



## **PRESS RELEASE** **20 July 2015 – Immediate**

### **Aggregates Association Defends Cartel-Busting Concrete Trucks.**

The British Aggregates Association, BAA, has come out strongly in support of volumetric concrete mixer trucks. It has also labelled those calling for additional regulation as being ‘anti-competitive.’

The advent of volumetric concrete trucks, which are in effect self-contained mobile batching plants, has transformed the ready-mix industry. They can match deliveries to the amount required and avoid returned material penalties. They can also perform multiple deliveries and keep construction teams working effectively with concrete on demand. In addition, they provide a valuable service to the DIY market, especially at weekends when the large suppliers are often closed.

Because volumetrics are classed as plant rather than trucks, they are subject to less regulation than conventional trucks. This allows them to operate to their ‘design’ weight rather than an arbitrarily set limit. However, they are heavier than drum mixers and cutting their carrying capacity would make them uneconomic.

All of the major quarry and ready-mix companies are now owned by the cement industry. The current call for additional regulation may be more about competition concerns than health and safety. Volumetrics provide a rare point of entry into a market which is dominated by multi-nationals. However, it would appear that the recently developed ability of small operators to enter this market is resented in certain quarters.

The BAA does recognise the need for some additional regulation. It would be both equitable and sensible for volumetrics to undergo annual MOT inspections and for their drivers to hold HGV licences.

However, the imposition of the Road Transport Directive, RTD, with its restriction in working hours, would be particularly difficult for them to cope with. For single mixer owner drivers it would be catastrophic as it would be impossible for them to finance, operate and maintain their vehicles on a 48 hour week.

#### **BAA Director Robert Durward;**

“The BAA warned the Department for Transport in 2005 that the imposition of the RTD would mean the end of the road for owner drivers. We even met with DfT officials in London in an attempt to get this point across. Unfortunately no-one listened and, as a result, owner drivers have been all but wiped out. An unintended consequence perhaps, but one that was flagged up well in advance. The loss of this valuable entry point into road haulage has fundamentally changed the nature of the haulage industry, reduced competition and driven up prices.”

“Not only have volumetrics increased customer choice and availability, but they have opened up a hitherto restricted market to some much needed competition. A degree of additional regulation would be appropriate but it must be sensitively applied. The grey areas must be eliminated not just for the industry but for those who police it as well. Every sector has its rogue operators but enforcement not regulation should be the first port of call. Under-regulation can be revisited if necessary; however over-regulation often cannot as the damage done cannot be reversed. What happened to owner drivers in the haulage sector provides a compelling reason to get this one right.”

Ends

Notes for editors;

1. Volumetrics are better for the environment as they reduce cement wastage, the production of which is recognised as one of the greatest causes of manmade CO2.
2. There are calls from certain sectors of the industry, including the Mineral Products Association, MPA, to step up the regulations on volumetrics to 'create a level playing field.' However, this is misleading as volumetrics do not compete on all fours with conventional mixer trucks and cannot be used for high volume contracts. They are designed to do multi-drop rather than bulk deliveries and are incapable of competing on a so called level playing field.
3. Volumetric operators often have to buy cement from their competitors at higher prices.
4. Volumetrics tend to travel relatively slowly within a restricted area and spend most of their time off-road on construction sites.
5. Matching their weight regulations with conventional trucks would leave them unable to carry sufficient material to make a profit. It would also prevent them being able to complete standard concrete pours without having to reload. It would not be practical for them to return to base for more material once concrete has started to set.
6. Volumetrics can also be used as back up for a fixed plant and the ability to maintain supply during a breakdown is often a major consideration in gaining an order for ready-mix concrete.
7. A number of operators who began with one volumetric have become significant ready-mix suppliers.

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