



Transport Select Committee

Oral evidence: Road haulage sector: Skills and workforce planning, HC 517

Monday 18 January 2016

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Members present: Mrs Louise Ellman (Chair), Robert Flello, Mary Glendon, Karl McCartney, Mark Menzies, Huw Merriman, Will Quince, Iain Stewart, Graham Stringer, Martin Vickers

Questions 1-52

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **David Wells**, Chief Executive, Freight Transport Association, **Martijn de Lange**, Chief Operations Officer, Hermes Europe, **Jack Semple**, Director of Policy, Road Haulage Association, and **Colin Snape**, HR Manager, Nagel Langdons Ltd, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Good afternoon and welcome to the Transport Select Committee. Would you give us your name and organisation, please?

Martijn de Lange: My name is Martijn de Lange. I am the chief operations officer at Hermes.

Jack Semple: I am Jack Semple from the Road Haulage Association.

Colin Snape: I am Colin Snape from Nagel Langdons Ltd.

David Wells: I am David Wells, chief executive, Freight Transport Association.

Chair: Are there any interests to declare?

Robert Flello: I have a member of staff in my office who is funded by the RHA, and I know Jack and David from my work with the freight industry.

Q2 Chair: There seems to be general consensus that there is a driver shortage for heavy goods vehicles. We are also told that the number of drivers is increasing. What is the situation as you see it?

David Wells: It is very difficult to put a precise figure on it. However, we undertook some research about a year ago when we tried to enumerate the shortfall of drivers in two ways. The first was that we looked at the number of HGV vehicles that were defined on O

licences. Then we compared that with the ONS number for HGV drivers. That is one way of doing it. We then tried to cross-reference that by looking at the number of HGV drivers in 2001. We know that the British economy has grown in terms of the number of people in employment by 12% since 2001. We applied that growth factor to the number of HGV drivers in 2001 and we came up with the number 342,000. If you compare that with the ONS number of 299,000 drivers, you come up with a shortfall currently of around 44,000. That cross-references with the O licence comparison with the number of HGV drivers. Currently, that calculation would say it was around 45,000. A year ago we did the same calculation and it came up with a figure of around 55,000. I put a big caveat on that; clearly, it is not precise, but it would seem to suggest that there has been some reduction in the shortfall in the last 12 months.

Q3 Chair: Mr Semple, do you agree with that?

Jack Semple: I would put a slightly different interpretation on it. I think you have to look at the number of licensed drivers, and the number of licensed and qualified drivers that are needed by the UK economy to function well. The ONS talks about around 290,000, but we know that more than 600,000 driver CPC cards are issued, most of which go to lorry drivers. You have to look at the way the ONS study categorises drivers. You have to answer the question, as a householder, “What is your occupation? Lorry driver or something like lorry driver.” We think that if you answer “Delivery driver” you will not be categorised as that. If you are a transport manager who drives, and most transport managers in SMEs require a licence to drive from time to time, you will not say you are a lorry driver. If you are somebody who does occasional lorry driving at weekends and so on, and these days even most SMEs have a requirement for people like that, you will not say you are a lorry driver. A lot of fleets have hundreds of trucks and, in some cases, more than a thousand trucks, most of which are double-shifted; they require at least two drivers, and in reality slightly more than that. If you extrapolate the number of drivers that we need to drive, we are talking about a much larger number of licensed and qualified drivers who are needed by the transport and logistics industry, plus a proportion of private licences—people who want to drive their horseboxes and so on. We are talking about a hugely greater number. Our interpretation would be that the ONS figure can skew things. We have suggested that, to function properly, our best estimate is that the number of drivers needed in the economy is about 600,000.

Q4 Chair: Does anybody else want to comment?

Martijn de Lange: I had the same industry number—around 50,000—but from our experience I would say that the issue is getting worse. We find it really hard to get hold of drivers, whether lorry drivers or van drivers. It is causing all sorts of issues for our industry, which, at the end of the day, is a big growth industry—distribution, e-commerce and goods for export. It is a problem that in our eyes is getting worse, regardless of what the official industry numbers are.

Q5 Chair: If the situation is getting worse, is the responsibility for that with the industry itself? Should the industry have been doing more to promote its importance and make itself more attractive to drivers?

Colin Snape: To go back to the previous question, my company has slightly bucked the trend on the driver shortage, but we have really had to go out of our way to attract drivers. We are paying increased premiums for drivers—better pay—offering them better benefits and utilising lots and lots of EU drivers. We have had to go out of our way to work with people like Merseytravel and the Department of Work and Pensions, and with various DWP initiatives to recruit drivers and get access to some of the funding that is available through those to keep our driver pool tip-top. The knock-on effect of that is that, if we pay better premiums, SMEs feel the pinch because we are taking their drivers. It is going to be the SMEs that really feel the issue at some stage in the future.

Q6 Chair: For you, it has not been about training more people to become drivers; it has been recruiting them from other sectors.

Colin Snape: A lot of it, yes.

Q7 Karl McCartney: We are talking about drivers as a generic group, but can you split them? You mentioned that you have bucked the trend, but is that because you are doing ultra-long haulage work? Is it the shorter daily trips that drivers are not willing to do any more and therefore that is why the numbers are dropping off? Can you split the sector at all, or is it right across the piece that there is a shortage of drivers for all the different types of journeys that might take place in the road haulage sector?

Colin Snape: The sector is huge. It goes from small vans right the way up to the 44-tonne articulated vehicles. We run a range of vehicle types. The job we do in our company is chilled and frozen food distribution, so it is hard work; it is going into town centres with full pallets of goods on and off the backs of trucks into shops and supermarkets. You can split the sector, but I believe there is the same impact right the way across. The large players such as Amazon, eBay and people like that now have an impact on areas of our industry, delivering fresh food, for instance. There is a requirement for more and more drivers to be able to do that type of work, but, as I said, the shortage is not being felt by me at present because of the recruitment practices we put in place.

Q8 Karl McCartney: Is that the experience of the other members of the panel?

Martijn de Lange: We have experienced it at Hermes, but we have of course put a couple of things in place to combat it. We have our Warehouse to Wheels programme. We also have a driver school. We have a large pool of people sorting parcels, and we are educating them to get their driver qualification and to become a driver. We have quite a lot of van drivers and lorry drivers as well, so we are trying to deal with the issue via educating our own people, but the growth in the sector has been such that you need to attract people from outside as well. You will probably get to the issue that Colin raised, so ultimately you will see pay going up hugely. You might say that that is really good, but if it goes up a lot more than the average, and we don't watch out, we will become uncompetitive.

Jack Semple: It is a really interesting picture. We have heard from members right across the board about the difficulty of getting drivers. The impact varies across the industry in one sense, but on the Chair's point about whether the industry could do more, the reality is probably yes. The RHA launched Love the Lorry week and we will be doing it again in 2016. It was a big success. It is partly to challenge our members in terms of how they

perceive and project themselves, and to be more competitive as an industry in trying to attract people. We are working with Jobcentre Plus, as I know a number of other people are, and we had a very good scheme where we identified candidates to make sure they were suitable to come into the industry. The Welsh Government have latched on to that and are, hopefully, funding 180 drivers over the next few months to come into the industry through Jobcentre Plus, but it is very patchy.

I was speaking only this afternoon to one of our successful SMEs who has started developing its own drivers, but, as he said, that only takes them so far because they can only afford to do so much. I do not think we can neglect the issue, which I see has been raised in some of the papers last week by one or two of your colleagues, about the extent to which we are reliant on foreign drivers. This is a really significant issue for the industry in terms of resilience, and potentially for the UK Government in terms of revenue. Our best estimate from our members is that there are 60,000 lorry drivers in the UK from abroad, mostly from eastern Europe, although I gather that Portugal is becoming a popular destination from which to recruit drivers as well.

We have calculated that remittances out of the UK are getting on for £200 million a year, which goes straight out of the UK economy. We were asked to do that calculation by the Treasury. Our own members who have been going and, I have to say, continue to go to eastern Europe—there is no complaint about those drivers at all—know themselves that in the long term it is not ideal. Meanwhile, the economy as a whole remains short of the number of drivers we need.

Q9 Karl McCartney: It would be remiss of me not to mention this. Some of you might be aware of technological innovations, particularly by Denby Transport, who are supportive of me and I am of them in my constituency. Perhaps one of the answers to a shortage of drivers is to have longer lorries, and some of you will be aware of Denby Transport's innovations in that area. Do any of you think that is a distinct possibility and maybe that they should be allowed to test their lorries on the roads in the UK, as they are elsewhere in Europe?

David Wells: A couple of years ago, a small number of longer semi-trailer licences were granted. They are useful for a particular type of operation. In fact, there was a discrete package of those licences. They were not all taken up by the industry. It may be useful in certain situations for certain logistical applications, but across the board I do not think you would find that was the answer.

Q10 Karl McCartney: But if you have a huge consignment of toilet rolls, which do not weigh a lot but are huge by volume, you might need 10 lorries' worth; so, if instead of using 10 drivers you could use five drivers with an extra-long lorry, surely that would go some way to solving it.

David Wells: But then the issue when you get it to the depot at the other end is that you have to manoeuvre it round a constrained area. It is not always quite so straightforward. There are certain applications where it may apply, but there are a lot of applications where it would not.

Jack Semple: From the RHA's point of view, it is some time since we have been asked the question. Our view, when we were asked the question, was that it was something that should be looked at in the UK. The debate was closed down by the then Transport

Secretary and it has been closed down ever since. There seems to be reluctance to look at technological issues to improve the efficiency of the supply chain in the UK. It would be a controversial issue but it is certainly worth looking at. We need to get out of the mindset that any change in the haulage industry is something that has to be resisted.

I cannot help adding that, in terms of the efficiency of the supply chain, the more the Department for Transport can improve our road network, the greater the gains we will have. Certainly reducing the number of vehicles, as well as improving the efficiency of the road network, is something we have to look at.

Q11 Chair: Can you give us an idea about how the industry itself is changing? Mr Snape, when you spoke to us a few minutes ago you were talking about different sorts of journeys and vehicles. Are there now more of the shorter vehicles? Is the whole nature of road haulage changing?

Colin Snape: Any competitive operator tries to use the best equipment they can to get the job done. Some of our work is in town centres so we have to send smaller vehicles. We adopt and adapt operations to do that, rather than using longer trailers. We used longer trailers in the trial and they worked fine for moving yoghurt, but if we are moving meat they are no good because of the extra weight. We have now gone the opposite way and are using shorter semi-trailers, because they are more manoeuvrable than rigid vehicles, to go into town centres. The vehicles that deliver to London, for instance, are smaller semi-trailers. There is a lot of scope, and a lot of new vehicles and initiatives are available to us, and any savvy operator will use those to the best of his advantage.

Jack Semple: The industry has evolved quite significantly and continues to evolve and innovate. We are using IT systems, telematics and so on. As a whole, we are not applying it as widely or as effectively as we might as an industry, but we have some really good operators who are doing that. We are using proof of delivery at point of delivery to speed up the cash flow of our customers. What we need is an improvement on the roadside. In terms of drivers, even when companies are bringing on their own drivers, there are constraints on the extent to which they can do it. In the SME sector we are getting no incentive at all to change the pattern that has become ingrained. The pattern is that we go to eastern Europe or we look elsewhere, to other companies. We need to do more, and I think the Government have a role to play in this, to encourage companies to train UK people to drive in this essential industry. It is not true to say that the Government do not train anybody, but it is piecemeal for other reasons. When steel workers were laid off, some local authorities picked up on the need and responded, but we need to do more to encourage the industry as a whole. It is not just about the very large operators; in fact, it is mostly about SME companies. They need a bit of encouragement and a bit of support to bring on people who are in the UK and committed to the UK.

Q12 Chair: We will come on to that in more detail, Mr Semple. I just want to get an understanding of how the industry itself might be changing, and how requirements might be changing.

David Wells: The evidence would suggest—it is quite plain for all to see—that over a period of time the number of HGV registrations has been falling, although in the last few years it has actually increased. What has grown substantially during that time is the number of heavy vans, and that has been fuelled by the growth in home delivery and

internet shopping. Retailers are moving from the out-of-town store model to the home delivery model, and they have significant fleets of heavy vans. As an occupation, to be the driver of a heavy van as opposed to the driver of an HGV, working nights and doing long shifts in a much more controlled environment, with tachograph analysis, telematics and all the other constraints and measures that are placed upon an HGV driver, is, I suspect—I am not an HGV or a van driver—a much more attractive proposition. You are working during more normal hours—when you can deliver to a home. There has been a significant shift in the industry towards home deliveries and heavy vans. You can see that in the growth of heavy van registrations.

Martijn de Lange: I was going to mention home deliveries, the growth of e-commerce and the fact that home deliveries require smaller vehicles. There is a big growth of lorries in big fleets, but the small fleet is also increasing because there is a more flexible transport logistics model due to the whole e-commerce growth. At the end of the day, the sector employs a lot of people who are close to retirement, so more people are leaving than are coming in. It is a job that can be quite demanding, with the type of regulations that have been introduced. That is an issue that we need to sort out so that there are more people coming in and fewer leaving.

Q13 Robert Flello: We have heard that the situation at the moment is that there is something of the order of 55,000 vacancies. The growth in the number of heavy vans is almost a red herring, in that it is not coming away from heavy goods vehicles but is in addition. As I understand it, the average age of a heavy goods vehicle driver is somewhere around 56 or 57; Mr de Lange touched on that. If growth in the UK economy continues at the same sort of rate, we are surely going to go away from 55,000 to a much greater figure. Is there an estimate at the moment of what that might be in the next five or 10 years?

David Wells: We would say, based on ONS numbers, that the average age of an HGV driver is 48; 64% of drivers are 45 and over. I am not a statistician, but if you can get your head around that you see that there is a particular spike of drivers—64%—around the 45 to 50 age bracket; they dominate the age profile. When those drivers get to retirement age—there clearly is no specific retirement age these days but let us say they get to 60 and decide they do not want to do this job—in 15 years' time we are going to have a massive problem. We have an issue now. Let's be brutally honest: did Christmas get delivered this year? Yes, it did, but there are only 700 HGV drivers registered as unemployed so there are very few people looking for work as HGV drivers. The industry has been adaptive. It has taken as many drivers as it can and it is using European drivers, but the issue is going to get significantly worse when that age profile reaches retirement age. That is no different from many other industries, but only 1% of HGV drivers are under 25, whereas if you look at the national average 10% of employees are under 25. Our age profile is a particular issue. We are not attracting people in at the bottom end, and that is going to play out even worse for our industry than for other sectors.

Jack Semple: The industry is more demanding than it ever was. It is working to tighter delivery schedules and service demands from customers. The roads are more congested than they have ever been; the DFT statistics show that. It makes it a more demanding job. We got a one-off relief to a degree when the normal retirement age of 65 was lifted, but the reality is that we are starting to see a bit of concern from members about some of their

much older drivers doing the job. More of our members are telling us that the demand from older drivers is to go part-time or do occasional work, weekend work or whatever.

Martijn de Lange: We see it as a bit of a ticking time bomb that is potentially going to limit our ability to grow as a business or increase costs substantially. We see it as a big issue. As you rightly say, it is going to get a lot worse. We need to act now. We have been talking about it for a while, but I am not sure what we have done as a collective.

Q14 Robert Fello: Do you think it is strange, given that there is a huge number of vacancies, that the number of people unemployed has fallen but is still something of the order of 1.7 million? There are a lot of people looking for work and a lot of people on the minimum wage, yet there are all these jobs. Why is it that people do not seem to know about these jobs?

David Wells: When you survey members and people who are new in the industry, one of the most significant factors that puts people off is the cost of acquiring a licence, which can range from anywhere between £3,000 and £5,000. That is an upfront cost to get your HGV licence. You do not start earning until you have that licence, so it is a major impediment to the industry, as well as the other factors around the image of the industry. The perception of the industry is not good and that is clearly a factor.

Jack Semple: To pick up on David's point, getting the licence is far more burdensome than it was in the past. In the past you could go straight to HGV 1, but you now have a more cumbersome process where you have to get a rigid licence and then an articulated licence. You also have to be qualified with the driver CPC. In addition, the administrative burden appears to be more complicated than ever it was, on top of the cost. We now have the situation, in terms of getting tests, that it is quite difficult to book a test within the timescale when a lot of people want to get a test. The delay period puts them off. Of course, we have the issue of a very poor pass rate at annual test as well. All those issues combine. We need to streamline the system for getting people through the test. We need to drive up the pass rate. One way to do that is to be more careful about the selection of candidates and the preparation for the test. We need to have a protocol and encouragement in place to do that. The more you can encourage employers who have jobs to take responsibility for that—to get new recruits in and to select and prepare them in the right way—the more you will see, as some companies have, a 90% pass rate and not 54%, or whatever it is at the moment.

Q15 Chair: Mr Semple, you mentioned before the work you were doing with Jobcentre Plus. How many schemes are operating?

Jack Semple: The idea of the Jobcentre Plus initiative was to create work experience for people who were Jobcentre Plus customers—people out of work and claiming benefit. We had a successful trial in Southampton and Eastleigh. It was very clear to the Jobcentre Plus staff there that, had there been a bit of funding to go with that, to quote one of the staff, we would have been trampled in the rush. We had 20 candidates at 10 member companies. The principle has been adapted by the Welsh Government. They like the idea of candidate selection and preparing them in the right way and getting unemployed people into work. That is the origin of the scheme at the moment: to train 180 drivers. The reality is that, without funding, and with certain reorganisations, the scheme has not gone forward as well as we would have liked. We have a review meeting with Jobcentre Plus in the next

several weeks to see how we can reinvigorate it. With a bit of pump-priming, you would be trampled in the rush. When we made known the decision of the Welsh Government to support Jobcentre Plus and we informed our members—just RHA members—the offer was oversubscribed in less than 36 hours.

Q16 Chair: What do you want funding for? It started off as work experience. Would it be for getting a qualification?

Jack Semple: For getting licensed and qualified to drive in the industry. It would be to support companies in a quality-based system to select candidates and get them licensed and qualified to drive in the industry.

Q17 Chair: Are you saying that the people who want to do it are there, but it is a matter of funding?

Jack Semple: In Wales, the offer for 180 drivers was oversubscribed in 36 hours just from our RHA members.

David Wells: On a point of clarity, funding for the Jobcentre Plus schemes comes from the flexible support fund, which is a DWP fund. Jack is right that it is very patchy; it is not across the country. One of the things we think that Government could do to help is to give a dedicated fund so that it is not just at the discretion of a local Jobcentre Plus where they may see a need or where some candidates are asking for HGV driver training. They should make it a national dedicated scheme right across the country. Then the interest we have seen in Wales would be replicated right across the country.

Q18 Will Quince: I understand your point about the licence and the funding thereof being a barrier to entry for some people. Clearly there is an issue of supply and demand, because there are jobseekers out there. How many organisations or companies within the industry currently sponsor individuals to go through the training and pay for it?

Colin Snape: I do not know for the industry, but talking about myself we would not sponsor somebody through that type of system. We work with Jobcentre Plus in various locations around the country. If they have a programme running, we will work in accordance with it. They will say, “How many drivers would you like?” I might say that I could take on five at my Liverpool depot, for instance. They recruit the five people. They use the funding that is available to get them trained and I offer them a role at the end of it, but, as the guys on either side of me said, it is very patchy around the country. I am the chair of the apprenticeship Trailblazer for the industry. One of the problems we have, going back to what you were talking about, Robert, is that we cannot attract youngsters into the industry. The licence acquisition is not funded through the apprenticeship, which is farcical really. There is an apprenticeship that we can use, which unfortunately will disappear next year, but we cannot fund licence acquisition through it, so we are missing out on all the youngsters. It is primarily aimed at 17 to 19-year-olds, but we are not attracting those young people into the industry because we cannot fund the licence.

Martijn de Lange: We have a driving school that funds this in effect, so we are accredited to give them training and examine them. We do that but we cannot keep up with what we require, for all the reasons that have been mentioned. I would add one thing, which is the high insurance costs and premiums for young drivers. We are trying to do our best, but

there is a lot more that needs to be done because this is an issue that is only going to get bigger.

Q19 Will Quince: I take the point, but I do not entirely accept it. You are in effect saying that there are two issues. One is that you cannot encourage enough people to do it, because the cost of training is about £3,000. The second is that, once you get people in, they move on to other companies. Surely the pragmatic view for the industry should be that they are going to sponsor people through those places, but if they leave the company within two years they have to pay back a percentage of that training cost. A lot of other businesses do that. Would that not be a pragmatic view for the industry that would fix two issues: first, you get drivers, and, secondly, you get some kind of loyalty to the individual business?

Colin Snape: We do a similar thing for anybody in our company who does training. They sign a training agreement that they would have to pay that back. The training is just a proportion of the cost—recruiting somebody, the time and effort spent with them over and above that, bringing them on, training them up. Seeing them go for £1 an hour more to somebody who is paying a little bit more is an issue.

David Wells: I entirely agree with that. For the larger employers that is one of the tools in their toolbox. One of the other things that we would ask Government to consider is the extension of the 24+ advanced learning loan scheme to level 2 qualifications, which would include HGV driver training. The reason why that is attractive in this situation is that the loan follows the employee. One of the big concerns for the smaller operators, and for the bigger operators as well, is that you train somebody and then they say, “Thanks very much, I’m off.” But in this situation, the loan follows the driver or the employee. If the Government could see their way to extending the 24+ loan scheme to level 2 qualifications, it would be a really significant help. It would almost double the toolkit in that regard, so we would really encourage that.

Q20 Martin Vickers: You mentioned the success of the Welsh scheme. What detailed response are you getting from the Scottish and English Governments about similar schemes throughout the country?

Jack Semple: In terms of the UK Government in London, nothing very much at all. We are having a continuing debate with Scotland, where I gather that we are having a very positive response from colleagues in Edinburgh on the retraining issue in the Aberdeen area following the redundancies in the North sea. We have had support from MPs up there specifically for the road haulage industry, and we are very hopeful of being involved in the retraining plans. The Scottish Government are very receptive and we are getting very positive noises. We do not have anything specific as yet in terms of the general pattern. We may come on to the Trailblazer, but there is complete lack of clarity as to what is going to happen in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Trailblazer covers England and Wales. My best understanding is that a sum of money will be calculated and sent on to Scotland and Northern Ireland to spend as they wish for the future.

David Wells: It is fair to say that the Chancellor has said twice in financial statements that he would work with the industry to look at supporting driver training. We have been working towards putting in place pragmatic funding models that would enable him to do that. On top of the dedicated flexible support fund for Jobcentre Plus and the extension of

the 24+ loan scheme, we would ask for an industry-agreed apprenticeship scheme that allows for driver training to be part of that. We are offering three funding models that are pragmatic solutions for you to support this industry. The Scottish Government are positive, but as yet there are no firm proposals on the table that I am aware of as to how to take this forward.

Q21 Martin Vickers: Mr Semple, earlier you mentioned the work you were doing with Jobcentre Plus and various schemes. I have the port of Immingham in my constituency, which as you know is a big hub for the road haulage industry. A few weeks ago a constituent came to see me who was involved in driver training. He said the problem with the jobcentre scheme was that they were using it to keep their targets up and were sending people who were totally unsuitable and would never have the financial resources to put themselves through the training. He said that basically they were wasting his time. That was his argument. Would that be a fair criticism?

Jack Semple: Jobcentre Plus is a very large organisation and a very devolved organisation in terms of power, so I would be surprised if there was consistency right across the organisation. At national level Jobcentre Plus has worked very well with us and understands the issues very well. The whole point about the Southampton and Eastleigh trial was precisely to identify a system for candidate selection so that the candidate would be suitable. I know that has certainly been adopted in some parts of Jobcentre Plus, to make sure that the candidate is suitable. In some parts of the country at least, Jobcentre Plus has a far better understanding of the logistics industry than it had before, and of the requirements. Again, it is the idea of having a system of quality identification of the candidate, making sure that the candidate understands what the industry is all about and what the job will be about before going forward and making the additional commitment. We do not want to see the situation of almost a decade ago, for example, when there was some retraining at Rover; we trained a huge number of drivers but fewer than 20% of them ever actually drove a lorry carrying a load. The whole point is to have a quality system for candidate identification and preparation for test.

Q22 Iain Stewart: At the weekend, I was discussing our inquiry with a constituent who has 42 years' experience in the logistics industry. He offered me his analysis of why there is a large level of disillusionment among the existing workforce and a disincentive for new people coming in. I would be grateful for your thoughts. His theory is that many of the existing drivers are exhausted and stressed, and that is down to the number of hours that they are required to be at their place of work, which is different from the maximum legal hours they can drive. He contends that, when you add up loading and unloading procedures, periods of availability, tighter delivery schedules and all the other things, it is possible for a driver to be at work for 71 hours in a five-day period, or 84 hours in a six-day period, and that, as I said, is leading to huge levels of exhaustion and stress. I would be grateful for your comments on that.

Colin Snape: It is illegal for a driver to work any more than 60 hours in a week—completely and utterly illegal.

Jack Semple: The issue of hours of work within the EU working time directive on road transport has been raised two or three times, not least by the union. Each time it has been discussed, it has not got anywhere for lack of evidence. I would think that compliance

levels in the haulage industry are high. That said, it is a very diverse industry. I do not think anybody would say that some sectors are not demanding. It is not everybody who wants to drive a lorry in every sector of the industry, but the point you make can be overstated. Having said that, several years ago we dropped mandatory retirement at age 65, and the issue we are now getting at our helpdesk from members is, “I have a driver who has been with me for many years. He has gone well past 65. I am getting a little bit nervous about him taking the lorry out every day. Within employment law, how can I gently manage the driver to shorter hours?”

David Wells: I would reiterate what Colin said. It would be illegal for a driver to do that amount of hours in a week.

Q23 Iain Stewart: Is that hours actually driving or hours at the place of work, including unloading and loading?

David Wells: They count towards his hours, so even though he is not behind the wheel, if he is still at his place of work, he is deemed to be at the place of work and that goes on his driver record. To follow up on that, it is true that to be an HGV driver today is not the easy occupation that people think it is. It is a very regulated industry. We have just been talking about hours. The driver has to be aware of all his hours. He has to comply with the telematics system, so he has to go on a specific route. He may have to make a delivery within a 10-minute window, so he is incentivised to deliver on time. He has to handle all the issues around congestion on the road network, as Jack alluded to earlier. He has fewer facilities to stop and take his 45-minute break because many of those facilities, lay-bys and so on, are closed as roadworks are undertaken. He has to drive efficiently. His employer will be incentivising his pay packet in order for him to drive in an efficient way, so no harsh braking and no fast acceleration. He will be scored according to the way he drives and the amount of fuel he uses. He has to do driver CPC. It is not just jumping in your truck, doing your hours and off you go. It is quite a demanding job and I can understand the comment that there is strain on the driver, because in genuine truth there is strain on the driver and it is not really recognised.

Q24 Iain Stewart: In your surveys of drivers about their satisfaction with the job, is that something that comes up in responses?

David Wells: I cannot say that the FTA has done a satisfaction survey of drivers, because we are a trade association rather than an individual driver association.

Q25 Iain Stewart: Are you aware of any other industry surveys?

Colin Snape: We do our internal surveys, and without doubt the job has become harder and harder. The roads are more congested and that adds to the driver's stress levels. Stress, as in every other industry, is increasing and increased numbers of drivers are going sick with stress. It is getting harder and harder. It never seems to crop up in our surveys. The people who are doing the job like it, but they are a dedicated bunch. It is not the easiest job in the world. It goes from one scope to the other—from the very hard-working driver having to do 10 deliveries in the town centre to the driver who does night trunking and just sits behind the truck and guides it for eight hours. They are completely different types of work.

Martijn de Lange: On satisfaction the score is quite high for drivers, because in that type of working population the pay can be quite high. It is definitely a demanding job. What also makes it demanding are the spikes in the industry. There is an enormous spike from black Friday, Saturday and Monday to Boxing day, which means that within that period of the year a lot of people jump ship for £1 more, when supermarkets are heavily promoting. There is a difference for the kind of people who work across the year, which is a steady job, and then there is a massive spike for two months of the year when it is very demanding. All the things you have just mentioned create an image of the industry that is not helping to attract drivers. I would say that the industry complies with regulation. We pay well and wages are going up quite a lot. There are fantastic trucks, trailers and technology provided by the majority of companies. There is therefore a good opportunity to climb up the salary ladder, but we need to promote a better image when people leave school and university.

Q26 Chair: Mr Semple, do you agree that it is about the very negative image, when the reality is much more diverse?

Jack Semple: It is a very important factor. It is incumbent on the industry to spark a much better appreciation of what the industry has to offer and the positive sides of the industry. The industry is very clean in terms of its environmental emissions, contrary to perception. It is increasingly an IT-driven industry, as David was saying. It is a very demanding industry in terms of service levels. It is a very essential industry. The industry and we, as trade associations, have to bring that message much more to life for the general public. I have to say also that regulators and political support are important. We read a big headline in the *London Evening Standard* last week about a lorry driver not being prosecuted following the tragic death of a cyclist. It made it very clear that the police had all the evidence that the driver did everything that could be expected of a professional driver, yet the screamer was that the driver was not going to be prosecuted and there were quotes from leading cycle lobbies expressing their disappointment. At every level, greater political support would certainly be welcomed by the industry and would be helpful. In addition, the industry is looking for support for facilities at the roadside. There is a real role for the Department for Transport and the Highways Agency to shift where they have been in the past and to become more involved in that aspect. The industry itself has to look at the facilities that customers in particular provide and the way drivers are treated at some delivery points and distribution centres. Those are some specifics that the industry would like to see.

Q27 Mary Glendon: Following what you said about attracting people into the industry, what do you think could be done to make more women interested in the industry? After all, we are more than 50% of the population. There are surely more women who would be interested in that career.

David Wells: In the FTA, we are encouraging our members to look at their shift patterns and to be more flexible. That would clearly help to attract women into the industry. Following Jack's point about driver facilities, there has to be an improvement in driving facilities. That will help women to go into the industry, if they can see that they will be securely and properly dealt with at the roadside when they need to take a break. It is a statutory requirement to take a break at regular intervals under drivers' hours rules. Those two things would explicitly help get women into driving in the industry.

Martijn de Lange: It is a very important point. It is still very male dominated, and a lot of jobs are moving away from shops into e-commerce and therefore into logistics. There are a lot more women working in shops, so if they go and are not replaced by women working in logistics, we will have a big issue. I agree with all the things David mentioned, but there is again the image of the industry—long hours and working at night. It does not have to be like that. With home delivery, there are more flexible working patterns that could suit women better. That image has to come across, and we need to move away from the dirty logistics image to that of a modern industry that is needed for the economy.

Colin Snape: I have spent the last few years working with schools in the vicinity of my depots around the country, trying to attract young apprentices who are ready to leave school. We work with them in their last two years, so we start to speak to them when they are 14. We put training in place for them between 14 and 16. We have just taken on a group as employees and young apprentices. Of the 70 we made contact with, only four young girls were interested in the job. It does not matter what we do—we were in the schools giving presentations and at employment fairs—we just do not seem to be able to attract them. They still have this perspective in their minds of its being very dirty and hard work. A truck now is an amazing place to drive. It is very modern and up to date. It can easily be driven by ladies. We have a few female drivers but not many, although we try to attract them. It is more about the facilities. A male driver does not have an issue with parking his truck up in a lay-by and having a nine-hour break if he is driving around the country. You cannot do that as a lady. More facilities are required to be able to do that. It would help to attract people in a big way. Saying that, the bulk of our office-based staff are female. They make much better traffic planners. That is renowned and we know that really well. We have people in our accounts department who are a lot better than guys. All our traffic administration is completely female dominated.

Q28 Mary Glindon: It is really disappointing to hear that. I know there are things beyond your control such as the facilities and so on. Outside the industry, whether it is Government or education, is there anything positive that could be done beyond what you have tried, or with help from outside, to attract women, whether younger women or women who want to change careers? Women are not frightened of hard work or of getting their hands dirty. I have known women lorry drivers who had successful careers. I hear you saying that this is not right and that is not right, but there needs to be a concerted effort to get greater representation, doesn't there? Is there anything that could do that which is outside your control?

Colin Snape: We could definitely do with some really good TV advertising. When the Olympics were on, DHL ran some adverts and that is what brought logistics to the forefront of people's minds. I go around talking to schools and I ask, "Do you know what logistics is?" and they don't have a clue. I say, "Everything that is in the school, everything that got to the school and got you to the school is through the logistics industry." Once you start explaining it they can see it a bit more, but there is nothing out there to entice youngsters to want to join.

Jack Semple: The industry is now starting to address the issue of taking the message to schools. The Think Logistics programme will expand and you will see in the coming year more and more efforts to reach out to schools. I was speaking only last week to somebody who presented to 20 school careers advisers last summer, and not a single one of them had

the faintest idea about logistics. Given the scale of the economy, it is disappointing. I suspect most of the women who are driving in the industry at the moment come from haulage families, so their father or somebody related to them was in the industry.

Q29 Chair: It goes back to the problem of image and people's perception of what it is.

David Wells: The FTA everywoman in Transport & Logistics awards are run every year. I am pleased to say that that has grown every year. It is a way of celebrating successful ladies in the industry and we are a big supporter of that. We are the headline sponsor and the reason is that we see it as a vital way of keeping the industry alive; 50% of our catchment area is just not touched by this and we really have to do something about it as an industry. As Jack said, the industry is waking up to the fact that we have to address the issue.

Chair: It is taking a long time to wake up though, isn't it? Maybe it is happening now.

Q30 Mark Menzies: I will come back to some of the things we have talked about in a second, but on the wider subject of recruitment, retention and training, are there any companies that are particularly successful at doing that at the moment? Are they good recruiters, good at training and good at retaining?

David Wells: A number of large operators are very good at it. We have two here today who will tell you about their own experience. I know, for example, that the owner of Maritime Transport sits on our board. They have 1,300 vehicles. They are very good at retaining, but they have exceptionally good driver facilities at their depots and treat their staff very well. It is a very professionally run organisation and they also expect their drivers to be very professional. Their vehicles are always very well turned out. You see them on the M25 or any major route. There are lots of good examples of people who can train and retain a good level of staffing. There are good role models out there.

Martijn de Lange: If you are not a good role model, you cannot attract anybody any more. The state of the industry is such that you have to be really good, paying fairly and providing good facilities. There is the point around technology, but also around fleet renewals—having better and better vehicles, more automatic vehicles and those types of things. It is hugely important. Everybody who wants to stay ahead of the game and wants to grow will have to do that. There are a lot of good examples.

Jack Semple: Risking Colin's blushes, he is setting a very good example for the industry. That is one of the reasons the industry is very pleased to have him as chairman of the Trailblazer. We are starting to see some of the larger companies address the issue more systematically, but even for them there is a limit to what they are doing and are willing to do. I referred to that earlier. If you look at bringing people on in the SME sector, there is a huge opportunity for the Government to encourage a shift in behaviours in the industry and to lead on that. The industry is in a very different place at the moment. There are examples of firms that are actively going out into their community. They need support to do that effectively. They need support to raise the general attractiveness of the industry,

but it is in terms of the needs of the economy that the opportunity lies for Government. We need to shift us from where we are to where we need to be.

Martijn de Lange: For example, we work on a scheme with Huddersfield University; there are all these things. A lot of companies will have examples so I do not want to pick up just on what we do. Frankly, a lot of people will have to do that, otherwise—

Q31 Mark Menzies: Within the road haulage industry, are there particular sectors for which it is more difficult to recruit? For example, we touched on ultra-long distance driving. As a lay person looking at this, the image I often get is of someone driving a big artic, to use a commonly used term, and that person is responsible for helping to load the vehicle, unload the vehicle, haul pallets to the back of the truck where a forklift truck driver takes them up. The image is created of something quite physically demanding, as well as mentally demanding. Does that in itself not put people off? For example, women might think, “I can do the driving and the organisational pieces better than anyone, but I’m not sure whether I could cope with the physical demand of hauling pallets on and off.” Is that an issue?

Chair: Isn’t this something where the industry has a responsibility? Are we talking about image or reality? Mr Menzies has spoken about the different aspects.

Jack Semple: It is a hugely diverse industry. You are talking about people who are licensed and qualified to drive in road haulage and that can mean anything from driving a 7.5-tonne parcel van to driving a tipper. One of our regional chairmen has several female drivers on 44-tonne tippers. It can be driving a livestock vehicle or a milk vehicle or what a lot of people think of as the industry, which is a standard food distribution vehicle.

Q32 Chair: Why isn’t the industry promoting this itself and showing this diversity?

Jack Semple: That is what you are starting to see. I recommend national lorry week next September. I think you will see a huge increase. Last October in national lorry week we had three hours on the Chris Evans breakfast show. We had all sorts of things, and hundreds of thousands of individuals visited #lovethelorry. That was a start, and you will see that and other activities blossoming this year. You will see the industry reaching out much more.

Q33 Chair: That was the beginning.

Jack Semple: That was the beginning. You will see a lot more this year, but again the reality is, are we going to have enough drivers across the industry and across the SME sector? Are we going to change the continuing reliance on 60,000 or more drivers from eastern Europe or elsewhere? If they decide to go home or go to Germany, because they are paying a bit more, there is a real resilience issue.

Chair: We are aware of the issue. I am focusing for a moment on the industry’s responsibility. You are telling me that lorry week was just the start.

Q34 Mark Menzies: We have talked about women. Another group could be BME. How do you reach out to BME communities to find younger people and try to attract them into the industry?

Jack Semple: There is a whole programme. In terms of younger people—

Q35 Mark Menzies: It is not necessarily younger people. I mean BME people across the board.

Chair: More diversity in the make-up of the population.

Jack Semple: I will address the younger person issue initially. The industry is catching up—I think you will see it start to catch up—to reach out to younger drivers, in the way that Colin's company has. There are insurance issues to address. There are mentoring issues, as well as candidate selection. There is real potential for the industry to demonstrate to all road users that, if you set the parameters correctly in terms of expectations, and give the right training, mentoring and supervision, you can have 18 and 19-year-olds driving heavy goods vehicles in the industry.

Q36 Chair: What is the industry itself going to do about not just young people, although including young people, but the black, minority and ethnic groups within our community? It is not just women who are under-represented; it is other groups as well. What is the industry going to do about it?

Jack Semple: I think I am right in saying that that is starting to change. You will see a focus on that this year as the industry promotes itself more widely.

David Wells: This is one of the questions that I have considered many times. I am not sure whether I am allowed to say this, but I do not believe that the industry has a racism problem. A whole diversity of people work in logistics operations. The particular question is that there do not appear to be many ethnic minorities represented as drivers, and I have struggled to come up with an answer to that. One of the schemes that will particularly help in this regard is Warehousing to Wheels. It is very diverse in warehousing but it is not diverse in driving. Warehousing to Wheels will help that. Warehousing to Wheels is popular because it allows an employer to understand what the employee is like. If you have to invest £3,000 in their training, clearly you will pick quality employees, people you trust and you think worth investing in. Let's be brutally honest. It is a really good scheme that will help address the diversity issue in the driving community.

Colin Snape: I do not believe there is an issue with BMEs in the industry. I have depots that are dominated by BMEs, for instance.

Chair: It is not an issue for the sector, but perhaps it is for drivers.

Q37 Huw Merriman: I want to ask about the effect of falling fuel prices. Do you believe that will give you the opportunity to put more money into increased wages in order to relieve your shortage?

Colin Snape: Not at all.

Q38 Huw Merriman: Why not?

Colin Snape: Most customers are on a fuel escalator, so you have to give that money back to your customers.

Q39 Huw Merriman: There is no margin saving for you at all.

Colin Snape: None at all.

Martijn de Lange: In our company, it is probably negative because it all goes back to our clients.

Q40 Huw Merriman: That has dealt with that. Perhaps my other question will be as straightforward. I am conscious that you are a private industry. Logistics is your business and your expertise. You have talked about Government intervention and I can understand that from a deregulation perspective, but why should subsidising initiatives or involvement in your recruitment and retention be the role of Government?

Martijn de Lange: Ultimately, we cannot do this alone. There are a lot of questions about what the industry has to do. What I and my colleagues are trying to say is that we are trying to do an awful lot, and if I could do more I probably would, because this is a lifeline for us to grow, but there is a limitation to what we can do. If the pool is not big enough, or we cannot make it any bigger as an industry, we need some help from the Government or the educational sector around careers advice. There are barriers that have been put in because of regulation, the CPC or costs. They are not issues that the industry can fully take away. For the SME sector there is the question of costs and funding. The bigger transport companies could fund it all, but we just cannot get hold of drivers. With the growth of e-commerce and the peak demands of our industry, we talk a lot about needing more drivers but it is very peaky. You need them for maybe three, four or five months of the year. How do you ever recruit against double demand during Christmas and black Friday if there is no availability? That is not something that we as a company or the wider industry can resolve on our own.

Q41 Huw Merriman: True, but other industry sectors are also struggling to recruit. Care homes are a very good example. Is it realistic for the Government to be interfering in your business? Surely you know your business, and how you should recruit and market, and whether you have to pay premiums in order to get people out of working in supermarkets to do the job. Surely that is your job; it is your industry.

Martijn de Lange: Yes, it is largely our job, but I would have thought that as we want to export more and more as a country, and this is such an important industry to support, it is in the interests of Government to make sure they help the logistics industry and support companies that are exporting a lot. Yes, of course we should be doing the majority of the work but not solely.

Q42 Huw Merriman: Thank you for the answer. You talk about its being good to get Government support, but then if Government decide they are not in the business of dealing with your retention and recruitment, it may mean that you are not as fast out of the blocks in taking full responsibility yourself in order to solve the situation.

Martijn de Lange: No; I think we are doing all we can.

David Wells: If I can reiterate, this is a complex issue. It has to be done almost in partnership with Government. We have seen some increase in labour rates for HGV drivers over the past two years. To take your model to the extreme, you could say, “Well, just pay more money and you will get more drivers.” We have seen some response to that. What we would say is that there are certainly a number of barriers that the Government could help remove. For example, there are issues around speeding up the process of medicals. Let us get drivers back on the road as quickly and as safely as possible; we are not looking for shortcut paths to the medical situation, certainly not after Glasgow, but there is a barrier that could be removed. We want some help on giving visibility around pass rates for training providers. That would really help us. Let us have an accreditation scheme for driving schools. That would really help, because then an employer could say, “Yes, I can see who is of good quality.” A third one would be looking at the number of test examiners. DVSA are really struggling to recruit test examiners. In some areas, on the DFT website, there are 12 test centres where you have to wait 12 weeks for an HGV driving test. That is an area where the Government can help.

Q43 Huw Merriman: Mr Wells, that lends itself to regulation. I said with the exception of regulation. You have given me three examples of where the Government could help by lessening the amount of red tape. I was talking more about it being best if the Government did not get involved in retention and recruitment and left it to you as a private industry to do that.

David Wells: The industry is going to have to recruit and retain staff. That is our responsibility as good employers. Our members would accept that, and generally speaking it is a good industry. Our members are quality members—I am absolutely confident of that—and they retain their staff. I gave you an example earlier. Government can certainly make it a lot easier to see where the funding streams are available. Some consistency across the country would help us. It is just making the job of recruiting and retaining that much easier for the industry. That is what we are asking the Government to help us to do.

Q44 Huw Merriman: If it is not necessarily about wage increases or recruiting in that particular way, would you say that more can be done on the innovation front? For example, if it is going to be so difficult to get more drivers, could there be more collaboration or working together so that you do not have so many separate journeys by companies? You could have more hubs so that journey time was reduced; or, for example, you could use rail more so that it is not so contingent on individual drivers.

Colin Snape: There are a couple of issues. Unfortunately, our rail network is not good enough. We cannot just move a container or a vehicle body on to the back of the train system in this country, unlike in Europe where bridges have been built to be able to do that and trailers have been adapted and are of the right shape. We cannot really do that. Most of the cost involved in our industry is the last mile, so we still have to get from a railhead to the shop, or wherever. As an industry we could be doing a lot more. The lack of a sector skills council is really impacting on us. We are unlike other industries. They have that and they are giving them guidance and doing lots of the work for them in trying to help with recruiting, advertising, publicity and things like that. We are struggling with that.

Jack Semple: What is made inescapably clear to us, including by large companies, is the cost burden of training the number of people that the economy needs and is going to need

to be licensed and qualified to drive. We are continuing to run well below where we need to be, and we continue to bring in large numbers from abroad. What is required is to put companies with a job to offer—a job available—in the driving seat to get the right candidates selected and trained, ideally within the UK, and that will happen much more effectively with Government support. That is the message we get from across every part of the industry. If you look at the SME sector, which continues to work on tight margins in a difficult economic climate, the people in our membership who own their companies are looking forward; they are husbanding their resources. We are bringing in more and more agency staff from across eastern Europe. We are not training in this country the number of drivers that we need. The contribution and involvement of Government has the potential to transform that. That point was made to us forcefully by our large and medium-sized members 18 months ago when we reinvigorated this issue. It continues to be made by our members at our council meetings and so on.

Q45 Chair: We keep hearing how the Government should be doing more and funding it, but what should they be doing? Let us look at apprenticeships. What should be happening there now? There are some changes; schemes are going.

Jack Semple: We very much welcome the Business Department's decision to accept the LGV driver apprenticeship.

Colin Snape: We have two standards that have been put forward to BIS for approval and they have now been agreed. We are in the process of writing the assessment plans, but it is fairly laborious. We still have the issue that we need to try to include licence acquisition within the apprenticeship. It also only attracts the right amount of funding for the right age group, which is up to 19 or 20. The funding then drops off, so people are not attracted to our apprenticeships because they cannot do what a normal apprenticeship can do, where at the end of one year, two years or three years they will have a fully qualified young person able to do the job. Unless we can get that vocational licence included—we intend to include it in our assessment plans—we are not going to achieve what we need to do with apprenticeships.

Q46 Chair: That is what you are asking the Government to do in relation to apprenticeships.

Colin Snape: Yes, we are in the process of doing that.

Jack Semple: In the meantime there is the opportunity for the Government to support firms and to get people licensed and qualified to drive.

Q47 Chair: Are those the two key things that you want the Government to be doing?
Martijn de Lange: With career advice.

Robert Ffello: I want to turn Mr Merriman's question on its head.

Chair: I will come back to you, but I want to be clear on exactly what it is the Government should do.

David Wells: We welcome the clarity and commitment on the apprenticeship scheme and including HGV drivers in that. We would ask the Government to give a dedicated funding model for the Jobcentre Plus scheme. We would also be looking for an extension of the 24+ loan scheme to include level 2 qualifications, which includes HGV drivers. That is on the training situation.

On driver facilities we would be asking the Government to identify where the hotspots are for parking. We would also be looking for them to make it a mandatory or statutory requirement for highways authorities to provide facilities, and to look at the planning regulations such that when a developer puts in a new distribution park it should include some parking for HGVs and a driver facility. We recognise that, where we have high levels of HGV activity, we need to put a facility for drivers. That is not something that has been done in the past and we would welcome them doing that now. As I said, there are three areas where the Government can reduce the barriers to drivers—around medicals, the number of test examiners and helping the industry on pass rates.

Q48 Robert Ffello: Picking up on what you have just said, Mr Wells, if the Government do not take any action and do not intervene in any way, isn't it the case that we will see more schemes whereby drivers, typically eastern European drivers, say they are self-employed so that there is a loss of tax to the UK Exchequer? We will see more young people either not in employment at all and therefore claiming benefits, or in zero hours low-paid jobs and therefore paying less tax. We will see communities like the Newstead estate in my constituency where drivers are pulling up in a residential area and using the local facilities, namely the local bush and the local rubbish bin to put the bottle in—I'll leave it there—because that is the only facility available to them. The lay-bys are closed, as you say, and there are not service stations or facilities. Even more fundamentally, we will have an economy that is slowed, because this is an industry that touches absolutely everything in this country. Literally, nothing moves without this industry, so if the Government want to see a growing economy they have to get involved and help the industry.

David Wells: I entirely agree with you. This industry touches every part of our economy. Not only does it employ 12% of the UK workforce and is worth £80 billion, but the chair you are sitting on was delivered by a truck or a van.

Q49 Chair: I come back to the point I made before, Mr Semple. The points that Mr Ffello raised are very important, but what has the industry been doing? What has the sector been doing about all this? You cannot rely on the Government to promote the importance of the sector. The sector has to do its own work, too.

Jack Semple: Could I add a couple of points in reply to Mr Ffello? You will not see companies standing up and saying, "We cannot get our stuff around as efficiently as we would like." Companies will not stand up and say that, but it is increasingly likely to be the case. I emphasise the point about tax evasion, which is becoming increasingly common in the industry in terms of employment status. I think you will also start to see the growing use of visiting hauliers to do UK domestic work. We are going to start to see more and more of that this year on a contract basis, as companies look to hedge their bets on availability of haulage, sadly. These companies pay no fuel duty, no income tax and no PAYE on their drivers. We need to reinvigorate and rebalance. The industry is going to be doing that, and you will see more and more of that from all sorts of areas of the industry.

The industry will become more proactive in promoting itself but we are looking for support.

Q50 Mary Glendon: You said something before about negative press images in relation to the *Evening Standard* last week. We have also seen in our news for so long now the situation in Calais. There are serious things happening to drivers, with crime and violence committed against them. What effect do you think that has on potentially getting people into the industry and retaining drivers who may have been affected?

Jack Semple: The clear evidence from our members is that they have been losing drivers from that route. More and more drivers do not want to operate on that route. It is not just British drivers. We have heard much the same from abroad. Companies do not like what is happening in the Calais area and drivers do not want to go there. They are either going through other ports if they can, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to book slots, or they are not doing the work. The negative impact cannot possibly be good for the image and recruitment potential of the industry. It is one of a number of negative factors.

Perception of the industry is a difficult problem to resolve. The urgency for the French authorities is to take whatever action they deem necessary, but what we are looking for is secure passage through the Calais area. We have suggested that they mobilise the French army if that is what it needs. There are a number of options. What we are really interested in is the outcome, and we are not seeing the outcome at the moment.

Martijn de Lange: In addition, of course, goods are getting delayed. That means there are fewer orders to British e-commerce businesses because you cannot get the goods out. That is another impact.

David Wells: We find ourselves between a rock and a hard place. The reality is that, as a trade association, we need to highlight the plight of drivers going through the port of Calais and the risks that they face. In the short term, that is absolutely the right thing for us to be doing. We are working closely with the Immigration Minister to highlight these issues and to come up with solutions. In the short term that is an issue, but in the longer term it is not improving the image of the industry. From our angle, we want to work with Government to make things better, because in the long term we do not want a negative impact on our industry. I concur with Jack; we have members who say they have drivers who are very reticent to go through the port of Calais now because of the security issues.

Jack Semple: It is increasingly easy, of course, to get a job in UK domestic haulage because we are short of drivers. It goes back to the point Mr Merriman was making about the Government's involvement.

Q51 Chair: Could the industry fund an industry-wide training levy?

David Wells: I think it is called the apprenticeship levy, isn't it?

Q52 Chair: Do you think the industry could do more?

David Wells: We have no option. We are mandated to pay it. Larger employers are mandated to pay the apprenticeship levy. That is why we would like to see an industry apprenticeship that will facilitate and use some of that allowance to train drivers.

Jack Semple: Our request is for £3,000 to support companies to get licensed and qualified drivers. The point is that the Government will get that money back in terms of the health of the industry and the effective working of the supply chain within the UK. More UK people will be working and spending money in this country. There will be more UK trucks carrying goods and paying fuel duty. It becomes a virtuous cycle and reinvigorates the industry.

Chair: Is there anything critical any of you want to tell us that we have not asked you about? No. Thank you very much for coming and answering our questions.