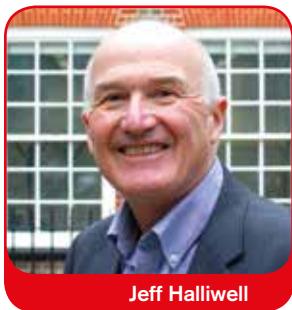




A safe place to park

What lorry drivers want during disruption
to cross-Channel services

Summary report
December 2016



Jeff Halliwell

Foreword

In November 2015 the Government announced a £250m fund for a permanent solution to the problem of where to park lorries at times of cross-Channel ferry and tunnel disruption.

There is a pressing need for an alternative to closing sections of the M20 – known as Operation Stack. Although this is used infrequently, it is hugely disruptive to road users. Transport Focus is keen to ensure that what is provided meets the needs of lorry drivers and the freight industry, both major users of the Strategic Road Network.

This research set out to explore what facilities lorry drivers want at the new lorry holding area. We also took the opportunity to understand their experiences of the Dover Traffic Assessment Project (TAP). Unlike Operation Stack, TAP is used regularly and involves the police controlling the flow of lorries from the A20 through Dover town centre to the port.

In terms of the holding area, we found that drivers' key requirements are access to showers and toilets, and being able to ensure that their vehicles and loads are safe.

When expecting to wait longer (eight hours or more) at the lorry holding area, around four in 10 drivers also prioritise better food, drink or recreation facilities. A significant number of drivers would also like to have the facility available outside times of disruption too.

We found mixed views on how well Dover TAP is managed, with around half of lorry drivers satisfied but a significant proportion of the rest dissatisfied. Satisfaction with information provided while in the queue was lower than other aspects,

with details about the likely length of delay being the key area drivers would like improved.

The main recommendations we make from this research are:

- in terms of Dover TAP, Highways England should explore ways to communicate the length of wait to lorry drivers in the queue and in advance of it, including using electronic roadside signs
- in the new lorry holding area, Highways England should ensure that the site offers showers as well as toilets, and should provide a high degree of security for parked vehicles
- Highways England should consider how the holding area can be made available for use as much of the time as possible, given that drivers say they would use it even when there is no cross-Channel disruption.

We will be sharing this research into lorry drivers' views with Highways England, Government and others to help ensure that the new lorry holding area is designed and operated to best meet the needs of its users.

This research complements our previously-published report *Take a Break: Road users' views about roadside facilities*, which highlighted lorry drivers' dissatisfaction with current provision across the network.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Halliwell".

Jeff Halliwell
Chair, Transport Focus

Key findings

Lorry holding area – priority of facilities

For short stays (around three hours) at the lorry holding area, most drivers prioritise the provision of showers (and not just toilets), ahead of food, drink and other amenities. Drivers also tell us the security of their vehicle and its load is important to them, with around two thirds wanting more than simply open parking with entry and exit barriers.

When drivers thought about longer stays (around eight hours) at the holding area, the need for shower facilities (as well as toilets) came through even more strongly. Vehicle security that is 'above basic' stayed an important priority for just over two thirds of drivers. The provision of better food and drink facilities, as well as amenities such as lounges, recreational facilities and complimentary Wi-Fi, became a priority for around four in ten drivers.

If drivers were to stay overnight, showers, toilets and vehicle security remain the most important facilities to provide. Sleeping accommodation was clearly not a priority, almost certainly because

the lorry drivers are used to sleeping in their vehicles, which are designed accordingly. Better food, drink and other amenities was a priority for around four in ten drivers, as it was in the eight-hour stay scenario.

In terms of additional facilities, being able to fill up with diesel or carry out servicing and maintenance were considered important by around a third of the drivers interviewed.

Around two thirds of drivers said they would use the holding area on a voluntary basis for daytime stops, even if there was no cross-Channel disruption. This increased to around four out of five drivers for overnight stops.

Four out of five drivers thought that if the holding area was available free of charge when there is no cross-Channel disruption it would encourage those who currently park at the roadside or in lay-bys (considered inappropriate by residents and local authorities) to use it. If a fee was charged, only two in five drivers thought it likely that those drivers who currently park inappropriately would use the site.



Dover TAP – controlled queuing on the A20, through Dover to the port

Half of drivers are satisfied with how well 'the authorities' manage the movement of lorries along the Dover Traffic Assessment Project (TAP) queue, with a significant proportion of the rest dissatisfied. Police and Highways England staff are regarded as relatively approachable, but lorry drivers are less satisfied when it comes to getting information about the likely delay to their journey. There was also dissatisfaction with the authorities' perceived failure to prevent other lorries from jumping the queue.

Drivers highlighted the importance of accurate and timely information in advance of joining the queue and while in it. This allows drivers to plan their legally-required tachograph breaks accordingly, as well as to manage their expectations while in the queue.

Drivers say roadside signs are the best way for information about Dover TAP to be communicated.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Provision of lorry area facilities

In the new lorry holding area, Highways England should provide showers as well as toilets and should provide a high degree of security for parked vehicles.

- Shower and toilet facilities are a high priority whatever the duration of wait at the lorry holding area. We recommend that enough are provided to meet needs even when the holding area is completely full for days on end. There must be sufficient 'redundancy' to allow a proportion to be closed for cleaning and maintenance at any one time without material impact on drivers. Cleaning will need to be to a high standard, carried out near-continuously.
- Security of vehicles and loads is extremely important to lorry drivers and we recommend that the design focuses not only on securing the perimeter of the site, but also on security within the holding area, including live-monitored CCTV and a physical security staff presence.
- After showers, toilets and security, lorry drivers' next set of requirements are for the provision of food and drink facilities, lounges in which to relax (otherwise drivers will be cooped up in their cabs) and Wi-Fi.

Highways England should consider how the holding area can be made available for use as much of the time as possible, given that drivers say they would use it even when there is no cross-Channel disruption.

- Drivers believe the majority of other drivers who currently park at the roadside or in lay-bys would use the new holding area if it was free of charge – that is, even when there is no cross-Channel disruption. While it may seem undesirable to offer these facilities for free, we believe the cost – in monetary and 'quality of life' terms – of lorries parking in inappropriate locations should be factored in. We encourage Highways England, in conjunction with other agencies, to explore options for the new facility to be made available even when it is not required for its primary purpose.
- We recommend that Highways England designs the holding area in such a way that it will remove the need for any section of the M20 to be closed and/or for Dover TAP to be needed in future.

- We recommend that Highways England considers how lorries will be filtered off the M20 into the lorry holding area with minimum disruption to other users of the M20.
- We recommend that the authorities consider the best way to ensure that all cross-Channel lorry traffic uses the site as intended and there is no queue jumping. This will be important to give confidence to lorry drivers that others are not gaining an unfair advantage.

Information to lorry drivers queuing in Dover TAP

In terms of Dover TAP, Highways England should explore ways to communicate the length of wait to lorry drivers, in the queue and in advance of it, including using roadside signs.

- Our research indicates drivers' satisfaction with TAP could be improved by providing more variable message signs (VMS) along and before the Dover TAP zone.

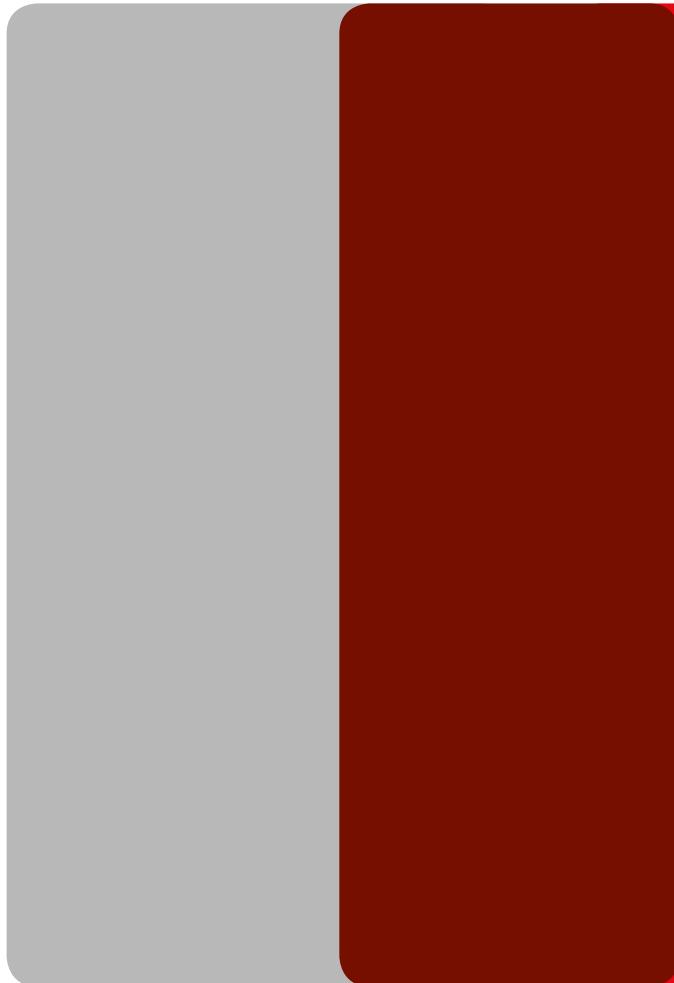
Highways England, along with Port of Dover Police and the Port of Dover, should investigate ways to provide accurate information to lorry drivers. This will help them plan their legally-required tachograph breaks, as well as to manage their expectations.



How we carried out this research

This research involved 245 face-to-face interviews on cross-Channel ferries and at roadside services near to both the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel. We asked lorry drivers for their priorities from a 'menu' of potential facilities.

This was a two-stage process – the first established drivers' initial level of priority if they needed to use the lorry park, then the second stage required them to think further about what would matter to them most if they needed to use the lorry park.



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