



Department
for Transport

Helen Whately MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
Lilian Greenwood MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: lilian.greenwood@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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Dear Helen,

Thank you for your email of 13 December seeking an update on efforts to improve how traffic management, and specifically Operation Brock, is deployed in Kent. I am responding as the Minister responsible for this issue.

My first months in office have impressed upon me the criticality of the Short Straits to UK trade and supply chains, and the extensive efforts undertaken by local stakeholders, particularly the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum, to plan and respond to any anticipated disruption in order to keep Kent moving. Despite this, I recognise that existing traffic management mitigations still have a significant impact on local communities.

As such, building on the work started under the previous Government, we are continuing to explore potential long-term alternatives to Operation Brock that will reduce the need to queue HGVs on the road network in Kent. I have reviewed the previous policy proposals put forward, and have agreed for work to progress on a system that utilises a combination of new digital technology and off-road sites to hold HGVs during disruption. Between 21 November and 4 December the Department conducted a pre-tender market engagement exercise with potential suppliers to inform next steps in developing this technology. A subsequent Supplier Day is planned for the 13 January, and we will continue to collaborate closely with Kent stakeholders as this work progresses.

A solution such as this, however, will be a long-term project that takes time to deliver and dependent on the outcome of the Spending Review. We therefore continue to support Kent partners, as the independent operational leads with regards to traffic management, in identifying potential improvements to existing plans. We are aware that the Kent & Medway Resilience Forum is considering a 'Mini Brock'.

Most immediately in terms of disruption risks in Kent, the European Commission have recently published its new legislative proposal which seeks to amend the EU Entry/Exit System (EES) Regulation to facilitate a phased roll-out of the system from 2025. This includes a phased introduction period of 170 days and an initial eight months where the flexibility to suspend EES entirely in the event of significant congestion will be in place. This is welcome news, as it will allow portals operating juxtaposed controls in the Short Straits additional time to optimise their implementation solutions. We are therefore confident that Eurotunnel, Eurostar and Port of Dover will be in strong positions in relation to EES ahead of its implementation in 2025.

To further support the implementation of EES, as announced by the Minister for Migration and Citizenship, the Government is continuing to look at a range of possible contingency options to avoid disruption on Kent's roads, including exploring the use of off-road pre-departure sites for passenger traffic. It is the Government's priority to protect the public and preserve the safety of the wider Strategic Road Network in Kent whilst we respond to any disruption as a result of the EU's implementation of EES.

We are also aiming to support the Port of Dover's Outbound Controls Project, which will significantly increase port capacity and thereby reduce traffic disruption in Kent, with a provisionally allocated £45m grant.

I thank you for your continued support and interest on this important area and look forward to working closely with you on these issues.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lilian', with a long horizontal line extending to the right below it.

LILIAN GREENWOOD MP

MINISTER FOR THE FUTURE OF ROADS