Electronic Bus Service Registration: operator guidance note v2.8

18/1/08

1.0 Introduction

This note aims to help you understand the issues that will affect you when making an electronic bus service registration application. It mostly covers non-IT issues but does include some data issues. If you need more technical detail please look at the TransXchange (TXC) schema guide at www.transxchange.org.uk.

1.1 E-registration benefits

Electronic bus service registration will enable you to integrate data from your existing IT systems. It means you only have to provide the information once, ie you don't need separate files for yourself, local authorities and VOSA. It will make the data used by all parties better with less manual keying and so less scope for errors to creep in and a more efficient process. Similarly it will be fed through to downstream systems therefore making their data more useful to the public. Also VOSA will aim to process your applications more quickly.

1.2 Keeping track of your own registrations

You can use PSV operator self-service via the VOSA website, www.vosa.gov.uk, to see what services you currently have registered. This lists an outline of your service, ie bus registration reference number, service number, start and finish point. Please make sure that you cancel, in advance, any services that you do not run.

1.3 Once only transition

VOSA expect a commitment from you that this will be a once only transition to txc/EBSR, ie once you start you should not go back to using the paper based system. Only under exceptional circumstances should you revert back to the paper based system and agreement should be sought with VOSA.

1.4 Scottish rules

TransXChange supports the differences required by Scottish Regulations. The main one is the requirement to notify the relevant local transport authorities of your intention to make, or change, an application at least 14 days before you actually make the application and you must place Strathclyde PTE as a recipient in the TXC list of circulated authorities. You may find it convenient to send a copy of the txc file that is the complete file, to them. When you submit the application you should attach a supporting document that explains what you have done to fulfil this requirement.

2.0 Registration

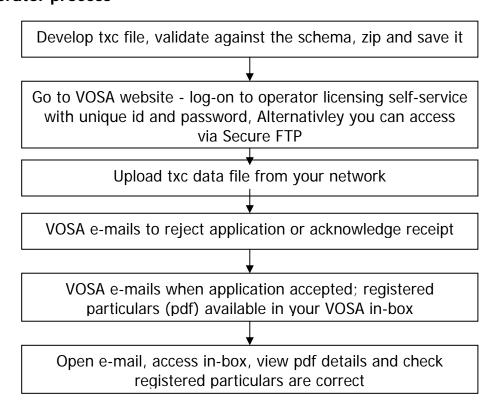
Before you make your first application you must register as a self-service user via the VOSA website. Go to www.vosa.gov.uk. Click on operator self service from the, menu options on the right hand side of the website. This will open the login and page, click on new users register to commence the registration process.

As part of the registration process you will need to have your operator licence number for the licence you wish to register. You will also have to create a user name for yourself and also a memorable word. These will enable you to access the site once you receive your password via the postal system to the main address held on our database.

2.1 Passwords

You are in charge of maintaining your own passwords. Within operator self service you can add other users by allocating different passwords to them. So different people within your company can make applications as long as they are authorised by you, have a specific password and are listed as the submission author for that particular data file. However if these people change you must make sure that you delete their access if they leave your business.

2.2 Operator process



To submit an application you need to log-on via the VOSA website or SFTP client. To access via self service click on 'on-line services' then 'operator licensing self-service'. When you have input your user id and password you will get a list of menu options at the top left hand corner. One is TransXChange Upload where you can browse your pc for the right file and then upload it. For SFTP you will access via a link and will be prompted for a user id and password which will be provided by VOSA, once you have accessed there will be a folder visible where you will upload your TXC zipped files.

When your application is received you will receive an e-mail confirming receipt and another e-mail when it is accepted. If you want to check the details of your txc applications, or their progress, log-on to the self-service website. There is a menu option on the left hand side for 'TransXChange Inbox'. This will take you to a list of your txc applications. NB: it will NOT list manual (or existing) paper applications. But you can get these by using the 'registration search' menu option.

For txc applications, you can click on any of the supporting documents, pdf or the xml file to view the contents

To submit a TransXchange file for existing registrations the process will be the same as per a normal application. However a new folder will be made available via SFTP for existing registrations this will be named EBSR Data refresh. A new menu option named EBSR data refresh will also be made available via the self service system. All existing registrations should be uploaded via either option. When uploading an existing registration you must set the application classification field in the TXC file to non Chargeable change.

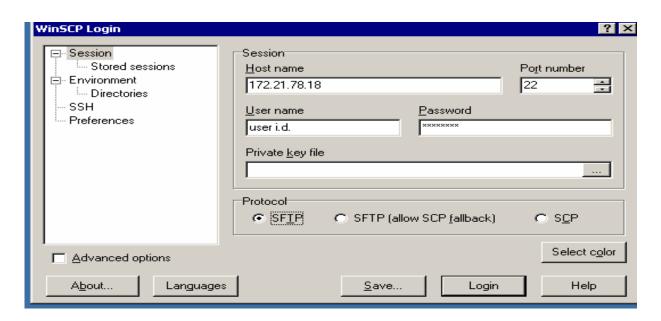
The next pages show users of the system how to access EBSR and use the upload and download areas for both SFTP and the VOSA self service website.

Accessing and uploading via SFTP.

To access the secure FTP site you must have an SFTP client, have access to the internet and be registered for VOSA self service.

Once the above is in place VOSA will provide the required access details for the SFTP site including passwords & login id's.

Launch your SFTP client from your PC



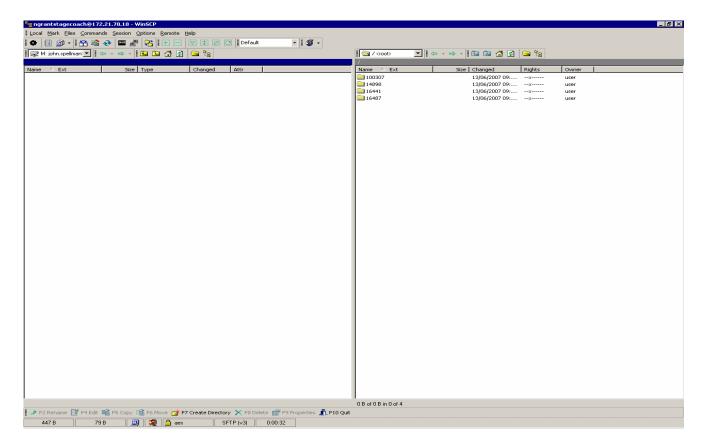
You will be prompted for the following:

- Host name
- Port Number
- User name
- Password

VOSA will provide you with the above details. Enter the required details select SFTP and login. Different SFTP clients may have a different screen layout to the above screen however the principals are still the same.

Please note if you have an option to resume in your SFTP client you need to disable transfer resuming in the SFTP client before submitting files, as the EBSR system does not support this option.

Once you have accessed the SFTP site you should be given a view similar to the screen below again not all SFTP clients provide the same view however the principals are still the same.

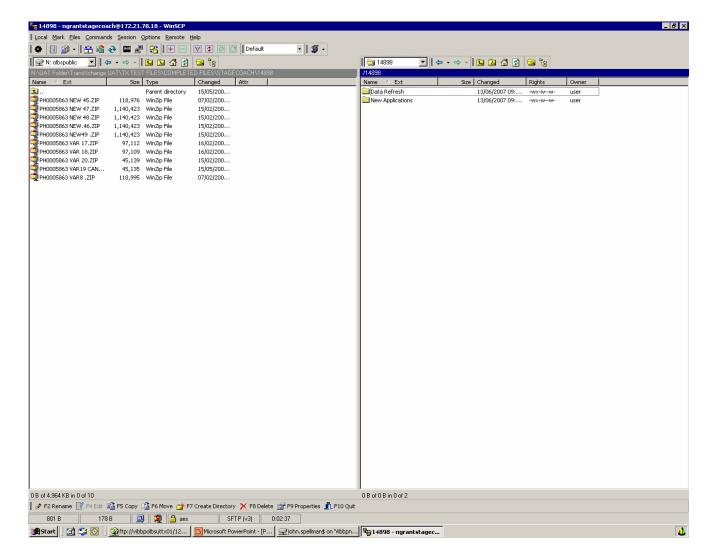


You will see a folder with a reference number this is the VOSA id for your licence. If you hold several licences you will be presented with multiple folders for each licence you hold.

- Click on the required folder for the licence you want to upload registrations for.
- Locate the drive on your network where your TransXchange files are located.
- Once you have accessed the required folder simply highlight the files you wish to be uploaded and simply drag and drop the files from your network into the folder.

Remember each file need to be zipped, you cannot just upload the TransXchange file.

These files will then be placed into the EBSR workflow process. You should expect to receive an acknowledgement email within 1 hour this will be sent to the email address which is included in your TransXchange file. The email will inform you of whether the file had been uploaded or has been rejected.



You will be presented with 2 folders these are named:

- Data Refresh
- New applications

Data refresh is the folder used to upload existing registrations as part of the rollout of pilot areas.

New applications is the folder in which to upload new, variation and cancellation registration.

To upload a file

- Locate your required document area on your network.
- Locate the required files.
- Highlight the files and drop and drag these into the required folder i.e. data refresh or new applications.

Please note all files must be win zipped and only 1 file per zip is allowed. You cannot place all files in 1 zip file.

These files will then be placed into the EBSR workflow process. You should expect to receive an acknowledgement email within 1 hour this will be sent to the email address which is included in your TransXchange file. The email will inform you of whether the file had been uploaded or has been rejected.

If the file has been uploaded successfully the email will detail:

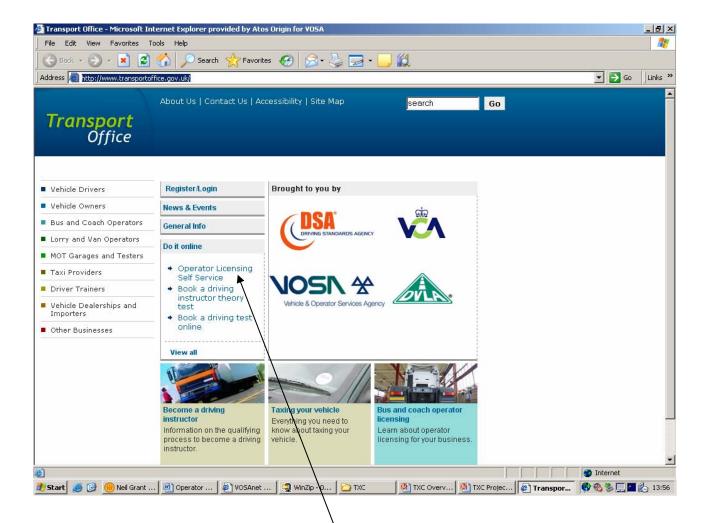
- Date of receipt of the file
- The VOSA registration reference number
- Details of which local authorities have been informed via email.
- That you can access the original zip file and official VOSA PDF outputs via the SFTP site or the VOSA website.

You will then expect to receive the Traffic Commissioners decision on the application within 5 working days of receipt. This decision again will be via email

Accessing and uploading, via Operator self service.

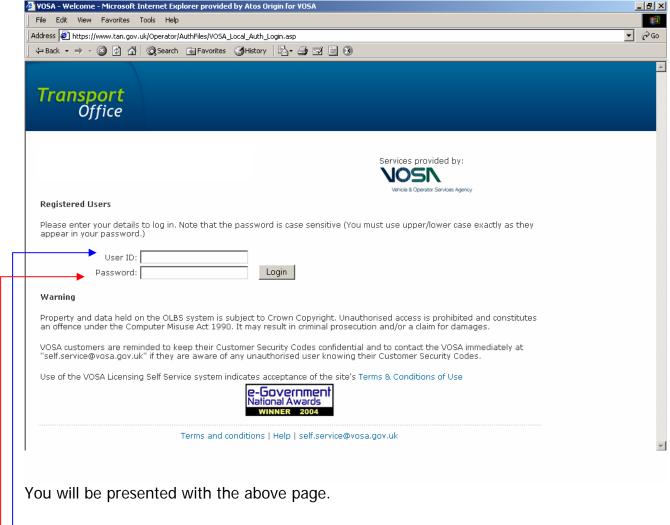
To access the secure VOSA self service site you must already be registered for VOSA self service.

To access the VOSA self site go to www.transportoffice.gov.uk



You will be presented with the above page:

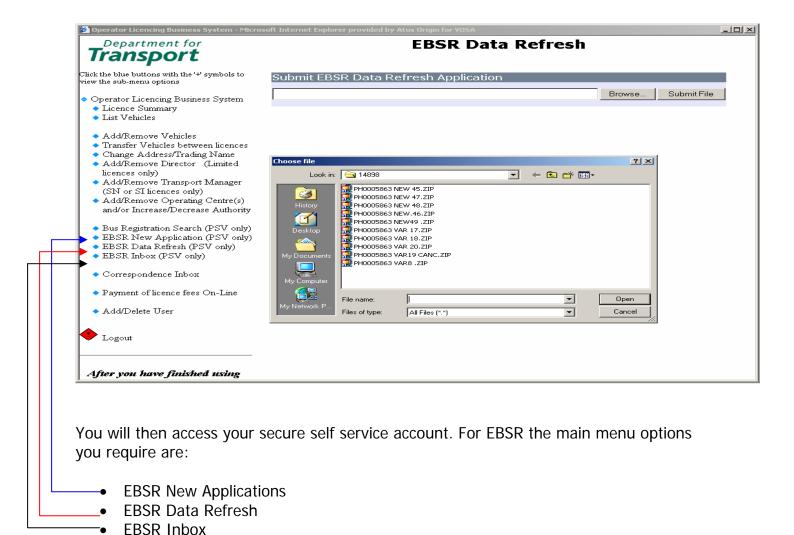
Click on operator licensing self service.\



- Enter your user id this will have be the id you entered when you first registered for self service.
- Enter your password this will have been issued by VOSA to you.
- Click login

If you have neither of these details please contact EBSRsupport@vosa.gov.uk

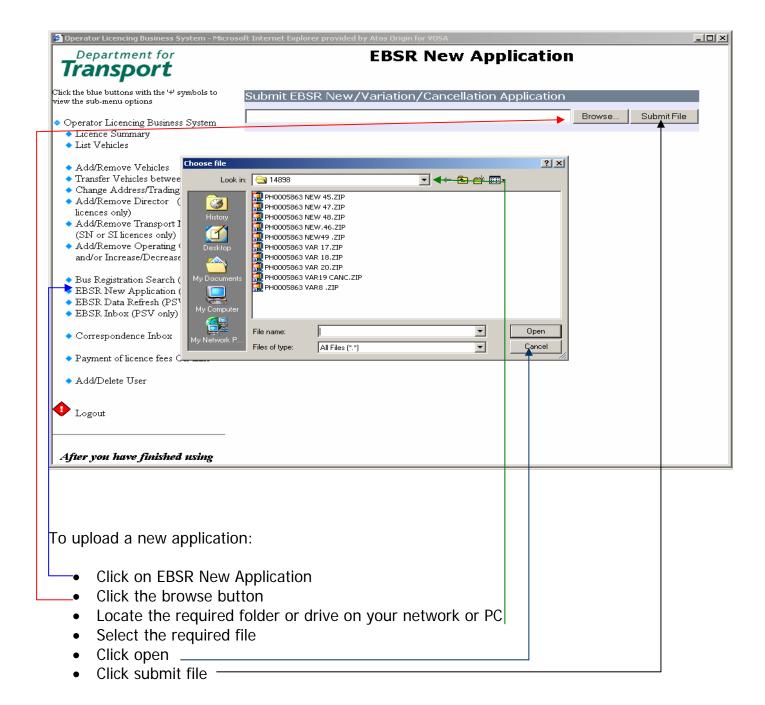
Once you have clicked the login button, this will launch a new browser window.



New applications is the option in which to upload new, variation and cancellation registration.

Data refresh is the option used to upload existing registrations as part of the rollout of pilot areas.

EBSR Inbox allows you to view applications you have submitted along with the ability to download the registered documents.



You can only upload one zip file at a time with this process therefore you must repeat this process for each file. The uploaded file(s) will then be placed into the EBSR workflow process. You should expect to receive an acknowledgement email within 1 hour this will be sent to the email address which is included in your TransXchange file. The email will inform you of whether the file had been uploaded or has been rejected.

If the file has been uploaded successfully the email will detail:

- Date of receipt of the file
- The VOSA registration reference number
- Details of which local authorities have been informed via email.
- That you can access the original zip file and official VOSA PDF outputs via the SFTP site or the VOSA website.

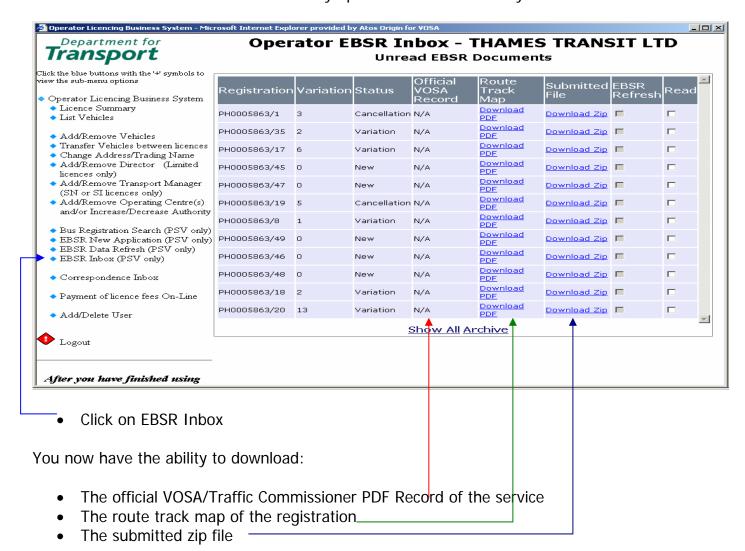
You will then expect to receive the Traffic Commissioners decision on the application within 5 working days of receipt. This decision again will be via email

To upload existing registrations click on:

EBSR Data Refresh

Follow the same procedure as per uploading a new application.

To view files which have been successfully uploaded into the EBSR system:



Select the required document you wish to download and simply click the hyperlink.

This page also allows you to view all recent EBSR applications which have been submitted and their current status.

3.0 Definition of an electronic registration

A TransXChange file contains one REGISTRATION that has the registration details of one SERVICE. The SERVICE defines vehicle journeys for buses displaying one or more public LINE NUMBERS, operating on one or more ROUTES. The ROUTE defines the physical path taken by a bus in one DIRECTION.

The pattern of working on a ROUTE is defined using JOURNEY PATTERNS. Therefore JOURNEY PATTERNS that contain at least 50% common route mileage are considered to be a single SERVICE and can be submitted within the same REGISTRATION even if the buses display different public LINE NUMBERS.

A frequent service is defined in legislation as a service where "the service interval is 10 minutes or less". Traffic Commissioners will expect that on at least 95% of occasions:

- Six or more buses will depart within any period of 60 minutes, and
- The interval between consecutive buses will not exceed 15 minutes.

3.1 Electronic data

One of the main principles used throughout TransXChange is that you only have to provide one common set of data for all parties. This makes sure there is little scope for typo errors and provides benefits for us all. Therefore your txc file must provide everything required:

- for registration
- by the local transport authorities affected
- and for traveline too

VOSA will only extract the registered particulars (remember service numbers are now required for all services) and we will put these in the pdf that we send back to you. You can check this to make sure all is well. Your IT systems must produce data that is fully txc compatible so that it has been validated against the relevant schema before you submit your file. If it doesn't validate against the txc schema it will be rejected.

Your data will also have to meet certain quality standards, which are defined in the txc schema guide – including for example the Traffic Commissioners' requirements on bus timing points 3.5 of this guide refers. Schemas from txc v2.0r upwards will be supported by VOSA.

3.2 Declarations

You should read our 'terms and conditions of use' shown on the self-service registration screen. If you haven't already read them please do so before submitting your first application. Section 8 refers specifically to bus registration and indicates that you declare that all txc applications will be correct. Click here to see the relevant section. You must check that you have updated the details of the person making the application if that person leaves/moves etc.

3.3 Bus registration reference number

This is the unique identifier for your application / registration and follows the same principals as the current paper based numbering system. With electronic bus registration you define this number yourself (from the VOSA sequence). This means the reference number is allocated right at the start and stays with your details as they go to all parties. This will cut down on errors and confusion. It is made up of the first 2 alphabetical characters in your o-licence number ie 'PH', the 8 numbers of your o-licence number (NB: don't forget the zeros if you have an 'old' number) and a 4-digit number for the application/registration. Please note failure to include your licence number an registration number will result in your file being automatically rejected by the EBSR system.

3.4 NaPTAN data

You must also include bus stop data from the NaPTAN database; this makes sure we all have the same information so that bus stop names, locations etc are consistent. If you need to access the NaPTAN database, go to www.transxchange.org.uk/

3.5 Principal Points

These are the points at which you are telling the Traffic Commissioner that you can be monitored. Therefore it is vitally important that this information is correct. TransXChange helps you as it allows you to clearly specify which stops are principal points. So, you need to enter TimingStatus data very carefully. Be aware that we will extract data on any stops where the TimingStatus is shown as a principal point. These stops and their timings will be included in the pdf of your service as the registered particulars. Remember that TCs have indicated that principal points must normally be no more than 15 minutes apart unless there is a good reason for a longer interval. If that is the case in any part of your timetable, you should attach a supporting document that explains your reasons.

3.6 Frequent Services A frequent service is classed as a service where "the service interval is 10 minutes or less" and a statement of that can be made on the application rather than displaying actual bus journeys. Traffic Commissioners see the benefit of displaying all bus journeys and have agreed that each journey on a frequent service can be displayed and the service will still be classed as a frequent service and monitored as such. A note needs to be provided in the EBSR application to state that the service is a frequent service.

4.0 Variations

Whenever you make a variation you should submit the whole data file including the whole timetable, route, stops etc rather than just the changed items. This ensures that the full data file can be processed for publicity purposes etc. It also makes sure that if your service is monitored the whole service is correctly monitored rather than you receiving reports of lots of unregistered departures. So, for example, if you only change the Sunday services you should still send in the full timetable covering the whole week, even if those journeys have not changed. This is because any variation application will completely overwrite the previous details submitted.

This does mean that it is important to summarise the changes in reasonable, but not too much, detail to get published in N&P. If you change a timetable please put more detail than just 'timetable changed' but without listing each journey that has been amended.

Each application must have a variation sequence. For a new application this is always '0' and then increases by 'one' each time you make a variation application for that particular registration. Remember that there cannot be any gaps in this sequence so you need to make sure you know what that last variation number was for the registration that you are changing, as failure to do so will result in the file being rejected at the Automated Processing Stage. If you are unsure of the next variation number, you can check via our PSV operator self-service to find out.

If you submit an existing registration via Data Refresh, the variation number will increase on the VOSA database by the value of 1. (i.e. if your current variation number is 5, then by uploading an existing registration, then it will change to 6). You do not need to give the next variation sequence number, as this is not validated via Data Refresh.

4.1 File attachments

You can attach supporting documents to a TransXChange file. This is particularly useful as it means that you can submit every piece of information that will be needed right at the start rather than having to wait whilst your TAO identifies what else is needed. You can attach things like letters/e-mails of support from the local authorities affected if you want to make a short notice application. Currently we support the following types of attachments: MS Word, jpeg, bitmap and .pdf files. As yet, we have no feedback about the suitability of other file types.

It is helpful if all the details are put into one supporting document but we realise that this is not always possible. If not, please use document names that explain the contents of the attachment ie 'SN support from x County Council', as this will help us process your application more quickly. Remember that these document names must be unique names within that txc file and must be listed in the data file. Missing supporting documents will mean the file will be rejected.

4.2 Data structure

When structuring your data within txc fields please try to follow these guidelines:

- When compiling the service number details please make sure that the first number quoted is the main core route. Any secondary, or associated routes, like an express service etc in that registration can then follow.
- When a service is subsidised in part please indicate whether it is wholly or partially subsidised (the schema allows this)
- File names should follow the structure approved for txc which is:
 Line_Operator_Area_ServiceCode_StartDate.xml (see the schema guide for examples)
- Routing information of the service must be included in the file to enable the mapping tool to display an image of the route of the service.
- As ever you need to make sure that you include all the affected local authorities. You
 can check which local authorities are covered by your route by looking at the first three
 digits of the NaPTAN codes for your bus stops. We will have automatic checks in place
 to make sure the details are correct.

4.3 Rejected Files

If you send an application to us and it has automatically been rejected (ie it's not complete or contains an error) you will have to correct it before you resubmit. We will try to identify this before a copy goes to the local authority and in that case you will be able to 're-use' the bus registration reference number and will be able to keep the same variation number.

Please note that this is different to the application being refused, as a rejected file has not being logged on our database due to the actual TXC file failing the VOSA automated validation process. An application will only be refused once the automated VOSA system has validated the file and a caseworker has determined that the application does not meet the Traffic Commissioners requirements.

If short notice is refused by the TC then the whole application will be refused. You will have to amend the data file and re-submit. In these cases, the bus registration reference number must be updated. If you submitted a new application you cannot use the same reference number but must choose another from your number range. For a variation you will have to increase the variation number by 'one'. Similarly you will have to amend the details in your N&P entry to show that the latest application replaces the previous one. We will minimise the situations where this occurs and will let you know if you have to resubmit.

4.4 Disaster Recovery/Contingency plans

If VOSA systems are unavailable to produce or receive TransXchange files, then the intention is to move back to the manual system in any instance of prolonged system failure.

Prolonged system failure would be classed as the system been unavailable for operators to submit applications in time to meet legal requirements and there appears to be no resolution or firm timescales for a fix. In these cases applications should be faxed or emailed.

Operators at an early stage would be informed to revert back to the manaul process until resolution of the issue.

4.5 Operator in-box

You will be able to access an in-box area to view details of your current applications. When you make an application you will get an e-mail when it is received and also when it is accepted that will take you to this location via a hyperlink. To access, you will have to enter your user-id and password; this also keeps others out of your area so they don't see details of applications you are making. Once in your in-box, you can look at all of your current applications but also you can 'tick' those that you have already seen if you do not want them to appear every time you log-on. Similarly the details will stay available, even when accepted, until you make another application. When that happens the previous application details will be deleted. However if you need a copy of the pdf etc at a later date, you can get it from your local TAO.

4.6 Free Variations

You are entitled to make a free variation for certain types of situation ie where a Traffic Regulation Order is imposed and it affects your route or timings. These categories will not change and txc enables you to continue to claim a free variation as you do now.

If you feel you are entitled to a free variation you should use NonChargeableChange option in the TXC schema. Also you must attach a document that explains why you feel a free variation is suitable. You need to put the name of this document in the xml file too. The document should explain in as much detail as possible why the application should be free – if this has been agreed in advance by your TAO please give details of who agreed, and when, as well as why (this will help us sort it out quickly).

4.7 Fees

Initially you should set-up a pre-payment account with VOSA so that your application is not held up whilst we ask you to send a fee in the post.

4.8 Contacting Us

We will send at least 2 e-mails to you, on receipt and at acceptance and this process will be automated. This means that you will NOT be able to reply directly to those e-mails. You can contact us electronically on self.service@vosa.gov.uk you have any queries about using txc for registration. However for the pilot all parties will need to liaise closely to ensure the whole EBSR process is functioning correctly VOSA will provide names of key representatives in case of queries.

VOSA contacts for technical assistance and the ongoing rollout of EBSR are:

<u>John.Furzeland@vosa.gov.uk</u> EBSR Senior Manager

Neil.Grant@vosa.gov.uk EBSR Manager*

Phil.Jowitt@vosa.gov.uk Business Development Manager

<u>John.Spellman@vosa.gov.uk</u> Business Development Team

VOSA contacts for application related issues and normal day to day operations regarding EBSR are:

<u>Debbie.Kavangh@vosa.gov.uk</u> PSV Manager

<u>Lee.Betts@vosa.gov.uk</u> PSV Team Leader

VOSA will aim to assist with queries on the same day however there may be cases where certain issues cannot be resolved on the same day i.e. Technical issues.

5.0 File zipping

You must zip your files before you submit them to save time. Txc files usually contain a lot of empty space and file zipping reduces this considerably (often by about 80%). On a slow pay-per-minute Internet connection without zipping you may have to wait quite a while to upload your file. If you want it, file zipping software can be found here. If you are submitting several applications at one time then you can zip each one and then zip those zipped files within a zipped 'envelope'.

5.1 Internet browsers

Access to the VOSA website has been has been tested against Internet Explorer 6.0. Apple Mac users have experienced problems with other parts of our self-service system and we have not tested that browser with this particular module. Other browsers have not been tested.

^{*}Neil Grant will be replaced as EBSR Manager by Phil Jowitt as of 1/2/08

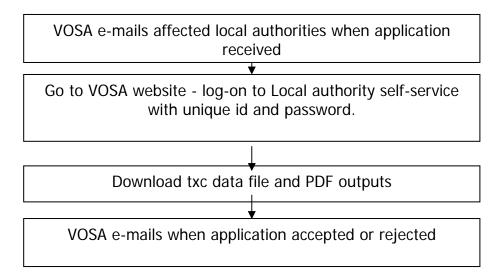
5.2 Cookies and pop-ups

We install temporary session cookies and so if you use Microsoft XP with service pack 2 applied you may need to adapt your security settings accordingly. Details can be found in our main self-service users FAQ.

5.3 Field lengths

We have restrictions on certain field lengths for a variety of reasons however we have made sure that those we apply are the same as those needed to comply with the schema. Therefore if your data file validates against the schema then field lengths will not be a problem.

6.0 Local Authorities process



To access via self service click got to www.vosa.gov.uk on 'on-line services' then 'Local Authority Inbox'. When you have input your user id and password you will get a list of menu options at the top left hand corner. One is EBSR Inbox where you can browse your pc for the right file and then download it.

When an application is received you will receive an e-mail confirming receipt and another e-mail when it is accepted. If you want to check the details of the txc applications for your area, or their progress, log-on to the self-service website.

For applications, you can click on any of the supporting documents, pdf or the xml file to view the contents

6.1 Registration

Before you can access your inbox we need to register your details on our data base also we require you to set up a bespoke email address which we can send all EBSR emails to. The standard email address is EBSR@localauthorityname.gov.uk to register as user email phil.jowitt@vosa.gov.uk or john.spellman@vosa.gov.uk.

6.2 Passwords

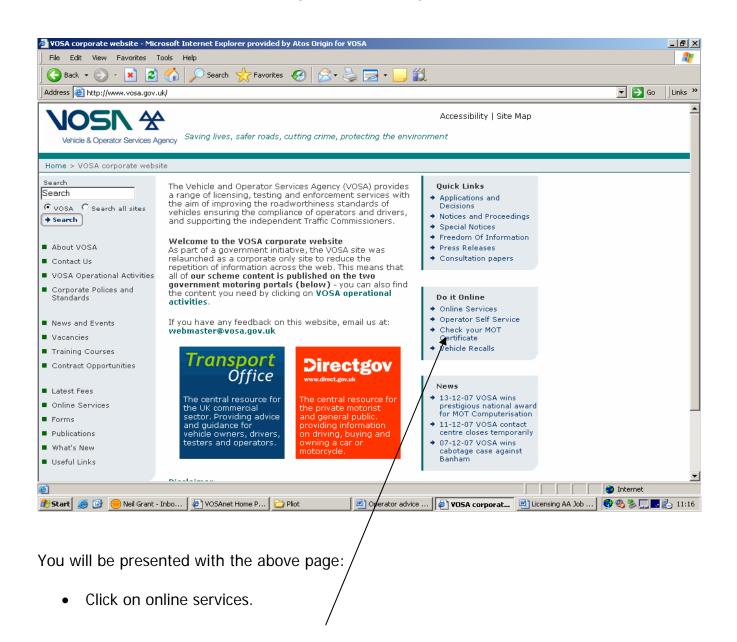
You are in charge of maintaing your own password. There is currently one password and user id for each local authority.

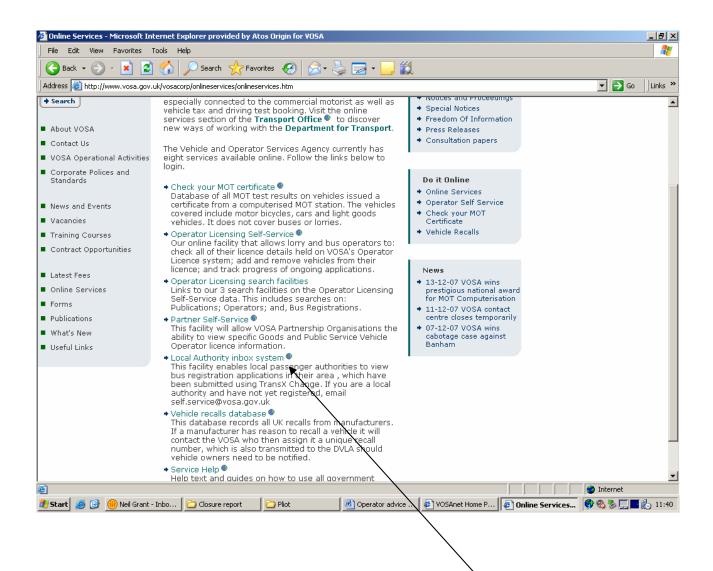
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EBSR User Guide – Local Authority perspective.

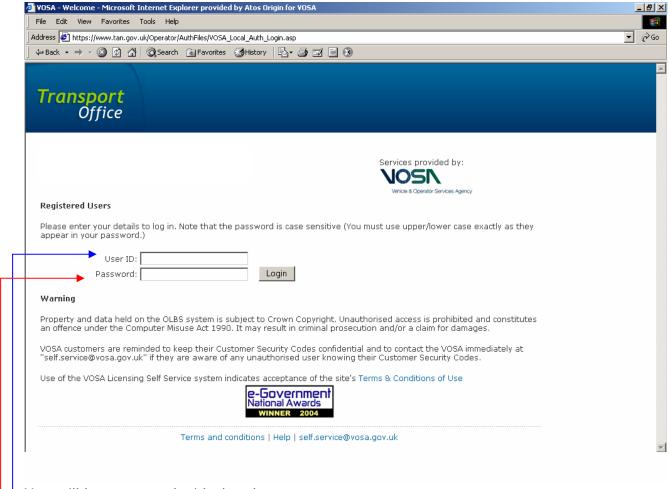
Accessing and downloading, via Operator self service.

To access the VOSA self service site go to www.vosa.gov.uk





A new page will be displayed now click on Local Authority inbox



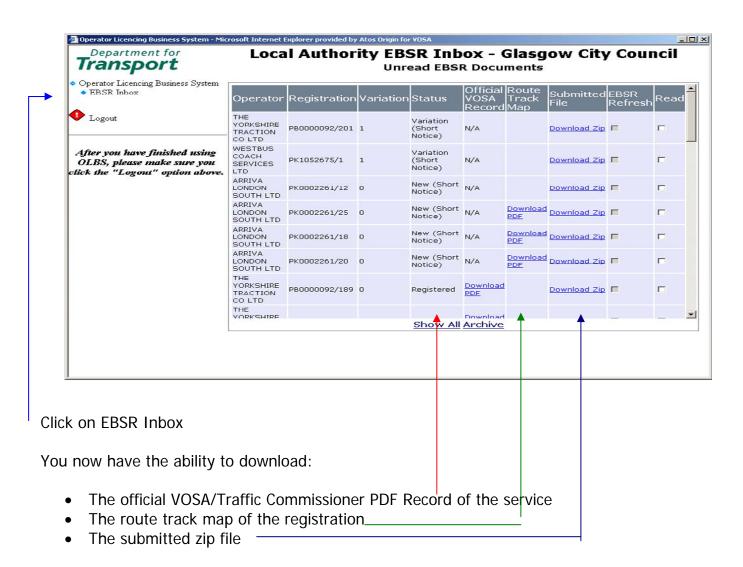
You will be presented with the above page.

- Enter your user id this will have be the id you entered when you first registered for self service.
- Enter your password this will have been issued by VOSA to you.
- Click login

If you have neither of these details please contact EBSRsupport@vosa.gov.uk

Once you have clicked the login button, this will launch a new browser window.

To view files which have been successfully uploaded into the EBSR system:



Select the required document you wish to download and simply click the hyperlink.

This page also allows you to view all recent EBSR applications which have been submitted and their current status.

If a file has been uploaded successfully by a operator you will receive an email form VOSA the email will detail:

- Date of receipt of the file
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