

1. Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2014 – Third Reading approved

Mr Turner to move:

That the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2014 be read a third time and do pass.

The President: The first Item on our Order Paper today is consideration of the Third Reading of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill. I call on Mr Turner.

Mr Turner: Thank you, Madam President, and I thank Hon. Members for their support during the stages of this Bill.

With your leave, Madam President, whilst I take the Third Reading I would like to just distribute some information for Members. The UK government, as I indicated, is also changing the driving licence and there is a sheet here just explaining what they are doing, which mirrors what we are doing in the Isle of Man. I think it will be interesting for Members just to see how it fits in – so if I may have those circulated, thank you.

The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill has effectively two purposes. The first is to give the Department of Infrastructure the authority to issue driving licences in a form that it sees fit. The intention, as I outlined to Hon. Members, is that they will be abolishing the ‘counterpart’, as it is known – that is the paper part of the licence – and keeping the plastic ID card. The power, though, in the Bill is not prescriptive, it is *enabling*, which means that if there are future changes to the form of these licences then they will be able to move with the times.

The sheet that has been circulated shows that the United Kingdom is doing the same. They made this announcement last year and this is why the Department has been working up plans to follow suit, so that our system is along the same lines as that in the UK and in other countries. The UK is bringing theirs in from 8th June this year, and the Department here on the Island hopefully will start issuing as soon as they have the powers to do it and will bring forward the changes to our own system.

There is another provision in this Bill that we have discussed, and that is an amendment to the Building Control Act. That reinstates provisions that were inadvertently repealed during the restructure of Government in 2010, and that allows the Department of Infrastructure, as the highway authority, to exercise certain enforcement powers regarding buildings or structures that are adjacent to the highway, or near the highway, that may cause a danger to the public on the roads and pavements. So the Bill also brings in that power.

I think we have given the Bill good scrutiny. We know what it is intended to do, and here at the Third Reading I now beg to move the Bill be read a third time.

Thank you, Madam President.

Mr Downie: I beg to second, Madam President, and reserve my remarks.

The President: The Hon. Member, Mr Crowe.

Mr Crowe: Thank you, Madam President, and I thank the hon. mover for his Third Reading and thank him for distributing this on what the UK government is doing with their licences.

There is a point here in the explanatory memorandum that says that:

‘The DVLA is developing new digital enquiry services for launch later this year that will allow organisations and businesses (such as employers and car hire companies) to view information they can currently see on the driving licence counterpart.’

Will the same facility be available in the Isle of Man? Will there be access to the central database of the driving licences?

The President: The mover to reply.

Mr Turner: Thank you, Madam President.

The Hon. Member is quite right: there is a system which the DVLA are party to, but there is a wider system that is rolled out in Europe called EUCARIS, the European Car and Driving Licence Information System. This is a system that provides opportunities to countries to share their car and driver-licencing registration information and other transport-related data. It is not a database but an exchange.

There are already certain reciprocal agreements in place between the DVLA and the Isle of Man Government. For us to actually share our data would require an agreement for both of the parties, and I know the Department are always looking at that but are very careful as to what agreements they enter into. In the initial period the DVLA do not have access to our driving licence data – I think they have to make a request for that information. Certainly my own view is that that is probably the correct way. If we were to simply have an open door system then one would have to really ask what is the point in operating our own driving licence system.

We could probably save a lot of money and just operate on the UK as part of a British driving licence system, but that is not the policy of the Department. The policy is that we operate our own system at the moment. We control our own data and should there be any formal requests from various agencies, law enforcement agencies, then the Department, providing they have the powers to release that certain data, will do so. I hope that answers the question.

I also know the Department is looking at the exchange to do with the EUCARIS, which is a similar provision that I think the Hon. Member is talking about, and I know the DVLA are part of that. So I hope I have answered the question.

With that, Madam President, I beg to move the Bill be read a third time and do pass.

The President: The motion is that the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill be read a third time and do pass. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.