Bridges Section
Trunk Roads: Network Management

Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF
Direct Line: 0141 272 7392, Fax: 0141 272 7373
Bill.valentine@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

Your ref:

Our ref:

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

PREVENTION OF STRIKES ON BRIDGES BY OVERHEIGHT VEHICLES

I am writing seeking your co-operation and to highlight the launch of a new information portal on Transport Scotland's Website, introduced as part of a number of measures to reduce bridge strike incidents on Scotland's trunk road network. The link to the portal is provided below:

http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/road/bridges-and-structures/high-loads

Bridge strikes are a particular problem on low (often rail) overbridges with a clearance less than the minimum required maintained headroom of 5.03m (16 feet 6 inches). These bridges are signed in accordance with legislation. There are also significant problems with higher unsigned bridges, with incidents where concrete is damaged and dislodged or steel beams distorted. Many are hit and run incidents and not reported at the time. Lightweight structures such as steel railway bridges, footbridges and gantries are particularly vulnerable where drivers are careless about the height of their vehicles or loads and, as a result, several structures have been dislodged, damaged beyond repair or brought down over the years. In some cases these incidents have been attributable to tipper lorries, where the tipper mechanism has failed, and to mechanical plant carried on low loaders.

This initiative is part a new proactive strategy to raise awareness, primarily in the freight haulage industry, of this increasing problem; given the serious safety implications and significant disruption to the trunk and local road network which often occurs. The information on the web page above will be treated as a working document, with additions of the revised High Load Grid and links to Electronic Service Delivery for Abnormal Loads (ESDAL) programmed over the coming months.

Previously the strategy for many roads authorities for unsigned bridges was reactive; focusing on damage repair and recovery of costs. Given the increase in bridge strikes on the trunk road network and the wider local road network we are moving towards a more focused strategy of prevention measures; including identifying overheight vehicles and the routes they take to prevent further bridge strikes and reduce the risk to public safety.

An awareness campaign is currently being implemented in tandem through Traffic Scotland, with appropriate information displayed on variable message signs and on Freight Scotland's web-based map showing route restrictions. The link to the Freight Scotland portal is shown below:

http://www.freightscotland.org/

It is often overheight loads, not overheight vehicles, that strike bridges. Legislation places the responsibility with the haulier, and primarily the driver of the vehicle, for ensuring the vehicle or load height can be accommodated on the road network.

The above measures will work towards increasing haulier/driver awareness which is a cross cutting issue between Transport Scotland, Traffic Scotland, our Operating Companies, local roads authorities, the haulage industry and the Police. As the trunk road authority we have to deal with the consequences of bridges strikes, which costs upwards of £0.5m a year in investigation and repair costs - not all of which is recovered. As such we are taking the lead in developing this proactive preventative strategy to make the haulage industry more aware of the risks associated and future prevention of bridge strikes.

Hauliers who have uncertainty over headroom clearances on trunk road routes or who require assistance with vehicle routeing are welcome to contact the relevant area's Operating Company who manages the trunk road network on behalf of Transport Scotland. Details of which can be found on Transport Scotland's Website:

http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/road/maintenance-and-management/operating-companies

I would greatly appreciate your co-operation in this matter in order to prevent further public cost and disruption and to prevent the potential for a serious incident causing fatalities.

Your faithfully

BILL VALENTINE
Chief Bridge Engineer