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PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR BUS AND LORRY DRIVERS

For the first time, Gibraltar's bus and lorry drivers are coming into line with the EU's driver qualifications which were introduced in 2008 for professional bus drivers and in 2009 for professional lorry drivers. The aim of the EU Certificate of Professional Competence [CPC] is to maintain high standards of road safety, health and safety and driving among professional drivers and, by September of this year, all bus and lorry drivers within the EU must have completed this mandatory CPC training.

Drivers, who had obtained the bus licence on or before the 9 September 2008 or the lorry licence on or before 9 September 2009, were automatically entitled to the CPC. This is called "acquired rights". However, to remain qualified, drivers must undertake 35 hours of periodic training every five years. It follows that all bus drivers must be CPC certified by 9 September 2013 and all lorry drivers must be CPC certified by 9 September 2014.

This is the first training to be offered in Gibraltar and it has been taking place this week at Bleak House and the John Mackintosh Hall under the instruction of John Reape from Ireland. John has an engineering background and he is a qualified accident investigator and CPC trainer.

In addition to basic mechanical knowledge of buses and lorries, this week's training course has covered risk management, health and safety and customer care. Amongst other things, drivers have also been asked to consider how they would manage the scene of an accident, the effect of drink and drugs on drivers and some product knowledge.

'It is essential that we keep up with the EU's requirement,' said Minister for Traffic, the Hon Paul Balban. 'The Government is pleased to offer this course which will increase the professionalism of people in the trade. It will also increase the wider employability of our drivers.'