



# Vehicle & Operator Services Agency

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Your ref:  
Our ref: **F0005038**

Date: 8 July 2013

Dear

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

I refer to your letter of the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013 in which you requested the following information:

I'm trying get some facts together on the history of VOSA (for something I'm planning to write for the letters page of Commercial Motor). What I'm trying to find out is the following:

- Way back in the '870s and '90s long before VOSA existed there were two enforcement arms overseeing the activities of HGV and PSV operators. Those two arms being the Vehicle Examiners (who looked after roadworthiness and were, I believe, based at MoT test stations) and Traffic Examiners, (again I think they were based at the TAO and working directly for the local TCs). Is that a fair summary of how it was?
- When were those two arms combined into the Vehicle Inspectorate? And what was the logic behind the merger?
- What was 'TAN21' as a strategic plan and organisational move - and when did it take place?
- When was VOSA created as a Executive Agency?
- Finally, am I right in thinking that once a year VOSA has annual budget 'negotiations' with the DTp which remains its primary 'paymaster' in terms of Government funding for enforcement? What other revenue-streams does VOSA have, apart from annual test fees etc? Does it still get a proportion of O-Licence revenue for its enforcement budget?

We advised that your request would be handled using the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

For ease of understanding I have provided the responses in the order in which you have raised the points.

The Agency has provided information that may also assist with your understanding of the work undertaken by the Traffic Area Offices in addition to the enforcement work conducted by vehicle examiners and traffic examiners.

1. Back in the late 1970's and early 1980's there was one enforcement body overseeing the activities of HGV and PSV operators, all under the Traffic Area Coordinating Division – TACD, part of the central Department of Transport (DTp).

This comprised two arms – one of which was responsible for annual testing of heavy goods and public service vehicles conducted at Goods Vehicle Testing Stations (GVTS) and privately owned PSV premises known as Designated Premises DP). It also contained the Vehicle Examiners (VE) who's role was to conduct roadside enforcement checks of vehicles, visit Operator Premises to check systems for preventative maintenance and compliance with safety standards and also to visit and supervise/enforce the private sector MOT testing scheme for cars and motorcycles. VE maintenance investigation reports would be provided to the DTp appointed Traffic Commissioners to help evaluate whether operators were complying with their obligations.

The management structure for the VE's was contained within the Traffic Area Offices where a technical administration section was housed along with the Senior Area Mechanical Engineer (SAME) who oversaw the whole Traffic Area (geographic area) and usually one Area Mechanical Engineer (AME) for the local area, there would be one or two other AME's within a Traffic Area dependant on geographical spread. The Vehicles Examiners were based at GVTS's or at district offices

The second arm were Traffic Examiners (TEs), non-engineers who's role was to focus on the more administrative side of operator compliance such as drivers' hours, vehicle overloading, vocational driver licensing as well as undertaking checks on Approved Driving Instructors (ADI) etc.

The management structure was a Superintendent Traffic Examiner (SuptTE) – one per Traffic Area Office, and Senior Traffic Examiners (STE) – 2 or 3 per TAO. Traffic Examiners also reported to the Traffic Commissioners.

Traffic Examiners were similarly based within the Traffic Areas and some Driving Test Centres, the TE and VE's were not co-located.

The Traffic Commissioners were located in 'Traffic Areas' and were supported by staff organised in a "Traffic Area Network", or TAN. TAN was supervised by the Traffic Area Coordinating Division (TACD), part of the central DTp. The Traffic Area Office was where local support staff were located to process Operator Licences, handle the issue of vocational driving licences, prepare prosecution papers and process all driving test bookings. The TAO was where Traffic Examiners (TE) and the Driving Examiners management chain operated from. TAOs, GVTS and Driving Test Centres (DTCs) were not co-located.

TACD had commenced a modernisation programme in the 1980s with the merger of some Traffic Area Offices, examples of this are the merger of the two Scottish TAO's

to form one office based in Edinburgh, the merger of the separate Northern and Yorkshire Traffic Areas to form the North Eastern Traffic Area based at Leeds, the merger of the separate South East and Metropolitan TAO to form one are based in Eastbourne. TACD had also overseen the creation of the new Welsh Traffic Area following the merger of the South Wales Traffic Area and the North Wales area previously contained within the North West Area.

In 1988, the Vehicle Inspectorate (a former division of the Department of Transport (DTp) - the Vehicle Inspection Division) became one of the first 'Next Steps' Executive Agencies. The "VI" as it was known (or VIEA) was responsible for annual testing of heavy goods and public service vehicles conducted at Goods Vehicle Testing Stations (GVTS) and privately owned PSV premises known as Designated Premises DP). VI also employed Vehicle Examiners (VE) who's role was to conduct roadside enforcement checks of vehicles, visit Operator Premises to check systems for preventative maintenance and compliance with safety standards and also to visit and supervise/enforce the private sector MOT testing scheme for cars and motorcycles.

VE maintenance investigation reports continued to be provided would be provided to the DTp appointed Traffic Commissioners to help evaluate whether operators were complying with their obligations.

The Traffic Examiner and enforcement office function remained with TACD at this time.

All aspects of driving tests began to be transferred away from the Traffic Area Offices to regional offices and in 1990 the Driving Standards Agency was formed.

The issue of vocational driving licences for HGVs and PSVs was also transferred from the Traffic Commissioners to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. The Traffic Commissioners retain disciplinary powers in respect of vocational driving licences and undertake this work with provisions of information where necessary from DVLA.

2. In the early 1990s the Traffic Examiners and their associated enforcement (prosecution) offices ceased to be managed by TACD and merged with the Vehicle Inspectorate Executive Agency.

3. TAN21 was an IT system to support the TAN Business and Finance System (TANBS), and to assist with the delivery of the modernising government agenda for electronic service delivery. It was replacement for the TAN's main legacy system for GOL (Goods Vehicle Operator Licensing) and the separate PSVOL (Public Service Vehicle Operator Licensing System). The TANBS combined the Goods Vehicle and Passenger Vehicle Operator Licensing as well as local bus service registrations, compliance (enforcement) related information and case processing. It became fully activated in 2002.

The development of the TANBS also allowed for further modernising post the creation of VOSA in 2003, as it provided the some of the electronic capability required to develop and set up of the central licensing office (CLO) in Leeds.

4. In April 2003 the VIEA and TAN were merged to form a single Agency called the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) which remains in place today. This

brought (amongst other things) the roles of VEs and TEs together under a single management and budget structure.

All aspects of Operator Licensing applications and associated regulatory work continued to be conducted by VOSA staff using powers delegated by the independently appointed Traffic Commissioners.

The role of the Traffic Commissioners remained as independent quasi-judicial appointment by the Department for Transport.

The logic or business case for merger was fairly extensive at the time, and can be typified as aiming at better value for money to be derived from economies of scale from merging two largely similar functional units.

5. VOSA derives around 85% of its income from statutory fees.  
DfT currently contribute about £17m through the Single Enforcement Budget.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us, quoting reference **F005038**.

Yours sincerely

VOSA Press Officer