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Future of Transport Rural Strategy Call for Evidence  
Department for Transport  
Zones 1-3, Floor 3, Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London

Wednesday, 10 February 2021

**Email Response Only** to: [futureoftransport@dft.gov.uk](mailto:futureoftransport@dft.gov.uk)

Dear Sir/Madam

This response represents the views of MCIA, the trade association representing the supply side of L-Category industry. Powered Light Vehicles (PLVs) is the collective term for a range of two, three and four-wheeled vehicles for either passenger or cargo use.

PLVs are an important piece of the transport jigsaw. They can significantly expand the distances that can be travelled using active travel modes, while taking up less road space. The sector is advancing with alternative power, particularly in the lighter end of the market. PLVs offer a mode of transport which can easily connect urban and rural transport.

The online form is restrictive so please find below the MCIA response to the Call for Evidence.

Yours Faithfully

Jenny Luckman  
Transport Policy and Road Safety Manager



### **Car dependency/access to key services/access to employment and social isolation**

MCIA agrees that rural areas are very dependent on cars for all the reasons listed in the call for evidence. In addition, rural areas are being developed as dormitories for local towns, but without the necessary infrastructure improvements. Consequently, single occupancy car commuting between country and town creates urbanesque congestion on local routes. However, other than public transport and active travel, which have considerable draw backs in rural areas, very few other alternatives are supported.

Powered Light Vehicles (PLVs) give wider choice which suit a number of scenarios, especially in rural areas. These include powered two wheelers (PTWs) which encompasses traditional mopeds, scooters and mopeds. Also included in the L-Category sector are small, lightweight 3 and 4 wheeled vehicles, usually electric which give many advantages of the private car. For example, some are fully enclosed offering weather protection. All L-Category vehicles can travel further than pedal cycles or even e-bikes making them an appropriate choice for many different journey types. So while there is definitely a dependence on cars, there needs to be encouragement and incentives by Government to make realistic low and zero carbon choices and PLVs would offer this.

In terms of access to key services and goods, for all the reasons mentioned in the Call for Evidence, PLVs can offer people an independent mode of transport to access these services. In addition they are a suitable option when these services need delivering to the community. PTWs for example have been used for many years to deliver blood efficiently across the country. Many people now require their goods delivered directly to them and as has been proved with fast food delivery, PLVs offer a perfect solution and can be used for delivering medicine as well as shopping on a smaller scale from a local shop in a rural area.

PLVs are already used to support people getting to work and education. Wheels to Work is a scheme which loans PTWs to those who would not otherwise be able to travel. Many of these are in rural areas where public transport is not sufficient for their needs.

### **Issues facing rural areas**

As mentioned in the Call for Evidence, there is a projected growth in the older generation in rural areas. It is essential to create a transport network that considers this. PLVs offer 2, 3 or 4 wheel vehicles and as such are flexible to the needs of the user. The older generation who may not be as steady on two wheels, can certainly benefit from the 3 or 4 wheel PLV models. They are less likely to need larger vehicles so PLVs will give adequate provision, they are easier to park, are cost effective and economical. All of these considerations are important to the older generation.

### **Transport trends in rural areas**

There seems to be a national focus on ensuring that active travel is at the forefront of policy, but it is important to accept that in some situations this is not a viable choice. This can be particularly true in rural areas. Rural roads, often narrow with no road markings, can have poor lighting, less footpaths and higher speed limits. These are not necessarily best suited to walking and cycling. As accepted in the Call for Evidence, public transport links are not always reliable or suitable and therefore private transport becomes the most reliable option for users.

With this in mind, government and transport authorities should not accept that the car is the natural choice. PLVs are smaller, lightweight and contribute positively to air quality improvements. National and Local Government should specifically promote PLV use.

Some of the L-Categories are particularly well suited as delivery vehicles with the last mile model in mind. They can usually take a heavier payload and travel further distance than bicycle based alternatives.

### **Transport trends in rural areas of micromobility**

It is difficult to see how the shared model could work in rural areas. The use of privately owned micromobility however, particularly e-scooters may be popular and therefore this needs to be fully considered in terms of legislation. Much of the thinking around micromobility and the trial criteria has been based on an urban environment. The mix of traffic should be carefully examined given the speed differences and types of road in many rural areas to those allowed by e-scooters in the trial.

Rural roads are often poorly surfaced, have higher speed limits and are not as well lit. All of these things should be considered.

### **More effective integration of journeys in rural areas**

Electric PLV sharing schemes are becoming more commonplace in urban areas around the world in cities such as Paris, Berlin and Barcelona. There are also some schemes in the UK. There is no reason why this could not be easily extended to include rural areas, although the hire times may be longer than average urban journeys. Schemes are accessible and usually operated through simple mobile apps, although there would have to be a reasonable level of demand in rural areas to make such schemes financially viable. The popularity of vehicle sharing schemes demonstrates the changing nature of vehicle use, which does not necessarily involve ownership.

At a recent All Party Parliamentary Group for Micromobility meeting, Voi Technology said that they would soon be launching a moped sharing scheme. Given the ability for PLVs to extend the range of journeys compared to e-scooters or e-bikes, they would be ideal to service both urban and rural areas.

### **Examples of the transport trends in rural areas of new modes of transport**

The EU-instigated 'RESOLVE' project highlighted some exciting and innovative PLV designs and concepts which would certainly provide feasible options for rural transport. These small, lightweight vehicles provide options for both solo riders and passenger options.

From a delivery perspective, DPD have already acknowledged the benefits of PLVs and added a number of Paxsters to their electric vehicle fleet. Again, while the Paxster may have been designed with urban deliveries in mind, it could equally service rural deliveries from a local depot for short to mid length journeys.

### **Examples of transport trends in rural areas of strong community links**

Online orders and quick efficient deliveries are crucial to customers. PLVs have already proven how versatile they are in this area. From food deliveries, emergency service calls, parcel deliveries and blood deliveries, they have a clear role to play in the delivery network in both urban and rural areas.

PLVs will allow businesses to deliver over a longer distance than e-cargo bikes would allow for example, while maintaining clean credentials.

### **Incorporation of the key principles in the Future of Transport: Rural Strategy**

While many of the principles from the Future of Transport: Urban Strategy would be equally relevant to the rural strategy, one refers to short urban journeys and active travel so this would not be suitable for inclusion.

A principal which focusses on choosing The Right Vehicle for The Right Journey would add benefit to the rural and urban strategy. This would essentially encourage and incentivise users to consider their journey and then opt for the most suitable vehicle. This may be walking in some instances, it may be cycling, but for medium to longer journeys, possible with a little baggage, a PLV would be more suitable than a car.

### **Specific considerations for testing and trialling new technologies in rural areas**

Regardless of what technologies are trialled, it must consider all modes and how they interact with each other in a rural setting.