



Letters to the editor

Pointless law will put Irish trucks off the road

Sir, Over the past ten years, in an effort to reduce transport costs, reduce carbon emissions, reduce the national import bill for fossil fuels and to survive against lower cost operators from the UK and Europe, the Irish transport industry has invested heavily in about 1,000 articulated trucks with a trailer height between 4.65m and 4.9m

This extra height has facilitated a second deck in the trailer — much like a double-decker bus — and instead of having a load of 26 pallets of product, 52 pallets can be loaded.

The new legislation, which aims to standardise the height of all semi-trailers built under Whole Vehicle Type Approval (WVTA) to four metres in height, will require more trailers to move the same amount of goods.

Most loads of mixed products transported by the haulage and shipping industry is comprised of pallets weighing on average about 400 kilos.

An articulated truck is designed to carry 24tons, so with a standard trailer at four meters high and 26 pallet spaces the load would be about 10 tons whereas with a double deck and 52 pallets the load weight would be approx 20 tons.

An articulated truck carrying 10 tons will not save any measurable amount of diesel so with the higher double-decker the cost per pallet or ton is just about half the cost incurred with standard trailers that are four metres high or less.

If this EU plan is implemented, it will:

- Double the cost of transport of most dry freight products around Ireland
- Force local Irish transport companies out of business in favour of foreign owned multinationals.
- Put an extra 1,000 articulated trucks on the road
- Increase the amount of fossil fuel being used by 91million litres
- Increase the fuel import bill

by €60 million

■ Add 238,000 tons p.a. of carbon dioxide emissions to the atmosphere

■ Add €3.5million to the carbon tax bill annually

■ Add 8% to the cost of Irish exports to the UK and Europe

■ Add €30million to the annual cost of imported trucks from Germany Holland and Sweden

There is no safety issue with these higher trailers and they result in lower speeds and greater care by the drivers. The bridges on motorways, both in Ireland and the UK all are designed to safely take 4.9m high trucks, so there is no issue with safety or access.

In summary this move would be a major boost to the oil companies and the European truck manufacturers and well as UK trailer manufacturers and UK hauliers who would gain a bigger share of the Irish transport market.

It would put a lot of small Irish transport companies out of business and cost Irish exporters and consumers an extra €125 million per year.

The UK's Transport Minister, Mike Penning, has promised to negotiate strongly to achieve the best outcome for the UK transport industry. I would like to see a similar response from the Irish Government, in supporting our indigenous transport industries from Kerry to Galway, who are a key player in supporting the country's recovery through the distribution of goods to export markets, as well as gaining some reassurances that they will seek to stop this unjustified and unacceptable proposal.

Sincerely

Owen Cooke

Chairman

The Pallet Network (TPN)