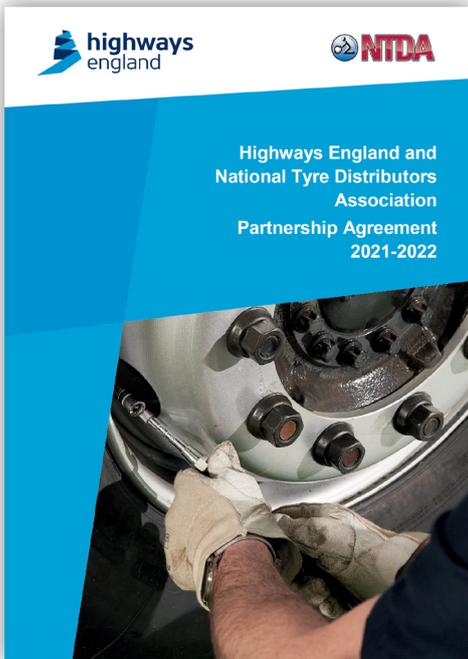




## NTDA signs strategic partnership agreement with Highways England



**The NTDA has signed a ground-breaking strategic partnership agreement with Highways England.**

The agreement was signed by Highways England's Acting CEO Nick Harris and NTDA CEO Stefan Hay at this year's PROFCON 21 recovery industry event held at Brooklands Motor Museum in Surrey on 29th July 2021, which the NTDA National Chairman Martin O'Brien of Lodge Tyre Co. Ltd also attended to represent the wider interests of Commercial Tyre Service Providers working roadside.

This agreement, together with a second agreement signed with the recovery industry, sees Highways England making a commitment to the NTDA and the Independent Recovery Industry Work Providers to work together to improve communications and achieve best practice across the industry, whilst encouraging commercial tyre technicians and vehicle recovery operators (VROs) to always work safely on the strategic road network.

The new agreements follow an industry first last March 2020, which saw Highways England sign an initial agreement to unite with strategic stakeholders within the independent recovery industry which included:

- Professional Recovery Operators Federation (PROF);
- European Rescue & Recovery Initiative (ERRI);
- London Association of Recovery Operators (LARO);
- Association of Vehicle Recovery Operators (AVRO);
- Roadside Rescue & Recovery Association (RRRA);
- Federation of Vehicle Recovery Associations (FOVRA).

Nick Harris, acting CEO, Highways England said: *"In March 2020, Highways England signed a strategic partnership agreement to unite with the independent recovery industry. Since signing the agreement, we have taken positive steps to update recovery protocols on motorways and to improve our day-to-day operational communications between vehicle recovery operators and Highways England. I am now pleased to have signed two additional strategic partnership agreements with the independent recovery work providers and the NTDA. These agreements, which have been made possible by the help and support of PROF, further demonstrate Highways England's commitment to work more closely with the recovery industry."*



With a range of independent bodies operating within the industry and Highways England responsible for the network they operate on, it became clear that further operational and strategic guidance would benefit all parties, which is how the initial agreement was born. Since signing the original agreement just over a year ago, great progress has been made in working more closely with both the recovery industry and the NTDA.

This work includes:

- The formation of a new Highways England Recovery Industry Executive Committee chaired by Nick Harris and on which the NTDA is represented by Stefan Hay;
- The creation of seven new operations led regional recovery groups, to improve day-to-day operational communication between VROs and Highways England;
- Producing a new joint working protocol guidance document covering the recovery of large vehicles on the network;

- Launching a new direct 'Recovery In' phone numbers to enable improved two-way communication between VROs and Highways England traffic officers;
- Creating four new recovery focused signs to help support the safety of VROs working on our network and provide motorists with information and awareness of a VROs presence and recovery activity.

NTDA CEO Stefan Hay said: *"We are delighted to be entering into this new strategic partnership with Highways England which is extremely important, and already proving to be highly productive, for the Association. The level of access the NTDA and its members now have at both operational and executive level within Highways England is unprecedented and will, undoubtedly, prove to be extremely valuable in ensuring safer roadside working for those REACT trained commercial tyre technicians deployed across the strategic road network."*

Highways England recognises both commercial tyre technicians and recovery operators as essential service providers and the importance of the role they play helping to clear incidents and keep traffic moving.

The agreement with the NTDA has given the opportunity for all involved to identify areas of joint working and respective areas of interest. It sets out a commitment to work together towards issue resolution and closer partner working in the future.

Because Covid-19 restrictions prevented the agreement being signed earlier, some joint initiatives have already been implemented. For example; a number of NTDA representatives from Tructyre, Watling Tyre Services, Lodge Tyre, HiQ Tyres & Autocare Preston and Brakes and Tyres on your Drive are now members of Highways England's Regional Recovery Groups and are feeding in the commercial tyre service provider's concerns and issues to Highways England management at regional level.



Furthermore, a series of successful Commercial Tyre Technician Motorway Workshop sessions between the NTDA and Highways England have been held on TEAMS, where REACT guidance, REACT training and improving the communication and partnership working between both parties are being reviewed with the aim of producing jointly agreed working protocols. Again, NTDA member participation has been excellent with full members Central Tyre, Tructyre, Watling Tyre Services and Lodge Tyre, the training departments of Bridgestone, Continental and Michelin and training providers Roadside Safety Training and Leading Edge all participating.

One key development, amongst several others, is that Highways England intends to give internal briefings to Traffic Officers (TOs) to explain how the REACT training and licencing works.

Highways England is now also bringing incidents to the NTDA's attention where REACT technicians are not following best practice, which has allowed the NTDA to intervene resulting in one technician being removed from roadside duties and sent on refresher training, despite the fact the technician worked for a non-NTDA member company.

Highways England had also been extremely helpful in reviewing NTDA REACT training and other materials and providing amendments and further input and has also agreed to provide a speaker at the NTDA Tyre Industry Conference in Birmingham on October 7th.

The NTDA, in return, is supporting Highways England with its **Summer Checks Campaign**, which was launched on the 19th July and which will run through to 5th September. A series of joint branded impactful posters and digital assets, (see right), have been produced encouraging motorists to check their tyres before setting out on long journeys during the holiday season.

