

# Rules on driving times suspended for the gritters

The regulations dictating how long snow clearance drivers can be behind the wheel have been suspended due to the severe and prolonged weather conditions facing Scotland.

In a change to domestic drivers' hours regulations, a suspension on time limit rules, which can be applied under emergency events criteria due to the heavy snow, will give councils greater flexibility in ensuring that snow ploughs are available to clear roads and to keep Scotland's transport networks open.

The Scottish Government has also secured a relaxation in drivers' hours regulations for feed supplies to the country's poultry farms.

A number of farms – mainly in the north and east of Scotland – have reported that while traffic access was clear, EU Drivers' Hours Rules meant that animal feed supplies have been badly impacted by heavy snowfall elsewhere on the delivery routes.

First Minister Alex Salmond said:

“Scotland is in the grip of the worst snow and ice conditions at this time of year since the 1960s and this is having serious knock on effects on our roads. Councils across Scotland are working hard to keep roads clear and I congratulate the men and women across Scotland who are working so hard to make this happen.

“By temporarily suspending time limits on driving time for gritters, we can ensure more roads are kept clear and give local authorities greater flexibility to deal with these difficult conditions and keep Scotland moving.

“The winter months are always a challenging time for the farming industry and there has been an unexpected impact on poultry farmers. By securing a relaxation in driver time regulations, we will help ensure these companies receive essential supplies and remain in business, in spite of ongoing difficult weather conditions.”

Rural Affairs Secretary Richard Lochhead added:

“We are closely and constantly monitoring the situation across the country, including the impact on agriculture, and are in regular contact with farmers and the NFUS.

“The poultry facilities are generally still accessible to vehicles, but feed stock delivery drivers are in many cases unable to carry out their deliveries as they are unable to undertake the work within the driver hours regulations currently in place.

“The granting of this temporary relaxation is therefore very welcome and I hope will help ensure that vital food stocks get through to the many affected units across the country.”