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# **Driver and Vehicle Agency**

## **Public Consultation**

### **Changing the cost of driving tests and vehicle tests**

From: Driver & Vehicle Agency (DfI)

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# Changing the cost of driving tests and vehicle tests

## 1. Background

This consultation proposes increasing the fees paid for practical driving tests and vehicle tests, which are carried out by the Driver & Vehicle Agency.

The Agency operates as a Trading Fund, which means the income we receive from fees must cover the cost of delivering the services we provide. Taxpayers do not generally fund our services. The proposed fees will enable us to cover the costs of providing our services and future investments to improve our services.

Before changing our fees, we have to consult publicly and in the absence of a functioning Legislative Assembly, the consultation responses will be considered, and decisions will be made by the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure in accordance with the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2022 (as amended) or any relevant decision making legislation at that time.

We are running this consultation to help us understand what business and the public think about the new fees we are proposing.

We will confirm the date should the fees change nearer the time once the consultation responses have been considered and decisions made. The fees that customers pay are set out in legislation and the relevant legislation will need to be changed, should the fees change following this consultation.

## 2. Why we need to do this

### Avoiding a shortfall in our income

The majority of our fees have been the same since 2005 for vehicle MOTs and 2009 for driving tests and have not been increased.

The rising cost of delivering our services means we are facing a shortfall in our income. Staff costs, accommodation costs (including energy bills) and our contracted services costs have all increased, which means our fees no longer cover our costs.

We want to take action now to rectify this. This will make sure we meet our obligations to cover the cost of delivering our services from the fees we receive.

## **Modernising services**

We have improved and modernised both the driving test and vehicle roadworthiness test in recent years to make the service better and more flexible for those who use it.

### **Driver testing services**

Since the majority of driving test fees were last increased, we have improved and modernised the driving test booking and information systems and invested in new technology. For example, we are now using tablets to record driving test results. Giving our staff modern tools like tablets helps us to:

- improve customer service, because it allows us to send test results electronically to our driver licensing section immediately - this makes it quicker to get a full driving licence;
- make our records more accurate than the old pen and paper version;
- share information about candidates' tests with them electronically; and
- reduce the potential for fraud.

### **Vehicle testing services**

Until recently, we have been able to avoid increases to the fees for vehicle tests however the rising cost of delivering the service means we are facing a shortfall in income.

Since the majority of vehicle test fees were last increased, we have improved and modernised the vehicle test booking and information systems and invested in testing equipment replacement programmes. In addition, we are constructing a new test centre at Hydebank in Belfast, which is due to open later this year.

The proposed new fees will help us cover the costs of running our services.

## **The fees have not kept up with inflation**

The fees for our practical driving tests have stayed largely the same for almost 15 years while most vehicle test fees have remained the same for over 18 years with no inflationary uplift. For example, the car practical driving test fee last changed in 2009 when it was increased to £45.50 and the vehicle MOT fee last increased in 2005 to £30.50.

The fees have not been increased in line with inflation. If they had, they would now cost the following for car practical driving tests and car MOT tests, for example:

- £64.67 for a car practical driving test (currently £45.50)
- £48.30 for a car MOT test (currently £30.50)

## **If we do not increase our fees**

If our fees remain as they are, we will not be able to continue to provide services at the current level or standards.

## **How we will use the additional income**

We plan to use the additional income from the proposed new fees to ensure that we have sufficient income to cover the cost of providing the services essential for contributing to the safety of drivers and vehicles.

### 3. What we are proposing

We are proposing to increase fees for our statutory services to cover the costs of providing them. The practical driving tests fees and a summary of the main vehicle test fees are shown below.

You can see the full list of vehicle test fees at the following the link – [Vehicle Test Fees](#)

Practical driving test fees	Current fee	Proposed fee
Car	£45.50	£65.00
Car (premium) <sup>1</sup>	£62.50	£95.00
Car and Trailer	£66.00	£87.00
Car and Trailer (premium) <sup>1</sup>	£99.00	£137.00
Motorcycle	£58.00	£80.00
Motorcycle (premium) <sup>1</sup>	£71.00	£110.00
Motorcycle extended test	£116.00	£160.00
Motorcycle Manoeuvres test	£31.00	£45.00
Motorcycle Manoeuvres test (premium) <sup>1</sup>	£43.00	£60.00
Car extended test	£91.00	£130.00
Lorry and Bus (driving ability)	£66.00	£87.00
Lorry and Bus (driving ability - premium) <sup>1</sup>	£99.00	£137.00
Tractor	£45.50	£65.00
Taxi	£60.00	£70.00
Taxi (premium) <sup>1</sup>	£90.00	£109.00

<sup>1</sup> Premium tests are carried out during evenings and weekends.

Summary of main vehicle test fees	Current fee	Proposed fee
Car	£30.50	£38.00
Minibus - Large passenger carrying vehicle	£41.50	£70.50
Motorcycle	£22.00	£34.00
Light goods vehicle	£30.50	£38.00
HGV 2 axle	£76.00	£101.00
HGV 3 axle	£87.00	£109.00
HGV 4 axle	£98.50	£117.50
HGV Articulated 2 axle	£80.50	£101.00
HGV Articulated 3 axle	£93.50	£109.00
HGV Trailer 3 axle	£52.00	£86.50
Taxi	£138.50	£147.00
PSV bus	£90.50	£102.50

## 4. Regular fees review

While the fee increases specified in this document seem significant, they represent the minimum that is required to cover the costs that are incurred in the administration and delivery of our services. They reflect the increases in costs over the passage of time since the last increases.

The Department now proposes to:

- (i) commit to more regular reviews in future years; and
- (ii) in the longer term, consider taking powers to increase fees by means of administrative fee schemes, rather than by subordinate legislation. This would facilitate more regular reviews without the need for legislative change.

## 5. Consultation questions

Your views are sought on these proposals.

The online questionnaire includes the following specific questions relating to the proposed increases:

1. Fees have not increased for over a decade. Do you think these fee increases are a fair way to ensure current service levels are maintained? If not, what alternative suggestions do you have as to how the costs of providing our services can be recovered?
2. Do you support the development and modernisation of driving and vehicle testing services for a better experience for the customer?
3. Do you agree that we should provide for a regular review of the cost of delivering these services and any associated fee increases should be applied on a regular / annual / biennial (every other year) basis?

## 6. How to respond

The consultation runs from 08 June 2023 for 8 weeks.

Fill in the questionnaire to give your views – [Consultation Questionnaire](#)

When you respond, tell us whether you are doing this for yourself or for an organisation.

If you are responding for a larger organisations, please tell us:

- who the organisation represents
- how you gathered members' views (if you can).

Contact the Agency at the following email address if you have any queries about this consultation – [dva.consultations@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:dva.consultations@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

## 7. Confidentiality and data protection

### **Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Confidentiality of Responses**

The Department may publish a summary of responses following the closing date for receipt of comments. Your response, and all other responses to this publication, may be disclosed on request and/or made available on the DfI website (redacted). The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of responses as this will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this publication.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 give the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation.



The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this publication, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- The Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided.
- The Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature.
- Acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

The information you provide in your response, excluding personal information, may be published, or disclosed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). Any personal information you provide will be handled in accordance with the UK-GDPR and will not be published. If you want the non-personal information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please tell us why, but be aware that, under the FOIA or EIR, we cannot guarantee confidentiality.

For information regarding your personal data, please refer to the DfI Privacy Notice at [www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/dfi-privacy](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/dfi-privacy). For further details on confidentiality, the FOIA and the EIR please refer to [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

## 8. What happens next

The consultation responses will be considered before final decisions are taken on fee increases.

We will publish the outcome of this consultation on the NI Direct website.