

“If operators are to help reduce emissions industry-wide, are not longer, heavier vehicles the best way forward?”

Longer, heavier vehicles, better known as LHVs, are rising in popularity throughout mainland Europe. However, in the UK, it is a different story: there is a great deal of opposition to such vehicles, much of it coming to the fore at the end of last year when Dick Denby's 25.1m-long Eco Link LHV was denied access to the public highway.

But, arguably, because the UK moves a greater percentage of its inland freight by road than any other European member state, it is this country that needs LHVs more than any other. So should we not be leading their development, and welcoming them in law, instead of standing back and watching others make all the advances?

These others include Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway, all of which have had LHVs rolling along their roads for some time now. Even Germany, which initially rejected LHVs, has announced that it will start trialling 100 to 150 25.25m-long LHVs in 2011. It is understood that the change of heart was partly due to the results of a study that found no real impact to road safety through their use.

Indeed, these longer, heavier trucks can clearly reduce emissions, road accidents and freight costs. Some operators have also previously claimed an overall reduction in fuel consumption of up to a quarter, as a result of using LHVs, instead of two separate tractor units and trailers. Who could ask for anything more?

Yet the authorities in the UK remain unconvinced. At a time when trailer development is producing more aerodynamic designs and more efficient packaging options – such as those with double deck internals – it would appear that the LHV is, perversely, just not deemed suitable.

A UK road transport ‘trial by jury’ has been arranged to debate the issues at the Mock Court Room, Derby University, on Tuesday, 22 June. Other subjects being addressed are corporate manslaughter, measuring fuel consumption and challenging transport vendors’ fuel-saving intervention claims.

Sadly, this could be the only type of trial that LHVs are subjected to in the UK for quite some time.



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