



Department for Transport

Vehicles of Historical Interest (VHI): “Substantial Change” Draft Guidance

Most vehicles first registered over 40 years ago will as of 20 May 2018 be exempt from periodic testing, unless they have been substantially changed¹.

Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) with 12 or more seats and large goods vehicles (i.e. goods vehicles with a maximum laden weight of more than 3.5 tonnes) will not be subject to a general exemption from periodic testing at 40 years and will be within the testing regime.

The criteria for substantial change

A vehicle will be considered to have been substantially changed (and hence not to have been historically preserved or maintained in its original state and to have undergone substantial changes in the technical characteristics of its main components) if it meets one of the following criteria. Such vehicles will not be considered of historical interest and will continue to be subject to vehicle testing.

Criterion 1

If a vehicle has a power to weight ratio of more than 15% in excess of its original design, unless such a modification took place before 1988.

Criterion 2

If a vehicle:

- has been issued with a registration number with a ‘Q’ prefix; or
- is a kit car assembled from components from different makes and model of vehicle; or
- is a reconstructed classic vehicle as defined by DVLA guidance; or
- is a kit conversion, where a kit of new parts is added to an existing vehicle, or old parts are added to a kit of a manufactured body, chassis or monocoque bodyshell changing the general appearance of the vehicle.

While reconstructed classic vehicles and kit conversions can have age-related registration numbers that are more than forty years old, they are not VHIs. Radically altered vehicles should have registration plates with a “Q” prefix, but if a keeper considers they have such a vehicle with an original registration plate they should either test it or establish whether it is a radically altered vehicle.

There are existing DVLA processes for registering reconstructed classic vehicles, kit conversions, and radically altered vehicles with the latter making use of the 8 point rule. (<https://www.gov.uk/vehicle-registration>).

¹ If the type of vehicle is still in production, it is not exempt from periodic testing.

If the keeper of a vehicle of more than forty years old is uncertain about whether the vehicle meets either of the two criteria, then they should seek professional advice. For example, the advice of a qualified mechanic or a historical vehicle expert.

The process for vehicle keepers declaring an old vehicle is exempt from testing

Every year vehicle keepers are required to licence their vehicle. Part of this process includes paying Vehicle Excise Duty (Vehicle Tax). Where the vehicle that year is over 40 years old at the beginning of January then from April of that year the vehicle keeper is exempt from paying this tax. The vehicle keeper must apply for the exemption from tax at a Post Office that deals with vehicle tax. Further advice can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/historic-vehicles/vehicles-exempt-from-vehicle-tax>

It is intended that alterations be made to these processes to take account of the “substantial change” rule related to vehicle testing.

On-Line

Please note the first time you apply to licence your vehicle in the historic tax class you must apply at the Post Office. Subsequent re-licensing transactions can be completed on-line.

Where the vehicle keeper is re-licensing their vehicle on-line it is intended that an additional question be asked whether the vehicle has a current MOT and the vehicle keeper will be required to declare that their vehicle has not been substantially changed since 1988. Appropriate safeguards will be in place that will prevent a vehicle keeper from declaring the vehicle is over 40 years of age and progressing to the next stage of the licensing process before first declaring or not as to whether their vehicle has been substantially changed.

At the Post Office

Where the vehicle keeper is licensing their vehicle at the Post Office it is intended that an amendment will be made to form V112 to enable keepers of historical vehicles to declare their vehicle is exempt from requiring an MOT.

Draft Advice (not part of the Draft Guidance)

What do I need to do if I am responsible for a vehicle aged more than 40 years old and first registered in or after 1960?

From 20 May 2018 most of these vehicles will not need a valid MOT certificate to be used on public roads. You still need to keep the vehicle in a roadworthy condition and can voluntarily have a test. We recommend continued regular maintenance and checks of the vehicle.

You need to check whether the vehicle has been substantially altered since 1988, checking against the criteria (in the guidance above). If it has been altered substantially a valid MOT certificate will continue to be required. If you are unsure check, for example from a qualified mechanic or expert on historic vehicles. If you buy a vehicle, we also recommend checking with the previous owner if you can.

If your vehicle is exempt from needing an MOT test (and you do not choose to do not have a valid MOT certificate for it) you will need to declare this when you apply for the exemption from road tax.

If you are responsible for a large goods vehicle (more than 3.5 tonnes) or public service vehicle (with 12 or more passenger seats), you will continue to require a valid test certificate.

What do I need to do if I am responsible for a vehicle first registered before 1960?

These vehicles are already exempt from the requirement for a valid MOT certificate to be used on public roads. You still need to keep the vehicle in a roadworthy condition and can voluntarily have a test. We recommend continued regular maintenance and checks of the vehicle.

You need to check whether the vehicle has been substantially altered since 1988 checking against the criteria (in the guidance above). If it has been altered substantially, an MOT certificate will be required for its use on public roads from 20th May 2018, even if the vehicle has previously not required an MOT.

If your vehicle is exempt from needing an MOT test (and you do not have a valid MOT certificate for it) you will need to declare this when you apply for the exemption from road tax.

If you are responsible for a large goods vehicle (more than 3.5 tonnes) or a public service vehicle (with 12 or more passenger seats), you will require a valid test certificate if the vehicle has been substantially altered since 1988 or if, in the case of a goods vehicle, it is used when laden or towing a trailer.