

Louise Ellman MP
Chair
Transport Select Committee
House of Commons
LONDON
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Dear Mrs Ellman

Inquiry: Operation Stack

Transport Focus is the independent consumer watchdog representing the interests of transport users, including since March 2015 users of the motorways and major 'A' roads in England.

As the Committee conducts its Inquiry following the evidence session last October, I thought it would be helpful to outline Transport Focus's position regarding the management of lorry traffic in Kent in the event of disruption to ferry services from Dover and/or the Channel Tunnel.

We welcome Highways England's proposal to create a purpose-built lorry area adjacent to the M20 because of the huge detrimental impact Operation Stack has on users of the road network in Kent. However, we highlighted in our response to the Highways England consultation that it appeared to be aimed mainly at stakeholders in Kent, rather than seeking to draw in the views of likely users of the lorry park once open. We believe that what is provided must meet the needs of both UK and European HGV operators and their drivers, otherwise it will not solve the problem it is seeking to address.

With regard to location, Transport Focus has no preference between the two sites. The crucial thing is that whichever is selected meets the needs of lorry drivers and their employers, and facilitates best use of available cross-Channel capacity available at both Dover and Eurotunnel.

We believe that, once fully open, there should be an explicit commitment that no section of the M20 (or other parts of the Strategic Road Network) will in future be closed in order to queue lorries seeking to cross the Channel.

With a large sum of public money to be invested, we feel that the site should be available for use as much of the time as possible. We therefore favour the option for both a general disruption and a combined truck-stop as detailed in Section 13, Alternative 4 of the consultation. We again emphasise that detail about the facilities



to be offered at the site should be decided only after significant user input. There is no point in building a facility that does not meet lorry drivers' or their employers' needs – there is every danger that they simply won't use it.

Cross-Channel freight traffic is forecast to increase and TAP (Traffic Assessment Project) on the approaches to the Port of Dover via the A20 has been in use almost daily in recent months. We therefore recommended that Highways England considers carefully how the proposed lorry area will reduce or eliminate the need for TAP. It is likely that road users will be dissatisfied if TAP remains in regular use once the lorry area is up and running.

We also suggested that Highways England considers how HGVs will be filtered off the M20 into the proposed site with minimum disruption to other users of the motorway.

Transport Focus will shortly conduct research among HGV drivers using the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel to understand their views about the proposed lorry area, as well as their experiences of TAP. In addition, we are carrying out research into road users' experiences of and needs from roadside facilities in general. Insight from both exercises will help inform the ultimate design of the lorry area. We will publish our findings of both in due course and I will ensure that the Committee receives a copy as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Guy Dangerfield
Road User Director