



Department
for Transport

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From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State

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31 October 2025

Dear Ms Andrews,

Thank you for your letter of 26 September 2025 enclosing a Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths, following the inquest into the death of Mr Richard Ellis. I am deeply saddened to hear of Mr Ellis's death and offer my sincere condolences to his family and friends.

The Government treats road safety seriously and is committed to reducing the numbers of those killed and injured on our roads. The Road Safety Strategy is under development and will include a broad range of policies. More details will be set out in due course.

While this incident has been classified as a road traffic collision, we understood it took place on a public bridlepath on a private estate. Given that, as I understand, my officials are not in possession of all the facts of the case, I have sought to provide you with a comprehensive response about the existing regulatory frameworks that might apply, hoping that relevant authorities can take this forward.

Relevant agricultural vehicle regulations for public roads

Once a tractor enters service on a public road, its continued roadworthiness is governed by a legal requirement that all vehicles used on the road are maintained in a roadworthy condition at all times as set out in the Road Traffic Act 1988 and the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986. These regulations cover aspects such as braking systems, steering, tyres,

visibility, and overall vehicle condition, helping to ensure that agricultural tractors remain safe and compliant throughout their operational life.

My Department conducted a consultation in 2016 on introducing roadworthiness testing for fast tractors used for commercial haulage. As a result, agricultural tractors capable of a speed over 40km/h (approximately 25mph) being used for commercial haulage were brought into scope of roadworthiness testing under the Goods Vehicles (Plating and Testing) Regulations 1988. At the time, it was decided that it would not be proportionate to bring slower speed agricultural tractors in scope of annual roadworthiness testing given their use on roads is limited in comparison with other vehicles.

As part of ensuring compliance, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (“DVSA”) conducts roadside checks throughout the road network. Where non-compliance is evident, this can result in a vehicle being prohibited until the weight is reduced or the defect rectified. In addition to prohibitions, DVSA also impose fixed penalties on the drivers of such vehicles which range from £50 to £300 depending on the severity of the offence. Alternatively, more severe cases may lead to criminal prosecution.

The DVSA publishes guidance on maintaining roadworthiness and this is available at the links provided below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-maintaining-roadworthiness/guide-to-maintaining-roadworthiness-commercial-goods-and-passenger-carrying-vehicles>

This guidance covers what drivers and operators are legally required to do according to the law and highlights the fact that it is an offence to use an unroadworthy vehicle on the road. This guidance also gives best practice advice on the responsibilities that an operator or driver will have to consider to ensure the roadworthiness of their vehicle. This can also be used to support the maintenance of tractors solely used on private property.

In addition, DVSA publish the Categorisation of Defects manual which is made available so that vehicle owners, operators and drivers can become more aware of DVSA’s standards and what will be done should problems be found. Part 1 of the manual is intended for heavy goods and public service vehicles and may also be used for agricultural motor vehicles, trailers and trailed appliances:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6748955424108edc3c8cebde/categorisation-of-vehicle-defects.pdf>

Relevant agricultural vehicle regulations for private land

If tractors are operated solely on private land with no public access, they are not in scope of road vehicle regulations that apply on public roads. This includes roadworthiness regulations under the C&U regulations that create the legal requirement to ensure the roadworthiness of vehicles on public roads, although as noted above the good practice guidance published by DVSA is still relevant.

If the incident took place on a private land, there is health and safety legislation (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974) that covers the maintenance and servicing of agricultural vehicles. This legislation is enforced by the Health & Safety Executive and an employer is required to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of both their employees and non-employees who may be affected by their undertaking. The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (“PUWER”) provide a set of more specific duties in relation to work equipment, including that employers ensure their work equipment is maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair. This is also maintained by the HSE and we suggest that you consider writing to them should the circumstances of this case fall under this legislation.

The HSE provides guidance for safe workplace transport in the agricultural sector which can be found at the link below:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/machinery/farm-vehicles-1.htm>

Departmental response

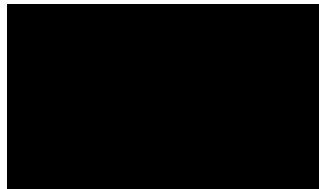
In total, there were 353,269 tractors licensed on roads in Great Britain (“GB”) in 2024. Road collision statistics show that, over the last ten years, the number of incidents involving an agricultural vehicle where someone was killed has remained relatively stable. Data on road injury collisions held by the Department shows that in the ten years from 2015 to 2024 there averaged 21 deaths per year on public roads in GB involving agricultural vehicles. The Department does not collect data on accidents that take place on private property.

In view of your report, I have asked my officials to investigate how best to raise awareness of the DVSA's published guidance on maintaining roadworthiness and to consider whether additional specific guidance on agricultural vehicle maintenance should be published. My officials will consider how best this information can be communicated to operators of agricultural vehicles, including those who operate tractors solely on private land.

The Department will continue to monitor the effectiveness of vehicle safety regulations to identify any potential amendments.

Once again I would like to express my condolences to the friends and family of Mr Ellis.

Yours sincerely,



MINISTER FOR LOCAL TRANSPORT