

# **Radical 48t Road/Rail Container Trial**

## **Open for applications**

6 April 2022

The Department for Transport is inviting companies to participate in trial operations to move containers to and/or from rail terminals at weights up to 48 tonnes.

The standard maximum laden weight for 6-axle articulated lorries when used on public roads in Great Britain is 44 tonnes.

Allowing 6-axle lorries carrying containers to or from rail terminals to be operated at 48 tonnes improves the efficiency of road/rail combined transport. The increase in permitted weight offsets the extra weight of container needed to move the container by rail (compared to a standard all road movement using a standard trailer).

The trial is not a general relaxation of lorry weights, it is only for approved operators working on approved routes carrying containers to or from rail terminals. Normal axle weight limits while on the road will need to be followed too.

### **Trial outline**

The trial will:

- Be limited to approved operators,
- be restricted to specific and approved routes,
- be limited to a maximum journey length (48 miles),
- have to be part of domestic intermodal (road and rail) operation.

This real-world trial is intended to provide information on the costs and benefits of allowing the additional weight and to identify other practical and commercial considerations.

The trial will not operate for road movements in Scotland, however the rail leg can start or end in Scotland (requiring loading at the Scottish rail terminal).

## How to apply to join the trial

The Department for Transport is seeking expressions of interest from the haulage industry to be part of the trial.

To be eligible applicants will need to haulage operators, or potential haulage operators, in Great Britain.

Applications will need to be made by 31 May 2022

The information the Department will need in an application will include:-

- Company details
- whether your company already operates intermodal freight
- the less than 48 mile routes you propose to follow under any trial (including start and finish postcode, with turn by turn instructions between those two points), this includes an option for file evidence upload
- the envisaged frequency of these journeys during a trial
- other comments

The information page, with the application can be found [here](#).<sup>1</sup>

It is worth noting that detailed routes have to be approved. Weight limits are a sensitive issue and anyone applying to operate at the higher weight will need to take this into account

## RHA Comments

The RHA has supported and promoted this initiative for the last few years, generally under the banner 48 tonnes for 48 mile or 48/48.

The higher weight limit allows an operator using containers moved by rail to move the same payload as a lorry doing the same trip exclusively by road door to door. Currently, a container moved by rail loses around 4 tonnes of payload compared to an all road movement because weight of the container.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/expression-of-interest-for-a-uk-heavy-goods-vehicle-hgv-intermodal-trial>

This type of operation will improve the competitiveness of rail for many intermodal freight movements. In simple terms the intermodal services operating in the trial will be more efficient and cost effective.

The trial will be able to provide evidence on reduction of road miles travelled and the carbon reduction that will occur due to greater efficiency.

The scheme is open for England and Wales, we hope that Scotland may consider joining later.

The latest information from the Department is unclear, but we expect the trial to operate for 4 years.

RHA

6 April 2022

v 2.