

Two years after their launch, and with numbers approaching 200, ATFs (Authorised Testing Facilities) are performing well, but with room for improvement.

This was the conclusion following the first national forum devoted to ATFs, which took place recently. The forum was hosted by VOSA (the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency), which confirmed that more than 40% of testing is now carried out at non-VOSA sites.

Operators gathered to share their experiences and put forward ideas to make the testing process better at such sites. The general consensus was that, despite the steep learning curve for all parties concerned, ATFs has been more of a hit than a miss, and VOSA remains on track to hit its targets for open access, as well as closing sites this year.

More than 80 representatives from ATFs across the country attended to give presentations, take part in discussions and make suggestions for the future. Delegates were also invited to participate in 30-minute workshop sessions to discuss topics such as the ATF contract, maximising ATF lane capacity and future business processes.

These sessions helped VOSA to get first-hand feedback about areas of the ATF agreement that have worked well and others that could be improved, and VOSA chief executive Alastair Peoples says he appreciated the input. "It was good to see so many ATF representatives at this event, talking through common experiences and discussing what can be done better in the future."

Among those operators participating was Neil Jacob, service improvement director for Imperial Commercials. "The forum gave a platform to ATF providers to network and share views face to face," he commented. "Presenting to the delegates enabled me to outline the experiences Imperial Commercials had when opening our ATF investments and hopefully will bring some benefit to those gathered."

Another satisfied customer, then. And VOSA is hoping for many more to follow suit in the not too distant future.



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