

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

25 October 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

This month, we are celebrating National Lorry Week and highlighting the vital role of truck drivers, hauliers, and the wider logistics industry in keeping our essential supply chains moving.

As hauliers and businesses from across the United Kingdom, we are writing to ask you to personally intervene to find a full and workable solution to the critical shortage of HGV drivers.

As we seek to make the transition to a higher wage economy post-Brexit, we know that relying on international drivers is not a long-term solution. As an industry, we are committed to improving pay and conditions for our drivers. We want to make it clear: we do not resist this change, we support it. That is why the RHA has worked tirelessly for the last four years to establish suitable apprenticeships for the sector.

However, the current shortage of HGV drivers must be addressed urgently with short-term solutions while we take the time needed to invest in and train a domestic workforce that is able to grow into the future.

Prior to the pandemic, the industry had a driver shortage in excess of 60,000 which, over the last eighteen months, has increased to an estimated 100,000. This has been caused by a multitude of factors including the loss of over a year of driver training and testing causing a significant and growing backlog, the departure of a significant number of EU drivers and the increased pressures brought on by COVID-19. These factors, combined with limited apprenticeship opportunities for lorry drivers and an ageing workforce, has resulted in the major supply crisis we see today. Without further action, this will only get worse, particularly as we begin the countdown to Christmas.

Whilst we are grateful for the Government's acknowledgement of the shortage, the solutions proposed to date including the 3-month visa, whilst a step forward, simply do not go far enough to tackle the crisis and protect the UK economy in the months ahead.

We therefore urge you to act to protect the UK economy by:

- Adding HGV drivers to the Home Office Shortage Occupation List for a period of at least twelve months whilst we train a domestic workforce
- Extending the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) and introducing a 'one year for one module' CPC for UK drivers, meaning that a driver can extend or renew a UK Driver CPC entitlement for one year if they undertake one Driver CPC training module without having to spend a week retraining to renew it. This would enable experienced and retired drivers to immediately return to driving. For UK drivers (no longer bound by EU regulations), Driver CPC should be suspended for 3 months
- Convening an HGV driver taskforce that would see our industry and Government work together to tackle issues such as infrastructure investment to improve conditions on our motorway networks (including working with local authorities to invest in lorry parking and truck stops) and promoting haulage as a valued career. This should include discussions on reforming the apprenticeship levy to enable businesses to access alternative courses that can be approved by the Transport and Logistics Trailblazer Group.

It is our collective view that there has never been a more challenging time for the UK haulage industry. We urge you to act urgently and decisively or risk further damage to not only our businesses and livelihoods, but the UK's integrated and finely balanced supply chains.

Put simply, we will not be able to build back better and recover from the pandemic without a thriving haulage industry and we urge you to take the necessary action to ensure that we can continue to play our essential role underpinning the UK economy, both now and in the future.

Yours sincerely

Signed by RHA members and trade bodies