

Towing



If you intend to tow a boat (or any other kind of trailer for that matter) there are a number of legal issues that you should be aware of. Remember, ignorance of the law is no defence!

Driving Licence

As a driver you must not tow more than your licence permits you to and you must not overload your vehicle or trailer. The following information on licences is taken from DVLA Fact Sheet INF 30 "Requirements for Towing Trailers in Great Britain":

All drivers who passed a car test before 1 January 1997 retain their existing entitlement to tow trailers until their licence expires. This means they are generally entitled to drive a vehicle and trailer combination up to 8.25 tonnes MAM (Maximum Authorised Mass, also referred to as permissible maximum weight (pmw) or gross vehicle weight (gvw)). They also have entitlement to drive a minibus with a trailer over 750kg MAM. However, one element that has apparently caught out many long-term licence holders has been where a replacement licence has been issued if the original licence was lost or destroyed. Your new licence will not include the B+E element (see below). Those who have altered their licence due to name or address changes should find that their original entitlements are transferred.



Old style licence

13.	9. Cat.	10. From	11. To	12. Codes
14.	B	01-07-80	21-04-32	
	BE	01-07-80	21-04-32	
	C1	01-07-80	21-04-32	
	C1E	01-07-80	21-04-32	107
	D1	01-07-80	21-04-32	101
	D1E	01-07-80	21-04-32	101,119
	Issuing Authority	<i>tkinp</i>		
	License number	115,71		
	Category			
	12.Information codes			

New style licence

Drivers who passed a car test on or after 1 January 1997 are required to pass an additional driving test in order to gain entitlement to category B+E and all larger vehicles (see the DVLA website for more details: www.dvla.gov.uk).

However, Category B vehicles (Vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes MAM and with up to 8 passenger seats) may be coupled with a trailer up to 750kg MAM (allowing a combined weight up to 4.25 tonnes MAM). They may also tow a trailer over 750kg MAM provided the MAM of the trailer does not exceed the unladen weight of the towing vehicle, and the combination does not exceed 3.5 tonnes MAM.

For example:

(i) a vehicle with an unladen weight of 1.25 tonnes and a MAM of 2 tonnes coupled with a trailer with a MAM of 1.25 tonnes could be driven by the holder of a category B entitlement. This is because the MAM of the combination does not exceed 3.5 tonnes and also because the MAM of the trailer does not exceed the unladen weight of the drawing vehicle.

Whereas:

(ii) the same vehicle with an unladen weight of 1.25 tonnes and a MAM of 2 tonnes when coupled with a trailer with a MAM of 1.5 tonnes would fall within category B+E.

This is because although the combined weight of the vehicle and trailer is within the 3.5 tonnes MAM limit, the MAM of the trailer is more than the unladen weight of the towing vehicle.

To put this in context, the new boat and trailer weighs about 1200 kg and the old boat 1000 kg, allowing for fuel, shot, etc. However, the Indespension trailer (Totnes Diver 1) has a plated gross vehicle weight of 1800 kg and the Bramber trailer (Totnes Diver 2) of 1280 kg, so these are the values that must be used to calculate the combined MAM.

The plated gross vehicle weight can be found on the manufacturer's plate, which is usually found on the drawbar of the trailer, as shown below:



The Shogun has a gross vehicle weight of 2500 kg, so, with a trailer gross vehicle weight of even 1100 kg, the combined MAM is over the 3500 kg limit. This means in practice that in order to tow either of the TSAC RIBs with the Shogun you must either have a pre-1997 licence, or pass the additional test.

Oddly, if you have a car or 4WD with an unladen weight of more than 1300 kg and a MAM of not more than 2200 kg you do not need the additional test. As

a guide, a Ford Mondeo saloon has a kerb weight of 1360 kg (1470 kg for the estate) and a MAM of 1895 kg (2065 kg for the estate) and would be okay.

Insurance

Whilst the club insures the boat and trailer and this includes towing, this does not cover damaged caused to third parties by the trailer (unless it is uncoupled from the towing vehicle).

The Shogun insurance (there's a copy of the insurance certificate in the glove box, together with the breakdown cover) covers both vehicle and trailer when it is being towed against damage caused to third parties. However, if you are using your own vehicle, and hence your own car insurance, you should check that you are covered. This is something that easily gets missed, so check your policy or call your underwriters now while you think about it.

Please be aware that the boat insurance requires that the trailer is immobilised with a wheel clamp (and preferably hitch lock) when left unattended, unless placed in a locked secure building or compound.

You are only insured to drive the Shogun if you are 25 or older.

Dimensions

The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 give the following limits for towing vehicles with a permissible gross weight of 3.5 tonnes or less: **Length** of trailer must be less than 7m (excluding the trailer drawbar) and overall length of the towing vehicle and trailer must not exceeding 18m.

The trailer **width** must be less than 2.3 metres. The boat must not overhang the sides by more than 30cm. In this case the total cannot exceed 2.9 metres and reflective triangles must be fitted no less than 15cm from the outermost edge of the boat.

Both our boats have an overall beam of 2.28m so when towing TSAC boats you do not need to worry about this.

Height is not limited by law.

Anything **overhanging** the trailer must be covered so as not to endanger anyone. Obviously the props are the main thing in our case.

Weight

The main weight limits are to do with your licence as described above. However, if the trailer's design axle weight is more than 750Kg (and both our boats are) the trailer must be braked (which both are).

It must also be braked if the laden weight is more than half the weight of the towing vehicle. This is often the case with a dive boat, so watch this one if you have a small car.

Vehicle manufacturers normally recommend a maximum weight of trailer appropriate to each model. Details can usually be found in the vehicle's handbook or obtained from car dealerships. The following website is also useful: www.cuddles.abelgratis.net/kerbweights.htm. You should not tow weights heavier than this regardless of the above.

To give some examples,

The Shogun has a kerb weight of 1820-1935 kg and a gross vehicle weight of 2500 kg. The handbook specifies a maximum trailer weight of 750 kg unbraked and 2800 kg braked.

A Ford Sierra 1.6LX has a kerb weight of 1044 kg and a recommended maximum braked towing weight of 1100 kg. A Peugeot 406 Estate 2l has a kerb weight of 1400 kg and a recommended maximum braked towing weight of 1500 kg.

Speed

Local speed limits permitting (such as in urban areas), **maximum** towing speed is 60mph on motorways and dual carriageways and 50mph single carriageways.

Lane restrictions

When towing, you are not permitted in the outside lane of motorways with 3 or more lanes **at any time** unless other lanes are blocked.

More Information

If you'd like to know more on towing and trailers, the National Trailer and Towing Association's "Guide to Safe & Legal Towing" which can be found on their website at www.ntta.co.uk/law/ is very informative.