

## Assembly Business Unit

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Your reference:  
Our reference: DFI-SUB-0301-2026

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Dear Michael

### **NOTIFICATION ON THE OUTCOME OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO REGULATIONS TO SUPPORT THE UPTAKE OF ZERO EMISSION GOODS VEHICLES IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025 officials wrote to you to advise of the Department's intention to launch a public consultation on proposed changes to regulations designed to support the uptake of zero emission goods vehicles (ZEGVs) here. The consultation sought views on whether amendments to category B licence entitlements could address unintended regulatory barriers arising from the additional weight of zero emission technology, while continuing to ensure that road safety remains a central consideration.

The consultation launched on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026 for a 4-week consultation period and closed on 6<sup>th</sup> April at 23:59. I am now writing to update you on the outcome of the public consultation.

#### **Consultation Analysis**

A total of **26 formal responses** were received, comprising responses from **12 individuals** and **14 organisations**. Responses were received from a wide range of

stakeholders, including members of the public, trade bodies, fleet operators, utility providers, retailers, local authorities and representative organisations, including, but not limited to, responses from Tesco Stores Limited, Logistics UK, Openreach NI, Alliance Party, Community Transport Association (CTA), the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Limited (SMMT) and Mid-Ulster District Council (MUDC).

Overall, the responses received demonstrated **strong support** for the proposals.

A clear majority of respondents (**92%**) were in support of **the proposal to increase the weight limits of ZEGVs that can be driven on a category B driving licence from 3,500kg to 4,250kg**, here. A number of individual respondents recognised that this proposed change would help remove barriers to ZEGV adoption created by the additional weight of battery technology, while recognising that these vehicles are broadly equivalent in size and function to their conventional diesel or petrol counterparts.

There was also broad support for:

- applying the change across **all 4.25kg ZEGVs** (**92%** of respondents were in support of this proposal);
- providing an enhanced **5,000kg Maximum Authorised Mass (MAM) allowance** where additional weight is attributable to specialist equipment for disabled users (**92%** of the 24 respondents were in support of this proposal); and
- permitting **towing**, including vehicle and trailer combinations up to **7,000kg MAM** subject to the appropriate B+E licence entitlement (**87%** of the 24 respondents were in support of this proposal).

Opinion was more divided on the **proposal to limit entitlement to drivers who have held a full category B licence for a minimum of two years**.

A majority of respondents (**71%**) supported this as a proportionate road safety safeguard. A number of respondents were not in support of this proposal, including SMMT and Logistics UK, which highlighted the importance of regulatory alignment with GB, where there is no requirement to hold a category B licence for a minimum of two years, noting that consistency across jurisdictions would reduce complexity for operators and support wider adoption of ZEGVs.

Tesco Stores Limited were of the view that, as 4.25kg ZEVs are operationally compatible with their 3.5 kg Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) equivalents, they can be driven with the same ease of handling as the ICE equivalent and the proposed minimum two year requirement is not required.

Respondents were also asked for views on any **anticipated benefits, data and equality impacts** of the proposals.

A number of benefits were identified, including:

- **environmental benefits** via a reduction in overall emissions (Alliance, CBI, CTA)
- **economic benefits** via provision of a greater range of options to address customer needs; reduction in costs for businesses and drivers; increased payload capacity (Openreach NI, MUDC, CTA, Logistics UK)
- **operational benefits** with a number of respondents, including Circet and CBI, stating that the proposals would expedite their transition from diesel to ZEGV fleets and support wider competitiveness and economic benefits for companies, drivers, and local communities. CBI also stated that without alignment NI risks falling behind progress in the rest of the UK.

A small number of respondents raised concerns and these focused primarily on:

- potential **road safety implications** associated with increased vehicle mass and the limited availability of **NI-specific evidence** on collision impacts to justify the proposals (CTA);
- concerns relating to rural impacts associated with **rural infrastructure and charging availability** (Go Eve Ltd and MUDC); and
- the clarity and definition of certain proposals, particularly in relation to higher weight allowances and specialist equipment.

One individual who responded was concerned that heavier ZEGVs may pose a greater risk to inexperienced drivers if they travel at speed. However, another individual respondent was of the view that, as the ZEGVs will be the same physical size as current vehicles, there will be no disadvantage. These views were taken into account and considered as part of the overall consultation analysis.

## **Way Forward**

Having considered all responses, the Department has concluded that the proposals set out in the consultation provide a balanced approach to supporting the uptake of ZEGVs while maintaining appropriate safeguards and recognising the importance of road safety.

The Department will therefore proceed with **legislative amendments** to:

- increase the category B weight limit for ZEGVs to **4,250kg MAM**;

- introduce a **two-year licence-holding requirement** for drivers using this entitlement;
- permit category B drivers to operate ZEGVs up to **5,000kg MAM** where the additional weight is attributable to specialist equipment for disabled users; and
- permit **towing** in line with defined conditions.

The Department will continue to monitor implementation and emerging evidence, including road safety data, as ZEGVs become more prevalent on our roads network.

A copy of the consultation outcome report is available at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/synopsis-responses-consultation-proposals-changes-regulations-support-uptake-zero-emission-goods-vehicles-zegvs-northern-ireland>.

Officials are available to brief the Committee on this matter.

I trust that the Committee will find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Heath', with a stylized, cursive script.

**JOE HEATH**

**DEPARTMENTAL ASSEMBLY LIAISON OFFICER**