

Post-Christmas work to activate Operation Brock

Operation Brock – a series of measures that improve Kent's resilience in the event of disruption to services across the English Channel – will be deployed overnight on Sunday 27 December, with the contraflow active from Monday 28 December, in preparation for the end of the EU Transition Period on 31 December 2020.

A significant part of Operation Brock is keeping the M20 open in both directions by using a contraflow road layout on the M20 London-bound carriageway between junctions 8 and 9 (from Maidstone to Ashford) and directing lorries heading for mainland Europe onto the coastbound carriageway, where they can be queued if necessary.

To make sure the contraflow is deployed safely, the M20 will be closed overnight in both directions between junctions 8 and 9 on the nights of 27 and 28 December.

Traffic volumes permitting, the M20 will close at 10pm on 27 December with both carriageways set to reopen by 10am on 28 December, or earlier if possible. These times have been chosen to minimise disruption to road users and avoid the key Christmas travel period. The M20 will also be closed overnight on 28 December between 10pm and 10am.

Once the barrier is in place, the road will reopen in its new configuration, with HGVs and other freight heading for the Port of Dover or Eurotunnel using the coastbound carriageway on the M20, where it will be queued if necessary. All other traffic – including local freight – should follow the signs and cross over to enter the contraflow on the M20 London bound carriageway. Drivers should look out for signs directing them to either stay on the coastbound carriageway or to enter the contraflow. All cars and motorbikes should enter the contraflow.

Highways England south east operations director Nicola Bell said:

The live test last weekend went really well with the contraflow system operating as expected. It gave us and our Kent Resilience Forum partners a valuable insight into timings for deployment and was a very successful exercise. The test also gave the DVSA the opportunity to test their plans.

The two moveable barrier machines worked exceptionally well with over 14,000 tonnes of concrete blocks being moved in just a few hours, together with more than 8,000 cones.

Head of Kent Resilience Team Mark Rolfe said:

To help keep the county moving, the Kent Resilience Forum has brought together Department for Transport, Highways England, Kent Police, and Kent County Council to agree a single plan to minimise the impact of any cross-Channel disruption.

Ensuring the M20 moveable barrier is in place ahead of Transition Day is part of this plan and our joint commitment to keep Kent's transport network running safely and providing reliable travel information.

About Operation Brock

Operation Brock is a series of measures which crucially keeps the M20 open in both directions using a contraflow system. As with previous deployments in 2019, Operation Brock has stages that can be deployed sequentially, scaling up or down to meet demand. When Operation Brock is in force it is a legal requirement to use the signed routes only for HGV journeys to Port of Dover and Eurotunnel. Depending on the scale of disruption, and whether HGVs are travelling to Port of Dover or Eurotunnel, they will be directed to a holding site. Failure to comply with instructions may result in fines and further delays. Kent Police take decisions on when to use the different phases of the system. Options include:

- A20 Dover TAP: A queuing system which holds lorries until space becomes available at the Port
- M20 Moveable Barrier: A concrete barrier than can be deployed quickly between junctions 8 and 9 of the M20 to install a contraflow. HGVs bound for Dover and/or Eurotunnel will be held on the coastbound carriageway
- Manston Airfield: an off-road site designed to hold traffic heading for the Port of Dover. Border readiness checks will take place here to ensure hauliers have the correct paperwork
- Ashford Sevington Inland Border Facility: an off-road site next to junction 10A of the M20, likely to be used if the M20 contraflow approaches capacity

For more information on Operation Brock and other contingency measures in Kent, visit:

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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Alister Jack responds to October 2020 Scottish GDP figures

News story

Scottish Secretary responds to Scottish GDP figures for October 2020



Commenting on today's Scottish GDP figures for October 2020, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Today's figures show again the significant challenge we face to recover from the economic shock of the covid pandemic.

The UK Government continues to take unprecedented action to support jobs and business in Scotland. Yesterday, the Chancellor announced a further extension of furlough and business loan schemes, and we continue to support self-employed people and hardest-hit sectors with VAT cuts. The direct support is on top of £9.5 billion in additional funding from the UK Government to the Scottish Government.

As we look ahead to the new year, we will continue investing billions in our Plan for Jobs, supporting City and Region growth deals in Scotland, and driving green recovery and jobs.

The strength of the Union and the support offered by the UK Treasury have never been more important. Together, we will continue to get through these challenging times.

Background:

- The UK Government furlough scheme, paying 80 per cent of wages, will run UK-wide until the end of April. The scheme also offers employers flexibility to bring employers back to work part time with the UK Government continuing to pay 80% of salaries for the hours they do not work.
- The self-employed support scheme will run till the of March, paying 80% of average profits up to £7,500.
- At their peak in the summer the UK Government furlough and self-employed support schemes were supporting more than 930,000 jobs in Scotland. They

will continue to provide a vital safety net for businesses and their employees over coming months.

- More than 76,000 businesses in Scotland have benefitted from UK Government loan schemes, worth more than £2.9 billion.
- The Scottish Government has been allocated an additional £9.5 billion from the UK Government for its COVID-19 response. This is on top of the block grant and in addition to direct UK Government support to people and businesses in Scotland.
- The UK Government is investing billions to help people back into work, including through our £2 billion Kickstart scheme to get young people into jobs, expansion of our sector-based work academy programme, and recruitment of thousands of Work Coaches in Jobcentres helping unemployed people of all ages back into work.
- At the Budget in March the Chancellor will outline the next phase of our plan to provide certainty and growth in the months ahead.
- The UK Government is providing the bulk of covid testing in Scotland including drive through and walk through test centres and providing the Scottish Government with one million lateral flow tests for mass community and student testing.
- The UK was the first country in the world to approve Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine with 40 million doses secured by the UK Government for distribution across all parts of the UK.

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Former Chair of charity disqualified after failures resulted in loss of property

The Commission has concluded its inquiry into Christ Apostolic Church World Soul Winning and Evangelistic Ministry (registered charity number 1014992), which also saw the disqualification of the charity's former Chair, Pastor Paul Obadare, for a period of 10 years.

The inquiry revealed serious regulatory concerns, including failings in the charity's financial management, and wider misconduct and/or mismanagement.

An inquiry was launched in 2015 when concerns were raised in connection with the repossession of the charity's land and property and subsequent litigation costs incurred by the trustees.

The trustees of Christ Apostolic obtained a bridging loan for £250,000 purportedly to fund maintenance work for their church building. The former Chair (Mr Obadare) told the inquiry they discovered that solicitors, who were acting on their behalf, received £188,858 of the loan funds and the majority of this was paid to five companies they had not previously heard of. £35,000 of this is believed to have been used to repair the church roof, however, the inquiry found that it was not possible to establish the end use of the remainder of the loan funds that were drawn down.

The inquiry was told that the former trustees failed to carry out background checks on a broker they relied on for financial advice. Two former trustees said they signed the bridging loan agreement, which included the church as collateral, without seeing the terms and conditions. The former trustees defaulted on repayments of the loan and the property was repossessed by the loan company.

A fire destroyed the building and the land was then sold by the loan company. Legal proceedings undertaken by the charity to dispute the repossession had increased their liability with the loan company to more than £1.5 million. The charity then received none of the £1.2 million proceeds from the sale of the land.

The official report is also critical of the trustees' failure to submit timely serious incident reports to the Charity Commission, notably when the charity's property was repossessed.

The inquiry concluded that there had been mismanagement and/or misconduct in the administration of the charity by its former trustees and it found that a lack of sound judgement by the former trustees led to them taking inappropriate risks. As a result of his particular role in the failings, the former Chair of trustees has been disqualified from being a charity trustee or from holding senior management positions in charities in England and Wales for a period of 10 years.

Amy Spiller, Head of Investigations at the Charity Commission, said:

The public expects each charity to show that it is doing its bit to uphold trust in charity more generally, and this expectation starts with the Chair and trustees. The former trustees failed in this expectation, allowing a catalogue of serious mistakes and misjudgements to occur. Their mismanagement had a direct and profound impact on the charity resulting in the loss of its largest asset – its property.

Our inquiry found the trustees had not acted in their charity's

best interests or that of its beneficiaries. Their actions and oversights ultimately exposed the charity to undue and avoidable risk. This case should send a clear message to other charities about the need for financial controls, due diligence and correct conduct and the potential impact should these not be in place.

A new board of trustees has been appointed and the Commission has issued them with an action plan to help protect the charity going forward. It is satisfied that the new trustees are now acting in the charity's best interests and have made significant progress.

Ends

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. Read [the full report](#) of the Commission's inquiry into Christ Apostolic Church World Soul Winning and Evangelistic Ministry.
3. View the [charity's entry on the register of charities](#).
4. The inquiry noted that the reports of the amount of money paid to the solicitors differed; the loan company told the inquiry that £191,950 of the funds were paid to an account in the name of the solicitors acting for the former trustees.
5. Police investigated the matter regarding the payment to the five organisations linked to the charity but decided there was insufficient evidence to proceed.