

Written Ministerial Statement

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Department for Infrastructure

EXTENDING THE USE OF TEMPORARY EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES TO HELP MANAGE MOT WAITING TIMES

Published at 11am on Thursday 12 March 2026

Ms Liz Kimmins (The Minister for Infrastructure): I wish to update Members on the measures my Department is taking to ensure MOT waiting times remain at manageable levels during 2026–27. Over the past two years, Temporary Exemption Certificates (TECs) have played an important role in easing pressure on the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) while delays in opening the new Hydebank and Mallusk test centres have continued, primarily due to the termination of the vehicle testing equipment contract. These actions, alongside record levels of testing by DVA, reduced waiting times from over 100 days in May 2024, to around 30 days by early February 2025.

The average waiting time for a private car MOT appointment currently sits around 32 days, against DVA's business plan target of 35 days. Demand for vehicle testing remains high, and following careful consideration, I have decided to extend the use of TECs for a further year, from 1 June 2026 to 31 May 2027, to maintain waiting times until Hydebank and Mallusk become operational, which is expected within the next year. Each centre will be capable of testing more than 100,000 vehicles annually, significantly strengthening the Agency's long term testing capacity.

The TECs introduced on 1 June 2025 will begin to expire from 31 May 2026. As motorists can book an MOT up to three months in advance, this decision is required now to avoid unnecessary bookings that would reduce the availability of test slots for those who need an appointment.

For the coming year, TECs will apply to private cars with a current valid MOT certificate issued here that fall within the following registration groups:

- Five year old cars first registered between 1 June 2021 and 31 May 2022 (39,404 vehicles); and
- Seven year old cars first registered between 1 June 2019 and 31 May 2020 (48,369 vehicles).

This represents just under 88,000 eligible vehicles. These age groups have historically shown the highest MOT pass rates and provide the best balance between safety and system capacity.

The DVA will automatically apply TECs and update vehicle licensing records so that customers can tax their vehicles as normal. Customers will not need to take any action, and the booking system will prevent eligible motorists from making unnecessary appointments. Further information will be made available on NI Direct, supported by social media messaging.

Finally, as road users, we all have a personal responsibility to behave in a way that keeps ourselves and others safe. Regardless of TECs, it remains our responsibility to ensure our cars are kept in a roadworthy condition. If you are eligible for a TEC, you should continue to maintain and service your car in line with the manufacturer's requirements.