



The UK Government has given the go ahead to trial 'platooning;' convoys of semi-automated HGVs that will have acceleration, braking and steering controlled by the lead vehicle. Each lorry will have a driver in the cab ready to retake control at any time. Proponents say platooning could cut both congestion and the cost of fuel for hauliers. Motoring organisations have voiced concerns about safety, particularly on motorways.

Platooning road trials are already underway in [Japan](#) as part of the Japanese government's Future Strategy 2017. Road trials in parts of Europe other than the UK are planned – the target is to be able to [drive across Europe with platoons by 2023](#) - and [Daimler has been given permission](#) to test the system in the US.

There are concerns about the impact of jobs, with the International Transport Workers' Federation suggesting that [4.4m of the 6.4m professional trucking jobs in the US and Europe could be eliminated](#) by autonomous technology. The International Road Transport Union, on the other hand, [suggests](#) that autonomous trucks will help the haulage sector deal with the current shortage of drivers in many parts of the world.

Implications for Gwent

Automated driving will have a major impact on the entire mobility system in terms of labour costs, safety, environmental impact and traffic flow. Platooning reduces air drag and therefore fuel consumption and emissions.

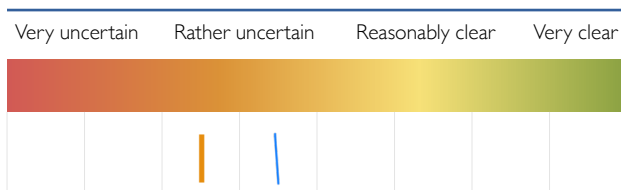
Making roads available for platooning will be straightforward in the short term and will require very little (or no) upgrading of existing infrastructure. In the longer term, augmented infrastructure may improve the reach and function of platoons.

For now, then, the economic costs of platooning are likely to be low and the benefits are likely to be high. It will also make AVs visible on the road and help to build acceptance.

There is no indication yet that the public will dislike or campaign against platoons – but who knows? Fears of job losses may lead to negative press; and while the main headache may be for government and road transport business, there may be a lot that local government can do to raise awareness about the benefits and to communicate clearly.

If Gwent were to approach early adopters and explore how it might work with them to create a positive and high impact communication campaign about the benefits of platoons, that might be well received. Perhaps more importantly, it will give Gwent an opportunity to engage with some of the issues around automated vehicles at an early; low risk stage.

How might the issue impact on Gwent in the future



How might Gwent public services respond?

