



Dear Readers, only one letter (that we can publish) this month, following several months where we have had a selection to choose from. We do appreciate your feedback, comments and criticisms. However, we can only keep this page going if you take a little time to send us your thoughts and opinions. We are happy to receive these via mail, email or fax or you can even dictate it over the phone to one of our staff. We are also happy to withhold your name and address or even publish a good letter if it is sent anonymously. But please, do keep them coming through. The editor

Dear Sir,

Your article on page 49 (C&A March) regarding the CPCS revamping its training scheme just highlights as far as I am concerned, the ridiculous situation in the way the CITB and CPCS dictate the training, or rather the certification of specialist plant operators in this country. The CITB/CPCS is a faceless quango that seems only interested in generating money to cover its inefficient operations. You could not dream up a more complicated organisation or scheme if you tried. I do not believe, given this group's track record, that any attempt to simplify certification will go anywhere as long as they are involved.

I see that having set some unrealistically long training periods for some plant and other categories the organisation is looking at or might have already cut some of its five or six day courses to four days. Why? Because the excessive requirement meant no one came along for training. The end result is that we have less people certified than we might have done if we had had a more realistic course length. Trouble is that a shorter course might let operators through who should never get on a piece of equipment?

My feeling though is the industry will be far better served with a very tough practical and theoretical test administered in the same disciplined way as the driving test. A prospective crane driver could join a hirer and work as an assistant on a larger crane, while studying crane theory and learning how to operate a crane or by attending an operator training course - all without any involvement of the CITB. Then when the person or his employer felt he was ready he could take a crane operators test, with both physical and theoretical sections to it.

The test could be organised by a body like the CITB with those who passed obtaining a crane drivers licence. If they fail they would simply have to sit it again just as you do with a driving licence. A car is one of the most dangerous pieces of equipment in the country - a lethal weapon in the hands of an inexperienced or bad driver and yet we let 17 year olds drive so why not follow a similar programme for cranes? Or Mewps for that matter.

The point is that instead of trying to vet and approve the training all that would be required would be the vetting of a tough format test or examination.

The programme could include the logging of a certain number of operating hours to obtain a full and permanent licence? The whole point is that dictating the duration of a training course and then virtually giving someone a permit when they have completed it, is not logical. Some people are naturals and will pick up the basics in a day or two while others could be on the course for a year and would never be any good. Why do we follow this route to certification with a crane or other plant and yet would never dream of doing it this way with a road vehicle?

The CPCS scheme should be updated. It should be phased out as fast as possible and a tough examination system put in its place that is close to an HGV programme or that required for London taxi drivers.

Yours Truly

Tom Feeney

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Letters to the editor

Please send letters to the editor: Cranes&Access: PO Box 6998, Brackley NN13 5WY, UK. We reserve the right to edit letters for length. We also point out that letters are the personal views of our readers and not necessarily the views of the Vertical Press Ltd or its staff.