

Your shout!

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According to the incoming president of the Institute of Highway Engineers, UK motorways should be an HGV-free zone on Sundays.

Richard Hayes, who took the reins of the institute at the end of June, suggests, given that France, Spain and Italy ban the movement of vehicles with a maximum gross weight of more than 7.5 tonnes for one day at the weekend and on public holidays, why can't the UK?

I'll tell you why not, Mr Hayes: we live in a world where shops open around the clock, and next-day delivery is commonplace and compulsory. Restricting times when goods and services can be transferred from A to B would not only impact negatively on consumer businesses, but also – financially and logistically – transport operators.

Recent figures suggest that 88% of domestic freight is moved by road in the UK. And for good reason: rail isn't up to the job. So the likelihood is that, instead of attempting to switch to rail movements – as seen in countries, such as France – operators would choose to circumnavigate any ruling by finding a way to remain on the highway on Sundays.

This might well mean deploying more vans and LCVs to undertake the work of the fleet's trucks at weekends, thereby adding to the congestion that Hayes is keen to reduce.

"Weekends should be a relaxing time on our roads when the network is used mainly by the general public, going about their leisure activities," reckons Hayes. "Many drivers are intimidated by heavy lorries thundering up and down our motorways and major A roads," he adds – which in fact raises the question, why are those people on the road at all?

"Surely, it is not too much to ask that we take some of the tension out of the system for one day a week," he reasons. It's an interesting point and maybe one that provides room for compromise. Should Hayes be successful in his quest to ban HGVs, perhaps a similar restrictive period could be enforced for cars during the 'working' week?

Similar to Mr Hayes' proposal, I think we all know how likely that one would be...

IRTE

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