

Lorry parking

INTRODUCTION

There are over 400,000 goods vehicles exceeding 3.5 tonnes registered in the UK and there are 103,000 operators licensed to run these types of vehicles. At any one time there are also many thousands of European registered goods vehicles running on UK roads. All operators seek to achieve high levels of vehicle utilisation.

Regulations* require drivers to stop at defined time intervals whilst traffic congestion can make it impossible to reach planned stopping points within allowed driving times.

There are limited official stopping places suitable for HGVs and this lack makes full compliance with the regulations difficult and may contribute to the volume of theft of loads and vehicles (which averages about 10 per day).

Provision of sufficient good quality stopping places would provide many benefits for drivers, operators, the community and the economy.

* the relevant regulations are EU Drivers Hours Regulations Directive 3820/85 and the Road Transport (Working Time) Regulations 2005.

LORRY PARKING REQUIREMENTS

Satisfactory lorry parking facilities will meet the following criteria:

- Must not obstruct the highway;
- Must have safe exit from and access to the highway;
- Surface must bear the axle, steering and braking loads;
- Area must be of shape and size to minimise manoeuvring to park;
- Minimum nuisance or hazard to third parties;
- Must be sufficient parking space when required;
- Must be on or close to arterial route (to minimise transit times, fuel consumption and environmental impact);
- Provide for drivers' personal needs (food quality/quantity, toilet, showers);
- Provide for operators' needs (security, fuel and basic service needs and cost);

- Be economically viable for private operation (or subsidised from public funds if benefits so justify (S.122 of RTRA 1984));
- Provide a segregated area for hazardous vehicles;
- Simple payment method (so as to avoid exorbitant fines/clamping).

Parking facilities are needed to accommodate the following and, of course, any one site may meet more than one of these needs:

- The home depot facilities;
- For the 45 minute stop on route;
- For the overnight stop, or other longer stop, on route;
- For vehicles delayed by route closure (eg. ferries, shuttle, accident, congestion etc.).

Whilst most of the criteria above apply for the first three requirements there are some differences in emphasis.

For instance a longer deviation from route will be more acceptable for an overnight stop than for a 45 minute break and more comprehensive driver facilities (eg canteen and showers) and vehicle security will be sought at the overnight stop.

POSITION PAPER 10

- Operation 'Stack', which has been developed by Kent Police, is an example of control and management of the rapid build up of HGVs which arises when a major part of the route closes. To date it has been operated with two phases according to the severity of the cross channel delays. Phase 1 can accommodate up to 800 HGVs whilst Phase 2 can accommodate a further 3,000 HGVs. It is understood that Kent police and Kent Highways are now reviewing the operation.

AVAILABILITY OF AND DEMAND FOR LORRY PARKING

Current research

There is no single source of information on the location and scope of all lorry parking facilities. Current availability of, and demand for lorry parking, across England is being researched on behalf of the Highways Agency.

A data base is being developed covering HGV flows (based on DfT and HA data), lorry parking facilities, driver needs and decision making processes, operator requirements and the interests of other stakeholders.

Currently about 300 HGV parking facilities appear on the data base. These include 130 motorway service areas (MSAs) and 170 other facilities. Many other unofficial and unauthorised locations are used for stopovers.

Research is still 'in process' but early indications suggest that:

- Overall there are insufficient facilities on the network and there are considerable regional variations;
- In the North West there are high HGV flows and good provision of parking facilities;
- The North West is a node for many long distance HGV flows (eg to and from Scotland, Ireland and Wales);
- In the North East there are high HGV flows and poor provision of parking facilities;
- In Central London and the South East there is very poor provision for lorry parking despite high vehicle through flows to and from Europe.

There is wide variation in demand by day of the week and time of day.

The database will include information on the location, quality, facilities provided and prices of lorry parks.

MOTORWAY SERVICE AREAS

These form an essential part of the 'national lorry park' and are, by definition, well sited on

the major routes. However they have several serious drawbacks for HGV drivers:

- They are often full – and utilisation varies by time of day;
- Security cover (eg CCTV) is limited or non-existent;
- Coaches also compete for space on the heavy vehicle areas;
- Catering and showering facilities may not be ideal.

OTHER HGV PARKING FACILITIES

HGV drivers generally prefer the facilities offered by dedicated truck stops – but the 'offer' at these does vary considerably. Valued features include:

- Appropriate value for money menus;
- Washing and toilet facilities;
- Availability of fuel;
- Security for vehicle (particularly where loads are high value);
- Closeness to route – 50% of drivers are willing to deviate 2-5 miles and a few much further;
- Ability to use Truck Stops as an operational base – which is popular with some owner drivers.

Operators often direct drivers as to where they should stop for reasons of security, cost or route deviation. Others leave the driver to chose.

The Safer Parking Scheme, which is increasingly popular for car parks, is currently being developed to identify and reward best practice in HGV parking facilities.

THE COST OF PROVIDING PURPOSE BUILT TRUCK STOPS

The ideal locations for truck stops are also, by definition, ideal locations for distribution centres. This means that land values are high.

The construction of a large area of hard standing with good quality services and proper security arrangements is also expensive.

Thus creating a well sited quality truck stop requires substantial capital investment and it can only be a proper commercial venture if a strong and continuing income stream can be achieved.

Indications suggest that many operators and drivers are reluctant to pay more than a minimum for using Truck Stop facilities. Thus high margins are not available and a high volume of business will be necessary to achieve viability.

There are examples of some Truck Stops upgrading whilst others are closing and the land use changing.

THE EFFECTS OF LAND DEVELOPMENT AROUND HGV OPERATING SITES

Many HGV operators have long established base sites where there has been little pressure for alternative land use.

Increasingly new local residential development near to existing lorry parks/depots may mean that continuing trucking activities give rise to complaints on safety or nuisance grounds. This is despite the trucking activity having been long established before the residential development was started.

The result may be the application of restrictions to the operator's license - and these restrictions can challenge the viability of the trucking business remaining on that site. Alternative affordable sites may not be available.

Increasing local industrial development can also drive up land values with the same effect on the trucking business. These circumstances are occurring more frequently.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Signage and Information

Drivers would welcome more comprehensive signage directing them to official Truck Stops and this particularly applies for those unfamiliar with the area in which they are travelling.

The Highways Agency considers signage from their network directing drivers to Truck Stops on a case by case basis whilst signage on Local Authority roads is determined separately.

The presentation of local maps and plans showing the location of facilities are not co-ordinated by any common standard and there are wide and confusing variations of colours, symbols and scales amongst them. Such plans are frequently not updated.

DRIVER MOTIVATION AND UNOFFICIAL STOPPING PLACES

Whilst drivers appreciate the facilities of the better truck stops those who are paid uncontrolled overnight expenses may prefer to avoid the associated parking charges and treat the expenses as an untaxed income – this can easily amount to £4,000 of extra income per year. Acceptable levels of overnight expenses are controlled and agreed annually with the Inland Revenue.

Searching out unofficial stopping places, whether in back streets, quiet roads or

industrial parks, can lead to damage to carriageways and hard shoulders and may lead to restrictive or retaliatory measures from landowners and Local Authorities.

OVERNIGHT PARKING AREAS WITHOUT SPECIAL FACILITIES

Overnight HGV parking can be very difficult to locate.

A number of Local Authorities (including all London Boroughs) have instituted an overnight ban on lorry parking on their roads. This is to prevent HGVs taking up valuable kerb space in residential areas where they could be seen as unsightly and quite out of scale with the surroundings. It is also to prevent drivers from using their HGVs as home to work transport – a role for which they are not suited.

Typically overnight bans may affect vehicles over 7.5 tonnes and extend from 10.00 pm to 6.00 am. Introduction of a ban requires a Traffic Order and the placing of signs on each side of every road in the area covered.

It is good practice for a Local Authority to ensure that suitable off street HGV parking facilities are available in or near areas covered by an overnight ban – but it is not a legal requirement and it is often not provided.

One practical way in which this deficiency might be resolved could be by studying the many parking areas which are heavily used by cars during daytime and empty at night. Examples are commuter rail stations, retail car parks, out of town office sites and park & ride sites.

Some such sites may be able to meet the minimum criteria for overnight parking for HGVs with small expenditure but others will not have suitable access or satisfactory paving strength for the purpose.

Some site owners may also be concerned that opening up such sites, by removing height limiters, may lead to 'travellers' moving on to them.

MAKING PROVISION

Driver regulations and high HGV flows create a major demand for Truck Stop facilities but 'free market' land values may inhibit commercial provision of sufficient well sited truck stops.

It is unreasonable to enforce regulations fully when the means of full compliance does not exist.

Thus there is a clear need for intervention at a national and or local government level to facilitate the provision of sufficient Truck Stops at strategic points throughout the national road network.



► RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FORUM

- That Government look at this problem urgently and work with the business sector and Local Authorities to resolve it.
- That the present important study of supply and demand for Truck Stops and the services which they provide is completed as a matter of urgency.
- That the existence of the information gathered by the study is publicised and the information made readily available (eg. websites, mobile phone downloads).
- That the business of providing and operating Truck Stops is also studied in depth covering capital and operating costs, services required, volumes and operating margins available and regional characteristics. This study should be completed quickly.
- That the social, economic and environmental benefits which Truck Stops provide are evaluated within the same timescale as 1 and 3 above.
- That a National strategy is then developed which will provide a network of Truck Stops which enables all HGV drivers to comply with regulations in an efficient way.
- That Regional Transport policy and LTPs shall include proper recognition of the need for Truck Stops proportionate to the HGV traffic in the area. This should include the identification of suitable sites near industrial estates and away from residential areas which can be developed in line with the requirements defined above.
- That the policy for signing of truckstops on the strategic network should be reviewed to meet the industries criticisms of inadequacy.
- That the possibility of establishing a form of nationwide site franchising through a public/private partnership should be investigated.
- That the possibility of using some industrial estate roads (which are little used at night) as official overnight stopping places with basic catering, security and toilet facilities provided.
- That Planning Authorities should ensure that any new industrial development should have adequate good quality HGV parking facilities adjacent. If these do not

already exist then new HGV parking should be included as an integral part of the development.

- That new sites should be developed to security standards agreed by the ACPO/BPA Safer Parking Scheme and that existing sites should be encouraged to meet these standards.

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The Parking Forum is an initiative of the British Parking Association and its current members are:

*Automobile Association;
Association of Chief Police Officers;
Association of British Drivers;
Association of London Government;
Association of Town Centre Managers;
Association of Train Operating Companies;
Bike Parking Security Association;
British Parking Association;
British Motorcyclists Federation;
Confederation of Passenger Transport;
Department for Transport;
Disabled Drivers' Association;
Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee;
Highways Agency;
Institution of Highways & Transportation;
London Transport Users Committee;
National Federation of Bus Users;
RAC Foundation;
Rail Passengers Council;
Royal Town Planners Institute;
Road Haulage Association;
Strategic Rail Authority;
Transport Research Laboratory.*

For further information about the Parking Forum please contact:

Parking Forum, c/o British Parking Association, Stuart House, 41-43 Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3BN

Tel: 01444 447300

Fax: 01444 454105

Email: info@BritishParking.co.uk

Web: www.BritishParking.co.uk

