



**Briefing Note for the Joint Committee on Transport and Communications Networks,  
on the Road Traffic (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill & Road Safety Authority (RSA)  
Services 2 March 2021**

**Road Traffic (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill**

Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan TD announced on 1 February that the Government had given approval to draft legislation which will allow for the regulation of scooters and ebikes in the forthcoming Road Traffic (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

The main provisions of the Bill are as follows:

**• Legislation for the use of scooters**

The Minister is proposing to create a new vehicle category which will be known as ‘Powered Personal Transporters’ (PPTs) and will include scooters and similar devices. The proposed legislation will allow scooters to be used legally in a public place and will also address standards to be met by PPTs in the interests of safety. Tax, insurance and driving licenses will not be required. As the intention is to legalise the use of PPTs in a public place, they will now be regulated as to how and where they may be used.

**• Legislation relating to ebikes**

Under current Irish law, ebikes are not classed as ‘mechanically propelled vehicles’ (MPVs) or as pedal bicycles. Ebikes will now be legislated for using EU standards as a reference point and will be treated mainly in the same way as pedal cycles while the more powerful models of eBike will be treated as light mopeds.

In addition to legislation relating to scooters and ebikes, the following provisions will also be included in the Bill:

**• Revision of legislation in relation to the giving of driving instruction for reward**

The legislation which dates to 1968 is not fit for purpose. The Minister is proposing to update this legislation, in particular to the concept of a ‘fit and proper’ person to be a driving instructor.

**• Introduction of a new power for the Road Safety Authority to revoke a driving licence**

The Road Safety Authority is responsible for issuing driving licence. The purpose of this measure is to strengthen the provisions to allow for the revocation of a driving licence.

**• Testing of Autonomous Vehicles (AVs) on Irish roads**

It is not possible under current legislation to conduct on-road tests of Autonomous Vehicles. A study has recently been completed on behalf of the Department, surveying the Road Traffic Acts and identifying areas where amendments might be needed to allow for such testing. The Minister will consider the implications and seek legal advice as necessary, with a view to proposing amendments for Committee stage.

## **Delays in driving licence renewals and driving tests caused by the current Covid-19 health crisis.**

The following briefing summarises the situation regarding RSA services and the ongoing impact that the Covid-19 pandemic is having on these services.

### **Driver Theory Test.**

The extension of Covid19 level 5 restrictions by Government, until at least the 5 April, means that the Driver Theory Test continues to be suspended.

Currently over 80,000 driver theory test appointments are in place over the coming months, this includes appointments already in place from 5 March that are now being rescheduled because the suspension of the service is being extended.

We recognise that it will take considerable time to meet demand and restore pre-covid waiting times when the service does reopen.

In response to this, we have plans to significantly increase capacity within the service when it can re-open. A plan is being progressed to increase this capacity from an average pre Covid19 capacity of 15,000 up to 50,000 per calendar month when the service resumes, to manage the backlog of customers and shorten waiting times. This increased capacity will become available from mid-April 2021

In addition to the increased capacity initiative, we are working on a plan to rollout an online driver theory test service called Pro Proctor. Pro Proctor has been trialled, during the months of December and January, on a pilot basis for those taking a theory test for trucks and buses. The pilot is now being evaluated and the RSA is committed to extending the service for all theory test types during 2021. There will be a limit on the number of customers that can avail of the service during the initial rollout phase, but the objective is that it should be an option for all theory test customers during later phases of the rollout.

### **The National Driver Licence Service (NDLS)**

Minister of State Hildegard Naughton TD recently announced details of a further extension to the expiry dates of driving licences on 24 February 2021. The extension comes as the EU and national Governments take steps in response to the disruption caused by Covid-19 to driver licensing services across the EU. The extension will apply to different groups of licence holders including those who benefited from previous extensions in 2020.

Drivers can see if they qualify for the extension by using the expiry date calculator on [www.ndls.ie](http://www.ndls.ie). Enter the expiry date printed on your driving licence into the calculator and it will tell you the new expiry date. The RSA has also told Insurance Ireland and An Garda Síochána about the new expiry date of driving licences. More details on the extension and who qualifies can be found [here](#).

Processing times for driving licences are taking longer than usual at the moment with standard applications being processed within a 12 – 15 day average as against a normal 3-5 day average. This is due to higher volumes of applications during the last number of months and the inclusion of a postal option for those aged over 70 and more complex Brexit related cases being processed towards the end of 2020.

The introduction of the extension to the expiry dates of licences, will result in reduced applications. In addition, we are undertaking a number of measures with our service provider

which will improve the rate of processing, and we anticipate that turn around times will return to normal levels shortly.

For those who do need to apply for a licence or learner permit NDLS centres remain open for essential workers. In addition, our online application service [www.ndls.ie](http://www.ndls.ie) has been successfully rolled out and those with a Public Services Card (PSC) and verified MyGovID account, can apply for their licence/permit online. To date in 2021 over 40% of customers have applied online.

### **Driver Testing Service**

The extension of Covid19 level 5 restrictions by Government until at least the 5 April means that the driver testing service may only deliver driving tests to essential workers. Because we can only test essential workers, we are not able to fill all our available capacity at this time with typically 25% of driving test slots going unused. We expect this to persist during level 5 restrictions.

It is not possible to provide waiting times for the driving test because the service is not operating as normal. As tests are only available to essential workers and we have surplus capacity we are able to offer test slots to essential workers almost on demand.

Anyone who is not an essential worker and is offered a driving test is being asked to cancel their test appointment. They can do this by logging on to [www.myroadsafety.ie](http://www.myroadsafety.ie). These customers won't lose their fee or their place in the queue when normal testing resumes. It is important to note that customers will be asked to confirm they are an essential worker when they attend a driving test.

What we can say is that we have 98,414 applications on hand and of these 5,670 hold a test appointment in the coming weeks and 62,024 are waiting for a test. The remaining 30,720 are ineligible for a test. Those who are ineligible are generally customers who haven't completed mandatory lessons.

If all customers who are eligible to be tested at present (i.e. no restrictions) were offered a test appointment in chronological order, we estimate that average waiting times would be more than 20 weeks.

In the coming weeks we will be communicating directly with each customer who is eligible for an appointment to provide an update on the status of their application. When restrictions are lifted and the driving test is allowed to operate normally again we hope to have a new online tool that will allow every customer on our waiting list to see a timeframe on which they can expect to receive their invitation for a test appointment. This should help give some certainty to customers about their status on the waiting list.

The RSA also plans to publish the broad principles that will describe the approach by which driving test appointments will be allocated so that customers and the public generally will see that a fair and transparent process is in place to test customers.

In addition, we are proactively communicating with Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs) to make them aware of the above approach so that they can reinforce this messaging with customer and to ensure all stakeholders involved in driver testing services are fully aligned.

The RSA is making good progress in recruiting an additional 40 driver testers, that were sanctioned by the Minister, and our expectation is that they will be available to conduct tests by the end of June 2021. In addition to the existing complement of 138 driver testers, this will add much needed capacity to the service. However, this will not be enough to get waiting

times down to the service level commitment of an average of 10 weeks. The RSA is submitting further proposals to the Department of Transport seeking approval for an additional number of driver testers, on a temporary basis, to tackle the backlog.

The RSA also opened a new Driving Test Centre in Drogheda on Monday 22nd February to cater for a demand for driving tests from such a large urban location. Including the new driving test centre in Drogheda, the RSA operates 52 driving test centres across the country

### **MyRoadSafety.ie & RSA Call Centre**

We launched a new RSA customer portal MyRoadSafety.ie on 30 November 2020.

MyRoadSafety.ie is a one stop shop for all RSA services. As would be typical with any new system we have had our teething problems and acknowledge that this led to issues for our driving test customers.

These have in the main been resolved but we do acknowledge that our customers have faced long wait times to contact our Customer Care Centre (CCC). This has been compounded by the fact that large numbers of customers have been contacting us looking for a driving test date.

We have assigned additional resources to our customer call centre, and reduced call wait times by circa 50%. However, volumes are continuing at high levels with driver testing wait times being the main query.

We are reminding our customers that we are simply not able to provide waiting times while normal testing is suspended during Level 5 restrictions. If a customer has applied for a driving test, we will be in touch with them to invite them to book their test, when restrictions are lifted. Customers who are essential workers should go to our on-line services where they can request an urgent test. This will ensure that their request is prioritised and that they receive an invitation to make a booking as quickly as possible. Otherwise, we ask that customers do not contact us for a driving test date or waiting times, as our customer service agents cannot make a booking over the phone or advise customers of waiting times at this time.

**ENDS**