

One-third of Northern Ireland restricted operators might not have proper licences

# NI still battling against the 0-licence deficit

By Robin Meczes

As many as a third of operators in Northern Ireland who should have a restricted operator's licence don't have one, the DVA has revealed.

According to the DVA, there were 2,914 restricted operator's licences in force in Northern Ireland in the first quarter of 2014, and 1,113 temporary permits awaiting conversion to a restricted licence – 4,027 in all.

The total is little changed from that in the first quarter of 2013, when there were 993

restricted licences in force and 2,991 temporary permits – 3,984 in all.

However, it remains significantly below the 6,000 to 7,000 firms TRU chief Donald Armstrong told *MT* in June last year that he expected to apply, following the changes to Northern Ireland's licensing regime in July 2012.

A DVA spokesman said it could not comment on the shortfall. However, he said that roadside observations during 2013-2014 suggested 88.9% of trucks over 3.5-tonne GVW

had a valid operator's licence in place, "indicating a high level of compliance with the operator licensing scheme".

He added that the DVA had issued 26 warning letters to unlicensed restricted operators detected at the roadside and forwarded 116 files relating to such operators to the Public Prosecution Service.

In response, Martin Reid, RHA director for Scotland and Northern Ireland, said: "We'd like [the figures] to be further forward than they are now, but they're only two years into

what is a massive operation and we fully understand that."

FTA policy manager for Northern Ireland, Seamus Leheny, stressed that Armstrong's estimate of the number of licences required dated back some years, and suggested many operators had since downsized or gone out of business.

However, he added that there remained a number of "unsavoury vehicle operators" in Northern Ireland who are "tactically avoiding operator licensing".

## Jack Richards & Son turnover rises by 13%

Two major business wins helped turnover at Norfolk haulier Jack Richards & Son increase by 13% last year.

MD Peter Brown told *MT* that an increase in business and an improved economic outlook helped turnover at the company rise from £29.7m to £33.8m in the year to 31 May 2014.

Documents filed at Companies House revealed an 18% increase in pre-tax profit to £814,620 (2012/13: £687,377). Its margin, however, remained flat at 2.4%.

"We had two big contract wins during the year that have helped us expand our business," said Brown.

The company remains optimistic about its current financial year and this autumn experienced an increase in volumes through its membership of the Palletways network. It is also a member of Harlequin Logistics which, according to Brown, is "becoming a worthwhile consortium" to be a part of.

However, Brown admitted that, despite there being plenty of opportunities for the business to expand, attracting new drivers has been a challenging task. He claimed agency rates went up in September and the beginning of October as operators looked to fill driver positions, but said these are now beginning to return to their previous levels.

"Following the Driver CPC, we didn't have a lot [of drivers] leave, but we have seen a slight increase in [staff] turnover," Brown said.



**LOGISTICS PARTNERSHIP:** Wilson James has won a five-year contract with University College London (UCL) to act as logistics partner for the university's Bloomsbury Transformation Programme. The £10m contract will be serviced out of its London Construction Consolidation Centre, which last month received the gold award under TfL's Fors. The partners predict this will reduce the number of deliveries on site by 70%. Wilson James will also be responsible for traffic marshalling and waste and delivery management for the project, including extending and refurbishing The Bartlett School of Architecture.

## Non-UK drivers get third of DCPC fines

A total of 8,444 HGVs and 310 PSVs were stopped for Driver CPC enforcement purposes from 10 September to 16 October, according to DVSA. This saw 196 Driver CPC offences recorded and 113 fixed penalties issued. Of these penalties, 106 related to "Driver CPC – no evidence of training or exemption". The remainder concerned "no initial or periodic training". The majority of infringements related to HGVs, with just eight of the 113 offences recorded against PSVs.

UK resident drivers attracted 74 fixed penalties, while non-UK residents netted 39 penalties. These comprised 32 fixed penalty deposit notices and seven court deposit notices.

While most EU member states now have Driver CPC in place, there are a handful of exceptions working to a 10 September 2016 deadline. These are Germany, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal (for those over 50 years old), Belgium, Spain (specific to particular licences), Sweden and Norway (those with a current licence expiry date of 2018).

In a separate move the DVSA revealed that from 1 April to 16 October, 35 Driver CPC offences had been taken to court, with 47 defendants – operators and drivers – involved. Of those that have been dealt with in court, the average fine was £366, with costs averaging £214 on top.

## DfT to introduce legislation to enforce EU tyre-labelling regs

The DfT is to introduce regulations enforcing the EU directive on tyre labelling that combine risk-based enforcement and the use of criminal law sanctions, rather than a suite of civil sanctions.

The decision follows a six-week consultation with the tyre industry on alternative methods of enforcing the requirement for tyre suppliers to make buyers aware of the mandatory information tyre manufacturers have to provide at the point of sale.

John Hill, head of B2B marketing at ATS Euromaster, said that two years on from the introduction of tyre labelling, the general principle of proportionate enforcement

represents a pragmatic approach. "We are pleased that there is an acknowledgment in the DfT consultation document that there is a balance to be made between education and sanctions, whilst taking account of the range of different businesses in the industry," Hill said.

"However, we believe there are still specific elements of the legislation that are unclear, such as education of the consumer."

The tyre labelling legislation requires tyre manufacturers to rate their tyres on wet grip, noise and rolling resistance and tyre suppliers to make buyers aware of this information at the point of sale.

## MotorTransport

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