

After reading August Transport Engineer's 'Your Shout', it seems appropriate to shed a different light on VOSA's Testing Transformation Programme (TTP).

As reported, there are now more than 100 ATFs (Authorised Testing Facilities), albeit the reality is that 70% of these were already DPs (Designated Premises) that have since been transferred.

When the previous chief executive quit VOSA, he left debts of around £40m. To recover from that financial position, hundreds of posts have been shed, and VOSA is now selling off its test stations and sending its staff to test at private sector premises – where testing is both less efficient and more costly to VOSA.

The expected price of TTP to the end of this financial year is around £14.6m. This includes the cost of the disposal of VOSA sites or its estate, which moves us a little closer to what is probably the true driver behind TTP – a stepped approach towards full privatisation.

Last August, a co-signed letter from the RHA, FTA and others was sent to the government, calling for privatisation of heavy vehicle testing, even though evidence, through VOSA's enforcement activities, shows that roadworthiness standards in countries where privatisation has taken place are considerably poorer than those in Britain.

Since that letter, the trade associations have been strangely quiet. Indeed, when the unions that represent VOSA staff recently sought to meet with them to discuss concerns over TTP, both the RHA and FTA declined to play ball.

So what's the alternative? What we need is a modern network of VOSA test stations, supplemented by private sector sites that give operators both the choice on where to have vehicles tested and the security that, come what may, statutory tests can be undertaken close to their locations and to identical standards.

VOSA needs a proper estate strategy to serve the transport industry and the nation for the future... and TTP alone is not it.



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