

RHA



RHA Cymru / RHA Wales

Driving Growth, delivering for Wales

Contents

Foreword	4
A word from our Director of Partnerships	5
Welsh Strategic Road Network	6
Investment in Driver Facilities	8
Net Zero	10
Skills	12
Freight Movement and Impact Study	14
About the RHA	16



Foreword



This manifesto sets out what we at the RHA would like to see from an incoming Welsh Government, with commitment to help support a thriving road transport industry across HGVs, vans and coaches.

The Welsh economy depends on road transport, delivering goods, materials, and people. As such, we call on an incoming government to undertake a full review of the freight and logistics industry to help inform future policy-making. And the RHA would be open to playing its part in supporting this.

We know investment is needed – in roads, in infrastructure to support decarbonisation, and in skills to develop the workforce of tomorrow.

And whilst there are challenges across the sector, we also know there is passion, innovation, and a can-do attitude across Wales to keep things moving.

We look forward to working in partnership with a new Government to help our vital sector deliver for Wales, now and in the future.

Richard Smith
Managing Director, Road Haulage Association

A word from our Director of Partnerships



Mae'r RHA wedi adeiladu cysylltiadau cryf dros sawl flwyddyn o fewn Llywodraeth Cymru, ac rydym yn edrych ymlaen i barhau rhain wrth i'r Senedd tyfu ac esblygu dros y flwyddyn nesaf. Mae'r sectorau coetsys a chludiant ffordd yn hanfodol pwysig i economi Cymru, trwy cefnogi twristiaeth, cludiant ysgol, y sector adeiladu, archfarchnadoedd, a nwyddau dyddiol i farchnadoedd domestig a rhwngwladol. Mae'r sector trafndiaeth ffyrdd yn holl bwysig i gyflawni prosiectau mawr yn y presennol a'r dyfodol yng Nghymru, ac hefyd cefnogi cyflogaeth mewn rhai o'r ardaloedd mwyaf tlawd. Mae'n hanfodol bod y Llywodraeth yn cefnogi'r sectorau cludiant nwyddau ar y ffordd a'r sector coetsys, ac yn cydnabod ei bwysigrwydd. Rydym yn barhau i fod yn ymroddedig i weithio a phartion o bob ochr o'r senedd, ac rydym yn edrych ymlaen at croesawi'r aelodau a'r Cabinet newydd ar ôl yr etholiad.

The RHA has built strong relationships over several years within the Welsh Government, and we will look to do the same as the Senedd grows and evolves over the next year. The Coach, Road Haulage and van sectors are the powerhouse of the Welsh economy, supporting tourism, school transport, construction, house building, supermarkets, and fast-moving consumer goods to the domestic and international markets. The road transport sector is vital to delivering Wales's current major infrastructure projects and those in the pipeline, whilst sustaining much needed employment in some of the most deprived areas. It is imperative that the incoming Government support the road transport sector and recognises its importance to all future endeavours. We remain committed to working with parties from all sides of the Senedd and will welcome the new personnel and Cabinet at the Senedd post-election.

Geraint Davies
Director of Partnerships, Road Haulage Association

Welsh Strategic Road Network

The Welsh strategic road network is essential for enabling road transport businesses to move goods and people to, from and throughout Wales which in turn supports every aspect of the Welsh economy.

75-80% of commuting trips in Wales are made by car,¹ representing one of the highest rates in Great Britain. Similarly, for much of the country, there is little alternative for the movement of goods other than by road, and the opportunity to deliver freight via rail, which for other parts of the UK might be a credible alternative, is simply not viable for Wales.

The Welsh Government must rethink its approach to highways schemes, and particularly the scrapping of vital road infrastructure projects, many of which are increasingly critical with each passing year.

As the primary east-west route in South Wales, the M4 is of critical importance to the road freight sector. The M4 is heavily congested and often struggles to cope with demand in peak periods, or in the run up to mass events. This creates real and costly problems for the freight and logistics sector in Wales.

Transport for Wales has described junction 25 – 26 as “the fourth most congested stretch of urban motorway in the UK”, a stretch which would rank in the top fifty traffic hot-spots in Europe. In 2019, the BBC reported that Department for Transport projections showed that traffic along the M4 in Wales was projected to rise by 38% over the next thirty years unless major interventions happen.² In a Welsh Government survey of business users of the M4 corridor between Magor and Castleton, 66% said congestion was a problem and 45% called it “a very big problem”.³

For road freight users, the current underperformance of the M4 means scheduling uncertainties and higher operating costs (idling, slower speed inefficiencies and variability) especially in peak periods and key stretches like Junction 23 to 29.

Failure to make significant improvements to the M4, along with key routes such as the A55, keeps Wales at a competitive disadvantage with other parts of the UK.

As such, failing to invest in the nation’s highway network significantly impacts the supply of goods and people across Wales.

Our Recommendations:

- Complete improvement works on the M4 (Newport).
- Dual the A55 (North Wales).
- Review Britannia Bridge closures and weight limits on Menai Bridge.
- Delivery of a third Menai crossing.
- Improvements to the A40 corridor.
- Review traffic measures in Llandrindod Wells and diversions in Mid Wales.

1 See: Welsh Government, Llwybr Newydd: A New Wales Transport Strategy Consultation Draft – Supporting Information – Transport data and trends, November 2020, p7

2 See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-46457049>

3 See: Welsh Government, M4 Corridor around Newport – WelTAG Appraisal Report Stage 1 (Strategy Level), June 2013, p21



Investment in Driver Facilities

Providing safe, secure parking for trucks across the road network reduces crime and increases road safety for all road users, as well as ensuring the basic working conditions of key economic workers.

In Wales, there are 20,000 registered HGVs and we estimate that there are only 168 secure parking spaces appropriate for use by HGVs.⁴

As part of the measures to help improve driver recruitment and retention, the UK Government has invested significantly in assessing and improving the state of truck parking along the English SRN.

Further, the UK Government is working with truck stop operators to invest over £100m in improving truck stop facilities.

The Scottish Government has also undertaken to perform an audit of lorry parking in Scotland and has directly intervened when a key parking site at Lockerbie was closed.

We would like to see a similar commitment to truck parking from the Welsh Government.

Our Recommendations

- A full audit of safe and secure facilities in Wales.
- The UK Government to provide upgrade funding to Wales.
- For the Welsh Government to work with relevant stakeholders to highlight freight crime in Wales and to develop a set of proposals to reduce this crime.



⁴ RHA analysis based on an assessment of available HGV parking spaces advertised on-line in 2025.

Net Zero

When HGVs account for around 20% of UK domestic transport greenhouse emissions, we know our sector must play its part to decarbonise. Our success in improving air quality where NoX emissions have fallen by over 70% since 2013⁵ shows how decarbonisation can be achieved with investment in vehicle standards and new technologies.

With many use-cases to cater for, decarbonising HGVs and coaches is complex. Our approach is pragmatic, and our aim is to provide commercial vehicle operators with the knowledge and tools they need to make investment decisions. This is so the exceptional levels of service our sector delivers can continue at the low cost the public expects.

Hindering the deployment of zero emission commercial vehicles on our roads however are five structural barriers. These are:

- Cost
- Lack of energy infrastructure
- Uncertain vehicle performance
- Skills
- Mindset change

We seek to work with the Welsh Government as a key strategic partner to overcome these barriers within a UK-framework. This is so our members can transport goods and passengers from Holyhead to Holyrood seamlessly.

Recommendations

The incoming Welsh Government should:

- Implement the actions set out in the Commercial Vehicle Decarbonisation Programme within Wales.
- Invest in the energy infrastructure within Wales.
- Invest in skills that allow technicians to maintain zero emission vehicles.
- Introduce financial incentives for businesses, such as grant schemes to help invest in depot infrastructure and vehicle purchase costs.
- Support the use of low carbon fuels such as hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) as a transition measure to help fleets lower their CO2 emissions.



5 See: Road Haulage Association, NOx Emissions Assessment Report, December 2024, p1

Skills

Wales, much like the rest of the UK, is experiencing significant skills shortages within the road transport sector. The road transport sector suffers from poor public perception and a lack of understanding of the careers available. Although our members work hard to promote the sector, this ultimately needs to be mandated by the government to ensure that quality careers advice based on the skills shortages within Wales is provided within all schools and colleges.

Due to higher-than-expected numbers of drivers leaving the profession, our revised forecast shows a need for 60,000 new HGV drivers⁶ across the UK each year for the next five years. With our coach members experiencing similar issues in recruiting coach drivers.

However, skills shortages are not just being felt within driving roles. There is a growing issue with recruiting, training and retaining heavy vehicle technicians. This is a more difficult issue to resolve, as it takes three years for a technician to be fully qualified.

Additionally, with decarbonisation targets for the sector to achieve, there is a need to upskill the current workforce on zero-emission vehicles. The cost for colleges to invest in up-to-date technology for learners is considerable, and help will be needed to keep up with industry requirements.

Given that the highest percentage of road transport operators are SMEs in Wales, access to funding to ensure the smooth transition to zero emission vehicles and maintain driver numbers will be crucial to keep the Welsh economy moving.

With RHA members being drawn into paying the Apprenticeship Levy in greater numbers as payrolls increase, there is a need for greater transparency in how levy funds are spent.

Recommendations

- Schools and colleges should provide clear logistics, careers guidance and promote the opportunities available.
- Provide transparency of apprenticeship levy funds and utilise the levy for investment in road transport-specific apprenticeships and short courses to fund vital training such as driver and entry level technician courses.
- In readiness for decarbonisation, invest in green skills, ensuring that colleges have access to up-to-date technology.
- Work with employers to ensure that course content is relevant and, as technology develops, new courses are available. For example, investment in digital skills for AI.



Freight Movement and Impact Study

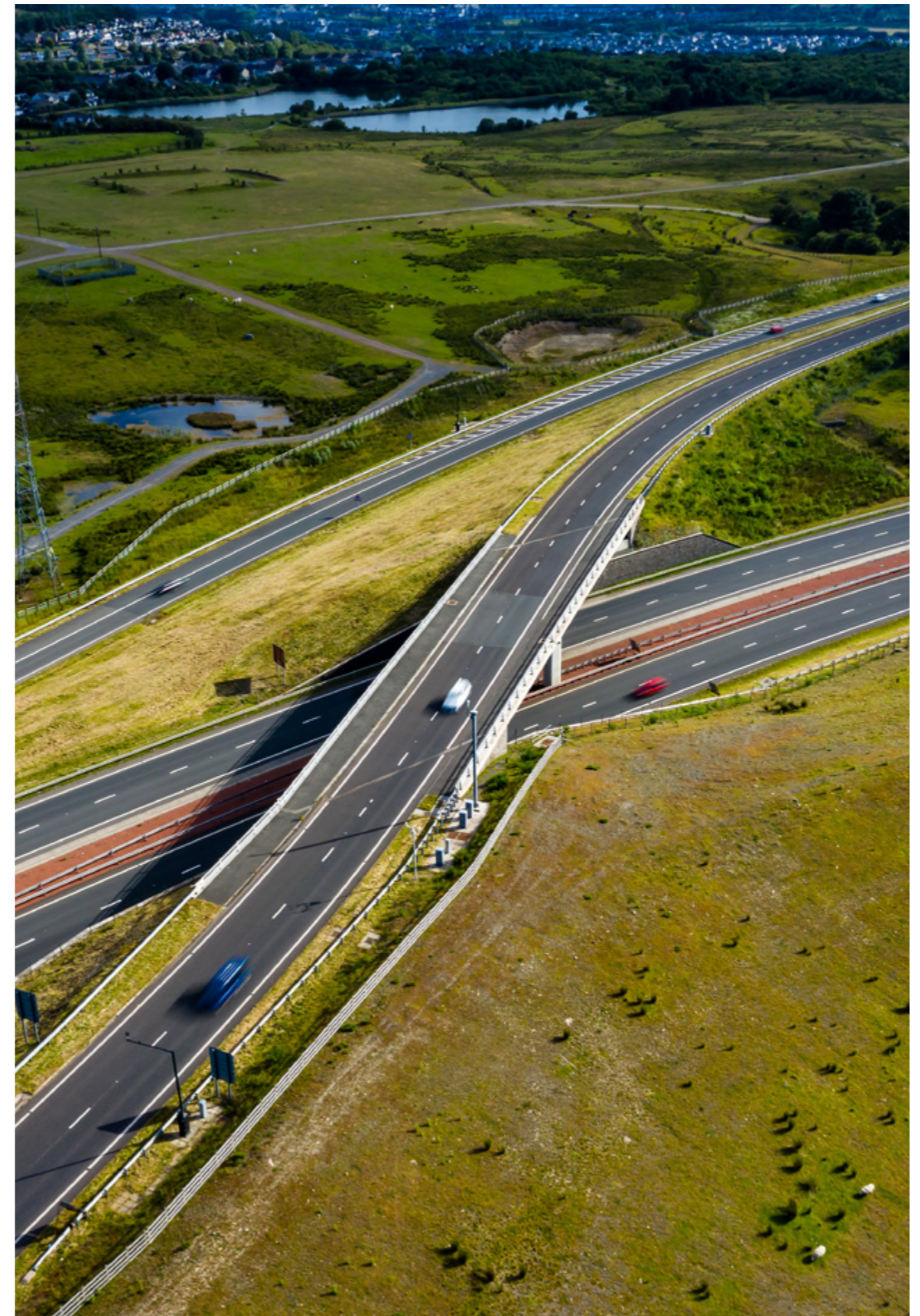
There is little data readily available to demonstrate how freight moves around the UK. This vacuum of evidence means policy decisions are often made based on assumptions and prejudices rather than the facts.

We would like to see the Welsh Government commit to a full review of the freight and logistics industry in Wales.

A detailed study on this level would be a vital evidence source for future policy-making decisions and could be used to improve long-term strategic planning and identify opportunities for further development in modal shift, net-zero transport and infrastructure investment.

Our Recommendations

- A full freight and logistics review in Wales.
- The civil service to work more closely with industry to help to identify and record data.
- Improved visibility and recognition of the road transport sector in future strategic planning.



About the RHA

- The RHA is the largest dedicated trade association representing over 8,500 HGV, coach, and van operators across the UK.

Our members are operators of vehicles who, between them, operate around 250,000 HGVs (half of the UK fleet) out of 10,000 operating centres and range from a single-truck company to those with thousands of vehicles.

The UK road haulage sector is responsible for 81% of all freight movements and is directly involved in the transportation of 98% of all agricultural products.

To find out more, please click here: www.rha.uk.net

- To find out more, please contact:
Policy@RHA.uk.net

- For more information, please connect with us:



@RHANews



/RoadHaulageAssociation



/road-haulage-association



TheRoadHaulageAssociation



@roadhaulageassoc

