January 22nd 2026

Dear Ministers, and wider DfT Road Safety Strategy and Policy Leads

Effective engagement with the driver and rider training profession - benefits for the Road Safety Strategy, and wider road safety

I am writing to you today to congratulate you, and the wider Road Safety team at the Department for Transport on the publication of the first substantive road safety strategy in decades. It is encouraging to see the Government consider such a wide and pragmatic range of measures to tackle the diverse risks road users face in Britain today.

However, at such a pivotal moment in the development of road safety strategy in the UK, we also wanted to issue a plea for closer engagement with the working driver and rider training community, the very professionals the Government qualifies and licenses to carry out the role of driver and rider educator, as you flesh out this strategy. As many aspects of this strategy will directly impact both trainers and their pupils (and will also require their support in making a reality), it seems more necessary than ever to ask that our members are better represented, and more closely consulted, in the development of strategy and policy moving forward. Being so close to the delivery of road safety education, and the behavioural development of drivers and riders on the road, also offers the valuable benefit of being well-placed to identify what gaps remain in the strategy - gaps which may be even more crucial to tackle than aspects of the existing strategy.

It may be that the initial response to this plea for more engagement will be something along the lines of *'but you will have an opportunity to have input via the resulting consultations we're rolling out as part of this strategy, and via your interface with DVSA'.* However, our response to this is that, after recent consultations on driver training and testing, resulting in the views of the wider public appearing to be more valued than those of the driving instructor, the professional trainer does not necessarily have the sense that their voice will be heard, or that their expertise and experience weighed as heavily in decision making in the area of driver and rider training, testing and licensing, as they should. And, as our thousands of members pay millions of pounds in licensing and testing fees into Government coffers each year (in addition to all their taxes as small business owners and citizens), they do feel they are entitled to escalate concerns to ministerial level and issue a plea for ways in which their voices can come through louder.

We'd add to that, as our interaction with DVSA has focussed more on discussions of driving test supply and regulation of trainers in the last five years (than it has on how Approved Driving and Riding Instructors can play a more powerful role in the development of road safety in Great Britain) you'll see why, as an industry, we're seeking more direct input into shaping wider strategy and policy, particularly in the areas of driver and rider education, training, testing and licensing. There is also a feeling that issues (and potential solutions) we discuss with DVSA on the topic of wider road safety do not always reach DfT and Ministerial level. The exception I would personally give to that is the agency's Director of Driver Services, Pauline Reeves, who has been the individual who has made the most concerted effort to engage, listen and respect the voice of the driver trainer in any conversations about their role in the context of wider driver education and road safety (and we'd clearly like to see people like Pauline enabled even more so in such a role moving forward). The recently developed Car Driver Training Forum is commendable; however, it is more narrowly focused on Category B activity, whereas driver and rider education challenges, and wider road safety issues, clearly extend beyond that (as does DIA's representative remit). Indeed, there are a number of silo discussions in road safety, which don't always contain the stakeholders who really know where the most pressing challenges lie, or how to tackle them.

Our industry is further frustrated when they read a press release launching the new Road Safety strategy that clearly suggests pre-launch briefings were given to a number of road safety organisations, few of which have a recognised role in representing driving and riding instructors (as far as working trainers are concerned, at least). Amongst those quoted in the communications surrounding the launch of the strategy were stakeholders who are in actuality quite distanced from driver and rider education at the coalface of our busy roads. Representative organisations like DIA by comparison, ourselves constituting the largest professional body for trainers in the UK, with over 10,000 licenced driver and rider trainer members and a subscriber base of over 35,000 trainers (making up the majority of the membership of the main industry steering group, representing more trainers than any other industry body and operating the largest media channel in the sector), and whose members train millions of drivers and riders on our roads every year, had no such foresight or input into this launch.

However, this is not a case of sour grapes over a press release, we reference the launch of the strategy in this context as it is symptomatic of a more worrying sentiment felt by our members that Government does necessarily not value working driver and rider trainers as a core stakeholder, or expert advisor, in the development of strategy and policy related to road safety - with the perception instead that other stakeholders, some of whom (as I have already pointed out) are somewhat distanced from the practical application of driver education, and arguably lack direct experience of the developmental journey of drivers and riders across the vehicle and licensing spectrum, enjoy more influence than the licensed instructor.

Furthermore, in a 22,000-word strategy document, outlining key focuses on how we train and assess driver and rider safety and competency in the UK, instructors are not referenced once. Which, apart from adding to the sense that they are the poor relative in the discussion and development of road safety strategy and policy, is odd given large parts of this strategy will rely on the driving and rider instructor community in terms of dissemination, development and delivery.

Underlining this feeling of being disenfranchised is when we hear of meetings of other road safety stakeholders, with Ministers and Department for Transport officials, to discuss key issues and challenges (such as in the areas of young driver, occupational or older driver education), but not of much involvement of professional, licensed driving instructors, or their recognised representatives. Additionally, in terms of stakeholder engagement, working driving and motorcycle instructors do not have the time, nor do they have the financial ability to give up income, to pay for themselves to attend road safety events in central London, or conferences across the country, so you're not really going to hear the voice of the licensed driver or rider trainer there either.

Looking to the future, we'd like to think that any advisory groups being convened to consult and advise on the delivery of this new strategy, or the development of any key policy in relation to driver and rider education in the UK, will include organisations like ourselves, enabling us to give voice to the instructor community working across the licence and vehicle spectrum. Quite simply, what we're asking for here is that, as you and your teams work to take this strategy from the page to our roads, you also work to engage more meaningfully with those actually out there on the roads already, working to make them safer. The very professionals whom the Government qualifies and licenses to deliver driver education in the UK, and who are pivotal to disseminating and delivering core aspects of this strategy, should be a pivotal stakeholder informing the development of the strategy itself.

We can add so much more to road safety strategy and delivery in terms of ideas, expert opinion, experience and insight. And, crucially, our professional members can also bring the breadth of experience to bear of not just trainers, but also of drivers, riders and their key influencers (such as parents). Our people are the people you need to drive this strategy forward, and our people spend more time interacting with the people who this strategy seeks to shape the behaviours of than many other stakeholders. Harness our people power and working together, we save more people from harm on our roads.

And, as we highlighted earlier, one crucial benefit we can also bring to the table is the ability to identify (and help plug) gaps in the strategy. One gap we'd point to straight off the bat is around the training, assessment and licensing (and ongoing performance management and development) of trainers – and, more widely, those who we empower to deliver road safety education in general. We won't achieve a more positive result in terms of road user behaviour and road safety outcomes if we don't address the gaps, weaknesses and challenges in how we train and develop road user knowledge, skills and behaviour in the UK. Not fixing these issues, and the gaps in the training and assessment regimes across the vehicle and license categories overall, will continue to undermine road safety - and this strategy.

Ending on a positive note, and to illustrate the positive and innovative contribution we can make as an industry (and as an industry body), a good example of an experience-informed and solutions-based approach from the professional instructor community is the Milestones Project, a DfT funded pilot, wholly designed by a driver training stakeholder (DIA) and focused on understanding whether introducing a proper pre-test curriculum of learning and assessment, centred on the key areas of novice driver risk, would have a more beneficial impact on lowering young driver risk. Because, let's be honest, we don't have a proper curriculum of learning to drive in the UK that either trainers or pupils have any mandate to follow, nor a way of measuring performance against (plus such a 'system 'also has merit in supporting the more efficient deployment of testing resources *and* managing trainer performance). Milestones* is a plug-and-play way of introducing a minimum learning-to-drive period, especially one which focuses on quality and relevancy of learning, rather than simply just clocking up hours on the road. And if, even at a base level, clocking up more hours on road is a goal, we also designed and produced a working Learner driving logging app for DfT as part of Driver 2020, which could be made available to all pupils in the UK with very little additional development or cost, accompanied by a guided private practice programme for pupils and parents.

In addition to projects such as these, we also designed the Safe Towing Scheme in answer to the Government's request for help in mitigating the risks of removing the requirement for B+E testing. Receiving no funding for such work, and financing it completely ourselves, we will be making the scheme free to training schools and trainees this year to encourage more engagement. We also designed the ADAS Hub focused on educating trainers and motorists about advanced driver assistance systems, and Driving Hub, designed to educate Learners about driving on high-speed roads, as well as various other road safety resources, often delivering these projects for a much lower cost than other road safety providers – or funding development ourselves. We are also currently in the process of working with the taxi and PHV industry to develop a CPC type framework to improve driver and passenger safety, given that we are the leading driver training and testing body in this space.

Additionally, as a leading provider of instructor CPD in the UK, we have also developed performance monitoring, management and development approaches for trainers. This approach attempts to not only plug the concerning gap left by DVSA's need to focus on driving test delivery (i.e. the gap that is instructor performance management, with the virtual suspension of Standards Checks, and resultant lack of focus on professional development), as well as going beyond DVSA's current regime in respect of training, qualifying and developing the standards of trainers. We would welcome the opportunity to share our thinking, and the frameworks we have developed, in this respect.

These are just a few examples of a solutions-based approach that stakeholders such as us bring to the table, because our members live and breathe the issues every day, and are therefore highly useful in helping engineer the solutions to.

In conclusion, we ask again, please let's explore more ways in which Government can engage with our industry, and harness our expertise and experience. We're not just DVSA's rather challenging stakeholder on driving test waiting times, we're one of UK road safety's biggest allies and proponents.

Yours sincerely

Carly Brookfield
CEO, Driving Instructors Association and Diamond Advanced Motorists

**For more information on Milestones, and as an example of solution engineering the industry itself is capable of, please visit drivermilestones.co.uk.*