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## A bit of give and take

**T**he driver is always an integral part in any vehicle maintenance system. Workshops will only see the vehicle at planned service intervals (typically every four to six weeks), but drivers see them every day.

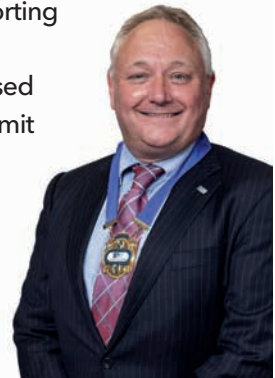
When I first came into the industry in the early '80s, driver checks and defects were recorded in a vehicle defect book, printed in duplicate issued to the driver. The driver filled out the defects and the technician recorded the remedial work below; both signed and dated it. The top copy went into the maintenance file as a record and the second copy was kept in the book. This provided both of them with an auditable trail.

Although paper reporting is still used, technology is moving on. Digital systems also need to maintain good communication links. It remains a legal requirement that all defects are reported in writing, whether on paper or electronically by device app (see also article, pp10-12).

So it's clear that drivers should not only be able to communicate with the workshop but information must flow in the opposite direction: workshops talking to drivers. My experience operating an in-house workshop supporting a large blue-light fleet has been to highlight issues when we notice a trend in defects. We will issue instructions or advice through our internal systems and advise drivers: 'when you're doing your daily checks, be mindful of this issue and report it; don't ignore it.'

This is usually only possible with in-house servicing. Unless specifically instructed, third-party suppliers may not relay any issues or concerns back to the operator, and the opportunity to educate their drivers may be lost.

For me personally, identifying trends in defect reporting has recently become easier, thanks to a modern fleet management system. This allows for defect trend reporting - if the methods for reporting follow a standard approach. Past experience has shown that trending relies on the use of standardised terminology on PMI and defect reports. We now limit reporting input to standard terminology, and it's the same system for both drivers and technicians.



Michael Sweetmore  
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