

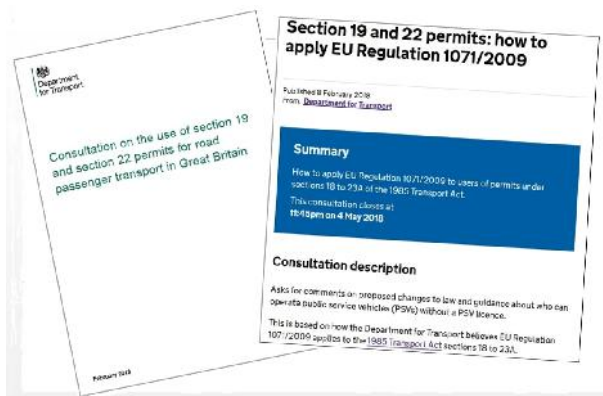


Mobility Matters is a campaign group whose objective is to ensure that CT organisations in the UK are able to continue to operate to meet the diverse travel needs of individuals and communities, and that appropriate operational legislation is in place to achieve this. **Protecting the Heart of Community Transport**

Campaign Newsletter No.8 (13 February 2018)

DfT Consultation on Community Transport launched!

The long-awaited consultation on CT licensing has now been announced and is open for responses until **4 May** (however, the document itself says it closes on **4 April**, which we assume is a mistake). **Mobility Matters** feels there are a number of serious concerns about the consultation and in the first instance we advise CT operators to consider their responses carefully and await our guidance prior to completion. We have 12 weeks to gather our thoughts and to fully assimilate the various implications.



<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/section-19-and-22-permits-how-to-apply-eu-regulation-10712009>

Our immediate thoughts are that CT operators should be aware that some of the questions could elicit responses that may compromise them should the information find its way into the public domain. We are seeking legal advice and in due course will offer guidance. Also, DfT's accompanying **Impact Assessment** would appear to be an old document from 2016 and is not tailored to the situation brought about by the 31 July 2017 letter or the current consultation.

We feel that a structured and unified response to some of the questions will be the best means for the CT sector to argue its case. With this in mind we are hoping to co-ordinate our response (and our advice to

individual CTs) with the **Community Transport Association (CTA)**.

Over the next few days we will be taking the following steps on behalf of the sector:

- launching an online questionnaire that will gather much needed information that will be shared with **DfT** as part of this consultation. We request your help with this - the questionnaire will not take up too much time or effort and it will be invaluable in enabling us to structure an effective response;
- once we have studied the consultation documentation, issuing advice and guidance on how best to respond;
- liaising with **CTA** to identify ways in which we can work together to best represent the CT sector;
- keeping you posted on regional events planned by **DfT** as part of their consultation;
- working constructively with **DfT** to map out a future that supports the most vulnerable members of our communities.

We will contact our supporters on this matter via email giving further details.

MM has always advocated the need for a full holistic review of the Permit situation. This consultation is not designed or intended to achieve this. We are also concerned about the number of factual errors, contradictions and inaccurate assumptions that are apparent in the document.

Nonetheless, it remains vitally important that we get as many CT organisations as possible to respond to the consultation in due course in order to ensure that the department fully understands the true nature and diversity of the CT sector and the likely consequences around the proposed reforms.

DfT was due to respond to the **Transport Select Committee (TSC)** recommendations, but we have as yet not had any feedback. **MM** is concerned that the **DfT** is intent on making legislative changes regardless and therefore the CT sector must make its voice heard by responding. The **DfT / Jesse Norman** message is echoed once again in the consultation document: *"The majority of community transport operators should not be affected by any clarification of the EU rules."* We

believe that the findings of the TSC report have not been incorporated into the consultation.

Harrow CT & Jesse Norman

Bob Blackman MP wrote to **Jesse Norman** expressing his concerns about how **DfT's** letter of 31 July would negatively impact on **Harrow CT**. **Jesse Norman's** reply was: *"As a result of legal action threatened against the Department, we are revising our guidance and amending legislation so that it is clear whether an operator can use a permit or a licence. The impacts of the changes to the regulatory regime will form part of our considerations...Within the existing legal framework, the Department wants as many community transport providers as possible to continue to operate, and retain, service provision for vulnerable community transport passengers."* Again this further demonstrates in our view, that the Minister is still not aware of the devastating impact of the Department's proposals.



More Questions in the House

As a result of CT operators contacting local **MPs**, we note that on 18th Jan, **MPs Neil Gray** (Aidrie & Shotts), **Robert Courts** (Whitney), **Richard Burden** (Birmingham Northfield), and **Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) passed on concerns from constituent operators to Under-Secretary **Jesse Norman**, who then told the House: *"I have been up and down the country talking to community transport schemes. It is not at all clear that the implication for local community transport operators will be anything like as severe as has been suggested..."* Following this statement, **Sheila Fletcher** filed an FOI request: *"Can you please provide a list of the CT groups Mr Norman has visited or directly talked to on the phone or by e-mail with regard to this matter. I am especially interested in groups he has been in touch with in Scotland."* The response is yet to be heard (see https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/list_of_scottish_community_trans). We at **MM** are also unsure of which CTs **Jesse Norman** has visited, but we feel that he still does not appreciate the damage that the **DfT's** proposals will cause. Full debate is here: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-01-18/debates/B9208226-A1B1-4D63-A6C5-9D17DAB477E1/CommunityTransportLicensing>

'O' Licence Applications from CTs

We have heard from a few CTs who are going through the process of setting up trading arms and applying for a full PSV 'O' licence, and who have experienced vigorous objections to their applications from commercial bus operators. Recent applications by CTs in **Cambridgeshire** were met with a very public objection based on information provided by a private investigator. We should point out that these CTs have been subjected to malicious scrutiny for some time from a particularly determined adversary. The following site indicates the desperate lengths to which the opponents of CT are prepared to go. We should stress that this is an exceptional case. <http://www.psvobjection.yolasite.com/>

Westminster Hall Debate on CT

As previously indicated, our main political objective at present is to obtain an Adjournment Debate in Westminster Hall. Several **MPs** have been contacted but so far no one has been able to progress this, despite sympathetic responses to the situation. There is every chance that a significant number of **MPs** will be concerned about the damage that might be inflicted on the sector and their constituents by the **DfT** proposal. Following the **TSC**, the Debate is a key next step in a process that could require **DfT** to re-think its actions. If you have not already done so, **we request that you please raise these matters with your MP as a matter of priority** and request that he or she assists with the Adjournment Debate. We are preparing some guidance advice on how CT operators might best engage with your **MP**. A *template letter is available on request.*



The Work Continues - How You Can Help

The vital work of **Mobility Matters** can only progress with your support – otherwise the campaign cannot continue. We therefore ask you to make a financial contribution as soon as you can – thank you. Every little helps!

<https://ctpermits.org/fund-appeal>

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