

Appendix B

Structural vs Environmental Weight Restriction

Weight restrictions generally fall into two categories; those introduced for environmental reasons and those implemented to protect weak structures on the highway such as bridges. A summary for each is provided below.

Environmental weight restrictions

An environment weight restriction can be imposed for environmental reasons on routes which have been identified as unsuitable for use by heavy goods vehicles, and where there is a better and equally convenient alternative.

An environmental weight restriction applies to vehicles with a maximum gross weight of 7.5 tonnes or above (it can be varied to 18 tonnes or above). The maximum gross weight is the maximum permitted weight of the vehicle when fully loaded.

Environmental restrictions can be applied to individual routes or a defined area of roads that have been determined as unsuitable for use by vehicles over a certain width or weight. They are useful in preventing heavy goods vehicles from using minor roads as inappropriate short-cuts between main routes.

Reasons to introduce a restriction of this nature include:

- To prevent damage to the highway infrastructure (carriageway, footways, street furniture) and buildings.
- Protect the character and environment of rural areas, villages and residential estates.
- Manage congestion on the roads.
- Reduce risks to vulnerable road users, including pedestrians and cyclists.

An environmental weight restriction will nearly always include exemptions for:

- Vehicles making deliveries or collections at premises within the restriction.
- Vehicles working on or near the roads in question.
- Emergency service and military vehicles.
- Buses, coaches and other public service vehicles.

This means that vehicles requiring legitimate access within the area covered by the environmental weight limit, such as to deliver to a shop or access an industrial unit, are permitted.

An environmental weight restriction cannot be varied to prohibit vehicles less than 7.5 tonnes.

Structural weight restrictions

A structural weight restriction is imposed on routes where following an assessment, it is deemed that the structure is weak and as such, cannot bear vehicles over a certain weight, and can only safely accommodate a lower load. Restrictions of this type will typically cover only short sections, where the structure is located.

The restriction can be varied to prohibit weights over 3 tonnes(3T), as well as 7.5T, 10T, 13T, 18T, 26T and 33T.

This restriction applies to all vehicles that exceed the weight on the sign including buses/delivery vehicles etc.; there are no exemptions.

Where an assessment has identified a weak structure necessitating the need to prohibit all vehicles over 3 tonnes, a structural weight restriction can apply. It is not possible to apply an environmental weight restriction, as this permits vehicles up to 7.5 tonnes, as well vehicles exceeding this weight due to the exemptions that are allowed. This would therefore cause irreplaceable damage to the structure and create a safety issue.