

Ewals Cargo Care B.V.
Ariënsstraat 61-63
Tegelen, The Netherlands
5931 HM

The RT Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

September 23, 2021

Ref: HGV Driver Shortage – Urgent Intervention Required

Dear Mr Shapps,

As we are sure you are aware the shortage of HGV drivers and operators in the (road) transport sector in the UK is becoming more and more critical.

Since last year the shortage of HGV drivers in the UK has significantly deteriorated as many EU national drivers have returned to their country of origin during extended periods of lockdown and restricted travel. The uncertainty surrounding Brexit and future rights to live and work in the UK have forced others to do the same. The majority of drivers who have left the UK workforce have not and are not expected to return.

In the UK the problem has been exacerbated by the increasing number of drivers reaching retirement age. The average age of a HGV driver working in the UK is 55, with less than 2% under the age of 25. Prolonged periods of inactivity have resulted in this aging workforce choosing to take early retirement or find employment in other, less demanding sectors.

Currently the open vacancies for HGV drivers in the UK only is over 120,000. We are also experiencing a shortage of HGV drivers on the continent but bears no relation to the levels we are experiencing in the UK.

The majority of UK fleet hauliers have numerous trucks parked in their yards, as they are unable find qualified HGV drivers. Many EU based companies are having to hold cargo as they simply do not have the options to ship goods due to the lack of available haulage in the UK.

The cost of all related transport activities - trucking, storage, demurrage, detention and handling are increasing by the day, but the increases in costs is not creating additional capacity.

Lead times have extended and service levels have dropped to an unacceptable level.

Shifting volume from unaccompanied to accompanied transport via the Eurotunnel and English Channel routes is not the answer. The addition kilometres will not only impose a significant increase in costs but there will also create an environmental impact to consider.

The situation is deteriorating by the day and if urgent action is not taken the final result will be the complete collapse of the supply chain and consignments will remain in limbo. Should we reach that stage not only will there be a lack reliable transport companies able to deliver products, but there will be a lack of important commodities such as food items, pharmaceutical products, building products and delays to manufacturing. The increasing costs of transport will pass on to consumers, driving up inflation and affecting peoples ability to spend.

We must do all we can to avoid this scenario and we must take action NOW.

As delegates of the Dutch transport sector we urge you to enhance cabotage legislation for EU hauliers. In practise this will result to more support to the UK haulage market and increase productivity with same truck. We also urge you to supply and increase the number of permits to work in this sector for non-British citizens.

HGV drivers must be added to the Skilled Worker Shortage Occupation List.

This will allow UK registered transport companies access to a workforce that can live and work in the UK more easily, and encourage those that have left to return, even if this is a short term measure whilst we concentrate on a longer term plan.

By sending this emergency letter, we as the Dutch transport sector would like to stress the importance this situation deserves and would like to offer to collaborate with yourselves to find and help implement urgent solutions.

Awaiting your prompt reply,

Yours Sincerely,

Susanne Dirksen - s.dirksen@schavemaker.com

Eric Postulart - Eric.Postulart@nl.ewals.com

On behalf of,

