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6th January 2006

Dr. J. Patterson,
Clerk of the Committee,
Transport Committee,
Committee Office,
House of Commons,
7 Millbank,
London.
SW1P 3JA

Dear Dr. Patterson,

Please find enclosed written memoranda submitted by Wynns Group to the Transport Select Committee for the inquiry entitled " The work of the Department for Transport's Executive Agencies – DVO group and the Highways Agency ".

As you will see we have structured our memoranda using the issues highlighted in Press Notice 17/2005-06. For ease of reference we have also numbered the paragraphs.

Should the committee be agreeable we would welcome the opportunity to give oral evidence.

I trust the attached will be of interest to the Committee. Should you or the Committee require any further information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

T. H. S. West,
Research & Corporate Affairs.
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THE WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT'S EXECUTIVE AGENCIES – DVO GROUP AND THE HIGHWAYS AGENCY

Written evidence submitted by Wynns Group. Incorporating Wynns Ltd & Robert Wynn & Sons Ltd

Introduction & Background

1. Wynns Ltd are the UK's only independent transport consultancy specialising in the movement of abnormal indivisible loads. In 1998 and working on behalf of Powergen, Wynns engineered the delivery of 7 loads in excess of 150 tonnes to Cottam Power Station in Nottinghamshire. The loads were delivered directly to site via the River Trent.
2. In November 2000 Wynns subsidiary company Robert Wynn & Sons Ltd was awarded an £8.5m freight facilities grant. The grant represented 99% of the total cost of the design and build of a specialist ro/ro barge and the purchase and conversion of a former inland tanker barge. The vessels, later named the Terra Marique and the Inland Navigator, work as a system to maximise the potential of the inland waterway network for the carriage of the largest and heaviest abnormal indivisible loads. Specifically, Special Order & VR1 categories which are granted for road movement by the Secretary Of State for Transport
3. The Government's "water preferred policy" was announced on June 11th 2002 by the then Parliamentary Under Secretary for Transport David Jamieson MP and clearly states that

"the Department's VSE Division will henceforth adopt a policy whereby water transportation is the preferred mode for the movement of the largest and heaviest abnormal indivisible loads. Road movements will only be authorised where the Department has considered the possibility but believes water transportation is not feasible"
4. In 2003 the Highways Agency became responsible for the implementation and management of the Government's policies concerning the movement of the largest and heaviest abnormal indivisible loads. Previously this had been the responsibility of the VSE section of the Department for Transport.
5. On behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport, Highways Agency officials manage the application process for Special Order permits (for loads which when transported are either in excess of 150 tonnes in weight, 6 metres in width or 30 metres in length) and VR1 permits which are for loads which when transported are above 5 metres in width.
6. The Highways Agency is also responsible for the implementation of the Government's "water preferred policy"

The purpose of the agencies and whether the current allocation of responsibilities is appropriate:

7. The Highways Agency website states that

"The Highways Agency is an Executive Agency of the Department for Transport (DfT), and is responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the strategic road network in England on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport".

8. The Highways Agency's role in the management of abnormal loads is involved. Last year alone, as well as co-ordinating the issuing of Special Order and VR1 permits, Highways Agency officials co-ordinated the compilation of a code of practice and best practice guide for the self escorting of abnormal load vehicles, commissioned and co-ordinated research into the true economic cost of the movement of abnormal loads and set up a working group to study the availability of inland waterway infrastructure which would be appropriate for the transshipment of abnormal loads.
9. As a direct consequence of the government adopting a water preferred policy for the movement of the largest and heaviest abnormal loads, the Highways Agency is increasingly involved with the facilitation of abnormal load movements. Applicants for Special Order permits are being asked to fill out a "water proforma" (attached) which request extensive information regarding the proposed road route as well as waterborne alternatives. The information contained within this proforma is then used by the Highways Agency within their decision making process when deciding if they allow use of the road network either in whole or in part.
10. There are a number of reasons for this. Primarily the Highways Agency has no responsibility for the UK commercial waterway network and they do not have ownership or responsibility for any waterside sites. Also as their role has developed from one of administration to one of implementation, they do not have the knowledge or expertise required with which to take steps towards the timely implementation or development of the water preferred policy.
11. The implementation and facilitation of the water preferred policy has been severely compromised under the stewardship of the Highways Agency. It is however questionable if the agency should have been given responsibility for the implementation and development of the water preferred policy.
12. There is a need for the Department for Transport to take ownership of it's policy. There are numerous stakeholders within government who need to work together to facilitate this policy and it is clear that the Highways Agency as an executive agency of the Department for Transport tasked with operating, maintaining and improving the strategic road network in England is not best placed to do this.

How the agencies contribute to Departmental objectives and policy?

13. In June 2002 the Minister announced his water preferred policy. At this time it was made clear that the Department wished to see the transfer of a significant number of abnormal loads from road to inland waterway.
14. Since the policy was announced we believe that there have been less than half a dozen examples of where Special Order abnormal indivisible loads have been refused road route permission and have subsequently been carried by inland

waterway. According to the Highways Agency themselves, there are some 450 Special Order applications per year, 26% of which are over 150 tonnes in weight., moving on the road network at a maximum speed of 12mph and most often blocking two lanes of the carriageway.

15. Infact there are examples of where the Highways Agency have taken steps to seemingly compromise the policy. These initiatives are actually making it easier to transport large indivisible loads by road.

Such initiatives include:

Developing the ESDAL system (Electronic Service Delivery for Abnormal Loads Project)

16. This is a system currently being developed which when fully online will make the administration of the Special Order process for road based movements much simpler for both the Highways Agency and the hauliers. Waterway routes do not feature, in this £8m Treasury funded initiative. It should be noted that this initiative was announced *after* the the announcement of the water preferred policy.

Allowing night time movements of slow moving abnormal load vehicles.

17. The practice of moving large indivisible loads in the hours of darkness has until recently been discouraged. We are now however seeing a greater proportion of loads being given permission to move at night. This is a policy change since the water preferred policy was announced. The significance of this is that congestion on the road network is significantly less at night. Therefore when the Highways Agency assesses the potential disruption caused by such a move they are less likely to insist on the load being transferred to an inland waterway. We are not aware of any research carried out into health and safety issues of night time movements.

Commissioning research in to the viability of raising the speed limit at which abnormal loads can travel.

18. Currently the maximum speed limit that a Special Order category abnormal load is permitted to travel is 12mph. The Highways Agency are currently commissioning research which will investigate the potential for an increase in the maximum speed that Special Order category loads are allowed to travel.
19. Research has shown that one of the significant factors when analysing the congestion caused by abnormal load movements is the speed of the abnormal load carrying vehicle. Should this research lead to a revision of the current limits upwards this would most likely lead to more loads being transported by road as the congestion anticipated by the movements of these loads would be less than it is now, again serving to undermine departmental policy and objectives.
20. While we welcome any Highways Agency initiative to make the movement of abnormal loads easier, we would have expected that in light of the Departments stated water preferred policy that their Executive Agency would be putting forward initiatives and finding funding to promote the waterbourne carriage of the largest and heaviest abnormal indivisible loads. This as yet has not happened.

Whether the agencies' performances are satisfactory and whether they are sufficiently accountable.

21. It is clear to us that the Highways Agency have not performed satisfactorily in the area of abnormal load transportation. The government has a clear policy regarding the movement of the largest and heaviest abnormal loads and it is not being implemented satisfactorily by the Highways Agency.
22. The policy has not been promulgated to any great extent by the Highways Agency, There is widespread confusion within industry as to how the Highways Agency apply the policy and local government officials are on the most part unaware of its existence.
23. While we understand that the Highways Agency are currently formulating a policy statement with accompanying guidance notes, for some 3 years now the only public reference to the "water preferred policy" is contained in a media briefing circulated in June 2002. Surely this is unacceptable.
24. The Highways Agency has commissioned the Transport Research Laboratory to carry out research into the true economic cost of abnormal indivisible load movements by road. This research project commenced early in 2003 and is yet to be concluded. The drafts issued to date have concentrated on the cost of the congestion generated by the movement and have failed to fully investigate all impacts generated by abnormal load movement and the resulting congestion. Despite representations being made by ourselves and others, the Highways Agency have to date refused to consider those costs it feels unable to quantify or calculate.
25. It is imperative that the officials within the Highways Agency abnormal load section are held to account and that their work in fulfilment of departmental objectives is assessed. This however is not the case. Abnormal loads seem to have fallen through the departmental stools. By that statement we mean that the Department for Transport has a water preferred policy but no actual responsibility for waterways, and as the role of the abnormal loads team has traditionally been an administrative one there is nobody within the Department for Transport who is responsible for the review of their effectiveness or for the development of policy in this area.

Whether there is sufficient co-ordination of systems and sharing of information between agencies and with the Government

26. There is currently no co-ordinated approach within Government on policies relating to waterborne freight carriage. The Navigation Authorities who are responsible for the day to day operation of the inland waterway network report to DEFRA. Responsibility for freight/logistics policy is that of the Department for Transport and it is the Highways Agency who are designated to implement the water preferred policy for abnormal load movement.
27. These are some of the Governments stakeholders responsible for issues associated with waterborne freight carriage and specifically abnormal load carriage on the UK commercial waterway network. There are however many others who need to take a proactive role if the Departments water preferred policy is to be effectively implemented, these include: the Environment Agency, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Regional Development Agencies, Regional Assemblies and Local Councils.

28. If the current situation continues it is difficult to see how the Highways Agency can effectively deliver the Departments water preferred policy. There is a lack of both impetus and strategic direction with the Highways Agency who would appear to be working at arms length with other sections of Government. The Department for Transport should be acting as a co-ordinator of stakeholders to ensure the the Highways Agency can deliver the water preferred policy, this to date is not happening.
29. In Summary the water preferred policy was created by the Department for Transport as a common sense initiative but with no ownership within the Department. The Highways Agency have been given it to administer but do not own it and have no target or responsibility to make it work and indeed, as we have argued given the current set up, cannot make it work.

1. Instructions

Please complete all the following tables. Where information cannot be supplied, please give reasons.

The note boxes are for additional comments, however, if there is insufficient space (they can be extended) additional comments can be submitted separately but should refer to the line number in the table.

An example of how Table 5 should be completed is demonstrated.

2. Summary table

No	Summary	From	To				Final UK destination ¹
1	Journey start and finish points Please give details of the location where the load is being collected from i.e. the point of origin followed by a description of the route being proposed to transport the piece/s.						
2		Mileage				Cost £k	
3	Water Option 1– road miles	Total		1 ST Leg		2 ND Leg	
4	Water Option 2 - road miles	Total		1 ST Leg		2 ND Leg	
5	Water Option 3 - road miles	Total		1 ST Leg		2 ND Leg	
6	Road option – road miles						

¹ If different from previous column

7	Justification for not using water for each option – if applicable	
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3. General table

No	General								
8	Describe the abnormal load(s)								
9	Overall dimensions of the piece(s)	Height		Width		Length		Weight	
10	Overall dimensions when loaded on vehicle	Height		Width		Length		Weight	
11	Number of loads								
12	Are repeat loads along same route likely? Please give details								
13	Number of road movements								

14	Value of each load £k		Total value of load(s) £k	
15	Date of first / last movement		Date of application	
16	Your reference			
17	Other information (e.g. wider project details / timing / urgency)			

4. Water option table

No	Water Option										
18	Describe below which water routes ² have been investigated (consider reasonable alternatives, not just parallel to road route)										
19	Option	From	Wharf y/n	Lift ³	To	Wharf y/n	Lift	Via	Wharf y/n	Lift	Sea / Waterway
20	1										
	2										
	3										
21	Preferred water option number										
	If not the shortest road mileage please justify why this option is chosen										
22	Has the load already travelled part of its journey by water? If so please describe										
23	Justification for not using water										
24	If in Row 23 time constraints are cited as justification for not using water, please explain why sufficient time has not been allowed to properly consider the water option.										

² Sea or waterway³ Roll-on roll-off (RR), Lift-on lift-off (LL), mobile crane (MC), fixed crane (FC), Heavy lift ship (HLS)

25	Explain why more than one load cannot be moved at a time by water or stored to reduce craneage costs	
26	If delays are likely due to e.g. planning permission for wharf, ground works explain	
27	Any other relevant information	Continue if necessary by extending the table

5. Road option table (example)

No.	Road Option							
28	Describe proposed road route (include proposed start time for each leg of journey)							
29	Day	Time 24 hr	Road name / rest points	Road class / number	Number of lanes (S or D*)	Length (miles)	Speed (mph)	Notes
	1	1000	Notown Lane	B5000	S2	4.5	6	Narrow and bendy (roundabout at end)
		1030	Town Road to Motorway	A6000	S2	3	6	Modern Wide road
		1100	Slip Road onto motorway at J4	M1000	D3	0.5	12	Roundabout Junction
		1100	Motorway J4 to J8	M1000	D3	15	12	Roundabout Junction Including 2 roundabouts
		1230	M1000 to M2000 slip road	M1000	D2	1	12	
		1230	Motorway J3 to J10	M2000	D4	35	12	
		1530	Motorway Off Slip	M2000	D2	0.5	12	
		1600	A 7000 to site	A7000	D2	3	8	
								Continue if necessary by extending the table

*Single or Dual carriageway.

6. Water option - road element if applicable

No.	Water option – road element if applicable							
30	Describe proposed road route (include proposed start time for each leg of journey)							
31	Day	Time 24 hr	Road name / rest points	Road class / number	Number of lanes (S or D)	Length (Miles)	Speed (mph)	Notes
OPT 1								