

17 September 2021

Dear Member,

NFDA Northern Ireland (NFDA NI)

NFDA Northern Ireland (NFDA NI) has been working on various issues affecting dealers, including MOT, Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging infrastructure and the end of petrol and diesel vehicle sales in 2030.

In this month's news, we outline some of the key issues that Northern Ireland is currently facing, plus general news and relevant updates.

MOT

Biennial MOT testing proposed for Northern Ireland

Proposals to carry out MOT tests every two years in Northern Ireland have been put forward in a consultation by the Department for Infrastructure.

The Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) claims that the UK government's recent announcement of a ban on the sale of new diesel and petrol vehicles by 2030 combined with biennial testing, if introduced, would help to address future testing capacity issues.

The change would remove approximately 240,000 (24 per cent) of cars and light goods vehicles from the vehicle testing regime in Northern Ireland each year, out of a current annual total of around 1,000,000.

The move could also see an estimated 10,500 fewer motorcycle MOT tests each year.

Infrastructure Minister, Nichola Mallon has suggested that "now is the right time to ask the public and those with a direct interest in MOT testing, road safety and environmental protection and others for their views".

She added: "I realise there will be those who favour a change in the frequency of MOT testing and others opposed to any change to the current process.

"Therefore, I would encourage everyone with an interest to respond to this call and clearly put forward their views with supporting evidence where possible."

Light goods vehicles that weigh under 3,500kg are first tested from three years old.

NFDA NI will be responding to the consultation which will remain open until 19 October 2021.

NFDA NI met with the DVA this week to discuss the current MOT situation.

- The DVA has agreed to provide a solution to a problem the industry has importing GB vehicles of MOT age
- The DVA has agreed to provide a solution to a particular issues Hurst's has raised over issues with unsold vehicles because they can't get an appointment for MOT.

We have scheduled a follow up meeting in October to discuss further.

Charging points and EV infrastructure

NI has the fewest public charging devices per 100,000 of any region and is the only region of the UK that did not increase its rapid charging device figure in the past quarter. Complaints are growing among dealers and EV owners that the public charging infrastructure that is available is unreliable

As the EV market becomes more mainstream, many of the obstacles – such as tolerating slower charging speeds and navigating an unreliable charging network – must be overcome.

With the sale of all new petrol and diesel cars and vans due to end in the UK in 2030, there is a real need for the electric vehicle market to significantly increase year-on-year. Many of the issues in Northern Ireland will stem from the problem that currently NI's public ChargePoint networks (PCNs) is privately owned and there are not enough of them to meet demand.

- NFDA NI has responded to the ongoing consultation on NI's 2050 Energy Strategy. This is a positive step towards creating a comprehensive EV strategy, owned by the Department for Infrastructure. We are awaiting a response
- NFDA NI met with Northern Ireland Minister Nichola Mallon to discuss funding for Electric Vehicle charging points. Ministers are committed to increasing the number of charging points - currently 237 charging points in Northern Ireland are broken and out of action

We have scheduled a follow up meeting in October to discuss further.

Coronavirus Update

Stormont ministers have agreed a number of changes to coronavirus restrictions.

These new changes came into effect from Friday 10 September:

- The number of people who can meet indoors will increase to 15 people from four households
- In hospitality venues, the requirement for table service will be removed and customers will be permitted to stand while consuming food and drink in outdoor settings
- Customers will also be permitted to take part in activities such as playing pool or darts or using gaming machines
- Dancing will again be allowed at weddings and civil partnership receptions and the requirement to purchase tickets in advance for live performances will be removed, as will the need for audience members to have allocated seats
- The legal requirement for social distancing outdoors no longer exists in Northern Ireland. However indoor premises such as restaurants, shops and indoor attractions are still required to comply with at least 1m (3ft)
- Face coverings: People must still wear them on public transport, in shops and a number of other settings - unless they are exempt.
- Ministers have not yet given an indicative date for the reopening of nightclubs and the return of dancing in hospitality venues
- Concerts can take place indoors but there are restrictions that mean people must be seated during performances and no dancing is permitted

General News

NI consumers braced for higher prices and longer waits for used cars

7 September 2021

Consumers in the north are braced for increasingly higher prices and longer delays in the used car market as the shortage of new vehicles continues to hit the motor industry.

The global scarcity of semiconductors combined with a shortage of HGV drivers and rising fuel costs is expected to drive prices higher over the coming weeks and months.

The latest data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) revealed the UK's weakest August for new car sales since 2013.

But the decline was even more pronounced in Northern Ireland, where just 2,702 new cars were registered during August, some 25 per cent below the 3,618 sold during the same month last year.

The 26,798 sales for the first eight months of 2021 to date is 39 per cent down on the same period in 2019, equal to just over 11,000 fewer new cars on the road.

That has had a knock-on impact on the used car market, with demand far outstripping supply, driving prices higher.

Northern Ireland's used car trade normally feeds off a steady supply of second-hand motors from Britain.

[View the full article here](#)

NI service sector recovering strongly

16 September 2021

The Northern Ireland services sector recovered strongly in the second quarter of this year as pandemic restrictions eased.

Output was up 5.5% compared to the first quarter and increased 29.2% compared to the same period in 2020.

Overall output was just 1.2% below pre-pandemic level but with big variations between subsectors.

The production sector, which is mainly manufacturing, also grew and output was just 0.8% below pre-pandemic levels.

On a quarterly basis, production growth was 1.1% and on an annual basis it was 27.6%.

The services sector is the dominant part of the economy covering a very wide range of activities including retail, hospitality, transport and financial services.

[View the full article here](#)

With the ongoing issues facing automotive retailers in Northern Ireland, NFDA NI will continue to increase our lobbying efforts to ensure the voice of the franchised vehicle dealer is heard.

If there are any issues that you would like added to our agenda which we were not already looking at, please let us know.

For more information or if you would like to join NFDA NI, please get in touch with us via email lana.patel@rmif.co.uk or call us on 01788 538 303.

Sue Robinson
NFDA NI Chief Executive