



## Department for Transport

Peter Harvey MBE  
Current NASP Chair

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton**  
Minister for Roads, Buses and Places

Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000  
E-Mail: [baroness.vere@dft.gov.uk](mailto:baroness.vere@dft.gov.uk)

Web site: [www.gov.uk/dft](http://www.gov.uk/dft)

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Dear Peter,

Thank you for your email of 11 January, about extending the validity period of driving theory test certificates during the current restrictions in England.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement of the national lockdown in England, all practical driving lessons and tests have been suspended. I fully appreciate the challenges that this will cause learners, instructors and trainers but the Prime Minister, on the advice of scientific advisors, was clear that we need to take action to protect the NHS and save lives.

The maximum duration of two years between passing the theory test and a subsequent practical test is in place for road safety reasons; to ensure that a candidate's knowledge is current. This validity period is set in legislation and after careful consideration, the Government has no current plans to lay further legislation to extend it.

I realise this will affect and disappoint some learners, especially young people, but it is important that road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date at the critical point that they drive unsupervised for the first time. Those with theory test certificates expiring will have taken their test in early 2019. Since then, their lessons and practice sessions will have been significantly curtailed during recent lockdowns and it is likely that their knowledge base will have diminished. Research suggests that this would be particularly harmful for hazard perception skills, a key factor in road safety.

Ensuring new drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the training of new drivers, who are disproportionately represented in casualty statistics. Taking all this into consideration, the decision has been made not to extend theory test certificates and learners will need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires.

MOT due dates for cars, motorcycles and light vans were automatically extended by six months from 30 March 2020 to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Drivers were, however, advised that all vehicles must continue to be properly maintained and kept in a roadworthy condition. Many garages stayed open during the first phase of national restrictions. This meant that whilst exemptions were in place, many motorists chose not to make use of them and still had their vehicles MOT'd.

Driver theory testing and MOT testing represent very different issues in terms of underlying legislation, road safety risk and potential risk of COVID-19 transmission; they cannot be directly compared.

Minimising the risk to road safety has always been a priority in our response to COVID-19. Although I understand you believe an extension to theory tests should be implemented, ensuring that new drivers have the current relevant knowledge and hazard perception skills is a vital part of the training of new drivers, who are most at risk of being involved in an accident on the road.

I am grateful to all learners, instructors and training bodies for their continued patience during this time.

Yours,  
Charlotte

**BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON**