

1. Introduction

A number of carnivals are held in the Force area each year, involving thousands of participants and spectators.

Carnivals are the responsibility of the event organisers and not the police.

It is the organisers who, in consultation with the local authority and police, decide upon the route, road closures and crowd safety matters. The cost of hosting these events must be balanced with the intended results.

There is a significant weight of responsibility which should not be underestimated on the part of the organiser. Legal advice should be sought where appropriate.

2. Police contact

The police have traffic management and road safety officers in each area who can help.

They are contactable through your local police stations.

3. Local authority

The Local Authorities have a highways department who can also help. You will find contact numbers in the telephone directory.

4. Legal responsibility

Recent judgements and, unfortunately, accidents have focused attention on the responsibilities of police and local authority at events. Consequently illegal and unsafe vehicles or combinations cannot be used without regulation.

The organisers of a carnival have the primary responsibility to ensure that any carnival float users are adequately supervised under health and safety requirements. An example of this would be control of alcohol.

The supervision requirement for a float extends to any interaction between the float users and the general public.

5. Carnival vehicles and road traffic legislation

Carnival vehicles have always been subject to the same road traffic legislation that applies to all road-going vehicles. There are no special rules or exemptions drawn up or issued by the police. Carnival vehicles must simply comply with the same rules that the designers and manufacturers of any vehicle adhere to.

However, it would be impractical and beyond the budget of the majority of carnival clubs to construct floats to this standard and therefore for a solution to the problem, the advice of the Department of Transport was sought.

6. Vehicle special orders - a relaxation of road traffic legislation

Applications for a VSO are obtained from and submitted to the DfT. The VSO is free of charge and orders are valid for varying periods of time, usually no longer than three years, though occasionally for five years. The conditions and requirements for issue can be altered by the Secretary of State annually, therefore each year advice must be sought from the DfT concerning current requirements.

7. The Vehicle Special Order

Who can apply for a VSO?

Any carnival club or individual wishing to use ANY vehicle or combination of vehicles for the purpose of a carnival that are otherwise not legal for road use. This covers both construction and use compliant vehicles temporarily adapted as carnival vehicles and vehicles or trailers specially constructed for the purpose.

How is a VSO obtained?

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/>

8. The Police and the VSO

The Police are not involved in any part of the application procedure. It is made direct to the Secretary of State via the DfT which is responsible for any conditions imposed on the application and subsequent grant of an order.

The Local Constabulary is supplied with a copy of any VSOs issued for carnival vehicles within the Force area by the DfT and these are collated and recorded by the Road Casualty Reduction Officers.

The Road Casualty Reduction Officers will provide local 'Traffic / BCU patrol officers' (Traffic) Units with details of all VSOs current within their patrol areas,

thereby allowing all police officers to check which vehicles in their area have a current VSO. Carnival vehicles subject to and issued with a VSO must carry the document in the vehicle when being used on a road for inspection by a police officer.

Vehicles being used on a road, not in possession of a valid VSO, or those not complying with all respects of the conditions attached to their order, may be reported for all contraventions of construction and use regulations which are disclosed.

It must be remembered that often both the driver and the owner/operator will commit offences if the vehicle is being used illegally.

9. Enforcement and inspection

The VSO has a framework of general rules and conditions that apply at all times, plus some further exemptions that apply ONLY when on the processional route. That is: A procession route agreed by the local authority, police and carnival organisers between two points known as the DESIGNATED ASSEMBLY POINT and the DESIGNATED DISPERSAL POINT.

Carnival vehicles in contravention of the conditions attached to the VSO or those who have not had such an order issued lose their 'protected status' and are subject to all the requirements of the construction and use regulations.

These vehicles may, in serious cases, be immediately prohibited in addition to the driver/owner/operator being dealt with by way of court action.

Police officers will be conducting checks during carnival season to ensure that vehicles contravening construction and use regulations have a VSO and those vehicles with a VSO have complied with their conditions.

10. Which vehicles do not require a VSO?

The requirement for a VSO is defined by road traffic legislation, which sets out the maximum dimensions allowed for vehicles used in the United Kingdom.

11. Road Traffic Legislation

All motor vehicles and trailers used on our roads must comply with the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (S1 1986/1078) as amended, and the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 (S1 1989/1796) as amended.

These regulations set the overall technical specifications such as weights, dimensions, braking systems, tyres, lights, etc. for ALL vehicles.

If a carnival vehicle complies FULLY with these regulations then a VSO is not

required.

However, if any one of the regulations is not met then a VSO will be required if the vehicle is to be used within the law.

A summary of the more common maximum limits under the regulations shown below will indicate whether a vehicle is likely to require a VSO. This is only a guide and reference must be made to the actual act of Parliament or regulation.

12. Maximum length of motor vehicle and trailer (Regulation 7)

A wheeled motor vehicle: 12 metres

Trailers: a trailer with at least four wheels drawn by a motor vehicle having a maximum gross weight exceeding 3500 kg - 12 metres.

A trailer drawn by a motor vehicle having a maximum gross weight under 3500 kg - 7 metres.

Vehicle combinations: a motor vehicle towing one trailer - 18 metres.

13. Maximum width of motor vehicle and trailer (Regulation 8)

Trailers: A trailer drawn by a motor vehicle having a maximum gross weight exceeding 3500 kg - 2.55 metres.

A trailer drawn by a motor vehicle having a maximum gross weight under 3500 kg - 2.30 metres (7ft 6")

14. Braking requirements for trailers (Regulation 15)

Gross weight not exceeding 750 kg - No requirement for brakes.

Gross weight exceeding 750 kg but not exceeding 3500 kg - At least over-run braking system required.

Gross weight exceeding 3500 kg - Continuous or semi-continuous brakes required, i.e. brakes that are operated with those of the towing vehicle.

15. Maximum permitted axle weight on trailer (Regulation 78)

Where the axle is fitted with tyres with a width not less than 300 mm or with twin tyres with centres of contact with the road not less than 300 mm - 10,170 kg. In any

other case - 9,200 kg.

16. Maximum permitted laden weight of motor vehicle (Regulation 75)

A four-wheel drive vehicle, car or transit style van - Gross weight governed by the manufacturer.

A two axle wheeled agricultural motor vehicle:

Where distance between axles is less than 2.65 m - 14,230 kg

Where distance between axles is at least 2.65 m - 16,260 kg

Vehicles with more than two axles are subject to higher limits.

17. Maximum permitted laden weight for a trailer (Regulation 75)

The maximum permitted weight for the trailer can be limited by one of two requirements:

Conventional two axle trailer - 14,230 kg. Or any lower weight as specified by the trailer manufacturer.

Combination train weight for two axle trailer/two axle towing vehicle - 24,390 kg.

Or any lower weight as specified by the towing vehicle manufacturer.

Where necessary the maximum trailer weight can be calculated by subtracting the weight of the towing vehicle from the maximum train weight given for the vehicle. In all cases the lowest permitted maximum weight from either that defined in the Construction and Use Regulations or the manufacturer will be applied.

18. Number of trailers drawn by a towing vehicle (Regulation 83)

A wheeled motor vehicle - 1 trailer. This is the normal requirement. In order for a vehicle to tow two trailers in a carnival, a VSO will be required even if individually the towing vehicle and the trailers meet the above requirements and are compliant with Construction and Use Regulations.

19. Notes

The maximum gross weight to be applied is the lower of the maximum weight permitted by construction and use regulations or that declared by the manufacturer of the vehicle or trailer.

In the case of smaller vehicles such as vans or 4 x 4 vehicles it will usually be

displayed on the manufacturer's plate riveted to the vehicle, or in the owner's handbook. Advice can be sought from the manufacturer of the vehicle.

20. Notification of abnormal indivisible load

It is likely that any carnival vehicle with dimensions or weight outside the limits set by the construction and use regulations will constitute an abnormal indivisible load.

Any vehicle or trailer over 9ft 6"(2.9 m) in width and/or 38 tonnes in weight must notify the police of the proposed movement of the load. If the trailer exceeds 38 tonnes in weight then the relevant highways authority must be notified.

Having obtained a VSO for the vehicle, application and notification must be made to each police force in whose area the load is to travel and, in certain circumstances, to other agencies.

These notifications are separate issues to the VSO application and must not be ignored. A failure to notify movement of such a vehicle may lead to the driver and operator being reported for any contravention of construction and use regulations.

21. Abnormal load movements

Vehicles whose dimensions exceed those normally permitted on roads may be authorised to move in two ways - construction and use or special types movement. In either case, conditions may be attached to the movement, a breach of which does not constitute an offence in its own right but removes the movement authorisation, reverting the vehicle or trailer to the normal maximum dimensions outlined in the construction and use regulations.

22. Construction and use movement

Authorised by Regulation 82 and Schedule 12 Road Vehicles (construction and use) regulations 1986 where the vehicle complies in all respects with legal requirements but the load is exceptional in respect of length, width up to 4.3 m, or lateral or longitudinal projections, but not weight.

23. Special types movement

Authorised by the Motor Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) General Order 1979 where the vehicle or load is exceptional in respect of weight, length, width or projections.

24. Application for movement

Made to the Abnormal Loads Officer of the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary. A specimen application form is shown at Section 27 of this guide. Certain notice and conditions may be imposed before the movement is authorised depending on the dimensions and the route proposed.

If the load is particularly wide or heavy, the police may require two days notice before the load can be moved, and even then may require a police escort over difficult areas of the route.

Be guided and advised by the Abnormal Loads Officer and ensure the application is sent in well in advance.

When planning for particular events it is recommended to seek advice from the relevant carnival committee, local council and the police concerning the dimensions of vehicles and floats physically able to get to the venue and the processional route itself. You may otherwise legally build a large float that physically cannot get to the processional route.

Since carnival dates are known a long time in advance, it is recommended that all known movements for the whole carnival season are notified to the Police Traffic Management Officer at the same time (on separate forms) as early as the schedule is known.

Our thanks go to the following for the use of their guide....

**The Force Abnormal Loads Officer
Devon and Cornwall Constabulary
Exeter Traffic Unit
Middlemoor
EXETER
EX2 7HQ**