

## MARKING AND LIGHTING OF OVER-WIDTH LOADS



The Highways Agency had a further consultation meeting at Broad Street, Birmingham on 5th January 2009, to discuss the Transport Research Laboratory's work on updating the law, and Best Practice for marking and lighting over-width loads. This study was initiated in response to the Highways Agency proposing that more abnormal loads move at night, with particular emphasis on the largest loads, which may cause the most congestion during the day. Because of Police concerns about safety, the Highways Agency are at pains to assure the industry that it is not their intention to make night moves compulsory.

The meeting was attended by John Rodell, Chairman and Hugh Wilson, of the HTA, Steve Biddle of the RHA, Nick Richardson on behalf of ACPO, and several abroad escorts (apologies if anyone has been omitted).

An in-depth discussion ensued about various types of reflective materials. The TRL came to the meeting adamant that reflective red material must not be displayed to the front of vehicles as it would be confusing.

On behalf of H. C. Wilson Transport, and other members who move abloads to and from the Continent, Hugh Wilson produced photographs of the red and white reflective rectangles with a row of 3 lights down the outside, which are in widespread use, particularly in Germany, Holland and Belgium. The strong argument for these is:

- They are becoming the European standard, and recognised on a cross-border basis.
- It is a standard option easily purchased on new Dutch and Belgian made low-loaders.
- Increasingly, UK trucks are shipping in and out, and it is crazy to be carrying different markers and lights for different countries.

The TRL listened to these arguments, and conceded that, under EU rules, continental trucks with abloads could use them as part of an international journey under EU rules anyway. They were still reluctant to abandon the triangular shape, and still concerned about showing reflective red and white to the front. They have gone away to consider further and come up with amended proposals.

## MARKING OF ESCORT VANS

The Highways Agency Transport Research Laboratory feel that in the use of the term ABNORMAL LOAD, while technically correct to cover wide, long, high and heavy loads, the word ABNORMAL is too long a word to be absorbed by oncoming drivers in the few seconds they may have to react. They are suggesting that the term 'WIDE LOAD' should be used in future to cover all types of load. Proposals may well come out during this year to change the words on the front of escort vans to 'WIDE LOAD', for any van sign written in the future, and for existing escort vans in approximately four years' time.

There was a wide-ranging discussion about reflective marking on vans and flashing signage and arrows. It was good to hear the discussion between the law makers, and the drivers who have been out there doing the escorting for the last four years. We look forward to further proposals from the TRL after consulting with the industry.

*Hugh Wilson*

*HTA Committee Member & Consultant to*

*H. C. Wilson Transport Limited*

## FURTHER NOTES FROM THE MEETING RE MARKING AND LIGHTING OF ABNORMAL LOADS:

The Transport Research Laboratory are conducting conspicuity work on AIL's for the HA.

The work is looking at three areas:

- 1) the vehicle & load,
- 2) the escort vehicle, and
- 3) a combination of escort vehicle and AIL.

One of the main issues to be considered is the time it takes for the human eye to adjust from bright light into relative darkness, which can take up to 2 seconds. This is very relevant when passing an escort vehicle. During the adjustment time we cannot see clearly and this affects our ability to see the AIL.

### Way forward for Vehicle and/or Load:

The idea is to continue with current outside load marker triangles, but in retro-reflective material. As mentioned above, the HA will take forward the idea of using the European square. Larger loads should be illuminated, and once legislation has been amended side vehicle markings should be incorporated. 'Wide Load' signs should be used at the front and rear and the HA/TRL will also examine the potential for front grill amber flashing lights.



### Issues re Escort Vehicles:

A number of options were considered which may require a change to the Code of Practice. However, any significant changes to the COP are likely to have a 3 – 5 year phase in. Any new vehicles are to be marked in accordance with new COP once issued. One possible solution is to make the escort markings similar to those on the load.

The question of how to differentiate escort vehicles from all the other vehicles on the road with amber lights and the same rear marking (RAC, AA, Breakdown vehicles etc.) still needs to be resolved. The TRL are to examine the best rear marking schemes to ensure public see the hazard without the problem of the time taken for the eye to adjust to bright lights, including:

- The potential to use the wide load plate on the front and rear of the escort.
- looking again at using traffic director lights.
- examining the potential to use the Red Border White Triangle traffic sign illuminated on the rear of the vehicle as a warning.

### Change in status of the Code of Practice:

The HA will also examine the potential for the COP to become an Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) under HSE legislation which will give it more teeth.

### Consultation:

The HA are to consult on the areas it is agreed to take forward later on during the year.

## DIVERSION OF AILS

In December 2008 John Rodell wrote to Graham Dalton, Chief Executive of the Highways Agency raising the troublesome issue of lack of communication between the various authorities – Local, Police and Highways - and the recent occurrence of road diversions forcing abnormal loads to divert from their notified routes. It was pointed out that the road diversions put in place were not being notified to the Police and Highways Agency and that once properly notified only the police had authority to divert the abnormal load from its notified route. There had been frequent occasions where abnormal loads were being diverted from their notified routes and that this could give rise to criminal proceedings loss of insurance and indemnity cover. Areas 6, 7, 8, 9 & 11 were considered to be amongst the worst offenders. In his response letter, dated 20th January 2009, Graham Dalton accepted that there was scope for improvement through better processes and communications and that Paul Furlong, the Abnormal Loads Team leader, would be investigating and taking matters forward. In the meantime he suggests that abnormal load operators 'verbally check with our agents on restrictions when scheduling a move and before setting out'.

HTA member Gary McIntosh commented that up in the Grampian area they have similar problems, whereby on very limited occasions the local roads department do not tell the Police of width restrictions that they are to impose until it is too late. This results in the AIL turning up at the road works, but due to the local road infrastructure there is nowhere for the AIL to go.



*Abnormal Load Services (International) Limited recently moved this sculpture (dimensions 7.5 m x 6.45 x H2.58) - photograph by Robert Erskine (courtesy of ALS)*



*Nootboom Trailers has received a European patent for their Pendel-X low-loader programme, which was officially ratified on 14 January 2009*

## INDUSTRY LIAISON GROUP MEETING HOSTED BY THE HIGHWAYS AGENCY ABNORMAL LOADS TEAM - 15TH JANUARY 2009

John Rodell attended the meeting on behalf of the HTA. The following issues were discussed at the meeting:

ESDAL Phase 3 pilot trials (for Cat2/3 and C&U loads) have commenced for selected trial users. Other hauliers will be invited to join the trial in March/April 2009 before the scheme is launched later in 2009. A guide and demos are available on the website ([www.esdal.com](http://www.esdal.com)).

There is a research project to look at varying the speed limits for Special Order loads of more than 150 tonnes. The view is that speed limits can be increased without a risk to road safety.

The HA wish to reinstate the high and heavy load grid (a collection of advisory routes suitable for the transport of the highest and heaviest abnormal loads). They will evaluate the grid to include the purpose and scope of grids, routes and reiterate the importance of such routes to local authorities. A consultation will be held and will include the HTA.

## HTA NATIONAL ABNORMAL LOAD NOTIFICATION DIRECTORY

For further information go to [www.convoi.co.uk](http://www.convoi.co.uk) and click on 'shop', or email [caroline.ward@convoi.co.uk](mailto:caroline.ward@convoi.co.uk) for an order form.

## OFFSHORE WIND POWER

The Government announced recently that offshore wind power could generate enough electricity to supply every home in the UK by 2020. A study by the Department for Energy and Climate Change concluded that between 5000-7000 more wind turbines could be built off the coast by the end of the decade. Subject to funding, grid access and planning, if the projects are successful thousands of jobs will be created in the UK. This also means opportunities for haulage companies specialising in the transport of wind turbine components.

## PRESS RELEASE - ABNORMAL LOAD MOVEMENT

A waste recovery unit weighing a staggering 215 tonnes is being transported from East Yorkshire to India, thanks to the expertise of freight management project specialists Abnormal Load Services (International) Limited (ALS).

The waste heat recovery unit, which stands at 17.38m tall, began its epic journey on from CiTECH Energy Systems Limited, before travelling to King George Dock (NorthGap) and on to Kakinada Andhra Pradesh, India. Once in place it will be used for gas processing at the landfill site from the Krishna Godavri gas field in the Bay of Bengal on the East coast of India.



## COFFEE AS A BIOFUEL SOURCE?



Could drinking coffee help fuel cars and trucks? American scientists have found a cheap process to extract oil from the grounds of filter coffee left over after making espressos, cappuccinos and other coffee preparations. The extracted oil was then converted into a biodiesel. As the world's annual coffee production is more than 7.2 million tonnes this could lead to a yield of 340 million gallons of biodiesel.

## TRUCKPOL

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