

Statement to Parliament: Road haulage update: 15 November 2017

The impact of disruption at the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel in Kent can lead to significant congestion in that county and further afield. In the event of such disruption, Operation Stack is deployed which queues lorries on the M20 until they can access their ferry or train, closing parts of the motorway to other traffic. However, it has been accepted that this is not an ideal contingency solution particularly given the impact it has on the M20, the surrounding roads, and in particular on people and businesses in Kent.

Following significant and long-running disruption in the summer of 2015, due to French ferry employee industrial action and migrant activity in France, Operation Stack was deployed for over 30 days that summer. The government determined to find a solution to the issue and announced that a new lorry holding park would be built at Stanford West in Kent. The lorry park was to be designed to mitigate the worst impacts of Operation Stack by taking lorries off the road until they could be released to Dover or Eurotunnel.

However, in October 2016 this decision was judicially reviewed on the grounds that the government had not properly taken into account the environmental impact on a local business and the area in which the lorry park would be built.

Today (15 November 2017) I am withdrawing the earlier decision to site a lorry park at Stanford West on the grounds that the government can no longer defend the judicial review. My department and Highways England have, since being judicially reviewed, tried to find a solution so that the lorry park could be delivered as quickly as possible to mitigate the impacts of Operation Stack, whilst also meeting our environmental obligations. However, it has not proven possible to do so.

But I can announce today that we are immediately starting the process to promote a lorry park through the normal planning process, including a full environmental impact assessment, as a potential permanent solution to Operation Stack. As part of this we will reassess the scope, scale and location of our solutions, taking into account changes since the original concept of the lorry park was promoted, in particular the UK's exit from the European Union but also the need for 'business as usual' lorry parking in Kent. Highways England intend to consult on the options in early 2018 with a view to submitting a planning application in 2019.

Alongside this, I have tasked Highways England with developing an interim solution to be in place by March 2019. Highways England have developed a number of options that, while continuing to hold HGVs on the M20, would allow non-port traffic to continue to travel in both directions reducing the levels of traffic disruption seen in Operation Stack. This could, for example, be through holding HGVs in the centre of the motorway rather than on the coastbound carriageway. Different technologies ranging from steel barriers to

moveable barrier systems could be deployed to deliver these solutions. A final decision on which option to take forward will be made in early 2018, with a view to completing delivery by March 2019.

Specific investment decisions on both the permanent and interim solutions will, of course, be subject to normal considerations of affordability and value for money.

[Today's announcement](#) demonstrates that despite the setback to our plans to build a lorry park at Stanford West, the government is still serious about finding both short and permanent solution to help tackle the traffic disruption that can occur from disruption at our busiest border for lorry freight.