

# Select Committee on the European Union

## EU Goods Sub-Committee

### Corrected oral evidence: Traffic management preparations for the end of the transition

Monday 23 November 2020

12.30 pm

Watch the meeting

Members present: Baroness Verma (The Chair); Lord Berkeley; Baroness Chalker of Wallasey; Lord Faulkner of Worcester; Lord Inglewood; Baroness Kramer; Lord Lamont of Lerwick; Lord Lilley; Lord Russell of Liverpool; Lord Shipley; Lord Turnbull; Lord Wood of Anfield.

Evidence Session No. 1

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 1 - 9

### Witnesses

[I](#): Duncan Buchanan, Director of Policy for England and Wales, Road Haulage Association; Nick Harris, Operations Executive Director, Highways England; Adrian Jones, National Officer, Unite; Claire Nix, Strategic Commander, Operation Blythe (EU transition), Kent Police; Tim Reardon, Head of EU Exit, Port of Dover.

## Examination of witnesses

Duncan Buchanan, Nick Harris, Adrian Jones, Claire Nix and Tim Reardon.

**Q1 The Chair:** Welcome to my colleagues on the EU Goods Sub-Committee and to our witnesses this afternoon. It is an hour-long session and we have quite a few questions to get through. This is a one-off evidence session looking at the key aspects of end of transition readiness. Today, the Committee will be looking at traffic management preparations in Kent.

I welcome our witnesses. For this session we have Mr Duncan Buchanan, the director of policy for England and Wales, the Road Haulage Association; Mr Nick Harris, operations executive director at Highways England; Mr Adrian Jones, national officer for Unite the union; Ms Claire Nix, strategic commander of Operation Blythe for EU transition at Kent Police; and Mr Tim Reardon, head of EU exit, Port of Dover. Welcome to you all.

You had sight of the questions before the session. There may be supplementary questions, if we have time. If colleagues ask supplementaries, please keep them succinct and short. I ask witnesses, on answering, to do the same. The transcript will be sent to you after the broadcast. If there are any corrections to be made, we would be most grateful if you could make them and send them back to us as quickly as possible.

Nick, Tim and Claire, for the benefit of the Committee, could you set out the traffic management plans that are in place for the area surrounding the Port of Dover and the Eurotunnel as the Brexit transition period comes to an end, with a focus on your own specific areas? How do you see existing measures such as the Dover traffic assessment project and Operation Stack fitting into the new measures being introduced, such as the revised Operation Brock?

**Nick Harris:** Thank you, Chair, for the invitation to give evidence today. Highways England is responsible for the operation of England's motorways and major roads. As executive director of operations, it is my role to oversee all our operational work. This includes the traffic management that we are going to put in place in Kent.

There are a number of elements in the overall traffic management plan. I will outline each element. The decision to activate each element of the plan is made through the Kent resilience forum, of which we are part, and is in response to the developing situation. On 1 January, the M20 between junctions 8 and 9 will look a little different. The coastbound side of the M20 will carry freight for Eurotunnel and the Dover ports, while the London-bound side of the M20 will be configured as a contraflow, using the moveable concrete barrier that we have installed, with two lanes running towards London and two lanes running towards the coast.

I will run through each of the elements in turn. What I have just described on the M20 will run in free flow until we begin to see issues. As

freight traffic starts to queue out of Dover port, we can implement TAP on the A20, which allows us to queue freight traffic on one lane of the A20. We use that a number of times during the year to deal with congestion; it relieves congestion on local roads in Dover.

The next trigger point will come if we get queueing back on to the M20, either from the A20 or out of Eurotunnel on to the M20. At that point, the M20 Brock will go from free flow into its active mode, and we will use traffic lights to start to manage the release of freight both to Eurotunnel and to the Port of Dover.

The next phase will be as we begin to see the M20 Brock filling. A few hours before it is full we will go to the next phase, which will be to divert Dover-bound traffic towards Manston, and then the use of TAP on the A256, while Eurotunnel traffic will remain on the coast-bound side of the M20.

The final phase, which gives us additional holding capacity, will be to use Manston and Sevington as holding areas for freight, Manston for Dover-bound traffic and Sevington for Eurotunnel-bound traffic. In total, that gives us capacity for more than 8,000 trucks across all those elements.

In principle, Stack is still there, but the traffic management solution that I have just outlined replaces it. It is much better, in that we can keep traffic flowing on the M20 and people moving around Kent.

**Tim Reardon:** The Port of Dover's responsibility is to manage traffic movements within the port estate. Our primary device for doing that is the buffer zone that we created four or five years ago, which is, effectively, a queueing area just inside the port entrance for up to 220 lorries. The purpose of that is to deal with temporary occasions when the flow rate of vehicles through the port is lower than the flow rate of vehicles coming off the road.

The buffer zone provides an area where, as I say, up to 220 lorries can be parked, held waiting to get their turn through the port. That is a tried and tested solution, which works well. As Mr Harris has just outlined, when the buffer zone becomes full, the next element of traffic management is the Dover TAP on the A20, which is run by Highways England with involvement from us. That, too, is tried and tested and works well. All those plans are designed to deal with temporary disruption to the flow of traffic out of the country, and to provide vehicles with a space to wait until the disruption has been eased and the traffic flow can resume.

As we look ahead to the start of next year, the key issue is not that we are looking at a temporary disruption to traffic flow through the port. That can arise at any time, whether it is due to bad weather in the channel, high wind, restricting the speed and manoeuvrability of the vessels, or indeed technical failures on the vessels themselves, such as we saw last week.

The issue as we look ahead to next year is a change to border processes that makes getting lorries through the port and out of the country more complex than it is now. The key challenge is to ensure that all vehicles, by the time they arrive at the border, have all the documentation and have made all the declarations they need to get through the border, and therefore do not create any disruption or congestion that might cause the activation of any of the existing traffic management processes.

**Claire Nix:** Kent Police's primary role is to co-ordinate the command and control in response to the traffic management plans for EU transition. We will have a strategic command co-ordinating centre and a tactical command co-ordinating centre set up in preparedness. That will be joined with the border impact centre that is being run at government level to share information on traffic flow from the borders, which will impact on the various triggers of our traffic management plan.

That command and control will be working with multiagency partners across the Kent resilience forum to monitor the impact of traffic build-up; to predict, through data analysis and modelling with an analytic cell, and do live monitoring of the traffic flow; to identify the various trigger points of the traffic management plan; and to identify in advance when they will need to be activated to ensure readiness of the relevant sites and resources.

Operation Stack is a Kent Police emergency response plan that is used in events where we have spontaneous traffic disruption. It is not generally used for planned events. It is a system of traffic management control that can be set up on the M20 in four different stages to hold freight. As EU transition is a planned event, we do not anticipate having to use Operation Stack; we have the traffic management plan, Operation Brock, but we have retained Operation Stack within the plan as an emergency response option. It is a tactic that will remain available to the tactical commander in the event that any of the traffic management plans fail, or we have compromise of any of the sites or routes. It is available to us to hold freight within the M20 network. That said, Stack stage one can operate with Brock, but if further stages had to be implemented, we would require the removal of the contraflow to initiate the further phases.

**The Chair:** Tim, you said that lorry drivers will have to implement all the paperwork. On a scale of between one and 10, where do you think you are at this moment on confidence?

**Tim Reardon:** To be honest, we have no visibility of readiness further up the supply chain to have the documents ready to get through the port. The requirements that UK exporters and French importers will need to meet to get goods from the UK into France have been well publicised for many months. The systems exist and have been tested. They are there, but we, as the port operator, have no visibility of readiness further up the supply chain, unfortunately.

We work on the basis that lorries will need to be ready, and that exporters in the UK and importers in France will have a clear interest in

ensuring that when they send their goods out they have done the necessary declarations, and can give the lorry driver what he needs to get through the frontier so that the goods can reach their customers as wanted.

**Q2 Lord Lilley:** I declare an interest. I am a frequent traveller, outside Covid times, through Folkestone and Dover because I have a house on the other side of the channel in France.

Nick, Tim and Claire, how confident are you that the traffic management plans will successfully deal with the reasonable worst-case scenario put forward by the Government? Have the plans been modelled or tested through exercises, and what have been the key lessons?

In that context, from my own experience, can you confirm that for several months last year, and even the year before, two lanes of the M20 were cordoned off for months on end? They could have been filled with lorries. They were not, but it would have made no difference. The traffic either side was limited to 50 miles per hour. It was a nuisance when someone was held up on the hard shoulder, but it did not bring the nation to a halt. I believe that the longest time Operation Stack has been in operation was in 2015, when it was about 23 near-consecutive days and there were queues of up to 7,000 lorries a time. We have experience of that, but are we expecting worse now?

**Nick Harris:** We are confident that the traffic management plans we have put in place will deal with the worst-case scenarios. We have been working hand in glove with government and our partners across Kent for many months to get ready. We have learned from the two previous occasions in 2019 when we were getting ready for exit. We have carried out a number of exercises with our current arrangements. With the concrete moveable barrier on the M20 that we are implementing as part of Brock, we are in a much better place than we were in the past. The great thing about this solution is that, unlike the steel barrier you were referring to, it is to the side of the hard shoulder. When not in place, it has no impact on the use of the motorway, so we will not see the situation that we saw before.

Of course, for 1 January we will start with it implemented, so there will be 50 miles per hour speed restrictions at that time, but it is a much more resilient tool than we had before. As was mentioned earlier, it is the plan to manage traffic this time round, rather than Stack. We are confident that it will work and that we will not see the same situation as we had in 2015 with Stack.

We have looked at all kinds of things that could happen, such as bad weather—we are in winter so we may get snow—and the impact of Covid, as well as various outages and other things that may have an impact on us. We are continuing to learn and implement things as we discover them. We are confident but not complacent.

**Tim Reardon:** From the Port of Dover's perspective, several elements of the plan are tried and tested and have worked historically. We are

confident that they will work again, particularly the TAP on the A20. That is in use many days of the week at the moment, so there are no issues around that.

Looking at the broader plan, the element that is difficult is the segregation of traffic, and telling lorries that are going to the Channel Tunnel to use one road and lorries that are going to the Port of Dover to use another road. It is difficult, first, because at the time drivers are told lorries are not committed to use one or the other, as they typically make their decision much closer than the top end of the M20, and, secondly, because what is required when dealing with dynamic traffic flow is a dynamic response. For example, the week before last, the M2 was closed for the better part of a day on one day because of a combination of roadworks and a lorry fire. All traffic heading to the port had to come down the M20 and the A20 because it was the only road that was open.

Similarly, also the week before last, on one day we had a lorry breakdown on the roundabout at the very bottom of the A20 and the A2. Again, there was significant disruption. The plans need to be sufficiently dynamic to deal with the circumstances on the day. Making a binary direction that lorries going to the Channel Tunnel should take one road and lorries coming to the Port of Dover should take another road is not a sound basis for making a plan.

**Claire Nix:** I concur with what Tim said. Tactical commanders will dynamically assess the information at the time. Over any period, we are likely to see the risk of other concurrent events or other impacts on the road network when the plan will have to change dynamically, dependent on the situation we face.

In preparation for that, we have, with our partner agencies, done an enormous amount of modelling of traffic flows at the different junctions connected with the inland border facility sites, to understand traffic flow and the impact of different rising-tide incidents. Equally, as Nick mentioned, there has been a lot of testing and exercising. Some of that is tabletop through varying scenarios. As partner agencies, we can exercise different incidents or contingencies to prepare our response.

There has been some minimal live testing. Freight has been put through some of the sites to test the volume of flow, and to ensure that the required flow rate can be provided, for example, at the Port of Dover. All that preparation, over many months, has helped us to develop a set of plans, with contingencies for a variety of incidents that may have to be dynamically deployed, dependent on the circumstances that we face.

**Q3 Lord Shipley:** Duncan and Adrian, how much confidence do your members have in the traffic measures that will be in place, and what are their main concerns? Secondly, how involved has the haulage industry been in drawing up those traffic management plans? From your own perspective, have your views been listened to?

**Duncan Buchanan:** I will deal with the second of those questions first. We have been pretty well integrated with the planning. We have been engaged throughout the entire process with the Kent resilience forum and in other meetings—all the things that have been going on. From our point of view, we have certainly been able to express our concerns and our worries. Not everything always gets taken into account. We are dealing with very complicated issues and multiple needs. It is not just about freight or road hauliers. It is about the whole Kent network and the needs of everyone who has to use the road networks of Kent. We get that.

From our point of view, I think we have been pretty well engaged and the conversations have been as open as they can be. They can be incredibly frustrating and incredibly slow at times. There have been many occasions where ifs, buts and maybes have dominated the conversation. We do not know what will happen here or there. Decisions are taken timely; that is how I would describe it. We did not find out about Sevington until very late, for example. There was a lot of, “We may use this place, or we may use that place”. That creates a lot of uncertainty for us. But we are where we are and, yes, the engagement has been good.

You asked how confident we are in the plans. I think the plans are as good as they can be, but I do not have a great deal of confidence in what will happen in January. That is the problem everyone is dealing with. We do not know what the scale of the problem will be. Hopefully, it will not be as bad as we fear. In all fairness, I think the problem with the border will come not so much on the road network but in the warehouses, factories and distribution centres of the United Kingdom. To follow on from what Tim and a lot of other people are saying, if you do not have all your paperwork for both sides of the border, do not pick up the goods, do not take the goods, do not even go to the port.

The RHA has done a checklist. The thing that we put, big and bold, on page 1 is, “If you don’t have the paperwork, don’t go to the port. Don’t go. Don’t even pick up the goods if it’s not all sorted out”. Hopefully, the problems will not be on the roads. I think there will be a major problem in January, but exactly how it will manifest itself, I do not know.

**Adrian Jones:** Much like Duncan’s concerns and comments, Unite echoes a lot of the thoughts around the uncertainty. The plans will undoubtedly be in place, but the impact of the plans is unknown. We are unashamedly the voice of UK drivers, and we will represent their views. The language that is used is important. When we talk about potentially 7,000 trucks, that is at least 7,000 people—7,000 workers—who will be held up in one form or another due to the impact of leaving the EU on 1 January. The plans will be in place, but what is the impact of those plans?

The Government’s own reasonable worst-case scenario is a significant delay. We do not know what the length of that delay would be. That is the uncertainty that drivers heading towards the Kent coast will have. What Duncan has just said is, to a certain extent, common sense. If you do not have the correct documentation and paperwork, do not go. But for many of our members that is not an option, because they are faced with,

“Do it or else”, or, “Head out on your way, driver, and we will make sure you get the documentation”. Drivers do not have the opportunity of saying, “Well, if I haven’t got the documentation, I’m not picking the goods up”. It is either that or lose the job, and clearly that is not a reasonable option. Yes, the plans will be in place, but what will be the impact of the plans?

The second part of the question related to involvement. I have to say that we have real and great concerns over the lack of drivers’ voices involved in any of the plans. We have requested involvement with the Kent resilience forum. We have yet to be taken up on our offer of support in looking for solutions that we may have. We will come on to the facilities and what will be provided for drivers. There has been absolute frustration from Unite and our driver membership that these plans are being made without drivers’ voices being heard as to what the realistic impact of the plans are on drivers. It is not just international hauliers. It is the local logistics and haulage operations in Kent and the south-east.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Adrian. I am mindful of time and we have a number of questions to get through, so forgive me if I cut you short. Hopefully, you will be able to carry on explaining it in the next question.

Q4 **Lord Wood of Anfield:** I have a question for Claire from an operational point of view about the Kent access permit. I declare an interest. I am from Kent and I have family living on the Kent-Sussex border, so I have a personal interest.

Drivers found to be heading to the Port of Dover or the Eurotunnel without the Kent access permit will, we hear, face a £300 fixed penalty notice. Claire, could you explain the enforcement mechanisms that you are planning to use? We have heard something about this before, but in particular I am interested in how you tell apart HGVs delivering goods domestically from those heading to the Port of Dover or the Eurotunnel.

**Claire Nix:** The Kent access permit will be introduced by government legislation, statutory instruments, on EU transition. It will require all freight travelling to the EU to go through the Check an HGV service and enter the required information to demonstrate that they have the level of documentation required, and they will then be granted a Kent access permit which states that they are ready.

Hauliers that do not engage with that process can, as you state, face a £300 fixed penalty notice. We will be able to identify those that are travelling to the EU and domestic freight by foreign hauliers, as they have to complete the standard levy system, and DVSA servers hold information on UK hauliers who operate with an international operating licence. That information will be uploaded on to the ANPR. Two cameras on the M20 and the M2 will integrate with the Kent access permit system—the Check an HGV system—which will enable our enforcement officers, who will be working with DVSA enforcement officers, to identify hauliers who do not have the required permit. They will be positioned at key compliance and enforcement points within the traffic management

plan to identify the non-compliant freight, to pull it over and engage, to understand the rationale.

Obviously, any enforcement will be done proportionately. We will be able to identify, through those mechanisms, local hauliers and international hauliers. We will do enforcement activities to prevent the use of unauthorised routes—rat-running through some of the local roads. We recognise the impact of any of the traffic management plans on our local community, and we want to ensure that they can freely move around without impact from some of the additional freight in the county.

**Lord Wood of Anfield:** I am still not quite sure how you will distinguish between freight that is on the M20 without a proper permit but intending to go towards the port, and lorries delivering freight to Folkestone or Dover domestically. How will the camera system be able to spot those differences?

**Claire Nix:** Domestic vehicles delivering within the EU will have an international operator's licence, as opposed to a generic local operator's licence. We will also run a local haulier permit scheme, so hauliers in the east of the county who travel across to the EU can apply to Kent County Council for a local haulier permit. That will prevent them having to travel from the east of the county back to the west to join the back of the queue. To reduce congestion, it enables them to continue direct to the port.

Q5 **Lord Berkeley:** Nick, you told us about all the facilities, such as the arrangements for putting barriers on the motorways, Sevington, Manston and everything that will be in place by the end of the year. I saw a television programme last week that showed some pictures of Sevington. It looked very unready, so can you confirm that all those facilities, including all the lights and signs to direct people to them, will be ready and tested before then?

**Nick Harris:** I can talk about the moveable barrier and the signage that we are putting out. We have made good progress. Most of the infrastructure is already in place. In fact, we have plans in the early part of December to carry out live testing of it. If you are driving on the M20 now, you may see the moveable barrier. It is a series of connected concrete segments that are stored at the edge of the hard shoulder. We have that implemented. In fact, as an aside, it is one of the largest uses of that type of technology in Europe. It is quite commonly used in a number of locations in North America, and I think there are a couple of instances in Germany.

We have had the machines that move the barrier for some months. We have been training the team that will operate the barrier and the traffic management, again for some months. I think we have 18 people trained to use the equipment.

**Lord Berkeley:** I know we are in a bit of a rush, but can I come back to you, and possibly Claire, about the vehicle recognition that Claire was

talking about? You have cameras there. Do they recognise number plates from every member state on the continent? Claire, how do you enforce fines on Bulgarian lorry drivers or their owners? My understanding is that the record for enforcing anything on even foreign cars is very low.

**Claire Nix:** Fines of £300 can be enforced on the spot. If they cannot be paid, we have powers to clamp the vehicle, and the clamping is removed on payment of the fine. There are options to enforce against foreign hauliers.

Q6 **Baroness Kramer:** Tim, you were kind enough, some years ago, to host me at the Port of Dover, so I have seen how little land space is available between the white cliffs and the water, and the very rapid turnaround time per ferry—two at a time. I think it was 45 minutes when I was there, and you were hoping to cut that significantly with some additional infrastructure changes.

Have you identified the additional infrastructure that needs to be put in at Dover, either for 1 January or for July? If so, what does it look like, and can there be interim measures? Secondly, have you basically abandoned the various plans to cut significantly the turnaround time, which I think was geared against the forecasts of pre-Brexit growth in traffic?

**Tim Reardon:** There are lots of elements there. The short answer is, yes, we have identified what we need to put in the port to accommodate new border controls and new processes. We would be delighted to show you what we build once we have built it, when the port is once again open for visitors. That is a general invitation to the whole Committee.

The new infrastructure at the port is needed to accommodate the element of the port-based processes that are changing; those are the outbound border controls, where two new elements are coming in. Inbound border controls will operate as they do now in the existing infrastructure, with no practical change. Inbound flows are not an issue. It is the outbound flow where changes will occur and, as I said, they are twofold.

First, French passport control processes will change. They will become more intrusive, and therefore slower, for holders of UK passports. That means we need more French kiosks in order to maintain the rate of flow. Secondly, there will be a new element, associated with French customs, built into the ferry operator's check-in. When a lorry checks in for its ferry crossing, it will need to demonstrate that the goods in the back have been pre-declared to French customs. That will add a bit of time, but more importantly it will need to take place before the lorry presents for its passport check.

We have a scheme that does all those things. We have put in an application to the Government's port infrastructure fund to provide funding to enable those works to happen. We are hopeful that we will get a positive response from that application. We have not had a response yet.

The timing for when each element needs to be in place varies slightly. The key element for part of the French passport process and for the French customs process is 1 January next year, as it is for the thing that arises out of both of those, which is to provide an opportunity for lorries that have been rejected physically to leave the port. Other elements of the French passport process will change again at the start of 2022, and we need to be ready for those as well.

We have the application in. The sooner we receive funding from the Government to start building, the sooner the infrastructure will be ready. Clearly, major civil works will not be ready for 1 January next year, nor even for 1 July in the summer, but the sooner we receive the funding, the sooner the work can start and the sooner it will be finished.

**Baroness Kramer:** How are you going to cope in the interim?

**Tim Reardon:** It is an exercise in operational response to a changed circumstance. We can only work within the infrastructure and the footprint we have. As you identified, the footprint is not going to change; we have the white cliffs on one side of the port and the sea on the other, and neither of those is moving. We have to focus on the process for getting vehicles through the port, so that everybody who wants to get through can get through. That will be an operational exercise until the infrastructure that we need is actually in place.

**Q7 Lord Lamont of Lerwick:** Duncan and Tim, the Government are planning to use sites at Sevington, Waterbrook and Ebbsfleet as inland checking sites. Do you expect those sites to be fully operational at the end of the transition period? Will they have sufficient capacity for their purposes?

Duncan, last week the Government published their long-awaited hauliers' manual. Has it been well received by your members?

**Duncan Buchanan:** My understanding is that Sevington will be ready. However, I would counsel a bit of caution on that, because we are entering December and a lot of things could happen to knock that off.

It also depends on what you mean by ready. I am very concerned about driver welfare facilities, not just at those sites but at the back-up arrangements on the road network. On driver welfare, particularly as we are going to be in January, if we have an acrimonious end to the transition period we may find ports blocked with fishermen in France and all sorts of things going on, and there is a high risk of serious unplanned problems on the road network. Let us hope that Sevington is in a state to work and look after the people concerned.

There is another aspect about some of these sites. It is not completely clear how the customs processes will operate at the sites. Bear in mind that we are six weeks away from this actually happening. We should not be in a situation where there is lack of clarity about who will be doing what at the sites. That is not a sustainable position for very much longer. We need clarity about who will be working at the sites, what functions are

going to be taken at each of the sites and what you do when something goes wrong. As sure as anything, things are going to go wrong.

You asked about the haulier handbook. At the moment, it is not a handbook; it is only a web page. There is a pdf planned. It may be published today. It may have been published over the weekend, but I am not certain about that. There is no foreign language version available at the moment, so we have a situation where 85% of the lorries—it is far higher among vans, by the way—are EU-based, with some having very low language skills, and we are providing very poor-quality information.

To back up something Adrian said earlier about the drivers' responsibility, the drivers are not responsible for anything; it is the companies. It is our members—the hauliers, the freight forwarders, the traders and the logistics companies—who have to provide the driver with everything they need. The driver is not a person who is qualified to do customs. He is a person who has sheaves of paper and he hands them to someone else, who does it. It has always been the same way. The driver is not responsible for triple-checking things that should be done by professional people elsewhere. We have been trying to educate people about that for a long time. I hope that answers your questions, Lord Lamont.

**Lord Lamont of Lerwick:** Thank you. It is quite disturbing.

**Tim Reardon:** My response is much the same as you have just heard from Mr Buchanan. We are told that the sites will be ready. We have to have faith that they will be ready.

To come back to a point I raised earlier in the session, there is an inherent danger in relying on such a small number of sites. The road network through Kent provides a number of routes to the coast from the hinterland of the UK, from which most of the lorries come. There needs to be an array of sites across that network, not one or two in a couple of locations. If they happen to be unreachable on the day, that creates a big problem.

We know that there is a plan to create a broader array of sites. Those sites are needed and they are needed soon. Like Mr Buchanan, we have been asking for a directory of the sites that will be available to be published, showing when they will be available and identifying the services that will be available at each site. It is also important that every site is capable of handling every lorry, regardless of what is in it, and that hauliers are free to direct their vehicles to attend whichever site is convenient for the journey they are on. Clearly, one of the most important ways to avoid increasing congestion is to enable lorries to be attended to where they already are, rather than requiring them to drive even further on the road network to attend a site that is a significant diversion from their existing journey.

Q8 **Lord Faulkner of Worcester:** This is a very practical and rather down-to-earth question directed principally at Adrian, but I am happy if anybody else wants to come in with an answer. There have been

alarming press reports that there will be very inadequate lavatory facilities for drivers on the M20, particularly if they are delayed in a queue for any length of time. The best one has read about is the possibility of occasional Portaloos here and there in lay-bys. Adrian, have you made representations to the Government about that, and what sort of assurances have you received?

**Adrian Jones:** It is a very important issue for our members, and one of our basic human rights. You are absolutely right; the Under-Secretary of State, Rachel Maclean MP, took it upon herself to announce that Portaloos would be made available at the roadside. That is simply not acceptable for anybody, and it should not be deemed a success from a Government who have not engaged with the industry in the way they should to ensure that proper facilities are provided.

You raise a very important point about the facilities on sites, both in Kent and further upstream elsewhere in the country, as was referred to earlier. Inevitably, drivers will get stuck in delays on the road network. What is being provided? What are the solutions? I have heard a number of comments today, and in recent weeks, that the aim is to keep traffic flowing. Brilliant. If that is the case, great. To be honest, it is pie in the sky at the moment. There will be inevitable and significant delays for drivers, so we need to make sure that proper facilities have been provided.

I have to say that the only involvement that Unite has had, despite repeated requests through the Department for Transport and directly to Ministers, has been in the last couple of weeks. I have been in conversations with officers in the Department for Transport to talk about what is to be provided. They cannot confirm what will be provided. The road network in Kent is an issue for Kent County Council. The new lorry parks or parking areas and customs checks are the responsibility of central government, but they cannot confirm what facilities will be made available on them.

I strongly support Tim's comments. We urgently need the locations and the facilities available, so that drivers can make the appropriate choices to get where they need to be at the right time. It is not just about facilities; it is about road safety as well.

**Lord Faulkner of Worcester:** What about signage? Nick, has anything been done to provide signage advising drivers where they can go?

**Nick Harris:** Before talking about signage, I want to mention that the safety and welfare of road users and everyone working on the road is absolutely our number one imperative. We understand the concerns and take them very seriously.

We have an extensive network of electronic road signage: the VMS that you have probably all seen on the network. That enables us to communicate in real time directly with drivers. We use that technology every day to communicate information, so it is tried and tested. Via that,

we will be able to provide information to all road users, including hauliers, so that they can plan their journeys. In addition, as part of the traffic management plans that we have been putting in place, there will be hard signage to give information on the actions that drivers will need to take, and signage giving them directions to sites where there are welfare facilities.

**Lord Faulkner of Worcester:** Claire, have Kent Police given any thought to potential anti-social behaviour issues that may arise from unpleasant incidents at the roadside?

**Claire Nix:** We will have additional resources available to deal with any breach of the peace or other criminality or anti-social behaviour linked to EU transition. Kent County Council is looking at anti-social parking by freight drivers, when they are unable to get through the inland border facilities and may choose to park on residential roads. We are looking at options to address those issues and the impact on the local community.

**Lord Faulkner of Worcester:** Thank you. It could be a nightmare, could it not?

**Claire Nix:** Absolutely. We are very mindful that we need to look at the impacts, not only on road users but on our local community who have to continue to go about their daily business, going to work, school, et cetera.

**Baroness Chalker of Wallasey:** The signs can be used in Kent very well, but a lot of the warning signs to drivers, as I am sure Adrian will agree, have to be put not only around the M25 but way up on the M6, the M11 and so forth. Facilities cannot wait until you get to somewhere in Kent near one of the sites. Can anybody inform me what plans there are and what will be done further back to alert drivers to the precautions they should take about where the facilities are?

**Nick Harris:** I mentioned our network of electronic signage. That is on our entire network, not just in Kent. We have a communication plan that involves giving information to drivers far away from Kent so that they can plan their journey and react long before they arrive in Kent, and make their plans accordingly. That is for our entire network, and not just for the information that we will be providing on the M20 and the M25.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Lord Turnbull has the quickfire round question.

Q9 **Lord Turnbull:** Each of you will have a still-to-do list, I am sure. If there was one thing that you would urge the Government to prioritise between now and the end of the transition, what would it be?

**Duncan Buchanan:** The number one thing for me is about sites. It is about knowing what each of the inland border facility sites is capable of doing, so that things can be picked up properly and complete paperwork can be obtained. Complete certainty over what can be done at each of those sites would be the most useful thing right now.

**Nick Harris:** I will stretch that slightly. Our efforts continue to be focused on working with the Government, the Kent resilience forum and the haulage industry to make sure that our traffic management plans are absolutely ready to be deployed and will be effective. That includes the live test deployment that we will be doing in early December. Of course, we must make sure that we engage with all necessary stakeholders and the local communities in advance of that work.

**Adrian Jones:** Those final comments from Nick were music to my ears. The one thing that drivers in the UK want is for their voice to be heard. We have demonstrated this year during the pandemic that we are a flexible workforce and a flexible industry, and that we rise to the challenge and find solutions. Engage us in that. Engage with Unite and engage with drivers to find the solutions to all the problems, or at least attempt to try to find solutions to the problems that we will face over the coming months.

**Claire Nix:** Like Duncan, I think finalisation of the inland sites is key, particularly the operational management plans for those sites, so that they can be fully integrated into the command and control arrangements. A huge amount of work is going on by government departments in respect of those sites, but we need real prioritisation to finalise the plans over the last few weeks.

**Tim Reardon:** There is a very easy one from me. What we need from the Government is commitment of funds to support the construction of the new infrastructure that will be needed within the Port of Dover to keep the gateway functioning. The whole debate about congestion falls away if the gateway itself continues to function and flow freely. We need the new infrastructure in the port for outbound border controls. The sooner that money is forthcoming, the sooner they can be built.

**Lord Turnbull:** Nick, what channel of radiocommunications can drivers and hauliers use to give them the most up-to-date information?

**Nick Harris:** That is a good question. I can provide some additional information after this session. As I mentioned earlier, our communication plan is to use our electronic signage. We are also providing information via local and national media, so updates can be gained there. I can provide some additional information.

**Lord Inglewood:** I have a question for Claire. I may not have understood things properly. We had evidence last week from Tyson Burrige, a north of England haulier that does some work abroad, but principally in the UK. If it has a contract to deliver goods in, say, Sittingbourne, will it be able to do that without let or hindrance?

**Claire Nix:** Yes. We should be able to identify those that are doing local deliveries. We have powers to check documentation, so if we stop a vehicle and it is doing local deliveries as well as undertaking EU deliveries, we will be able to inspect its documentation, see that it is a local delivery and it will be allowed to continue on its way.

**Lord Russell of Liverpool:** Claire, we heard earlier that upwards of 80% of drivers regularly going to and from the EU are not UK nationals and are not necessarily English speakers. How on earth are you going to deal with Bulgarians, Romanians, Hungarians and Poles if you do not have the language skills?

**Claire Nix:** Our officers engage with many foreign hauliers as part of their current policing activities in traffic management incidents. We find that a lot of freight drivers have basic English skills, although not full language skills. We have access to a telephone translation service. If we need to engage in more detail, we can access that by phone to translate into any languages that are required.

**Lord Lilley:** This is a slightly longer-term question. Given that only 15% of hauliers and drivers are British, is there scope for us in the longer term to increase the share of the haulage traffic handled by British hauliers and drivers?

**Duncan Buchanan:** I think there probably is. We are already seeing reluctance from EU-based hauliers to come to the UK in January. It will be a problem. If you have a choice of serving other markets or a very complicated, problematic, congested market with unreliable journey times, you are very much going to avoid coming here in the first place. Our members have been contacted by EU hauliers with a view to passing business to UK hauliers.

One of the problems we have at the moment—I am sure others can comment about this later when you talk to other people—is that, as we sit here today, not one UK haulier knows whether they will be able to operate in and out of the EU in 2021: not one. There is no allocation of permits at the moment, and there is no back-up deal in place at the moment. UK hauliers cannot commit to taking goods or picking goods up from 1 January, because at the moment they have no permits or licences that allow them to do it. They will not know for a couple of weeks or, I suspect, maybe more.

**The Chair:** Adrian, do you want to make a last comment?

**Adrian Jones:** Any steps that can be taken to stop the race to the bottom on terms, conditions and quality of services in the road haulage sector would be welcomed by our members. We have campaigned on that for many years, and it is something that we would welcome the opportunity to continue to work on.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I thank our witnesses for coming this morning. I am sorry that we have been slightly rushed. I think the questions could have gone on for at least another 30 or 40 minutes. I thank our witnesses for being so succinct.

Claire, there is one more question, which you can answer in writing. What is the cost of the haulier permits? It would be very helpful if you could get back to us on that. We want to gauge how much extra cost there will be

on hauliers if they are found without a permit.

I draw this session to a close and remind our witnesses that if there are any corrections to be made on the transcript to send them back to us as quickly as possible. That would be very helpful. If you have afterthoughts and wish to add those to the statements you have made today, please send them in writing. That would be very useful too. Thank you very much indeed.