



Department
for Transport

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State

Great Minster House
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London
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Lorraine Harris
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Alfred Gelder Street
Hull
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05 June 2026

Dear Miss Harris,

Thank you for your report made under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and Regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 to the Secretary of State for Transport, and to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), following your investigation into the death of Susan Jane Whittles. I am responding as the Minister for Roads and Buses, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport. As DVSA is an executive agency of the Department for Transport, this response also covers the matters addressed to DVSA.

I was very sorry to learn of the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of Mrs Whittles. I extend my sincere condolences to her family and understand that serious injuries were also sustained by her husband from the incident.

I recognise your concern that some foreign licence holders may be able to continue driving in Great Britain during the 12-month foreign licence recognition period even after they have failed a practical driving test. I also recognise your concern that this differs from the position of a GB provisional licence holder, who must drive under supervision and display 'L' plates.

The current driver licensing framework normally allows certain holders of valid foreign driving licences or international driving permits to drive in Great Britain for up to 12 months. A resident who holds a licence from a country that is not designated for licence exchange must pass a GB driving test if they wish to continue driving after that period. If they do not pass the GB test, they may only drive under GB provisional licence conditions.

In the case addressed in your report, the driver had entered the UK on 15 September 2022 and held a Nigerian driving licence. His entitlement to drive in Great Britain on that licence expired on 14 September 2023. At the time of the collision on 24 November 2023, he had not passed a GB practical driving test and was not entitled to drive unsupervised in Great Britain.

Your report raises a broader question about whether a person who is still within the 12-month period should be able to continue driving unsupervised after failing a GB practical driving test. I recognise that this concern is wider than the particular facts of this case, because it relates to the position of drivers who may still be within the 12-month recognition period when they fail a GB practical driving test.

This is a complex area because the domestic driver licensing framework reflects the UK's obligations under international road traffic conventions, including the 1926 Paris Convention, the 1949 Geneva Convention and the 1968 Vienna Convention. Those conventions, which also cover a wide range of matters relating to road traffic generally, affect the extent to which the UK can recognise, limit or withdraw recognition of foreign driving licences.

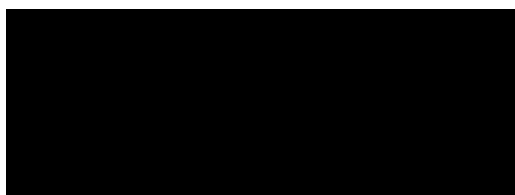
However, my department and I are firmly of the view that there is no compelling policy rationale to justify allowing unsafe drivers to use our roads, and are committed to looking into this further. This requires detailed examination of the relevant domestic and international legal framework, and so may take some time, but I would like to assure you we are actively looking into what can be done, consistent with the UK's international obligations.

The Government published its Road Safety Strategy in January 2026, setting out its plans to improve road safety and reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on roads in Great Britain. Alongside the strategy, the Department consulted on proposed changes to penalties for motoring offences, including driving unlicensed.

That consultation included questions on whether penalties for unlicensed driving, or driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence, should be increased. It also sought views on whether a person under investigation for a serious driving offence that leads to a fatality or serious injury should have their driving licence suspended. The consultation has now closed and the Department is analysing the responses.

Thank you for raising these important issues. I can assure you that the Government takes road safety very seriously.

Best wishes,



MINISTER FOR ROADS AND BUSES