



UK Metric Association

Campaigning for a **single** *rational* system of measurement

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Robert Ringsell
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
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Dear Mr Ringsell

Re: Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2015

I am writing on behalf of the UK Metric Association (UKMA) in response to the consultation on the draft 2015 update to the TSRGD.

Among our Objects is "to improve road safety by promoting the use of signage that complies with the best international practice and standards through the use of internationally understood units and symbols." UKMA is financed entirely by membership subscriptions and personal donations.

UKMA notes the statement in the consultation material that units of measurement are outside the scope of this consultation. It is regretted that short term political considerations appear to have outweighed the requirements of road safety. However, while it does not appear appropriate to limit the scope of responses, UKMA has abided by this point and is setting aside from this response comments on the use of measurement units on speed and distance signs.

Notwithstanding that wider issue about measurement units, UKMA would like to raise a specific issue around vehicle dimension signing, as we trust that minor changes to the availability of *existing* signs to improve road safety are within scope. I attach a report on the matter for your information, and will not repeat all the points within it here. But I would like to highlight the most significant points:

- Vehicle dimension signs are safety-critical signs, with significant risks arising from misinterpretation of signs, for example the costs of HGVs striking railway bridges, or the safety of users of fords;
- The UK has an unparalleled plethora of signs for vehicle restrictions, with no fewer than 10 different height restriction signs alone (and other non-authorised variants in existence on the road network)
- The use of dual-unit dimension signs (i.e. including metric as well as imperial

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units) has been encouraged by the DfT for 20 years and imperial-only signs are increasingly uncommon, but adherence to this guidance is inconsistent, with a small number of local authorities continuing to erect imperial-only signs contrary to all best practice guidance

- The DfT's own cost-benefit analysis in 2009 found a positive case for eradication of imperial-only height signs which constitute the vast majority of dimension signs, and the number of other types of sign – such as length and ford depth indicators is minimal

Given this, we call for the following simple, uncontroversial and highly cost effective changes to the TSRGD in 2015:

1. Withdraw the imperial-only versions of height, width and length signs and ford depth indicators (including temporary signs). These signs are already discouraged by the DfT in the Traffic Signs Manual and dual unit versions already exist, so this would result in a reduction in the number of sign designs available (and would not change the units used).
2. Introduce a new dual-unit length restriction sign, to allow authorities to replace separate length signs with a single dual sign, and withdraw the imperial-only sign. This would bring length restrictions into line with height and width signs, save local authorities money, and ensure foreign drivers can interpret the signs
3. Set a target date for the replacement of existing imperial-only height, width, length and depth signs. In 2009 it was proposed that these would have been replaced by 2014; most local authorities accepted this target although a handful felt this was too soon to undertake the work. Given that authorities have already had 20 years to phase in dual unit signs as part of their general maintenance cycle and the regulations will not take effect until 2015, it would appear appropriate to give a relatively short duration to withdraw these signs, allowing for mobilisation time to effect the change. Accepting that in certain local authorities there may be a large number of old signs on unclassified roads, UKMA proposes a deadline of 2 years (2017) to withdraw imperial-only dimension signs on classified roads, and allowing a further 2 years (to 2019) to withdraw the sign on unclassified roads.

These simple measures would improve the safety of Britain's roads for negligible cost and improve the consistency of signing within the UK.

For more detail supporting these points, please see our report attached.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Pollard
UKMA Secretary

Enc. Dimension signs Fol report v16.pdf

Notes:

Imperial-only signs to be withdrawn: 530, 531.1, 532.2, 629, 629.1, 629.2, 826, 7283, 7284 and all derivatives including temporary and advance directional signs.
Dual unit signs already in use to be used instead: 530A, 532.2A, 532.3A, 629A, 629.2A, 818.5, 826.1, 7283.1, 7284.1 and all derivatives including temporary and advance directional signs.

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