

Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Regulation (EU) 2024/1610 strengthening the CO2 emission performance standards for new heavy-duty vehicles

20 June 2024

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Regulation (EU) 2024/1610 strengthening the CO2 emission performance standards for new heavy-duty vehicles

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Philip McGuigan (Chairperson)
Mr David Brooks (Deputy Chairperson)
Dr Steve Aiken
Ms Joanne Bunting
Mr Stephen Dunne
Ms Connie Egan
Mr Declan Kearney
Ms Emma Sheerin

Witnesses:

Mr David Gibson Department for Infrastructure

Mrs Dorcas Cutrona Department for Infrastructure

The Chairperson (Mr McGuigan): I welcome, from the Department for Infrastructure, Mrs Dorcas Cutrona, who is head of the vehicle policy branch, and Mr David Gibson from the vehicle policy branch. I will hand over to you to brief the Committee.

Mrs Dorcas Cutrona (Department for Infrastructure): I thank the Committee for inviting us along. I had prepared an introduction, but you have more or less covered all the points.

We are here to talk about regulation (EU) 2018/858, which is a minor change to a definition to introduce the concept of an e-trailer. The Department for Transport has advised that it is a very minor change to the definition. It provided us with some information. We are happy to take any questions on it.

The Chairperson (Mr McGuigan): Does anybody have any questions?

Ms Bunting: Can we just confirm that any engagement that there has been with DfT and any research that the Department has done confirms that there will be minimal impact in Northern Ireland?

Mrs Cutrona: Yes. To be honest, we have had no engagement on this until this past week, when we went to DfT to ask for information to provide to the Committee. It told us that there would be minimal impact on any companies here. It would mean that any companies here that are producing e-trailers will be able to do it legally when this definition of an e-trailer is added. It is a positive thing, and DfT does not think that there will be any negative impact at all for any businesses here.

Ms Bunting: We understand that this happens regularly, and they are used to this kind of change. It is not a significant thing. Do we have any concept as to how many businesses in Northern Ireland might be impacted by it?

Mrs Cutrona: At this point, it is probably no businesses. There are very few trailer manufacturers here in Northern Ireland. Our understanding is that e-trailers are the massive trailers that supermarkets use, and I do not think that there are any manufacturers in Northern Ireland that do that kind of trailer work. It is a relatively new concept. DfT has said that it is a niche market at the moment. The change is being made to the definition to future-proof. Basically, it is —.

Ms Bunting: It is OK, Dorcas. A lot of this was in our papers, and it is just important to confirm, for the record, that that is the case: it is all very minimal, things have been checked out and the impact on Northern Ireland is negligible. That is what we were aiming to confirm with you, because it is one thing to hear it from DfT but another to hear it from local people. That is great. Thank you.

Mrs Cutrona: We have the wording change, if you want to be advised as to the actual change. Would that help?

The Chairperson (Mr McGuigan): Do you want to read that out?

Mr David Gibson (Department for Infrastructure): Regulation (EU) 2018/858 used to say:

"'semi-trailer' means a towed vehicle in which the axle, or axles are positioned behind the centre of gravity of the vehicle (when uniformly loaded), and which is equipped with a connecting device permitting horizontal and vertical forces to be transmitted to the towing vehicle".

The definition of "semi-trailer" is changing from "means a towed vehicle" to "means a trailer". That is the change there.

The definition of "e-trailer" is:

"any kind of trailer that is able to contribute to the propulsion of the vehicle combination by using its own electric powertrain and which is not able to be used on public roads without being actively towed by a motor vehicle".

That is just a new definition to be inserted.

The Chairperson (Mr McGuigan): Thank you very much. That may be one of the easiest evidence sessions that you are going to be involved in. [Laughter.]