

**Bilateral meeting with DISC
held on Friday 4 February 2011**

Present:

DSA: Rosemary Thew (Chief Executive)
Trevor Wedge (Chief Driving Examiner)
Jacqui Turland (Head of Engagement)
Ellen Turner (note taker)

DISC: John Lamarra
John Miller

Relationships and links

Rosemary confirmed that the purpose of the Modernising Driver Training (MDT) steering groups and working groups were different. It was up to the associations which individual attended but ideally representation on each would be different. It was acknowledged that in the case of MDT, some organisations had the same people attending both. Trevor was pleased with what had been achieved to date on MDT. The working group had developed proposals that had been accepted by the Steering Group and were now to be presented to the Minister. Trevor hoped that this work would quickly move forward and membership of the two groups would be reviewed. He intended to write to the groups once there was clarity on the next steps.

DISC were seeking meetings with Mike Penning (Under Secretary for Transport), Keith Brown (Scottish Transport Secretary), Michael McDonnell (Director of Road Safety, Scotland) and the Chief Constable for Strathclyde in order to promote road safety messages and explore ways in which the various parties could work together. Rosemary welcomed this.

Potential Driving Instructors

DISC were concerned to ensure the quality of those entering the profession; it was important to ensure that people had the right mindset, attitude and commitment from the start of the journey. DISC favoured introduction of an entrance examination of some kind. Trevor acknowledged the need to attract the right people to the profession, but said DSA's role was in providing sufficient information on which they could make an informed choice as to whether driving instruction was the profession for them. To this end he mentioned that a Job Preview tool had been developed, that would shortly be accessible on line, to enable potential instructors to complete a questionnaire to obtain feedback on their knowledge of the role of driving instructor and their suitability. The bigger challenge was in raising the standards of the 46,000 instructors who were already on the register.

Compulsory Professional Development (CPD)

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DISC favoured clear requirements on entry as to what was expected of instructors in terms of improving their skills. Trevor stressed that promoting a voluntary scheme of continuous improvement could provide real dividends. Proposals on CPD were wrapped up with the MDT package and it must be remembered that the Government's focus was in improving efficiency, minimising levels of interaction and reducing regulatory burden. It was unlikely that there would be much appetite for placing additional burdens on the industry. DSA remained fully committed to CPD and were in the process of developing a communications plan to promote the benefits to instructors and taking steps to ensure that DSA staff actively encourage CPD at every opportunity.

DISC asked whether any verification process would be introduced, if CPD is made compulsory, to ensure that people were actually learning from the courses they attended. Trevor said feedback from the industry had suggested DSA should take a 'light touch' approach to minimise bureaucracy and keep cost to a minimum. For such a process to be effective, there would have to be clear evidence of learning outcomes, which was not now the case in all CPD on offer. This very much depended on the nature of the training.

DISC asked whether it would be possible to restrict numbers coming onto the Register. Trevor said previous governments had not favoured this. In recent months there had actually been a reduction in numbers applying to become driving instructors.

The MDT package envisaged a shift of focus from what was taught to how it was taught, to a 'customer approach'. It would be preferable for measured feedback to be provided after instructor training had completed. DSA would be willing to consider changes to the ADI Part 3 test to reflect the 'customer approach'. DSA also supported the development of a vocational qualification as a possible alternative route to qualification. There could also be scope for differential pricing depending on the level of qualification instructors held.

DISC felt that there was currently not enough control over those who trained ADIs. They asserted that DSA had a role to play in ensuring the quality of training. Rosemary suggested that it would be for Ministers to say whether they are receptive to this idea. The package of proposals envisaged that all instructor trainers would have to qualify as individuals to be on the ORDIT register and in addition those organisations providing training would also be accredited. Any changes would require appropriate consultation.

ADI involvement in schools

DISC had piloted a road safety programme in schools in Scotland and were intending to meet with SQA with a view to achieving accreditation. It was difficult to find a way of getting instructors into schools to represent the industry, rather than their own business. DISC would like DSA's support in encouraging schools to contact industry representative groups rather than contacting individual instructors direct. Trevor suggested that rather than develop a new qualification, they should investigate helping to deliver the SQA Safe Road User Award (SRUA) and then use their programme as a stepping stone to learning to drive. DISC reported that there is a perception that ADIs have been excluded from

delivering the SRUA. Trevor gave an example of an ADI who is currently working in a college delivering the award. DISC welcomed the DSA's decision to cease publication of theory test questions and answers, which encouraged pupils to study the Highway Code rather than merely learn questions and answers by rote. It was, they felt, important to engage with young people before they started to learn to drive. **Action: Trevor to ask the ADI who is delivering the Safe Road User Award to get in touch with DISC. (Update: email sent to the ADI on 9Feb11.)**

Uniting the Industry

DISC represent a large number of driving instructors in Scotland. Their vision is to unite the industry and eventually have just a few groups representing the entire industry. The first challenge was to get all Scottish instructors under the one banner. Rosemary acknowledged that as far as DSA was concerned, it would be easier to engage with a united industry, but whether this could be achieved was really down to the industry itself. She acknowledged that relations with the industry representative groups had improved over the last few years, partly as a result of engaging with them on steering groups and working groups, and was pleased with the progress made. However, it remained the case that of the total number on the Register only a small proportion were members of any representative group. The majority were not affiliated to any association.

DISC had given some thought to how the industry might be structured. They suggested that the Register should be broken down into sectors with elected industry representatives for each. Compulsory membership of the relevant sector would ensure that instructors were represented. Alongside this arrangement would be a Road Safety Board, which would include representatives from the training industry and DSA/DfT officials. Initially it was proposed to have discussions with the Scottish Minister and officials to see whether this idea could be taken forward. Rosemary and Trevor felt the idea was interesting and warranted further consideration.

DISC welcomed a suggestion that a poster be displayed in all driving test centres promoting the benefits of membership of an association, listing national representative groups with contact details and providing space for local associations to add their contact details.

Conferences

Due to financial constraints, DSA was unable to host any business customer conferences for the foreseeable future. However, Rosemary said the Agency would be open to requests to field speakers to association events, or to provide information. This was welcomed. There was some discussion about the possibility of associations holding joint conferences under DSA 'badging' but clearly there would be a cost to the associations. Whilst DISC felt that instructors would be willing to pay something to attend, some associations did not raise funds over and above their running costs, and any such venture would need to be fully thought through. The DSA conferences in recent years had been

very well received, but it was acknowledged that those who attended were generally those keen to update their skills; it was more difficult to reach instructors who were not members of associations and whose skills were perhaps of poorer quality. DISC noted that in recent years the spirit of conferences had changed from an atmosphere of “DSA bashing” to one of openness and respect. This was a tribute to DSA.

B + E Trainers

Trevor confirmed that it was a deliberate choice, when the legislation was brought in, not to restrict B + E training to ADIs as learners in these vehicles already held a full Category B licence. There was currently no strong argument to revisit this.

Fleet Trainers

DISC asked whether there was any plan to make it compulsory for fleet trainers to be on the DSA register. Trevor confirmed that there were around 1,000 trainers on the voluntary register, three times as many as initially envisaged. The package of proposals referred to earlier included a proposal for a single registration scheme for all categories.

There being no further business, the meeting closed.