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Date: 17 July 2006
Our Ref: **F0000401**

Dear

I am writing in reply to your request for information concerning permits issued under Sections 19 and 22 of the Transport Act 1985.

Section 19 permits exempt certain bodies fulfilling the criteria from the requirement to hold a public service vehicle operator's licence. Small bus permits, covering vehicles with 9-16 seats, may be issued to bodies concerned with

- (a) education;
- (b) religion;
- (c) social welfare;
- (d) recreation; or
- (e) other activities of benefit to the community

Large bus permits, covering vehicles with 17 or more seats, "may be granted...to any body which assists and co-ordinates the activities of bodies" concerned with the above areas (Section 19(5) of the Transport Act 1985).

The vehicles used under the permit must not be used "with a view to profit nor incidentally to an activity which is itself carried on with a view to profit" (Section 19(2)(b)).

How many voluntary designated bodies are there that can issue permits for section 19-22?

Designated bodies can only issue small bus permits, under section 19(7) of the Transport Act 1985. The issue of large (s.19(5)) and community (s.22) bus permits is reserved to the relevant Traffic Commissioner, who may also issue small bus permits.

The exact number of designated bodies is difficult to estimate, as it includes all the county and metropolitan district councils. A list of designated bodies was set out in the schedule attached to The Section 19 Minibus (Designated Bodies) Order 1987 (Statutory Instrument no.1229), and amended by the Section 19 (Designated Bodies) (Amendment) Orders 1990 (S.I. no. 1708), 1995 (S.I. no. 1540) and 1997 (S.I. no. 535). I enclose a copy of the original listing, for information. Both the Order and the amendments are published on the Office of Public Sector Information website, www.opsi.gov.uk.

A list of voluntary organisations authorised to issue small bus permits is also included as Appendix A to the *Passenger transport provided by voluntary groups under the Section 19 or 22 permit system: Guide for Operators* (PSV385, December 2004), published on our website, www.vosa.gov.uk. A copy is enclosed with this letter.

How many of these permits are in force?

Not known. However, in the period 1998-99 to 2005-06 a total of 34,618 small bus permits, 792 large bus permits and 74 community bus permits were issued by all authorities. The permits remain in force until surrendered or until revoked by the Traffic Commissioner.

How many permits have the Traffic Commissioners issued over the last three years?

In the period 2003-04 to 2005-06, the Traffic Commissioners issued a total of 5,049 small bus permits, 282 large bus permits and 20 community bus permits. Further details are published in the Traffic Commissioners' Annual Report, available on the Department for Transport website, www.dft.gov.uk. I attach copies of the relevant pages from the 2003-04 and 2004-05 reports. The annual report for 2005-06 is due to be published later this year.

How many public inquiries have been held into the running of section 19 organisations over the last three years?

Notices of forthcoming public inquiries and the Traffic Commissioners' decisions are published in *Notices and Proceedings*, available on our website, www.vosa.gov.uk. To the best of our knowledge, no public inquiries involving section 19 organisations have been held in the last three years.

How many inspections were carried out by VOSA staff of section 19 vehicles?

Not known. Details of vehicle inspections are entered into our computer database, but the system does not allow us to differentiate between vehicles operated on a section 19 permit and other public service vehicles.

How many restricted licences for minibuses are in force?

3,264

Please supply a copy of the section 19 permit for Durham County Council and a copy of the original application form

We contacted you about this part of your request on 3 July, as the Council hold a number of permits under Section 19. You indicated that you were requesting

- a) the number of Section 19 permits issued to the council
- b) details of the person responsible for Section 19 permits

As I explained in my letter, Durham County Council is a designated body, able to issue small bus permits in its own right. We have records of 35 large bus permits issued to the council. 32 permits were issued to the Director of Social Services (unnamed) and the remaining three to the Education Department.

The original application forms were signed by various individuals – the Social Services permits were applied for by the Transport Manager (1993) and the Team Manager: Transport (1999). The Education permits were applied for by the Operations Manager: Transport, Admissions, Child Protection and Health (2003). The names of the individuals holding these posts are exempt from release under Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act, which covers personal information. However, if you contact the Council I am sure they will be happy to direct you to the current post holder.

Advice and assistance

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us, quoting reference **F0000401**. The enclosed sheet provides further information, including details of our complaints procedures.

Yours sincerely

VOSA Information Access

Enclosures

- The Section 19 Minibus (Designated Bodies) Order 1987 (Statutory Instrument no.1229)
- Appendix A, *Passenger transport provided by voluntary groups under the Section 19 or 22 permit system: Guide for Operators*
- Table 15, *Traffic Commissioners' Annual Reports 2003-4 and 2004-05*