

West Midlands Freight Council Minutes

**Wednesday 31 January 2024, 09.30 – 13:00**

**Best Western Plus Windmill Village Hotel, Birmingham Road, Coventry CV5 9AL**

**INTRODUCTION**

* The meeting was initially chaired by Gary King of Sainsburys, as Dave Rowland (DR) of Wincanton was delayed arriving due to traffic issues.
* The minutes of the last meeting were approved.
* Members were reminded about the competition law compliance guidance on page 5 of the Policy Report.

**SECRETARY’s RePORT AND KEY NATIONAL UPDATES**

Members received a report from the Road Council meeting held on 9 November 2023 and were updated on key national policy matters including Driver CPC, the Budget, MOT testing for Earned Recognition operations and the tightening of the Direct Vision Standard planned for October 2024.

Members queried whether the 5ppl policy ask in the Budget submission should go further and instead call for a reduction of costs for decarbonised vehicles and zero emission fuels.

Members expressed concern about constraints regarding labour and parts to meet the new DVS requirements, whether the systems will be able to handle the new changes and whether certificates will come through in a timely manner. Members comments that more time was needed to comply with the new standards and said they required more details about the technology specifications urgently.

**ACTION**: Denise Beedell (DB) to pass concerns on to Chris Yarsley.

One member said that their fleets were now registered in Ireland and the Netherlands, making applications for DVS and also LEZ more complicated. Members were alerted to a TfL survey about the DVS which closes on 5 February and encouraged to participate using the link in the Policy Report on page 25.

**REGIONAL ITEMS**

Members were updated on the 2 May 2024 Midlands mayoral elections and the Logistics UK Midlands Manifesto currently being produced. Also covered were the Midlands Rail Hub and Zero Emission HGV and Infrastructure Demonstration (ZEHID) trials taking place in the Midlands.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

**A1 ELECTION PRIORITIES FOR NATIONS AND REGIONS**

Feedback was sought from members on industry’s priorities for improving road safety and reducing serious and fatal collisions on UK roads.

Members commented about potential differences in approaches to charging zones, loading and unloading regulation and road pricing that could arise by having multiple mayors across the region. They expressed a need for a consistent approach and standardised definitions. It was felt that better recognition of the region as a transit area was needed. A suggestion was made to remove toll charges on the M6Toll to provide a through road.

Issues posing restrictions for logistics included a lack of decent secure truck parking that has truck recharging infrastructure, the need for a route to the western side of the West Midlands conurbation, upgrades to the A14, A42 (around Tamworth, Ashby and Donnington), M54 link to the M6. It was also noted that the elevated section of Spaghetti Junction (M6/A38M) is over 80 years old. Member experiences suggested that more work is being done at night which is causing delays. A-roads should be given a higher priority for street-lighting and better-quality pothole repairs that last longer. Now that HS2 is terminating at Birmingham, there were concerns about what will happen to the Midlands’ road corridors. If DVS comes to Midland cities, members said it is important the standard does not deviate from what is happening in London, so that entire fleets can operate to the same standards and vehicle will be compliant everywhere.

A consistent approach to all green infrastructure is required, including hydrogen refuelling stations in the region, which have reduced from 26 to 4 and is hindering hydrogen vehicle trials. Members wanted to see fairer pricing between home/depot charging and public charging, and they also called for the barriers, such as planning permissions for electric charging, hydrogen refuelling, wind and solar energy generation to be removed. There was support for lower fuel duty on low carbon fuels including HVO. There were reports of EVs being issued with parking fines when charging vehicles.

Current driver shortages are still being reported with members suggesting the causes may be around cost barriers for young drivers obtaining a licence and insurance. Technician shortages continue potentially down to continued poor perceptions of the sector, limited support from colleges and unclear career paths. One member reported that main dealers are bringing in technicians from South Africa.

Concerns were raised about the increased reports of vehicle hijacking and commercial vehicles being targeted by gangs in the West Midlands. It was acknowledged that the police need more capacity to pursue investigations and arrests, and members wanted to see the government fund NaVCIS.

**A2 GUIDE TO MAINTAINING ROADWORTHINESS (GTMR) REFRESH**

Members discussed DVSA plans to issue a refreshed version of the GTMR in April 2024, a year ahead of the main changes to brake testing in April 2025. The refresh could allow for other changes to the guide.

Members agreed the current GTMR covers the bases but felt that some areas needed clarification e.g. differentiate between ‘must do’, ‘should do’ and ‘would like to be done’ and make clearer what is considered a ‘meaningful brake test’. There are challenges with third party service providers not understanding what should be done. One suggestion was for the UK to follow the German example of statutory brake tests every 6 months.

Specific changes were suggested for page 39 to remove the word ‘exceptionally’ in relation to brake test reports and on page 53, 5th paragraph, about the requirement for brake test reports to be signed being unnecessary. Other areas included liability for trailers during MOT testing, tankers and fuel tankers and there was a request for a section to cover testing regimes for new vehicle types, such as electric and alternatively fuelled vehicles. Members suggested that a clear list of the old wording with the new changes should be provided, as is done for changes to Earned Recognition.

**A3 ROAD SAFETY PRIORITIES**

Members were given a presentation of updated statistics about incidents with road users and views were sought on the industry’s priorities for improving road safety and reducing serious and fatal collisions on UK roads.

Members provided examples of actions they have taken to improve safety for their road operations and employees which included ongoing monitoring and risk scoring, daily statements by drivers, alcohol and drug testing, installation of forward-facing cameras in vehicle and participation in the National Highways PING trial. Members suggested that some of the improvement for HGVs may be down to telematics, which should be rolled out to LCVs.

There was a discussion about understanding speed limits for different vehicles and installing speed limiters for light goods vehicles, keeping signage up to date and ensuring the electronic matrix boards are in good working order and also up to date. Members reported that guidance should be produced for authorities to improve sight lines and turning space at junctions and entry/exits for HGVs. The was general agreement that there needs to be much greater enforcement of non-compliant and poor driving behaviour, and a query about whether e-cargo bikes should have their speeds limited when road are reducing their speed limits.

**A4 ZERO-EMISSION VEHICLE (ZEV) REFUELLING AND RECHARGING**

Members were asked about their preparedness for introducing zero emission vehicles into fleets and updated on Logistics UK’s engagement with the Department for Transport’s Freight Energy Forum and our work leading Workstream 1 seeking to understand the aggregate future energy demand for the supply chain required by 2050.

Members felt that lots of operators are waiting to see what others are doing and seeking to avoid disadvantages relating to being a first mover, especially in relation to costs. There were concerns about whether energy supplies will be sufficient for the needs of Logistics.

It was reported that CNG providers trying to set up refuelling hubs have been advised that it will be several years before it will be possible to provide adequate power supplies at some sites. Members said that the government must invest more in the UK’s power supply and to simplify the planning system.

Some members have revised plans for decarbonising their fleet due to infrastructure issues. A few members are starting to explore this, and some gave examples of expected future energy demand data. There was limited engagement with DNOs. As part of the work Logistics UK is undertaking for the Freight Energy Forum, members were asked about sharing data to help understand better our sector’s future energy needs and members confirmed they are happy to support the sharing of data once the indicators are understood and circulated to members.

**WEST MIDLANDS FREIGHT COUNCIL OFFICERS AND ROAD COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES**

This meeting was the last one for Dave Rowlands of Wincanton as Chair of the West Midlands FC. Dave has been an excellent Chair and representative of the West Midlands at national Logistics UK fora for many years. Vice-chair Karl Wilshaw (Travis Perkins) was elected by members as the new Chair, and Adam Purshall (Menzies Distribution) agreed to take over as first Vice-chair with a view to succeeding Karl at the end of his term. Members also confirmed Eddie Parker (Arval BNP) as the second Vice-chair and Colin James (DPD), Chris Paul (EH Smith), Mark Smith (Aldi Stores), Robin Tate (Yusen Logistics) and Darren Wilson (DPD) as listed West Midlands representatives to Road Council. The West Midlands Freight Council can send up to four representatives to each meeting.

It was confirmed that Karl Wilshaw, Chris Paul, Mark Smith and Darren Wilson would attend the next meeting of Road on 8 February 2024 as representatives of the West Midlands FC. Dave Rowlands will also attend in his capacity as a former Road Council Chair.

**ACTION:** Denise Beedell (DB) to notify Chris Yarsley the names of confirmed attendees.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

* Concerned about the requirement to have Gold FORS standards for operators supporting Crossrail and it was felt this was restrictive practice.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Wednesday 1 May 2024, timings and venue to be confirmed.

Meeting concluded at 13:00

**ATTENDEES**

**Chairman**

Dave Rowlands Wincanton

**Members**

Richard Brown Fly By Nite

David Chambers Jet Plant Hire Ltd

Sandra Cooksey The AA

John Cowdell AS Miles Consulting

Albis DeRosa Whitworth Bros Ltd

Dug Dudley The AA

Anna Griffin Culina Group

Michael Hughes Hughes Driver Training

Alan Hurst National Grid

Colin James DPD

Andy Jordan TiP Group

Gary King Sainsburys

Steve Kirby Morgan Sindall

Nick Marshall Cobley Transport

Linda McGlinchey Sainsburys

Eddie Parker Arval BNP

Adam Purshall Menzies Distribution

Chris Paul EH Smith Builders Merchants

Daniel Price One Stop Stores Ltd

Andy Ray Brandon Hire Station

Mark Smith Aldi Stores Ltd

Simon Sumner Continental Tyre Group

Pasqualino Vaccarella Yodel

Devon Walton DPD

Karl Wilshaw Travis Perkins

**Staff**

Denise Beedell (Secretary) Senior Policy Manager

Josh Fenton Policy Manager - Trade, Customs and Borders

Hannah Gowlett Membership Relationship Manager