Northern Ireland (NI) via a 'Green Lane' and 'Red Lane' to protect both the UK internal market and EU single market.
- Members noted that insufficient information is being supplied and this was leading to a scenario whereby those that were shipping regularly, were becoming the only ones who understood the new process.

A2 Parking Restrictions

- Members talked about their experiences with the new parking regulations. Members mentioned that there had been several limitations with new housing projects for a long time, including the inability of vans to park on driveways or adjacent roads.
- Although these restrictions may compromise the security of vehicles and equipment, members reported that, where feasible, drivers driving their vehicles home boosted productivity, especially for those who are "on call". Should drivers be required to report to a central hub before starting a shift, this would also violate the "Working Time Directive". As well, working from home was more ecologically beneficial since it reduced commute distance and pollution.

A3 Statutory Role for Fleet Engineers

- The Operator Licencing regime's legislative requirements for the function of Fleet Engineer were deliberated by members, who also took into consideration the recommendations put together by Logistics UK's Engineering Forum members.
- There was consensus that while the role of Fleet Engineer was beneficial in many instances, it should become a statutory obligation. Members came to the conclusion that small enterprises in particular would find the "statutory" function to be too burdensome. It was widely agreed that having an engineering education was beneficial to oppose any cost-cutting measures that could compromise safety and compliance. A number of members voiced worries about the additional costs that this proposal could impose on businesses. All of them agreed, nonetheless, that the business's size would be the decisive element. For bigger fleets, fleet engineers serve as internal auditors, although members noted different experiences of their effectiveness in the role.
- The members agreed that Transport Managers have the final word in decisions and that the industry has done a great job of teaching directors about their obligations under "Operator Licencing". Members proposed that it would be beneficial to review the obligations of Transport Managers and fleet maintenance, rather than introduce another statutory requirement. Members noted this would reinforce the requirement for the Transport Manager to be responsible if it was communicated more clearly.
- On vehicle maintenance more generally, members noted the impact the technician shortage is having on the industry. Finally, members highlighted an issue often in front of the Traffic Commissioners is vehicles being given to a garage and assuming everything is fine when issues actually need to be addressed.

A4 Schengen Immigration Restrictions

- Members agreed that there was a lack of awareness around this subject matter. As a prime example, the singular member that was affected by the restrictions, had not been informed of the restrictions and how they would impact their operations.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- On DVS, concerns were raised about the cost and lack of detail about the equipment required to comply with the progressive safe system ahead of phase 2 of DVS in October 2024.
- Attendance was confirmed for UK Road Council on 9 November.

ATTENDEES

Chairman

Paul Needle Smith & Sons (Bletchington) Ltd

Members

Peter Staines Marshall Fleet Solutions
Mick Dearle LWC Drinks
Paul Stanley Fareham Borough Council
Karl Wintle Geotechnical Engineering Ltd
Lee Curds Agrii

Guests

Jon Disley Oxfordshire County Council

Staff

Michelle Gardner Deputy Director - Policy
Ellis Shelton Policy Advisor
Marco Scalzo Membership Relations Manager