

IMMEDIATE REVOCATION AND BAN FOR SCHOOL BUS OPERATOR



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The operation of school contracts with vehicles with expired MoT test certificates and vehicle excise duty, together with issues over vehicle maintenance, have led to the immediate revocation of the three-vehicle O-Licence held by Sowerby Bridge-based David Pilling and his three-year disqualification from holding or obtaining a PSV O-Licence. In addition, Traffic Commissioner (TC) Tim Blackmore disqualified Mr Pilling from acting as a Transport Manager (TM) for three years, after which he will have to pass a TM's CPC exam.

David Pilling, trading as Twin Valley Coaches, of Industrial Road, Sowerby Bridge, had been called before the TC at a Leeds Public Inquiry. At the outset Mr Pilling said that he had decided to surrender his licence as he did not have the time to run it properly.

The TC said that he would not accept the surrender of the licence. An investigation followed intelligence suggesting that buses on school runs and private hire were not being maintained properly. When Mr Pilling drove a vehicle into his operating centre, Vehicle Examiner (VE) Alan Lodge noted that it had no current MoT and the road tax had expired. Of the four vehicles in possession three had significantly out

of date MoTs and two were untaxed.

Mr Pilling said that he had no reasonable excuse. He appreciated that as a result the vehicles were uninsured. He had been honestly surprised.

The TC said that as an experienced operator and professional Transport Manager he should not have been surprised. One vehicle had a MoT test in February and had failed. Another had had a test booked in November 2018 but never turned up. Mr Pilling had been doing his own inspections. The VE had reported that the facilities were unsuitable as the inspection pit had been used for storage for some time.

Mr Pilling had no formal qualifications for inspecting vehicles. The VE's opinion was that Mr Pilling was not inspecting the vehicles properly, with the inspection records not properly completed. An undertaking to have roller brake tests every 12 weeks had not been complied with and there were no records for all of the vehicles. The inspection sheets that were produced appeared to all have been filled in at the same time.

No driver defect reports were available, with Mr Pilling saying they had been stolen along with tachograph records by a previous driver but he was unable to provide a name and

it was not reported to the police. An 'S' marked prohibition was issued in March at a school bus check to a vehicle being driven by Mr Pilling for a series of defects. Clearly no walk round check had been undertaken that morning. The tachograph calibration was over three years out of date.

There was clear evidence from tachograph records that Mr Pilling had carried on using vehicles after their MoT had expired on a large number of occasions.

In his decision the TC said that Mr Pilling had knowingly and deliberately disregarded public safety. The fact that a vehicle failed its test in February showed that he was aware of the requirements.

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