

Operator's Licence Application Readiness Checklist

UK Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence · 40-point readiness review

CPC Express

RADAT-approved

(RN24100001)

NLTC consortium

AC00591

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Use this checklist **before** you submit your Operator's Licence application via the DVSA VOL system. Every item below maps to a real refusal trigger we've seen at Traffic Commissioner level. If you can tick every box, your application is materially de-risked. If you can't, fix the gap before you submit — refusing applications is on public record.

1. Licence Type Decision


Choose the wrong type and the application is dead on arrival.

- I have confirmed whether my work is **own-account only (Restricted)** or **hire-or-reward (Standard)**
- If hire-or-reward, I have confirmed whether operations are **National (GB only)** or **International**
- I have confirmed any towed combinations exceeding 3.5 tonnes are accounted for
- I have considered whether an **Interim Licence** is needed for urgent start dates

2. Operating Centre

Inadequate operating centres trigger objections and Public Inquiries.

- I have a confirmed **UK operating centre address** — not a virtual office
- The site has **off-road parking** for all authorised vehicles (goods vehicles over 3.5t cannot park on public roads)
- The site has **safe vehicular access** appropriate for the vehicle types
- If I do not own the site, I have **written permission from the landowner**
- I have considered **environmental impact** on neighbours (noise, dust, hours of operation)
- I have checked the site has no **planning use restrictions** incompatible with HGV operations

 **Tip:** Drive past your proposed operating centre at 6am on a Monday. If the noise of trucks starting up would obviously upset a neighbour, you'll get objections.

3. Financial Standing Evidence

2026 thresholds: Standard licences £8,000 first vehicle + £4,500 each additional. Restricted £3,100 + £1,700. Light goods (International) £1,600 + £800.

- I have **3 months of business bank statements** showing the required threshold maintained throughout
- The funds are in a **business bank account** (not personal)
- The funds are **liquid and accessible** — not tied up in stock, equipment, or fixed assets
- I have NOT relied on a single large deposit immediately before the application ("window dressing")
- If using an **overdraft facility** or **invoice finance**, I have a letter from the lender confirming the facility
- If using a **director loan**, I have evidence the funds are committed and not at call

4. Professional Competence (Standard Licences Only)


Skip this section if applying for a Restricted licence.

- I have a nominated **Transport Manager** with a **valid Transport Manager CPC qualification**
- The Transport Manager will commit sufficient hours to exercise **continuous and effective control**
- The Transport Manager has **accepted the digital invitation** to join the licence via the VOL system
- The Transport Manager is **not a named TM on too many other licences** — Traffic Commissioner reviews capacity
- The Transport Manager has no **history of compliance failures** on other licences

5. Good Repute

Honesty matters more than the underlying issue. Undeclared issues cause more refusals than declared ones.

- All **directors and partners** are aware of the application and consent
- I have declared all **relevant convictions** (including spent convictions where required)
- I have declared any **previous operator licence refusals, revocations, or curtailments** — for me or any associated director
- I have declared any **Public Inquiry appearances** in the last 5 years
- The directors have no **undischarged bankruptcies** that affect financial standing

 **Critical:** Undeclared issues that surface later are treated as false statements. This is one of the fastest routes to revocation. When in doubt, declare it.

6. Fixed Establishment

You must show a genuine UK presence — not a brass plate.

- I have a **physical UK premises** where records are kept
- I have **UK-based staff** (even if it's just me as a director)
- I will keep **vehicle records, driver records, and tachograph data** at the UK address
- The business is **UK-registered** (Companies House or equivalent)

7. Maintenance Arrangements

Maintenance contracts that don't follow DVSA guidance are a common refusal cause.

- I have a **written maintenance contract** with a workshop (or have evidenced my own workshop capability)
- The contract aligns with **Annex 5 of the Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness**
- The contract specifies **inspection frequency** appropriate for my vehicle types and mileage
- The maintenance provider has **capacity for my fleet size**
- I have a **driver defect reporting** system in place
- I have **record retention** arrangements (15+ months minimum)

8. Newspaper Advertisement

The single most common refusal cause. Read this section twice.

- I know I must place the advert **within 21 days of applying** (not before, not after)
- I have identified a **local newspaper covering the operating centre's geographic area**
- I will use the **exact statutory wording** published in the application guidance — word for word
- I have budgeted for the cost (typically **£150–£600** depending on newspaper)
- I will retain the **full original newspaper page** (not a clipping) as evidence

⚠ Critical: A clipping or photocopy of just the advert is NOT acceptable evidence. The Traffic Commissioner requires the full original page showing the newspaper title, date, and surrounding content.

9. Vehicle and Authorisation Planning

- I know the **vehicle types** I'll be operating (HGV class, weight, configuration)

- I have applied for an **authorisation count** appropriate for my operations and growth plans
- I understand that **authorisation count drives financial standing** — not actual vehicle count
- I have allowed **headroom** in my authorisation request for short-term fleet growth

10. Pre-Submission Final Checks

- I have completed every section of the **VOL application form**
- All **declarations are accurate** and I have evidence to support each one
- I have paid the **£257 application fee**
- I have budgeted for the **£401 grant fee** payable on issue
- I have a **process for handling Traffic Commissioner queries** within their response deadlines
- I understand I **cannot start operating** until the licence is granted (interim licence excepted)

Post-Grant: What Comes Next

Once your licence is granted, the compliance work begins.

- I understand the **operator licence undertakings** I'm committing to
- I have a system for tracking **Driver CPC expiry** for every driver
- I have a plan for the **5-year continuation fee** (£401)
- I will book myself and key operations staff onto **Operator Licence Awareness Training (OLAT)**
- I understand the DVSA's **OCRS traffic light system** and how it works

This checklist is provided as guidance. It is not a substitute for the official DVSA application guidance or professional advice. For complex applications — previous refusals, multiple operating centres, borderline financial standing — professional support typically pays for itself.

Need help with your application? Visit cpccexpress.co.uk/operator-licence-application-service or call 01283-895777.