

DVA Business Plan

2024-25



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Chief Executive's Foreword

I am delighted to present the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) Business Plan, which has been approved by the Minister for Infrastructure John O'Dowd, and sets out our priorities for the 2024-25 year. The last few years have been very challenging for the Agency, and we are immensely proud of what we have achieved and delivered.

One of our key services which impacts practically every household in Northern Ireland is our MOT service. In each of the last two years the Agency conducted over 1.1 million vehicle tests, which are the highest numbers of tests ever recorded. Whilst we are conducting more tests than ever before, the demand is higher than our current capacity to deliver these tests. As we move into a new business year, we are committed to maintaining momentum and improving the services we deliver for our customers.

We will strive to reduce waiting times for MOT appointments. The opening of a new test centre at Hydebank on the outskirts of Belfast and the construction of another new test centre, at Mallusk, are expected to make significant progress during this coming year. The completion of both these test centres will give customers more choice and will help meet the demand for our services. In the meantime, and whilst we work towards the opening of both test centres, we will continue to do all we can to maximise our resources to maintain the highest levels of performance we can, in order to minimise inconvenience for our customers. On 30 April 2024, the Minister announced the introduction of Temporary Exemption Certificates for certain categories of vehicles. It is anticipated that this will relieve the pressure on the system and help reduce the waiting times for MOT appointments due to fewer vehicles requiring a test.

More broadly, we have plans to further enhance our information technology systems to ensure that customers are given a number of options in how they engage with us. All our efforts will be focused on delivering the services customers need, as safely and efficiently as possible.

There will be challenges, of course, during the coming year. One of these is resources, particularly human resources, as we seek to recruit the staff needed to maximise our capacity for delivering our services. We will work diligently with all our partners to ensure we get the right people in the right posts as quickly as possible.

We have more than 750 staff who are central to the success of the Agency and the delivery of all our services. Their continued dedication and commitment are critical to achieving our objectives this year.

To deliver against our priorities, we have set some challenging targets for the year. This plan sets out the key performance targets which, if achieved, will ensure we deliver a high level of service for our customers.

Jeremy Logan

Chief Executive

Who we are and What we do

The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) is an executive agency of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

The Chief Executive is the Agency Accounting Officer and reports through the Permanent Secretary of the DfI to the Minister for Infrastructure, who has overall political responsibility and accountability for all the Department's activities.

The responsibilities of the DfI are wide ranging and impact each of us every day. Its responsibilities are grouped into three key delivery areas: Water, Transport and Planning. For Transport, one of the responsibilities is road safety and the Agency's overall aim is to deliver improved road safety and better regulation of the transport sector.

We provide a wide range of services to road users in Northern Ireland, including:

- driver and vehicle testing;
- driver licensing – issuing and, where appropriate, withdrawing licences in respect of drivers of cars, motorcycles, lorries, buses, etc;
- driving and riding instructor registration – assessing the suitability of applicants, checking tuition standards, the delivery of Compulsory Basic Training and taking appropriate action when instructors fail to meet required standards;
- passenger transport licensing – issuing and, where appropriate, withdrawing licences in respect of bus and taxi operators and taxi drivers and licensing public service vehicles for both the bus and taxi industries respectively;
- compliance audits and enforcement of licensing, roadworthiness and other legal requirements for goods and passenger carrying operators and their vehicles;
- other requirements in relation to vehicles, including Transports Internationaux Routier checks, collision investigations and checking repair work following defect/prohibition notices; and
- technical driver and vehicle standards – ensuring the Department fulfils its legal obligations in respect of the provision of statutory driver and vehicle tests; providing technical advice to Safe and Accessible Travel Division (SATD) to assist in the development of legislation; reviewing legislative changes that may affect the driving and vehicle testing environment; and developing and implementing appropriate standards.

Our Vision

“

The Agency's vision is

**Safer Drivers,
Safer Vehicles.**

”

Our vision is consistent with and will contribute to the three strategic outcomes within the Department's 'Draft Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030'.

Our Mission is “To contribute to road safety, law enforcement and a cleaner environment by promoting compliance of drivers, vehicles and transport operators through testing, licensing, enforcement and education.”

Our Strategic Objectives are to:

- improve compliance with statutory requirements;
- improve the quality, integrity and security of our records;
- deliver quality services to meet the needs of customers and other stakeholders;
- apply appropriate quality standards to all current and new processes;
- improve our efficiency, effectiveness and economy; and
- develop the organisation and our people.

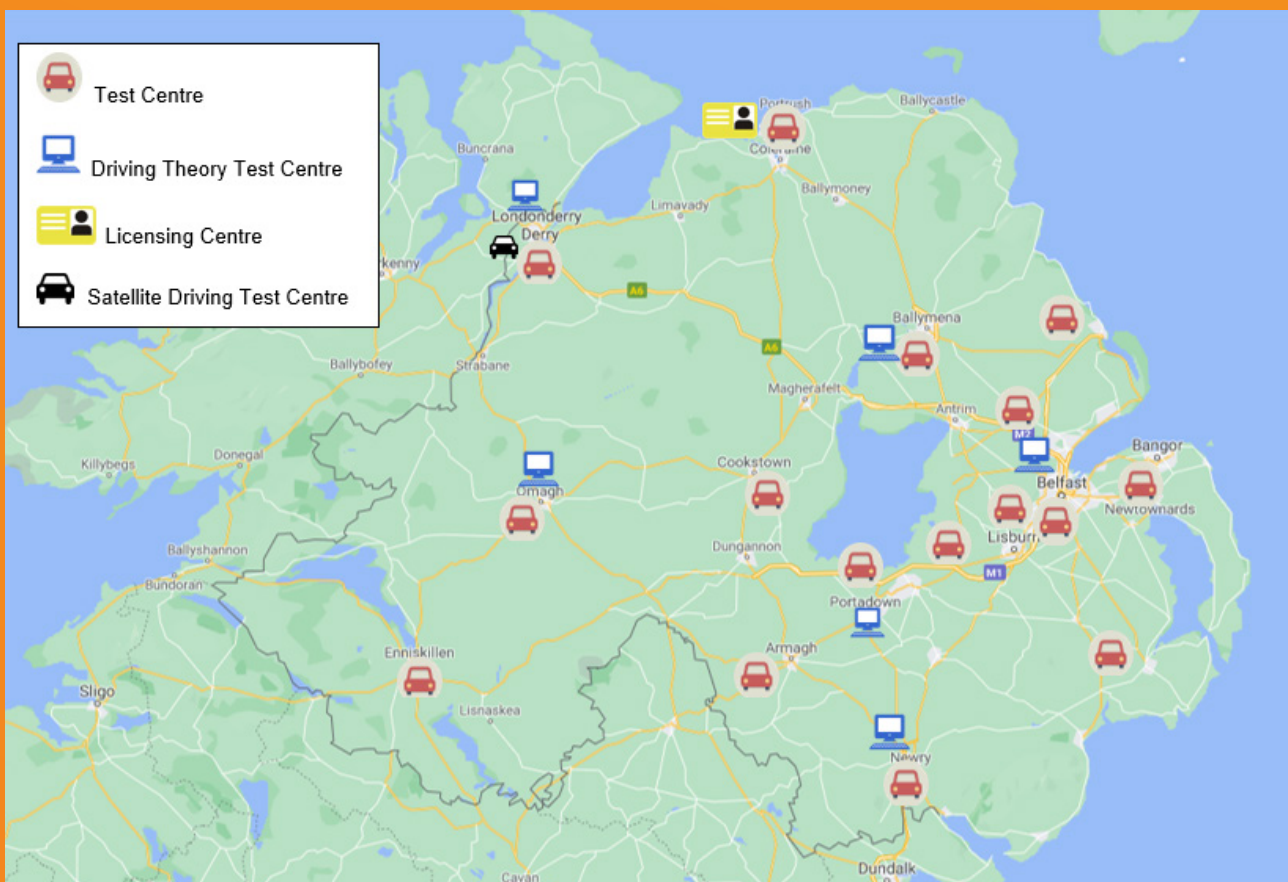
Our Organisational Structure

We deliver our services through teams of dedicated and committed people located throughout the region. Our organisational structure is shown below:



Our Locations

We deliver our services from 16 test centres, one satellite driving test centre and a licensing centre in Coleraine, where driver and passenger transport licensing are administered. In addition, there are six locations across Northern Ireland where customers can sit their Driving Theory Tests.



Our Values

The Agency is committed to improving the quality and delivery of public services for everyone in society. Respecting and valuing differences will help to ensure that our services reflect the needs and experiences of the people we serve. The Agency values describe how we should behave and how we should treat each other, our customers and our stakeholders.

They are:



Integrity

putting the obligations of public service above personal interests;



Honesty

being truthful and open;



Objectivity

basing advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence;



Impartiality

acting solely according to the merits of the case and serving equally well governments of different political persuasions;



Valuing people

leading and empowering, listening and responding, recognising success; and



Excellence

a focus on customer service, inspiring creativity and innovation, striving for excellence.

Our Resources

People

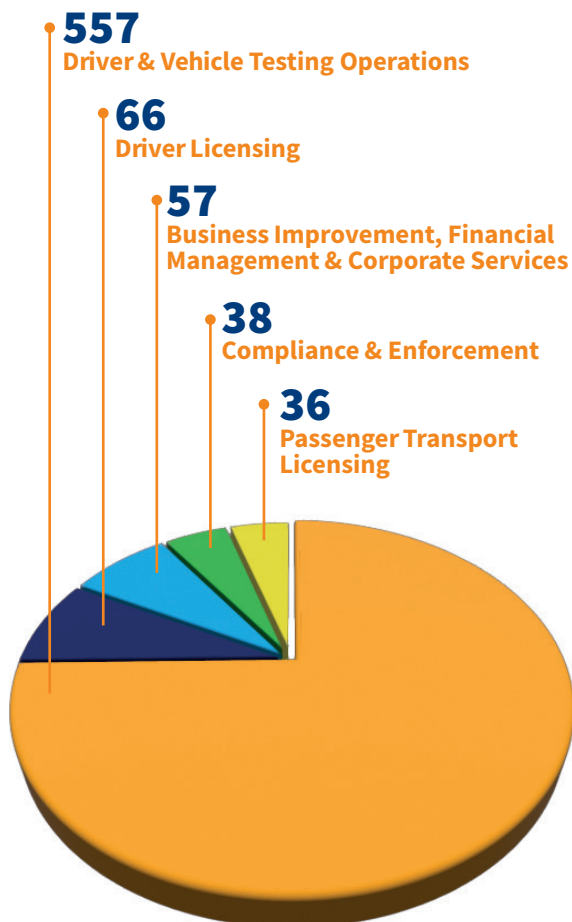
Our services are delivered through teams of dedicated and committed people located throughout Northern Ireland. As at 1 April 2024 we had 754 permanent staff in post.

Financial

The Agency operates as a Trading Fund under the provisions of the Driver & Vehicle Agency Trading Fund (Northern Ireland) Order 2016. This means that all expenditure must be recovered from the fees charged to customers or centrally funded by the Department to match the costs incurred for defined activities. As a Trading Fund, the Agency is able to increase its expenditure in response to increases in demand and conversely, is expected to reduce its expenditure in response to falling demand.

During 2023-24, it was necessary for us to increase some of our fees due to the increasing cost of delivering our services. This has allowed us to continue to deliver and invest in our services. We are committed to reviewing our fees on a regular basis to enable the delivery of excellent services for our customers with a focus on the financial sustainability of the Agency and value for money for our customers. We are projecting to earn in the region of £62m from fees collected for our services during 2024-25.

The Agency is beginning this year with significant cash reserves which are being held for investment in our infrastructure and assets, which will allow us to increase our capacity to deliver services and enhance our online digital services.



Our Priorities

Our focus for 2024-25 will be on three priorities:



Our Services:

delivering high standards of service to our customers;



Our Infrastructure and Assets:

improving our infrastructure and maximise our assets; and



Our Organisation:

managing our organisation safely and efficiently.

Our main priority is to deliver all **our services** to the highest possible standard and at maximum capacity.

One of our key areas for focus will be reducing waiting times for MOTs. We will take forward a number of actions to help us achieve this, including the recruitment of more examiners to increase our capacity for delivering this service and issuing temporary exemption certificates for specific groups of vehicles, which will reduce demand to a manageable level and reduce waiting times to within an acceptable timeframe.

During this year we also plan to develop further our **infrastructure and assets**. The opening of a new test centre at Hydebank on the outskirts of Belfast and the construction of another new test centre at Mallusk are expected to make good progress during this coming year. These new test centres will significantly increase our capacity to test vehicles and drivers and are a key pillar in our plans to reduce waiting times for MOTs. We are also progressing plans for the roll out of new vehicle testing equipment across our network of test centres.

We will continue to develop our IT systems and modernise our customer-facing services to make it as easy and as straight-forward as possible for customers to interact with us. Enhancing and delivering more of our services online will be a key focus in 2024-25.

Improving our organisation will remain a focus for us. From a health and safety perspective we will ensure our people work in a safe and positive environment and our customers are safe when physically interacting with us in the delivery of our services. We will continue to engage with staff to identify areas within the working environment that can be improved to make the Agency a better and safer place to work.

We are committed to promoting flexibility and choice at work with the aim of meeting customer and employee needs. We will continue to use the NICS Hybrid Working Policy, where possible and appropriate.

We will also continue with the work already commenced on our organisational structure. This is a key piece of work which will contribute directly to developing our organisation and our people and to improving our efficiency and effectiveness.

We are committed to reviewing our fees on a regular basis to ensure the financial viability of the Agency and value for money for our customers.

Outlined at Annex A are our 14 key performance targets which have been set to deliver against our priorities for 2024-25.

Our Progress and Monitoring of our Business Plan

An update on the performance of the Agency against its targets for the 2023-24 business year is available in the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Performance against the targets outlined at Annex A will be monitored by our Strategic Management Board and our Annual Report for 2024-25 will include a Performance section showing the extent to which the targets in this plan were achieved.

Regular updates on progress will also be provided to the Department and the Minister.

Equality

The Agency is committed to complying with statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Rural Needs (NI) Act 2016 in all that we do.

The Department's Equality Scheme sets out how we will ensure equality of opportunity and good relations when carrying out our functions. An equality screening and rural needs impact assessment have been completed for this Business Plan and can be found on the Department for Infrastructure website.

Annex A Key performance targets for 2024-25



Our Services

Target Ref	Business Target
1	For vehicle testing, the average waiting time for an MOT appointment (private car) will be 6 weeks or less at 31 March 2025.
2	For driver testing, the average waiting time for Category B (private car) practical tests will be 6 weeks or less at 31 March 2025.
3	For commercial licensing, we will dispatch 95% of taxi driver badges within 10 working days of receipt of all documentation.
4	For commercial licensing, we will dispatch 95% of taxi plates within 5 working days of receipt of all documentation.
5	For driver licensing, we will issue 90% of driving licence applications made by post within 10 working days of receipt.
6	For driver licensing, we will issue 95% of online driving licence applications within 5 working days of receipt.
7	For our customers, we will reply to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 97% of stage 1 complaints within 15 working days; and • 97% of stage 2 complaints within 10 working days.
8	By 31 March 2025 we will achieve at least 8 of the 11 Compliance and Enforcement targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conduct at least 700 vehicle inspections on HGV units (tractor or trailer) • To conduct safety checks on at least 50 buses used for dedicated home to school transport purposes. • To carry out at least 200 operator and vehicle licensing checks on buses at the roadside using tablet devices. • To conduct at least 30 taxi enforcement operations during the weekend night-time economy. • To carry out at least 2000 operator and vehicle licensing checks on taxis at the roadside using tablet devices. • To carry out a safety inspection on at least 90% of all taxis presented for a taximeter test. • To conduct at least 250 safety inspections on private cars. • To carry out a minimum of 50 multi-agency operations to improve road safety and compliance with statutory requirements. • To complete at least 90% of bus, goods and taxi operator compliance inspections requested by the Transport Regulation Unit (TRU) / Passenger Transport Licensing Division (PTLD) within agreed timescales. • To complete at least 95% of executive summary compliance reports (ESCR) requested by TRU within agreed timescales. • To carry out a driver and vehicle safety compliance survey of at least 480 randomly selected buses.



Our Infrastructure and Assets

Target Ref	Business Target
9	By 30 September 2024 on-site construction of our new test centre at Mallusk will have commenced.
10	By 31 March 2025 we will progress our business improvement work by completing our digital work programme for the year.



Our Organisation

Target Ref	Business Target
11	By 31 March 2025 we will complete a review of how we manage and support our digital applications.
12	By 31 March 2025 we will deliver our health and safety work programme.
13	We will achieve the trading fund financial target to break even taking one year with another.
14	We will generate a return on capital employed greater than 3.50%.



Safer Drivers, Safer Vehicles

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