

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
Secretary of State  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

**A joint open letter** – 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2021

CC Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State (DfT), Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State (Defra)

Dear Secretary of State,

I write on behalf of the organisations countersigned below to express our concern about a structural deficit of trained Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers emerging across the recycling and waste management sector, which is not only impacting essential services now but could also risk undermining the UK's green economic recovery in the future.

Our sector provides vital services that are critical to the economy as well as protecting public health and the environment. We estimate that the UK is currently experiencing a shortage of 100,000 HGV drivers across the economy and this is very much being felt by our sector which, in the longer term, may hinder our ability to deliver upon the Government's resource-efficiency and environmental ambitions. To illustrate this, ESA members are currently reporting an average of fifteen per cent vacancy rates for driving roles and it is proving very challenging to fill this resourcing gap given the dynamics of this labour market.

Although we welcome new measures recently introduced to increase driver-testing capacity - helping us to train the next generation of domestic drivers - this will take time to deliver the required numbers and more immediate relief is urgently needed for this acute situation. We recognise government's attempts to address short-term resourcing pressures through relaxations to driver hours rules, but we are concerned that this will have negative health and safety implications.

We therefore believe that HGV drivers should be recognised as an important shortage occupation with a two-year derogation to the points-based immigration rules for trained HGV drivers – allowing our sector, as well as others across the economy, sufficient access to a wider pool of drivers while we recruit and train the next generation of domestic drivers.

This approach would prevent our sector from falling off a cliff-edge of driver shortages and will ensure that we can continue to keep the wheels turning on essential services – protecting the environment and public health while supporting the UK's green recovery. We would welcome urgent further dialogue and look forward to working with you and your teams to resolve this pressing issue.

Yours sincerely



**Jacob Hayler**  
Executive Director of the Environmental Services Association (ESA)  
On behalf of:

- Gavin Graveson, Chairman of the ESA and Executive Vice-President, Veolia UK & Ireland
- Michael Topham, CEO, Biffa Plc
- John Scanlon, CEO, SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK Ltd
- Paul Taylor, Group Chief Executive, FCC Environment
- Ed Dodd, Group Director Waste & Resources, Hills Waste Solutions Ltd
- Derek Edwards, Managing Director Waste, Viridor
- Sarah Poulter, CEO, Chartered Institution of Wastes Management
- Dr Nina Skorupska CBE, Chief Executive, The Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA)
- Cllr Eric Buckmaster, Chair, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership
- Steve Palfrey, Chair, Waste Group, Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT)
- Emma Beal, Chair, National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO)
- Carole Taylor, Chair of the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC)
- Simon Ellin, CEO, The Recycling Association
- Phil Conran, Chair of the Approved Authorised Treatment Facilities AATF Forum (WEEE recyclers)