



Justice and Home Affairs Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Electronic border management systems

Tuesday 27 February 2024

11.10 am

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Members present: Lord Foster of Bath (The Chair); Baroness Buscombe; Lord Dubs; Lord Filkin; Lord Henley; Baroness Meacher; Baroness Prashar; Lord Sandhurst; Lord Tope.

Evidence Session No. 1

Heard in Public

Questions 1 - 11

Witnesses

[!:](#) John Keefe, Chief Corporate and Public Affairs Officer, Getlink Group; Tim Reardon, Company Secretary, Secretary to the Board, Port of Dover; Gareth Williams, General Secretary and Chief Strategic Partnerships Officer, Eurostar.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

John Keefe, Tim Reardon and Gareth Williams.

Q1 **The Chair:** Good morning. Thank you very much indeed for coming. Before we start, I would be grateful if you could each introduce yourselves.

Gareth Williams: I am the general secretary of Eurostar.

Tim Reardon: I am the company secretary of Dover Harbour Board.

John Keefe: I am chief corporate and public affairs officer for Getlink Group, the owners of the Channel Tunnel.

The Chair: Thank you. Before we begin, I should declare my own interest as a regular traveller on The Shuttle, which I think is a fantastic service.

As you know, we had a previous inquiry into the issues of ETIAS, EES and the ETA and you all have very kindly given evidence to the committee. We will now ask for an update on the current situation and some other questions we might have. There will be a record kept of this and copies of it will be sent to you. If you have any corrections or if there is any further information subsequent to the hearing that you think we should have, we would be very grateful if you could write to us as quickly as possible. The meeting is now in session.

Could we begin with a very obvious starter for 10 question? Having given evidence last time and having described some of the problems that you saw as inherent in it, can each of you give us an update of the situation as you see it in relation to the European schemes? We will come back to the proposed UK scheme a little later. Do you have any thoughts on whether things have improved or an information on likely timescales for introduction and so on? It is a very broad opening question.

Gareth Williams: We are preparing for the introduction this autumn of the European Entry/Exit System—EES. That will be followed about a year later by a scheme called ETIAS, which is a registration scheme. What EES requires you to do is to create a biometric file if you are a non-EU citizen that records your face and your fingerprints, and it links that to a permission to travel into Schengen countries. That scheme, as I said, is due to go live this autumn. It requires a very significant investment in facilities at the stations and at the other facilities where it is taking place—airports, ports, and so on. We have been busy making those investments in order to be ready this autumn.

The Chair: Before I move on to the others, are you confident about this autumn? It has been delayed and now we understand that post the Paris Olympics is the starting gun.

Gareth Williams: That is right, and this time round we fully expect it to be introduced.

Tim Reardon: That is very much our expectation as well. It is a standard EU scheme that will apply at all points of entry. It will apply in the Port of Dover just as it will

apply in St Pancras station. The key focus for us is ensuring that it applies in a way that is suitable for vehicle traffic. As designed, it is an aviation system. It is designed for airports. It does not translate naturally or easily to the very different operating environment that we have in our ferry terminal. Most of our work over the last two years, since I was previously with this committee, has been focused on working with the French authorities and with the UK Government to ensure that a sensible, practicable operating model is developed—one that will enable these biometrics to be captured and then used in respect of passengers travelling in vehicles through our terminal.

The Chair: Thank you. We will be returning, as you can well imagine, to identifying some of those practical operating arrangements and whether they are working.

Before I bring in John Keefe, can I check one thing? You said that you were working with the Government. I assume that means the Home Office. Can you give us a very quick snapshot of how involved the Home Office has been in helping you with the work that you have had to do?

Tim Reardon: We have been working with both the Home Office and the Department for Transport, which has the key policy responsibility in respect of UK ports. They in turn have been in discussions with the French authorities.

Constitutionally, this is happening in Dover because of the treaty of Le Touquet concluded between the UK and France. We are, if you like, onlookers and facilitators rather than integral to the process. It is a French border control and it is happening here because of the treaty that France has with the UK Government. The formal lines of communication are Government-to-Government, but clearly we know the people and we have been working closely with them, applying our knowledge of how the site works and how the traffic flows through it to develop precisely those practical arrangements.

John Keefe: I agree with everything that my two colleagues have said. The one important piece that I think is missing at the moment is biometric enrolment at distance. There was an original plan to have a smartphone application that would enable at least the facial biometrics and the biographical details to be registered at distance, which would have saved a lot of time enrolling details for individuals once they arrive at the portal. All the preparation we are doing is in readiness for individuals turning up and having to enrol at the point of entry into the EU, which, as my colleagues have said, is on UK soil because we are all juxtaposed portals.

For the rest, in line with what happens at the Port of Dover, ours is a vehicle-based system and from having to sell a ticket for one vehicle and one space for one vehicle, we are now required to provide enrolment space for all the passengers in that vehicle, which can multiply the crossing time by a factor of three, four, five or 10.

The Chair: Sorry, can you repeat that very last figure?

John Keefe: Three, four, five, 10, depending on the number of people in the car.

The Chair: Okay. I am sure that colleagues will want to pick that up, but we will hold on to that. I am enormously grateful. I will bring in my colleagues so that we can pick up some of the details of this, but thanks for your opening remarks. I will bring in Baroness Buscombe.

Q2 Baroness Buscombe: Good morning, gentlemen. Taking what you have said a little further, what changes are still needed to accommodate the launch of the two systems? In particular, John, you have just raised the issue of biometric involvement at distance. Is it just delayed or is there a much longer-term problem? Perhaps John would like to respond first, then Tim and then Gareth.

John Keefe: From what we gather from the EU, it is delayed. It is an element of the system that was envisaged from the early stages. It is a two-tier application. One is a fundamental provided by the EU and the second is an individual member state application. Each member state will adapt the application to its particular needs, and then it will feed the essential information through into eu-LISA, which is controlling the database.

In the requirement to gather information at the point of entry into the EU, particularly in a vehicle-based environment where space is at a premium and safety is critical, it is very difficult to envisage how to capture all that data without stopping a vehicle and asking the people in it to step out, all of which adds to delay in the transit time. The application was a great idea in that it would have enabled most of that information to be captured in advance, it would have reduced the requirement for capture at the point of entry into the EU, and it would have enabled traffic, passengers and freight to travel much more freely. It is a shame that it is not ready at this stage.

Baroness Buscombe: Do you have any thoughts about how long we are talking before it could be introduced—six months, a year or maybe longer?

John Keefe: We do not believe that it will be ready before 2025, but dates are notoriously difficult to pin down in this situation.

Baroness Buscombe: Thank you. Tim, what changes are still needed to accommodate the launch of the systems from your perspective?

Tim Reardon: Like our colleagues at the Channel Tunnel, the European app that has been promised and has been explained, is needed to make the passenger experience smooth, to enable the registration process to be more efficient, and to enable use to be made of preregistered data when somebody comes through after their first time. We are eagerly awaiting the delivery of that. We cannot influence it, but we are looking forward to it coming.

One of the reasons that this has been such a difficult scheme to bring forward is the extraordinary stipulation that is in the Schengen Borders Code, that a digital system or the use of a digital system has to be overseen by an officer in uniform. That makes it very difficult to realise the self-service benefits that every other online scheme delivers. Strategically, that remains a significant request for us.

Once we have established how the regime will work for each of our traffic streams—we are there for two of the big streams; we are close to agreeing an arrangement for the third—those need to be signed off and physical preparations made to accommodate the new processes. Clearly, vehicles are large. The terminal through which they are to drive needs to be configured appropriately so that they can get through safely and so that the people working in the terminal and moving between the vehicles can do that safely. That is where our current focus is.

Baroness Buscombe: Thank you. Gareth, from the Eurostar perspective, what changes are still needed?

Gareth Williams: I will look in the medium and short term. In the medium term, if we take a step back, this is designed to automate the border to enable more people to self-serve, to use automated solutions. As John said, a remote app to enable that to happen online before you get to the point of the border would be a very big step forward. We have such an application in play at the moment in St Pancras. You register remotely. It does a biometric facial check. It checks you into the train and completes the UK border exit control in the time it takes simply to walk past the machine. It shows the potential.

We understand that the European border agency, FRONTEX, is trialling a proof of concept of its app, possibly in early summer, but like John, we do not expect that to be live before 2025. We need to deal with the here and now.

We have not relied on that technology to be ready. We have used the most recent delay to invest. We are lucky in some regard as a purely passenger operation that we do not face the same category of issues that Tim and John do with car traffic. For us, it is a matter of investment and a matter of communication. For instance, we are buying three times as many EES kiosks as were allocated to us by the French Government to ensure that we can be ready this autumn for the demands we expect to be placed on the system. We accept that it is where it is. We are investing and we are getting on with it.

Baroness Buscombe: That is great. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Is there anything further, Lady Buscombe?

Baroness Buscombe: No. I think that is very helpful. Further questions will probably tease out more information that would be helpful to us.

Lord Dubs: Good morning. Could I ask a supplementary question? You talked about kiosks. Do you have the space to put the kiosks there? I understood from newspaper reports that that will be difficult.

Gareth Williams: We have found the space because we need the space. Part of it was not having the kiosks immediately in the same space as our check-in, and having two flows of passengers. Principally, the kiosks will be at one end of the arcade in St Pancras station and HS1 has allocated space there. We also have available space in what used to be one of our ticket offices for business travellers,

and if necessary, we have an overflow space as well elsewhere in the station. We will have space for, I think, 49 kiosks in St Pancras.

The Chair: Sorry, could I just pick that up? We are talking about having a gizmo that will make all this much easier, but the gizmo will not be introduced for at least a year after the scheme is launched. Is your estimate that the number of kiosks you would need post the introduction of the clever gizmo is fewer or the same as you are planning for?

Gareth Williams: Fewer, as a rough estimate. As I say, we are putting 49 kiosks into London in order to be, if anything, over-ready for the demand we expect. A rough estimate is that with the remote app we could probably manage with 30.

The Chair: There is a significant increase in the requirement for a period that may be as short as one year because of the failure to introduce the clever gizmo that, in effect, allows preregistration?

Gareth Williams: We are planning to be ready for the peak of the peak and that is bound to be in the first year when people are unfamiliar with the system, where they are having to learn, and we are having to provide more staff and to communicate to help them through that process smoothly. I would expect over time the pressure on the system as a whole to diminish as more people have established their file and, as you say, when the remote solution becomes—

The Chair: Just to be clear, I get the notion that over time as people become more familiar with the system and they know to get ready for it, to have the right information, all those things, it will get easier. Nevertheless, it the case from what you are saying that significant additional expense is being incurred by you to meet the requirement on day one this year, when it would have been significantly lower if they had waited until they got the gizmo organised.

Gareth Williams: Yes. We do not believe that we would need the same number of kiosks with the remote solution as without, and we are investing in the plan that is without.

The Chair: Who is picking up the tab for this additional cost?

Gareth Williams: We are.

The Chair: Thank you. Before we go on, one of the things that was raised two years ago when you gave evidence was concern about people in cars having to get out and the safety arrangements around that. That might apply also to buses, which I know my colleagues want to pick up later. In the generality, do you believe that once the gizmo is ready—I am sorry to keep calling it that but it is good shorthand—that will improve the safety situation?

Tim Reardon: The safety risks that we saw two years ago have been sorted. The French police have developed an alternative system for capturing biometric details for car passengers that does not involve getting the passenger out of the vehicle.

The Chair: This involves both visual and fingerprints?

Tim Reardon: Yes. Essentially, it is a glorified iPad, which is passed around within the vehicle and occupants of the vehicle can register a facial image, their fingerprints and a swipe of their passport on that device while they remain seated in their vehicle. That piece of technology—and full credit to the French police for developing it; they saw the risk, they acted on it, excellent—coupled with a reconfiguration of the terminal to enable cars to be processed away from moving traffic, so that the agents who are handling those tablets are not themselves having to dodge cars as they move from one to the other, have ensured that the safety issues that we were concerned about are no longer there as a risk.

The Chair: We have one good gizmo and the other we are still waiting for.

John Keefe: Faced with the same issue of people's safety around vehicles, we have gone down a different track. We have built a hangar, if you like, an indoor space, with parking spaces and kiosks. That enables each vehicle to park safely. The occupants of the vehicle can step down into a safe, controlled environment and can use the kiosk as it is designed in an airport.

To make this work with the traffic flows that we have, we prefer to have it under our control than under the control of a border authority. We have installed 106 kiosks in the UK terminal, all inside a building. We have extended the length of the on-terminal roadway, so that we can absorb the traffic as it goes into that area. We expect to come out of that with a minor extension to journey time from motorway to motorway of about six minutes per vehicle, with an average number of three occupants.

Lord Filkin: What John Keefe has just said partly answered my question, which is about the expected delays to people arriving at Dover or at the shuttle for boarding. Given what you have described before the gizmo arrives, many cars in peak seasons will have four people in them, for example, and there will be a lot of cars arriving. This is partly going into Lord Dubs's question. Did you say it would be about three to five minutes? I was surprised it was so little.

John Keefe: Sorry, six minutes on average for an average car, and an average car across the year would have three people in it. You are absolutely right that at peak it might have five, or nine or 10, depending on the size of the vehicle. The intention is, and the modelling shows, that through the EES enrolment process we stretch the motorway-to-motorway time only by six minutes. Not only do we have to have that building and 106 kiosks, we have also had recruit 70 new staff to filter those who are arriving at the building into those who are a first enrolment, those who are a subsequent enrolment, those who are EU citizens and those who are visa nationals. There are different categories of people who may or may not have to use the whole system. They may have to use part of it, or they may go through simply to the border and be processed there.

It is not just the infrastructure; it is not just the number of PAF officers who are present but the nature of the traffic. Similar to what Gareth was saying, in the early stages we believe there will be pretty much 100% filtering to be done, because people will not know what is going on. Of those who have to fully enrol, there will be those who understand technology and manage to do it quite quickly and there will be those who are baffled by it, who may take longer. We need staff to help them through those phases so that they do not cause queuing behind them. We also need staff where if a car turns up with a mixture of people, one who is an EU national, one who is a visa national, one who is a UK citizen but already enrolled in the system and one who is a UK citizen but not enrolled in the system, we have to orientate that car through the right lane so that each of those people gets treated in the required manner. It is a very intense, hugely expensive, very people-heavy new technology system.

The Chair: I am going to turn to Lord Dubs, who is also going to ask his own question, but I know he wants a follow-up as well.

Lord Dubs: If I may follow up first, you said six minutes on average per car. What does it take now?

John Keefe: It has been very difficult to work out. It depends on the day and the amount of traffic. This morning, for example, I came through as a passenger because I was in France and it took me about 15 minutes in the terminal in France and then a 35-minute crossing, so let us say 50 minutes. We would average out at about 90 minutes, because people stop and do shopping, they pick up something to eat, they walk the dog, so in 90 minutes we would expect six minutes extra on that journey.

Lord Dubs: What is it now, though?

John Keefe: It would give you an average of about 90 minutes from motorway to motorway. With EES we expect that to go to 96 minutes.

Lord Dubs: I am sorry. Perhaps I misunderstood you. You talk about six minutes as the time to process a car.

John Keefe: Six minutes is the average additional journey time.

Lord Dubs: What does it take now?

John Keefe: It is 90 minutes, on average, from the motorway, when you come off the motorway to our check-in, to when you leave our train and drive on to the motorway at the other side. You go through all the processes, whether they are commercial, domestic, border or transport, and you leave the train on the other side in 90 minutes. In the future, the EES part of the process would add six minutes for an average car.

The Chair: Separating the journey time in terms of the admin time of checking passports and the stuff that is currently done, how long does the administration of

the current checks on who you are take?

John Keefe: We would say somewhere in the region of 45 seconds per person.

The Chair: Forty-five seconds per person, and you are now adding six minutes to 45 seconds.

John Keefe: Per vehicle. If we took an average, we would have three people in the car. Three multiplied by 45 seconds is 135 seconds. We are now adding nearly four minutes on top of that.

The Chair: Sorry, I did say at the beginning that I fairly regularly—well, not that regularly—travel in the tunnel and I know that if I am in a car and I drive, it does not take 45 seconds to get through passport control. It takes me a very long time to queue up, because there are a lot of people there, and then I have to go to the second desk and that takes quite a long time queueing there, especially with the people who paid more who keep jumping in from the side and make life even more difficult. I think the question we are asking is: the administration may take only 45 seconds, and then six minutes for doing the EES, but how much is it adding to that total journey? The queues for getting into your myriad of booths that you are putting up, with all the helpful stuff, will still add travel time in addition to the six minutes.

John Keefe: In the modelling that we have done with the 106 kiosks available, that part of the process does not impact on queuing. Queuing that happens currently at the border will still occur. This does not at this moment in time improve the passage through the border, because you still have to go to the border and you still have to present your passport—until such time as ETIAS is introduced, when it will be a fully automated scheme.

Gareth Williams: That is an important point because it is not all about the kiosks. It is also about the border line behind the kiosks that has to verify the file that you have created. So at St Pancras, we are almost doubling the number of control booths for the French police from 10 to 18, to ensure that you do not get a bottleneck, that, having provided enough kiosks, you do not then get a bottleneck at the border line itself. We are also adding eGates.

Lord Henley: I have a quick question. There is an app coming in that is going to make things better. Am I right that as that develops with the extra kiosks you put in, whether at St Pancras or on the Channel Tunnel, it will speed up the whole process? I am thinking as an analogy of someone who uses the péage on the M6 north of Birmingham, how much that has improved over the years as they have got rid of the use of cash and it is now credit cards only. They have also increased the number of gates that are available for people with an automatic machine, and so on. You very rarely queue that long there. Similarly, on both of yours, whether it is foot passengers at St Pancras or cars at Dover or wherever, the whole process is going to improve—subject to technological problems.

Gareth Williams: That is very much why we are pushing for the remote app. If I take the example of the SmartCheck system that we have at St Pancras, I use it all the time. I used it yesterday and it took me approximately 40 seconds from walking into the station to be at the French passport booth, because it is simply walk past, once you have done the registration. Again, if we take a step back, the purpose of this is to automate. The opportunity is there to speed things up through use of the app in exactly the way you describe. That is why we are pushing for it so hard, but we do not want to be caught out in the meantime.

Lord Henley: It might be that in due course you can reduce the number of kiosks that you have, but you are starting off with the—

Gareth Williams: I would be delighted to throw them away and put another coffee shop in.

Q3 Lord Dubs: Can you provide an update on the anticipated numbers you expect to go through the European Entry/Exit System through the initial months of operation? Do you have any estimates?

Tim Reardon: I will start. We do not expect the introduction of EES to lead to any reduction in the wish of our ferry operators and passengers to travel. We are working on the basis that we will need and want to get the same number of passengers through the terminal that we were doing prior to Covid as a norm. The key for us is ensuring that the flow works on peak days. On quiet days such as today, there would never be an issue. However, on peak summer weekends, when we are looking to process 600 vehicles per hour coming into the port—last summer on our busiest weekend just shy of 116,000 passengers went through the port—on those busy, busy days, we are focused on ensuring that we can get that rate of traffic through.

For us, it is all about the peak, because the port needs to be big enough and the processes need to be slick enough to accommodate the peak flow. Yes, it will be busy. It is always busy at the start of the school summer holiday because that is what drives the majority of the traffic—families travelling in cars—so we are focused on accommodating that. Clearly, if the scheme does come in as planned in October this year, we will be looking at October, which is a relatively busy tourist month with half-term, and Christmas—December is another busy tourist month. November is a bit quieter. In addition, November is the busiest month for freight traffic, as the shops around the UK stock up for Christmas and that leads to large numbers of delivery lorries coming in. We are focused on getting the system in place to enable everyone who wants to come through to come through, and we expect that to be comparable with 2019 numbers.

Lord Dubs: From the Eurostar point of view, do you want to add anything?

Gareth Williams: We take about 11 million or 12 million passengers per annum, and I would say that about 60% of those are non-EU nationals who would have to register. As Tim said, it is about when the peaks are. If this is to be introduced,

having it between the Olympics and Christmas is a better time than having it clash with either of those, or the peak of summer. We expect the high peak to be early the following summer, when you have mostly rest of the world travellers—mostly leisure travellers, with fewer business travellers in the summer—and you will have more people having to register for the first time there as a proportion of the passengers on any given train. That is what we have planned against, and we have some time after introduction to prepare for that.

The Chair: Mr Keefe, do you have anything to add quickly? I am anxious to move on.

John Keefe: I have a reflection on the types of travellers. There are circa 10 million passengers per year. Of those, 80% to 85% are based in the UK, 70% will be third-country citizens as far as the EU is concerned, so we will look to enrol circa 70% of our traffic through the year. We believe that in years to come that will reduce, because some of those people will come back in subsequent years and so they will still be in the system, but we expect that we will register between 30% and 40% of our traffic every year as new entrants into the system.

The Chair: That was very helpful. We have already touched on the preregistration gizmo, but Baroness Meacher has a question on that.

Q4 **Baroness Meacher:** Can you help me understand why there is a problem with preregistration? Is it something to do with the fingerprint requirement—what is going on there?

John Keefe: It is time taken at the point of entry into the EU. Rather than arriving with all the data already in the system and checking that the data matches the person, it would be as if I walked into this Room but just before I walked in, in the corridor, I was asked to provide all of my information, which I have already provided to the clerks in the past. It is the proximity of the gathering of the information and the crossing of the border that makes it difficult. Everybody arrives at the point of maximum disruption, stops, and enrolls information into an unfamiliar system. If they could do that sitting on their settee or at their dining room table at home before they turned up, then it would just be an automatic checking of the information, not the capture.

Baroness Meacher: Do you think that having to do fingerprinting is a major extra problem, or not particularly?

John Keefe: It is another form of scanning and gathering biometric information. We are merely confronted with the requirement to do it, not the decision on whether or not it is valid.

Q5 **Lord Sandhurst:** My question is directed primarily at Mr Keefe and Mr Reardon, but obviously Mr Williams is free to come in. I want to ask you about passengers travelling as a group, primarily on coaches, but I do not know at what point car passengers become a group—five or six passengers in one car, quite possibly. Will you be asking, for example, the coach companies to do a pre-check at, say, Victoria or wherever they board, so that at least they have been filtered, and you hope they

have their tackle in order before they arrive at your destination?

Secondly, will the app, which Mr Williams has described, the gizmo, help you chaps at Dover and LeShuttle? Will it make a difference?

My third question is the iPad-type thing—how well will that work in a coach? I can see it working in a car, where the officer can see it being passed around, but with 40 or 50 people in a coach it is a different question.

Tim Reardon: The final question is the easiest one to answer. The iPad will not be used on a coach. Coach passengers will be asked to get off the coach and register their details at the same kinds of kiosks that Mr Williams and Mr Keefe have mentioned they are using on their site. Those same coach passengers will then pass through a French border control as though they were a foot passenger. Coach traffic will be handled fundamentally differently from car traffic, reflecting the different logistics of how it works. Importantly for us, it will be handled in a different place. There will be a satellite site on the port estate where coaches will be handled in a discrete manner, which means that they are done in a facility for them and they do not get in the way of everybody else. Equally, they are not held up by cars or lorries, as the case might be. That is a pleasing development, and we hope to get approval for that confirmed in writing very soon.

In terms of coach operators themselves doing stuff before the journey begins, they do at the moment, ensuring that their passengers have everything that they need to get through the frontier when they get there. As per the previous discussion, the EES process has to be done at the border under supervision of a border officer because that is written into the Schengen Borders Code. At present, that element cannot be brought forward and done in advance. It would be great if it could be, because clearly it would reduce the pressure at the point in the journey where the pressure is hardest felt; namely, the point where everybody is concentrated as they seek to get through the gateway. So there is a separate process for coaches.

We are confident that both the car and coach processes that we have will ensure that the rate of registration will match the rate at which the French border control, when you get to it, is able to process you.

John Keefe: Our process is very similar; we have a separate stream for coaches. Since the UK left the EU, coach passengers have been required to step down from their coach and go through an airport-style process with eGates. So they will be in that similar processing loop and it is exactly everything that Tim Reardon has just alluded to there, in terms of the relationship with the coach and the requirement to enrol at the border with a border officer present.

Gareth Williams: I have nothing to add.

Lord Sandhurst: I do not have any supplementaries, unless anybody else does. That is very helpful.

Lord Filkin: I have one very short question, and I am talking about the period before we have the gizmo. On the first weekend of the summer holidays, what do you

realistically expect to be the situation for car passengers arriving either at LeShuttle or at Dover? It sounds as if the probability of significant problems is still high.

Tim Reardon: The start of the summer is always our busiest tourist time. It was this year, and it has been in all the years that I have been working there. As Gareth referred to a moment ago, the timing of the introduction of EES away from that peak is a sensible thing to do, to ensure that when the new element to the process is introduced it does not coincide with the peak flow coming through the port.

We, like others, are working on the basis that the body of the travelling public that is registered on EES will progressively grow, so that by the time the next summer peak comes there will be a decent proportion of people who have already been through the border once and should not need to reregister. Clearly, the app is important to not having to register a second time.

Lord Filkin: It does not answer my question about what you expect to be the situation in the first summer, before we have a lot of people who have already preregistered and before we have the app. Is it not almost inevitable there is going to be significant additional problems and chaos? Chaos is perhaps too strong a word—disruption to passengers.

Tim Reardon: This summer EES will not apply.

Lord Filkin: Yes, this summer.

Tim Reardon: Summer 2024 EES is not an issue.

Lord Filkin: Yes, I mean 2025.

Tim Reardon: By summer 2025 we are hopeful that the app is going to be in place. It will make life a lot easier if it is. We are currently so focused on getting it over the line this autumn, when it does come in, that we are not modelling for next July yet.

Lord Filkin: Surely our risk is that the app is not ready by next July and we have all this hitting the system without the app. Yes?

Tim Reardon: That would not be good.

John Keefe: We model on worst case. That is why we have put 106 kiosks in, and we have completely reworked our terminals in both Folkestone and Coquelles. The risk of queuing passengers is simply one that we will not accept. We have gone through an enormous amount of infrastructure work, a huge amount of systems development work and a huge amount of modelling. We are in the process of recruiting and will be training and testing through the summer. To give you an order of magnitude, that will be in the area of an €80 million investment to ensure that we can keep the traffic flowing at the rates we have talked about, with just a minor extension to the end-to-end journey time.

The Chair: We are about to move on to look at the electronic travel authorisation scheme being introduced by the UK. Could you write to us with a clear indication of

what the financial implications have been for you in terms of the capital infrastructure for preparation? Could you also give an indication of what the additional running cost will be, from your point of view? We have talked about additional staff, for example, and so on. A third figure that we would be pleased to receive is an indication of within those costs, how much could have been saved had the gizmo been prepared and ready to operate on day one. So there are three sets of figures: capital cost, increased running cost, and then the difference if they had got their act in gear and got it all sorted out at the same time. That would be very helpful. I am sure this issue is commercial and in confidence, but I am sure you would find a way of presenting figures that would be helpful to the committee.

Can we move on to the ETA, the scheme being introduced by the UK, or in fact as we know has already to some extent been introduced for some countries? Lord Tope.

Q6 Lord Tope: What preparations are being done for the introduction of the ETA? I think it was partially introduced this month. Did you learn anything from that? It is very early days, but it would be interesting to know. What impact do you expect it will have on the UK's juxtaposed entry controls in France?

Gareth Williams: It has been, as you say, introduced in a limited way. We do not get too many Qatari nationals as a proportion of overall traffic and so I do not think that we can draw any conclusions yet. This is more an issue of communication than infrastructure or anything else. That is probably the missing element we did not touch on with EES. There are three components with EES. One is the investment in the infrastructure; another is the investment in the staff; and the third is the effort to communicate clearly with all categories of passengers what they need to do to progress smoothly through the border.

The Chair: Just so we are clear, we will come on to that third thing in a few minutes' time, because I know Lord Filkin is very keen to pick that up.

Gareth Williams: ETA for us falls very much into the third category, because you will be able to get your electronic travel authorisation remotely online via the Home Office as you would for a normal visa. It is more about communication than additional facilities or stress at the station. It is about ensuring that people are prepared, rather than additional processes.

That said, I think the decision is still open about which cohort of ETA is to be introduced. There are two next cohorts to be introduced and my understanding is that there will be one this autumn and one next year.

Lord Tope: There was one this month.

Gareth Williams: Yes, there was an early starter. There is another to come later this year and another one next year, and while all countries make their own independent decisions, I think that we have politely asked the Home Office to avoid the excitement of introducing this at the same time as EES.

John Keefe: I think we were quite firm in our request to the Home Office rather than just polite. If it was introduced at the same time, it would be a mistake.

The Chair: Sorry, it has already been introduced, so are you talking about it not being introduced in particular tranches?

John Keefe: First, for EU citizens—because our tunnel goes only to France, so the majority of our non-UK-based are EU. I will just take the figure I gave you earlier on: 70% of our traffic is probably UK/third country to EU, so 30% only is EU or other, and that traffic is split very much between all nationalities, so the communications piece from the Government becomes very important. How they communicate this to the rest of the world, to the rest of the EU—that there will be a new requirement for enrolling into an electronic system and requesting a travel authorisation—will be the make or break of this system.

The second thing, of course, is that it will not impact on traffic in the UK, because anybody applying—even if it is a last-minute application for an ETA to travel through the Channel Tunnel—will be in another country. Any impact on traffic flow would be on the other side of the channel rather than in the UK.

Lord Tope: That was the last part of my question, really, the position in France and what effect it will have there.

John Keefe: In France and in other EU countries, I would say that among the population this is a completely unknown initiative.

Lord Tope: I think we are all waiting for Lord Filkin's question.

The Chair: Just before we come on to Lord Filkin's question, can I be clear on your figures? I think you said roughly 10 million passengers per year.

John Keefe: Yes.

The Chair: Of those 30% are EU/other. That is 3 million.

John Keefe: Okay, to do it the other way, in fact 85% of them are in the UK and their first leg of travel is in the other direction, from the UK to France. Only 15% start their journey in France and come into the UK. Those split among all the 27 EU member states and others. There will be a few Chinese, there will be a few Americans, there will be a few Australians, South Africans, wherever they have travelled into the EU from, and then seek to travel into the UK. It is tiny percentages per country, so the communication must go far more broadly.

In the initial enrolment into EES, our estimate is that of the 85% there are some EU citizens in that group. There are also some other nationals who may have a visa to travel to continental Europe, so there is 30% that will not be included in the first enrolment.

The Chair: I am looking at your numbers and trying to work out the number of people who need to be warned. You were very concerned about the introduction of

ETA for EU citizens at the same time as you are handling ETIAS and EES. I understand that, but the numbers of people you are talking about who will be coming into the UK, requiring an ETA from the EU, sound to be very much more than I had imagined it would be in a year on your route.

John Keefe: You would be correct. It is far smaller than you would imagine because it is not an even split. It is very much a tidal flow south on the first leg and then north. Therefore, per country it is only a very small proportion of our traffic and therefore the communications job is quite a significant one, because you have to talk to all the countries, even though you are addressing only a small part of the population.

The Chair: It would be very helpful if you could give us your comparable figures so that we get a feel for it. Your point is still well made about the importance of not having a coincidence of ETA for EU member countries, citizens, and ETIAS and EES.

Q7 Lord Filkin: I wanted to widen the question a little to include people arriving by air. Clearly, from what you have said, you do not expect the problem to be particularly acute from foreign nationals who have not preregistered coming into the UK via the ETA system, because the numbers are relatively small, as one would expect. The reverse is true if you think about Heathrow, where you have millions of people coming in over the year. Can you in answering the question about prewarning or knowledge of the system, think about that question as well? The question is essentially about the awareness of individuals and of foreign carriers about this system in sufficient time to get as many people as possible preregistered to avoid the problem. Have I articulated the problem correctly?

John Keefe: If I try to answer it as I understand it, I am not sure I can answer on behalf of the airlines as to how their traffic breakdown is calculated, but from our experience the knowledge of ETA in EU member states it is very low, so if we multiply that by Heathrow Airport, which carries far more traffic than we do, it would have a similar or perhaps enhanced requirement for good communication to all the countries that its passengers come from.

It seems that ETA awareness has not gone out beyond the very small pilot countries that it is being tested in, notably Qatar, which was the first one it was introduced for. Our experience is that there is no knowledge at public level and only very sketchy knowledge at political or administrative level.

Lord Filkin: The question, of course, is exactly the same whether we talk about planes or vehicles. It is a question about awareness, so that distinction does not matter except that it is supercharged if one is talking about Heathrow. Has the Home Office shared with you at all its planned rollout of information and briefings both to the public and to carriers?

Tim Reardon: It has not shared it with us, but we would not expect it to, because it would focus on the ferry operators, which are the ones selling tickets, and potentially—and I do not know this—the site operators in France where the UK

border control is physically located. By the time any inbound passengers reach us in Dover, they have already been through the UK border, so the process has happened or will have happened. The interest for us is not in the intricacies of how it works but more in the overall impact on how many people wish to travel. Does the process of international travel become significantly so irksome that it deters some people from doing it?

Equally, the thing that we have been waiting for and watching with interest, is some kind of information about how the physical frontier process will be made easier after passengers have subscribed to these travel authorities. If passengers have already been given authority to come, surely that will make their transaction when they get to a frontier simpler. It certainly ought to. What is the payback for passengers from obtaining a travel authority? If that makes the process of crossing a border easier, quicker and more pleasant, we would foresee international travel becoming more attractive as a proposition. Clearly if it means that more people are doing it, we would be pleased to see that. For us the information about how the physical process at the border will become easier, quicker, what might be stripped out of it once a passenger has a travel authority, is the bit that is missing at the moment.

Gareth Williams: That is an important point and one which I think we would be optimistic about as a passenger carrier. If you come back to the rough breakdown of figures—40% Brits, 20% the rest of the world, 40% EU—as you might expect, one of our biggest markets is North America. The Far East market is also very large, but you might expect a high proportion of those passengers to have come in via Heathrow or a UK airport and to have already completed the ETA at that stage, although some will come via Schiphol on our Amsterdam route or Roissy Charles de Gaulle and across. That is why our focus on ETA is very much fixed on the introduction of it for EU passengers.

For me there is an analogy with the move that the UK made two or three years ago to require people to have a passport on entering the UK, which was a significant change for some of our markets and required a communication effort from ourselves and the Home Office but was managed smoothly and without disruption to either propensity to travel or the flow at the border. It was handled pragmatically by the Border Force and, if you look forward, part of the *raison d'être* behind ETA is to enable more passengers to use things such as the electronic passport gates, in particular the next generation of electronic passport gates, which UKBF is introducing. Again, if we make that link, we can see that benefit in future from having the electronic infrastructure in place.

Lord Filkin: Can I check I have understood the challenge correctly? The awareness challenge is really posed to the carriers. The public do not really need to know about it. It is the carriers that need to know about it because they sell a ticket. You cannot come to the UK unless you have bought a ticket of some form. At the point of sale of the ticket that is when they need to alert the passenger to the process. Is that correct?

Gareth Williams: We need to tell our passengers. Government communicating would also be helpful.

Lord Filkin: That simplifies it because you are basically focusing on carriers. Correct?

John Keefe: Yes, but sometimes the point that a passenger makes the decision to travel can be very shortly before they set off. The requirement to obtain an electronic travel authorisation, while it could be instantaneous, may take up to 48 hours and in some cases could be significantly longer. Not having background communication from government means that a number of people could potentially be put off from travelling to the UK because they are unaware, in the same way that many people were unaware of the change to the passport requirement, and the passport requirement caused a particularly big drop in coach traffic, school group traffic and education travel because it was not communicated effectively and it was introduced rather suddenly. There is a similar risk that it puts off people who are able today to decide at short notice to travel to spend a weekend in the UK, and with the EES/ETIAS approach in continental Europe, it is a barrier. Not only is it a barrier in time and administrative terms, but it is a barrier in cost terms. First, a passport costs a significant amount of money, and it also costs money to obtain an ETIAS or an ETA authorisation.

Lord Filkin: That was very helpful, thank you.

Q8 The Chair: Before we move on, which we must, can I be clear on one point? I am sitting here wondering whether you are saying that the Government should be doing more, or the Home Office should be doing more, to give this background briefing, so that the wider world knows this is coming, or in some cases has come, or that you are hopeful that the Government will do it at the appropriate time, which is not now, or what? I understand that they may go directly to the carriers and all of that, but you guys are involved very heavily in this business. You know what is going on, so what are your thoughts? Are the Government doing enough? Should they be doing more, or are we just waiting for them to do it at the right time?

John Keefe: They will come to us because they know that we are a direct route to the passenger who is making a booking. They should be doing more in advance to create that background awareness, so that when somebody comes to us and asks, "May I travel?" we are able to say to them, "Provided you have all of these things, yes, you can" and then they book immediately. If we say, "You can travel only if you have X, Y and Z" and they then have to go away and get it, there is a barrier to travel. The Government can remove the barriers to travel by giving good briefings and good communication across all the populations.

The Chair: That is very helpful, but I am a politician and I believe in nice, short, snappy sentences. Does this snappy sentence agree with you that in your view the Government are currently not doing enough?

John Keefe: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you, that is very helpful. Would the other two like to say yes or no to whether you share that view, just so we have you on the record?

Gareth Williams: I agree. I would like to see more general awareness and then more specific communication once the decision is taken as to when to introduce it for EU, then speaking as a carrier we will do our bit as well.

The Chair: Very good. It was not a yes or a no, but it was still very helpful.

Gareth Williams: I am learning from politicians.

Tim Reardon: We as the Port of Dover have no visibility of what the Government are doing, but then we would not expect to. I cannot honestly give you an answer as to whether what they are doing is enough or not.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We are now going to move on to look at the interrelationship between what is happening in the EU schemes and the UK scheme.

Q9 **Lord Henley:** What is your estimate about how travel between the UK and the EU for third-country nationals will be affected once we have both the EU schemes and ETA fully operational?

Gareth Williams: As we have been saying, we are planning, investing and communicating very hard to ensure that there is no regression in terms of travel at the border as these various systems are introduced. That is what we are pushing towards as a business.

If you take a step back, you have a number of systems doing similar things. As a rail carrier, for the first time we are now subject to advance passenger information in the same way as airlines, which we are rolling out. It is fundamentally driven off the data fields of your passport. You then must, on the UK side, complete an electronic travel authorisation, which is driven off the data fields of your passport. You have EES, which collects your passport data, and biometrics that are also stored there, and ETIAS, which essentially does the same thing as ETA for Europe.

There is, and should be, an opportunity to join these things up and make each of those automated processes work in a coherent way to the vast benefit of passengers, compared with what we have seen historically. The next thing that we would like to see Governments work together on to better co-ordinate would be a “collect once, use many” system, where each country can still make its individual decisions driven off the same collection of data.

If I take one example from our business, I talked about our remote application to enable you to go through the border biometrically. We are looking to use that engine to drive the way people can provide us with the advanced passenger information that the Home Office needs, so that they have to give the information only once, in an easy form. I think that, for us, is the biggest challenge and opportunity for the future. Having introduced all these separate things, do not do

them through separate channels, but join them up, do them once and use the information collectively.

Tim Reardon: It is very much the same view from us. We are expecting everybody who travels now to continue to want to travel once these schemes are in place. The first element of the challenge is for the travelling public to absorb the new obligations on them that come with these schemes. The second is very much the one that Gareth identified, of looking to the two neighbouring countries to collaborate, to ensure that full advantage is taken of the data flow to simplify the physical process.

We each host juxtaposed controls, where the French and the UK authorities sit within sight of one another—within touching distance of one another on occasion—and that provides an obvious opportunity for genuine collaboration and working together. We in Dover have recently designed our new outbound border control plaza for the next 20 to 30 years, and we have been able to work very closely with the local managers—from both Border Force and the French police—to ensure that each of their requirements dovetails as neatly as they possibly can. Clearly, the introduction of an electronic data flow provides an opportunity for much more strategic collaboration between neighbouring authorities, not only when they are physically sitting next to each other, but generally. With a single data flow with both fundamentally doing the same thing, there is so much opportunity to simplify and make life easier for the people who it is really about—the travelling public coming through.

The Chair: That is very exciting and very helpful. We are short on time so if you do not mind, we are going to move on to Baroness Prashar.

Q10 **Baroness Prashar:** I can see that you would like a joined-up, automated system, but in the meantime, what is the potential for confusion around these requirements and what are you doing to mitigate that?

Tim Reardon: I do not think that there is a great deal of scope for confusion. It is no more confusing than the fact that you need to bring sterling if you are coming to the UK and euros if you are going to the continent. There are different things that you do in different countries and the processes are there. Clearly, making sure that everybody knows is necessary and important, but we do not foresee a big issue with confusion. There will be new obligations and they need to be digested and managed, but the fact that they are different in each direction we do not see as a significant risk.

Baroness Prashar: Is that your view?

John Keefe: Very much so. It is two different populations being treated in a similar way according to the direction of travel, but each population has very clear requirements on it. It should be quite straightforward at that level.

Baroness Prashar: What about the potential for scams and third-party involvement? All these new apps can be subject to some sort of scam. Is that something that you

have factored into it and is it being looked at?

John Keefe: In responding to that, we have to make the clear separation between our responsibility as transport operators and border authorities' responsibility for controlling data identity informational good. That would have to be answered at their level.

Gareth Williams: The same—it is their systems.

The Chair: Finally, Lord Dubs is going to do this, but picking up your point about getting the schemes to operate together, I think it would be quite helpful to have a bit more information.

Q11 **Lord Dubs:** Are you aware of a dialogue between the UK and the Schengen countries about how the EU and UK schemes interact, or will interact, and affect the passenger experience?

Gareth Williams: Yes, there is dialogue continuing. I think a lot of the focus of that dialogue has been on the introduction of EES, understandably, this summer. The Home Office has set up a dedicated unit to look at that in terms of cross-channel and the Department for Transport has been heavily involved as well. They meet their French counterparts on a regular basis, and we attend some of those meetings as well. I think the structure for that dialogue is there. What we are urging for, in the same way as the countries came together to create the juxtaposed system in the first place, is to have that dialogue continue beyond the immediacy of EES and ETA and look at juxtaposed controls in the digital age and how they can be optimised.

John Keefe: Similarly to Gareth Williams, we are aware of the bilateral and trilateral meetings that are going on between the Governments to work through this, but mainly in relation to EES. We have a model for how we can make the border simpler, and we applied it when the customs inspections were introduced at the EU border on the day that Brexit became a reality in 2021. That is a single point of capture of data that we do on behalf of our customers, and then we transmit that data in the form required to both HMRC through the GVMS system and to the Douanes in France through the Brexit information system, almost replicating what is needed in the passenger market—a single point of capture, as was said earlier on. Then that data is shared securely with all those that need it, and it works extraordinarily well. From a situation where in the early stages of 2021, there was a fear that trucks would be stuck on motorways queuing for hours, we have gone from a period of confusion as everyone learned the new rules, to a situation today where trucks go through our terminals just as quickly as they used to in 2019 and 2020, pre Brexit, with the additional controls that are now required on them.

It is entirely possible to deliver using digital technology and pragmatic processing, working together. We can have a border that in the future can be far more efficient than it is today. We happen to be going through a very painful introductory experience because, to a certain extent, it is being done backwards. We do not have

the app that we should have up front, so we are having to build infrastructure and to invest in staff, systems and processes, but there is a way forward out of this. The end result—a digital border that speeds travel and trade for everybody—is what we are all working towards.

Tim Reardon: I completely support that.

Gareth Williams: We are looking forward to it as well.

The Chair: Of course, one wonders just why we are introducing schemes piecemeal without having done that co-ordinating work right at the start. Anyway, that is a comment we may or may not choose to make. I thank all three of you very much. It has been an informative, enjoyable and interesting session and I am grateful for you taking the time to get here, even having to force you to make use of your own service and come over on LeShuttle.

John Keefe: Always a pleasure.

The Chair: Well, not always—most times. Thank you very much indeed. Order, order. The formal public session is now concluded.