

Statement by Cascade Software

27 May 2008

*Cascade Software have recently been contacted by both county council and Highways Agency Managing Agent clients using our *** ABLOADS *** software to tell us that, in the course of her contacts with structure owners, Fiona Steele, Serco's ESDAL Project Manager, has been making statements to structure owners against Cascade Software and its products in strong, sometimes even threatening, terms which are not only factually incorrect and totally out of place from a public service contractor, but also which in some cases have caused considerable offence.*

Firstly, she has been telling structure owners that ESDAL will provide them with a complete abnormal loads management and checking system and they will need nothing else to manage the abnormal loads notifications they receive.

This is factually completely incorrect as we are all very well aware. ESDAL is not a complete management and checking system as it is not compulsory and therefore can only deal with notifications placed on its website. Structure owners will have to deal both with these ESDAL notifications and those received directly from hauliers completely outside of ESDAL (and at present all reports suggest that actual utilisation of ESDAL by hauliers is likely to be limited). Furthermore, structure owners will also have to communicate directly with hauliers in respect of problem structures on routes notified through ESDAL, as ESDAL does not supply this facility.

*Secondly, she has been telling structure owners that Cascade's *** ABLOADS *** clients have been giving up in favour of ESDAL.*

This is completely wrong. Not only is it untrue but silly, because as ESDAL is still far from complete (latest estimate end of next year) it would not be an option even if ESDAL was a complete system.

*Thirdly, she has been telling structure owners that *** ABLOADS ***'s checking system is technically inferior to ESDAL.*

Whether or not this is correct is a technical matter and one therefore on which she is not competent to deliver a judgement. We believe, and our clients confirm, that because we gather and utilise dimensional and articulation data for each span of our structures, as well as the assessment values that ESDAL uses, and therefore we can analyse most structures including masonry arches for the actual axle arrangement of the notified vehicle, that our checking engine is far and away more sophisticated than the minimalist approach used by ESDAL, which does not utilise such detailed structure data. Certainly Ms Steele has absolutely no right to make statements like this.

*Finally we are informed that Ms Steele has been telling structure owners that they are under an obligation to utilise ESDAL rather than our *** ABLOADS *** software solely because it has been set up using public funds and is therefore free.*

*Again, this is totally outrageous and out of order. What structure owners need is a management and checking system which will handle notifications received from both notification sources, and hopefully one which integrates both sources in one application. As we quite fairly suggest to structure owners reading the FAQs on our website: 'There is no reason why you cannot continue to use your existing (abnormal loads management) system if you wish. But please consider using our *** ABLOADS *** software, which will integrate, manage and uniformly check notifications from both sources ...'*

Ms Steele's activities and statements are extremely damaging to Cascade Software and its staff and may not be legal. Furthermore, they have been undertaken in her capacity as an HA contractor, and therefore, apparently on behalf of and with the backing of the Highways Agency, factually incorrect information has been deliberately and maliciously given to structure owners with the authority of the Agency. We are also writing directly to the Highways Agency asking them to immediately inform all structure owners that, contrary to any statements made by Ms Steele,

*ESDAL is **NOT** a complete abnormal loads managing and checking system – it only caters for notifications submitted through it*

*There is **NO** evidence to suppose that Cascade's *** ABLOADS *** checking system is in any way inferior to that incorporated into ESDAL*

*Structure owners are under no obligation to use ESDAL rather than *** ABLOADS *** simply because ESDAL is publicly funded and therefore free*

In conclusion, Cascade Software would like to make clear the following.

When the ESDAL project was set up, as the only software firm seriously involved in abnormal loads and therefore representing a unique source of notification management and checking expertise, Cascade anticipated some involvement in the project and the opportunity to liaise with the development team as the project developed. Regrettably this has not occurred, and indeed throughout the project development process the impression has been given by the Agency and its contractor that Cascade Software represented a threat to the ESDAL project, with every excuse being used to avoid any contact.

Despite all this, Cascade Software states categorically that we have always supported the ESDAL project and will continue to do so. We remain hopeful that the Highways Agency, for the benefit of ESDAL, structure owners, hauliers and Cascade Software alike, will even at this late stage decide that it would be only sensible to liaise with and facilitate any management and checking software which can integrate notifications from both ESDAL and direct sources and make ESDAL more relevant to structure owners.