



An Agency within the Department for

Infrastructure

Gníomhaireacht Iaisistigh den Roinn

Bonneagair

An Agency within the Department for

Infrastructure

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DVA Business Plan

2023-2024



Safer Drivers, Safer Vehicles

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Chief Executive's Foreword

As we move into a new financial and business year, I look back on 2022-23 with some pride and satisfaction at how the Agency performed. Collectively, we have made very good progress in dealing with the aftermath of the COVID pandemic and its impacts on our services and, indeed, we have achieved some very positive results across a range of services in terms of output. This included conducting record-breaking levels of vehicle tests and driving tests. I pay tribute to all my colleagues who have worked tirelessly to make that happen.

Looking forward, we are determined to maintain momentum and enhance the services we offer our customers. This year, we will continue to progress our plans to complete the construction of a new test centre and depot at Hydebank, on the outskirts of Belfast. We also

plan to award a contract for the construction of another new test centre, at Mallusk, to help us meet the ever-increasing demand for our services. The completion of both these test centres will give customers more choices for testing and will significantly increase our overall capacity for conducting vehicle tests.

For driver licensing we will work closely with 3fivetwo, our Professional Medical Advisory Services partner, to improve the processing times for the completion of 'fitness to drive' referrals. We will also make progress with many technological improvements, to help us provide a quicker and more efficient service to our customers.

We will continue to work with other agencies to conduct roadside checks and physical inspections on a wide range of vehicles, to improve road safety and compliance with statutory requirements.

We will undoubtedly face many challenges during the coming year, not least managing our resources in light of the increasing cost of delivering our services. With that in mind, we will be conducting a review of our fees and charges, which have remained largely unchanged for many years.

This plan sets out the key performance targets that we intend to deliver against in 2023-24.

Jeremy Logan
Chief Executive

Who We Are

The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) was created under the Review of Public Administration on 1 April 2007, by the merger of Driver and Vehicle Licensing NI (DVLNI) and the Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency (DVTA). The Chief Executive is the Agency Accounting Officer and reports through the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to the Minister for Infrastructure. The Minister has overall political responsibility and accountability for all the Department's activities.

Decision making in the absence of Ministers

As a consequence of the continued absence of an Executive, the Department has been operating without the direction and control of a Minister since 28 October 2022. To help facilitate decision making in the absence of Ministers, the UK Government introduced the [Northern Ireland \(Executive Formation etc\) Act 2022](#)  (EF Act) which became law on 6 December 2022 and amended by the [Northern Ireland \(Interim Arrangements\) Act 2023](#).  The Department has produced specific procedures to be followed to ensure that any decisions that are taken in accordance with the Act take account of the Secretary of State's guidance and are appropriately recorded. These decisions are made public, via the Northern Ireland Office, at the following [link](#). 

This Plan has been approved by the Agency's Strategic Management Board (SMB) and the Permanent Secretary of the Department. The Plan will be subject to review (as necessary) by an incoming Minister on the establishment of an Executive.

Our Vision

The Agency's overall aim is to deliver improved road safety and better regulation of the transport sector.

“

The Agency's vision is

**Safer Drivers,
safer Vehicles.**

”

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.

What We Do

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.

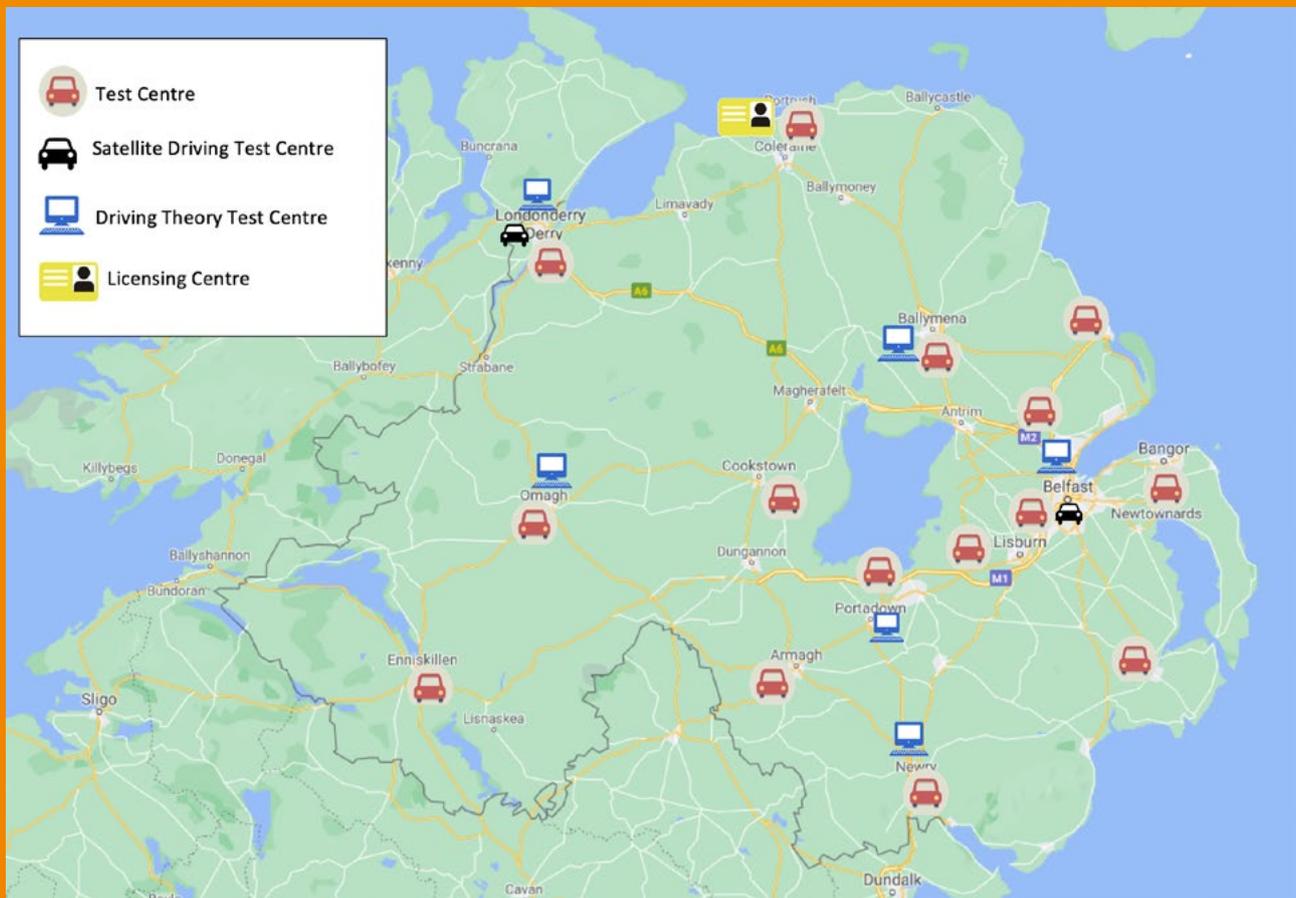
Our Organisational Structure

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 15 test centres, two satellite driving test centres and a licensing centre in Coleraine, where driver and passenger transport licensing is administered. In addition, there are six locations across Northern Ireland where customers can sit their Driving Theory Tests.



Our Values

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

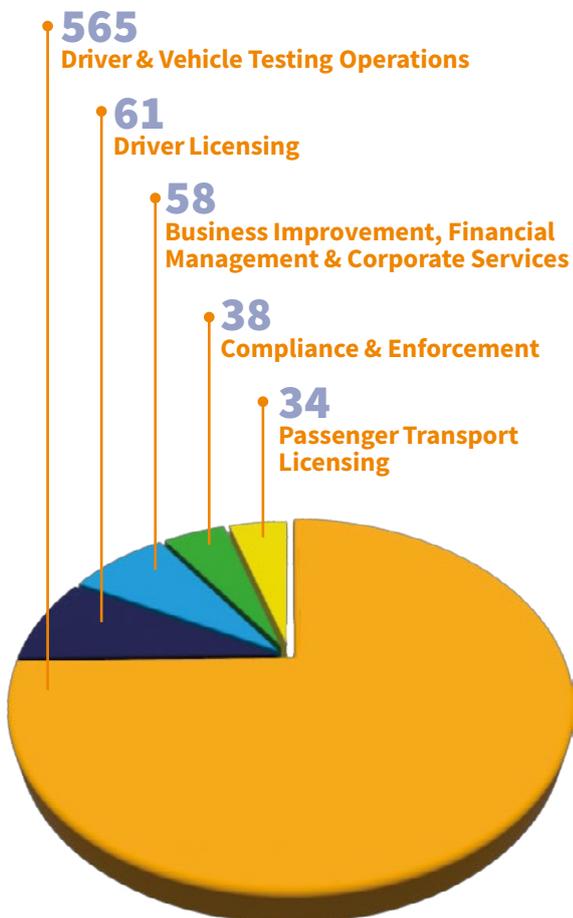
People

Our services are delivered through teams of dedicated and committed people located throughout Northern Ireland. As at 1 April 2023 we had 756 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.

The Agency is beginning the year with significant cash reserves which are being held for investment in our infrastructure and assets. 2023-24 will be another challenging year financially due to increasing costs associated with the delivery of our services. It will be necessary to carry out reviews of fees charged for our services in order for the Agency to recover costs and meet its financial targets.



Our Priorities

Our three priorities for 2023-24 are to:

1. Deliver high standards of service to our customers;
2. Improve our infrastructure and maximise our assets; and
3. Manage our organisation safely and efficiently.

Our main priority is continuing to deliver all **our services** to a high standard and at maximum capacity, whilst complying with public health advice and guidance to ensure the safety of staff and our customers. This will continue to be a challenging task given the high level of demand for our services and current limits on capacity across our existing network. We will strive to ensure that our stakeholders are kept informed about relevant issues and we will utilise the services of NI Direct, social media and other means, where possible, to provide updates to stakeholders, particularly when important changes take place. We will also work hard to ensure that all customer transactions and contact are handled efficiently, effectively and courteously.

We also have plans to improve and develop **our infrastructure and assets**. During this year, we plan to complete the construction of our new test centre and Compliance and Enforcement Depot at Hydebank and to award a contract for a further new test centre at Mallusk. We are also progressing plans for the roll out of new vehicle testing equipment in the coming years.

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 priority in 2023-24.

Our organisation will continue to be a key focus for us and ensuring our people are safe remains a priority. Staff have been rigorously undertaking risk assessments on working arrangements, ensuring that staff who are required to work in our locations can do so in a safe way, following the latest public health advice.

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.

The NICS and the Agency are committed to promoting flexibility and choice at work with the aim of meeting service 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.

Our financial position will also be a priority for us. Therefore, we will carry out reviews of the fees we charge for our services in order to recover increasing costs and meet our financial targets. We will progress this work during the year and continue to monitor and manage the financial position.

Our Progress and Monitoring of Our Business Plan

An update on the performance of the Agency against its targets for the 2022-23 business year is available in the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 which can be found at the following link.

[DVA Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Performance against the targets outlined at Annex 1 will be monitored by our Strategic Management Board and our Annual Report for 2023-24 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.

The Plan will be subject to review (as necessary) by an incoming Minister on the establishment of an Executive.

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 the published screening form can be found [here](#). 

Annex 1 – Key Performance Targets for 2023-24

Priority	Target Ref	Business Target
Deliver high standards of services to our customers	1	For vehicle testing, we will provide over 1.2 million appointment slots.
	2	For driver testing, the average waiting time for category B (private car) practical tests will be 6 weeks or less by 31 March 2024.
	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 2024 we will achieve at least 8 out of the 10 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 15 taxi enforcement operations during the weekend night-time economy. • To carry out at least 1500 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 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.

Annex 1 – Key Performance Targets for 2023-24

Priority	Target Ref	Business Target
Improve our infrastructure and maximise our assets	9	By 31 March 2024 we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete the construction of the new test centre and depot at Hydebank; and award a contract for the construction of the new test centre at Mallusk.
	10	By 31 March 2024 we will progress our business improvement work by completing our digital work programme for the year.
Manage our organisation safely and efficiently	11	By 31 March 2024 we will complete a review of how we manage and support our digital applications.
	12	By 31 March 2024 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%.



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