



UPDATE ON VOSA, DRIVER'S HOURS FROM JOHN PARKER, CHAIRMAN 11TH JUNE 2009

As reported earlier, Graham Cory, Chief Executive Officer of the BHS, and I were due to meet Jim Fitzpatrick, Minister of State for Road Safety, at the Department of Transport on Tuesday 9th June 2009, to discuss the above.

Unfortunately, the meeting was cancelled at very short notice – I was actually standing outside the Department of Transport when I received a call cancelling it – due to the recent spate of Ministerial resignations and re-shuffles. Jane Kennedy resigned as Minister for the Horse on Monday morning, which led to Jim Fitzpatrick being appointed in her place. However, no Minister had been appointed to take Mr Fitzpatrick's place in time for our meeting.

Although it was extremely frustrating to have the meeting cancelled, having prepared documents and travelled down to London, the plus side is that the new Minister for the Horse already knows what the issues are in this case, and now has a remit to represent the horse sector.

We are re-arranging the meeting with whoever is appointed as the new Minister for VOSA at the Department of Transport, and I have today written to Mr Fitzpatrick, in his new role as Minister for the Horse, to ask for an early meeting with him as well.

Janet Williams, from Wales, is trying to arrange for me to meet some of the Welsh MPs who have already written to support us.

Thanks very much indeed to everyone who has sent us letters of support from their MPs/MEPs/ Welsh Assembly Members, etc. We have good cross-party support on this issue, and need to keep the issue to the forefront of Minister's minds, so please keep writing.

The Horse & Hound on-line petition to the EU has been altered slightly - it no longer refers to a limit of '150 miles' – so please follow the link and sign it.

I must emphasise that this is not an issue which only affects 'professionals' with big horseboxes. To quote directly from the Minister's reply :

' The EU Regulation on driver's hours ... prescribes maximum limits on driving time ... for most drivers of goods vehicles in excess of 3.5 tonnes.'

VOSA are currently interpreting the law to mean that privately-owned horses are 'goods', and that transporting them to a horse show is 'with a view to making a profit' !

This obviously has serious implications for everyone who takes part in even the smallest equestrian events.

Finally, please pass on this information to people who do not have access to the internet. I know many people are not able to use electronic communication – I am myself, as many of you will know, happier delivering letters by Royal Mail Coach – but it is the quickest way to keep you abreast of developments. Also, please talk to people from other horse disciplines when you are at shows, and ask them to visit the BDS website and download the letter to send to their MPs.

John Parker

John Parker
Chairman