



Transport Committee

Oral evidence: [Operation Stack](#), HC 496

Monday 11 April 2016

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Department for Transport \(OPP0019\)](#)
- [Highways England \(OPP0013\)](#)

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Members present: Mrs Louise Ellman (Chair); Mary Glendon; Huw Merriman; Will Quince; Graham Stringer; Martin Vickers.

Questions 182-249

Witnesses: **Andrew Jones MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and **Jon Griffiths**, Deputy Director, Road Investment Strategy Division, Department for Transport, and **Jim O'Sullivan**, Chief Executive, Highways England, gave evidence.

Q182 Chair: Good afternoon and welcome to the Transport Select Committee. Would you give your names and positions, please?

Andrew Jones: My name is Andrew Jones. I am the Member of Parliament for Harrogate and Knaresborough and one of the Transport Ministers.

Jim O'Sullivan: I am Jim O'Sullivan. I am chief executive at Highways England.

Jon Griffiths: I am Jon Griffiths. I am a deputy director in the Department for Transport.

Q183 Chair: You want to spend a quarter of a billion pounds developing a piece of land the size of Disneyland, or 90 football pitches, for a massive lorry park. Could you take us through the reasoning that brought you to this decision rather than looking for any alternative solution to the problems that are currently being experienced?

Andrew Jones: The first thing is that we have a very significant national economic asset in our connectivity to the markets of Europe via the channel crossings, either through the port or the tunnel. Last year we saw significant disruption, primarily in June and July, when we had a bit of a perfect storm. We had the increasing volume from holiday traffic combined with channel tunnel disruptions to the Eurostar service due to migrant incursions in France, at the same time as we saw industrial action in the French port of Calais. That significantly constrained capacity and indeed closed capacity for a period, and resulted in

a significant backing up of HGV vehicles on the roads of Kent, and, indeed, brought Operation Stack into play.

Operation Stack is a queuing system. It has existed since 1988 and has been used basically to hold traffic away from the port of Dover. However, in these unprecedented times we saw Operation Stack go through its first phase and second phase, and into the third phase—I think for the first time ever. It was used for 26 days in a very short period of time, and that brought much of the traffic of Kent to a standstill. The M20 was effectively closed.

What were we doing about that? That disruption was utterly unacceptable and we do not want to see it again. We cannot completely remove the risk of disruption but we can try to put in place greater resilience on the Kent road network. That will mean that the holding area, should we need a holding area, would be off the highway so that the highway can keep running. That is effectively what has led us to this conclusion.

You asked whether there were any alternatives to lorry parks. We have indeed considered those, and my colleague from Highways England will comment on that in just a second. There was significant expectation that this national issue would receive work—and it is a national issue; it is not a Kentish issue. It happens to be located in Kent, but access to our port and main entry to the markets of Europe via the port and the tunnel is a national issue. It is just located there. We had to take some action. We had a series of things that we have done in the short and medium term. That has led us to this long-term answer, which is the lorry park.

Now let us address the comment on alternatives to that.

Q184 Chair: We accept that there is a major problem. We have heard a lot of evidence about what happened last year. I am now focusing on whether the proposal being put forward is in fact the correct one to solve the problem and is a reasonable use of the very large amount of money involved. Mr O’Sullivan, were you told that money was available and that a giant lorry park was what you had to come up with, or did you carry out an independent assessment? Can you explain to me exactly what happened?

Jim O’Sullivan: I can. The imperative was to solve the Stack problem. The use of Stack in Kent had been unprecedented. It had caused great disruption and therefore we had to go about solving it. We looked at a number of different solutions. We came back to three significant problems that had to be solved. We looked at IT-based solutions, multiple parking spaces and existing parking spaces. We looked at a number of different things.

The first problem is the physical problem. Even with a clever IT solution you still have to find parking space for up to 5,000 trucks. That was the first thing we looked at. The second was that it needs to be logistically close to the ports. For instance, we do not get a lot of advance notice that a ship or train is available in times of disruption. Therefore, you need to be able to get the trucks down to the port quickly and efficiently in a fairly finite and well controlled window. That was the second thing.

The third is the perceived fairness among the trucking community. One of the advantages of the current arrangement—there are not very many—is that the truck drivers themselves can physically see the people who arrive before them and the people who arrive after them. We have a Eurotunnel queue and a ferry queue. People can see that Eurotunnel must be taking traffic because that queue is moving. They can see that the ports must be

taking traffic because this queue is moving. There is a relatively easy culture of perceived fairness that we can exhibit in Stack.

We had to address those three issues. We looked at a number of different options. We came to the conclusion that it needed to be a single site. It needed to be close to the ports. We came back to Government and said that a physical engineering undertaking on this scale could cost up to £250 million in order to solve the problem. We believe that the best way to do it is to build a lorry park such as the one we have described.

Q185 Chair: Where were the assessments of the alternatives carried out? Are they published?

Jim O'Sullivan: I am not sure if they are published. They were carried out within Highways England.

Q186 Chair: Where were they carried out?

Jim O'Sullivan: Within Highways England.

Q187 Chair: Tell me again what they showed. Did you look at upgrading the M2/A2 freight corridor?

Jim O'Sullivan: We did. There may be long-term plans; there are probably two or three for that corridor. We looked at that quite early. The first thing is that it is quite an old motorway, so the hard shoulder was only ever designed for parking. It was never designed for running. Most of the modern motorways were built with a view that at some point they would be widened, and therefore the hard shoulder is a running lane. That is one of the reasons why we have had such success with smart motorways: we did not need to reinforce the hard shoulder. The M20 is a particularly old motorway and was only ever designed to take parked vehicles, and parked vehicles in small numbers too, because it was only ever intended for breakdowns.

We looked at widening. Currently, the typical costs for widening are about £10 million to £11 million per mile per carriageway. In order to bring some sort of infrastructure benefit to Kent, you would have to do a significant length of the M20. Even if we spent a much greater sum of money than the £250 million we are talking about, we would possibly still only end up with single lane running when we had to deploy Stack. The absolute right answer to this question is to get those trucks off the motorway and not use the motorway for truck parking.

Q188 Chair: Did you have a benefit-cost ratio of the different alternatives?

Jim O'Sullivan: Not a benefit-cost ratio, because this is a very complex problem. We have done some cost-benefit work but the benefits are hard to quantify. When you get one day of Stack you can quantify it. As you get two, three and five days, it is not just about being a day late for a hospital appointment; you are going to be a month or two months late for an appointment and the hospital is going to be backlogged. In the health business it is very hard to quantify those longer-term cumulative impacts.

Andrew Jones: What we are dealing with is a project to increase the resilience of national infrastructure. Obviously, value for money is critical in all public expenditure, but it is

very hard to quantify in this particular case because we do not know how often the asset will be needed. If it was able to be predicted perfectly, we probably would not be in this situation in the first place. Who knows how often the disruption may take place in the future? If we were doing a cost-benefit analysis and we were looking at a standard road scheme, we know that the M60, the M25 and so on all become busy at certain times of the day. You cannot predict that for Operation Stack. Sometimes we have had very little notice indeed when Kent police call it. It is hard to make that prediction.

There is a further point which again is hard to quantify. The news that was coming out of Kent and out of the UK was that it was hard to travel around and do business. It is very difficult to quantify the impact of that in terms of potential lost opportunity. Yes, value matters, but a standard cost-benefit ratio for a road scheme is not that easy to deliver here.

Q189 Chair: I am sure we can accept that it is not so easy to find the right figure, but I still wonder if there was any figure that you were working on. There is a figure of £250 million per day that was attributed to the Freight Transport Association assessment. They are saying that that was not necessarily their assessment but a figure that was being suggested. Does that figure sound right to you as the cost of Operation Stack?

Andrew Jones: The cost of Operation Stack is different from the cost to the UK economy.

Q190 Chair: What was happening to the cost of the UK economy?

Andrew Jones: The cost to the UK economy is a totally different question.

Q191 Chair: Does the figure of £250 million a day sound right to you?

Andrew Jones: That was a figure provided by, I think, the port of Dover chief executive. It was based on the fact that the port itself handles trade to the value of about £100 billion every year, so every day the situation in France continued it cost the UK about £250 million. The Road Haulage Association said the cost to haulage companies caught up in the operation was about £700,000 a day. It is very hard to quantify. The Department has commissioned some work from the Transport Systems Catapult to ascertain the impact of the disruption from last summer. We do not yet have the final version, but subject to safeguarding commercially sensitive data we would be looking to publish the results of that very shortly.

Q192 Chair: Do you have any figure you have been working to? If this £250 million a day is unclear, is there any figure that you have had in mind while you have been working out what to do?

Andrew Jones: We have not been working on a specific figure, which is why we have commissioned the consultants to work up a figure. There was a clear national economic urgency for the action that we have taken, and that is why the Treasury has provided additional funding of up to £250 million for a permanent lorry park. The key thing was to get the holding off the highway and to get that area of our country flowing again, to help to manage recovery for our exports.

Q193 Chair: What kind of assessment have you made about how many days this would be needed for in the future? Last year 31 days were involved. Clearly it was a major national issue, not a local issue. If we look at previous years, the figures vary. In 2014 it was three days; in 2013 it was one day; in 2012 no days; and in 2011 no days. What kind of assessments have you made about how many days this will be needed for in the future?

Andrew Jones: I do not think you can make that assumption. It has been very varied during the course of the many years that Operation Stack has been used. You just highlighted the fact that it was no days only a couple of years ago, but it was in place for 26 days in 2015. The point is that we are trying to increase the resilience of our transport infrastructure so that, should something be required, it does not bring the area and the economy to a standstill. That is what local councils, local chambers and local Members—colleagues here—were all saying last summer.

Q194 Chair: What would you say to people who suggest that this is a knee-jerk reaction to the unique circumstances of last year?

Andrew Jones: I do not think that is quite fair. Calls for some work on the removal of the holding area off the highway have been made locally by councils and the chambers for many years before last year. We also need to think about not just how things are now but how things will potentially be as freight volume grows. Let us just quantify that. We now have a situation where about 10,000 HGVs a day go through the port and the tunnel, split about two to one in favour of the port. Speaking with the port of Dover and Eurostar, they both predict very significant volume increases, potentially 40% or 50% over the next five to six years alone.

What we are doing is building resilience into our network. It would be marvellous if everything could run smoothly, but experience tells us that it will not necessarily happen. It might not necessarily be the circumstances that we saw last summer, which were a bit of a perfect storm. Indeed, historically, Stack has been used more in the winter time when the port is under challenge because of very poor weather. Last summer, it was all to do with the migrant and industrial action issues. This is not a knee-jerk response. It is a solution to a significant issue, which we should anticipate being of greater import as we develop more international business, as the port and tunnel anticipate.

Q195 Mary Glindon: Minister, in relation to value for money or what it is worth nationally, you said that it is important nationally, but you have just mentioned that it is Kent that is brought to a standstill and local businesses and people who are put to such inconvenience. If we are talking nationally—we are MPs from across the country—how could we justify this amount spent on infrastructure when we do not know what it would be worth to the economy nationally or to any of our constituents outside Kent?

Andrew Jones: I would say to your constituents, many of whom will be working in international businesses, and many of whom will be using our highway network, that this is the way they and those businesses are reaching their customers, and that although the issue is located in Kent it is not necessarily a Kentish issue. It is a national issue. I have met with hauliers from right across the country, all of whom were unanimously saying, “This matters for our business.” It is not even just a UK issue. We had representations from the Irish Government, because much of the freight from the Republic of Ireland comes across the UK to access European markets. That is how I would respond when

faced with that issue, as you would respond when you improve any part of our transport network. It has an impact right across the whole area; that is why it is a network.

Jim O'Sullivan: Surprising as it might seem, despite the fact that we have 5,000 or 6,000 trucks at any given time in Stack at its worst, the average delay is about four to six hours; in the way it worked out last summer, an individual truck was only held for that period of time. That means that the rest of the country can dispatch trucks to Kent, providing that they meet the working time regulations and the tachograph and so on, knowing that they will be able to continue that journey and deliver the freight with which they have been commissioned. While it is a Kent problem because Kent grinds to a standstill, maybe for a day, two days or three days, the impact on a truck is on average probably about four to six hours. The trucking companies, by its being in Kent and managed the way that it is, suffer delay, whereas Kent suffers the economic impact. If we were to put the economic impact of Kent first and not allow those trucks to enter that area, it would have a huge bearing on the success of any business that is trying to export goods to France.

Q196 Mary Glendon: It may not have been clear, but I was trying to understand how the public would see the justification for the country in economic terms. That has not been specified, because as yet the Minister has not been able to give that information.

Andrew Jones: I would simply reiterate how important it is to keep our highways running and how important it is for companies to meet the commercial needs of their customers. If they cannot do that, they will lose their customers.

Q197 Huw Merriman: I represent a constituency—and live—right on the border of Kent, so I am more impacted and I certainly see the bedlam, the economic damage and the chaos that our local businesses and residents in Kent and slightly further afield have experienced in their day-to-day activities. I am also aware that there is a longer-term issue with freight in general. As part of the solution for Stack, will the Department be looking at solving the issue of fly-parking, with facilities not being used and antisocial behaviour as a result, or do you think it is more likely to be option 1 for emergency use only?

Jim O'Sullivan: The first thing is that we try to simplify these things and break them down in such a way that we can deliver them. Our first imperative in terms of a solution is that it must solve the Stack problem. That is what we were asked to do. That is the first thing. Our intention is to build this facility to solve that problem. We will then come up with a set of safe operating procedures for the relevant authority, whoever becomes the operator for it, and at the same time we are willing and indeed actively pursuing discussions with other organisations as to what else it might be used for.

Fly-parking, as they call it, is very much our problem. We find trucks parked under motorway bridges, particularly in the Kent area, where they are waiting for their slot in the logistics. I think that is going to become more of a problem. As electronic tracking becomes better and those trucks are timed to the minute, they are going to need to break their journeys. The haulage companies can now tell them where and when to stop. We see fly-parking as a long-term problem. This solution may or may not play a role in that. We have time to work on it and to decide whether it is appropriate for it to be used for that. We are also very aware of its impact on the residents of Kent. It needs to be secure; it needs proper CCTV; and it

needs proper maintenance. There is a bunch of other things that we need to do to make sure that it is the acceptable and right solution.

Q198 Huw Merriman: Does that mean that there could be a decision to go ahead with one of these two sites on a solution to Stack basis, and then later you may decide to extend that site to encompass the facilities we talked about? Or will a decision be made on what that site will be all in one go?

Jim O'Sullivan: I think both are possibilities. We are open to those discussions and we are having those discussions at the moment, but there are a large number of stakeholders involved—the current commercial lorry parks, the county council, the franchise operators on the motorways and the Freight Haulage Association. There are many different stakeholders who would have a view as to alternative uses for this facility when it is not being used for Stack. It may have a role to play in other disruption, but we are being asked to do this on an urgent basis. Our imperative is to make sure that it solves the Stack problem while minimising the impact on our neighbours and residents. If there are other uses for it we would like to get to them quickly, but it must not distract from the imperative of solving the Stack problem.

Q199 Huw Merriman: I can well understand the need to just solve Stack, but equally do you feel that it could cost more if you shoehorn in a solution for the other problems that we mentioned, or do you not see that as a concern?

Jim O'Sullivan: Broadly, we would expect other solutions or other uses to be self-funding—some form of revenue for lorry parking or for whatever people may come up with that they think is appropriate.

Q200 Huw Merriman: From the private sector.

Jim O'Sullivan: Yes.

Q201 Chair: Is it possible that you might expand the lorry park in future?

Jim O'Sullivan: It is always possible. One never says that things are impossible, but the facility we have proposed for the consultations is large enough for the foreseeable future.

Q202 Chair: Would this park have been big enough for what happened last year?

Jim O'Sullivan: Yes.

Q203 Chair: Are you sure that it would have been?

Jim O'Sullivan: Yes.

Jon Griffiths: Apart from the four days when stage three was implemented. That was the other part of Operation Stack on the London-bound carriageway, so the M20 was shut in both directions. That was the rare event that has not happened before. Operation Stack stages one and two—the coast-bound carriageway between Maidstone and Folkestone—would be accommodated within the Operation Stack facility that we are currently designing. If that is overflowed at any time—it would have been for four days last year—

we would have to revert to Operation Stack on the main carriageway in the worst-case scenario.

Q204 Chair: That was four days of last year.

Andrew Jones: For four days last year we had to implement Operation Stack at stage three. Operation Stack at stage one is junctions 8 to 9 of the M20 coast-bound and has capacity for 2,100 HGVs. If it goes to stage two, the capacity goes up by 1,500 to 3,600. Stage three increases it a further 2,100, and then stage four by a further 1,500, to 7,200 in total. We have never had to go to stage four. We are looking at a proposal to get off-highway holding for up to 4,000 HGVs effectively covering stage one and stage two volume.

Q205 Graham Stringer: But going on the projections that there will be an up to 40% or 50% increase in traffic, and if you take last year as an example, how many days would the proposed car park stop Operation Stack starting? That is not a very clear question, but do you see what I mean? With the increased number of lorries, when would the lorry park have been full last year if there had been 50% more traffic?

Jon Griffiths: I will try to answer as best I can. It is difficult to predict, because what Operation Stack is accommodating is the reduced capacity of the channel crossing. It depends how much capacity is taken out between either Dover and Calais and the other channel ports or on the Eurotunnel service. Yes, the increased projections mean there will be more traffic, but those operating ports and Eurotunnel will be putting on more services. In some respects, it is how much the capacity across the channel is reduced and not how many trucks will be using it. The worst-case scenario was last year when we had both disruption on the Eurotunnel services and on the port services—something that has happened very rarely in the last 10 or so years. Therefore, that is why we are going with a park of at least 3,600 to 4,000 spaces; it copes with most eventualities as we currently see it.

Q206 Graham Stringer: I was just trying to get at how effective this park would be with the increased traffic flows. I can see it is a more complicated problem than I thought, but one needs to try to understand that as part of the cost-benefit analysis.

Jon Griffiths: We are currently doing that work. It is very difficult to do but it is something we are very mindful of in terms of demonstrating the value for money of the scheme. The difficulty is to make sure that we can quantify it in a way that can be put together against other schemes or how we would normally do these things.

Q207 Chair: It does not sound as if you are doing it as you would normally do other schemes. It appears that you see it as a major problem that occurred—a massive national problem—and you have come up with a solution, and decided that that is what you are going to do. Now you are trying to work out the rationale in terms of funding. Would that be right? Is it your distinctive view that that is the right solution? From what Mr Griffiths said, he does not think that.

Jim O'Sullivan: I would make two points. First, this is an incredibly difficult scheme to evaluate because it is not our normal road capacity, and so on. In the resilience, you ask

yourself how many vehicles it takes out of Stack, and we take about 4,000. There are two characteristics of Stack that we learned last summer. The first is that as you introduce each phase it becomes disproportionately more painful. The first phase blocks a single section of road, and people can find other routes and get around it. When you block a second section you start to form a logjam. By the time you get to the third section, you are actually interfering with traffic in both directions. Therefore, all the traffic is now trying to pass each other in opposing directions on local roads. That is the first factor.

The second factor is that if it goes on for days on end, which it did last summer, by the time you get to the third or fourth day, and children have not been able to go to school, hospital appointments have been missed and company appointments have been lost, the backlogs into the future are not easily recovered. On that basis, if you talk about 4,000 spaces and you start with that much congestion, it really does not matter whether it is this much today or this much in the future; if you can alleviate that number off the top of it, you are significantly improving the economic situation in Kent.

Andrew Jones: In terms of the basic question, “Is this a solution looking for a justification?”, we need to rewind and remember where we were in June and July of last year: we were facing a significant national issue. It was described at the time as a national crisis and that was entirely reasonable. This is a solution that has been developed after an assessment of all the options that Jim outlined earlier. The question is, can we use standard cost-benefit analysis in justifying it financially? No, we cannot, because of its periodic nature; we do not have a prediction to say how frequent that periodic use would be. There is absolutely no doubt at all that we have to get the holding off the highway to keep the economy of the area functioning.

Q208 Graham Stringer: Earlier, Mr O’Sullivan said that it cost £10 million or £11 million to widen the motorway by one lane and that it would require a significant lengthening. Can you define “significant”?

Jim O’Sullivan: In order to get the economic benefit, you need to lengthen the motorway across its full length, so to put eight or 10 kilometres of tarmac down purely for parking purposes would not achieve very much. We would be looking at traffic growth forecasts for the whole M20 and trying to determine how much of it we should be lengthening and when. We looked at the cost benefit analysing that road. In the longer term there are proposals for both the M20 and the M2 in terms of widening them or putting in smart motorways. In terms of bringing that expenditure forward it was not cost-effective.

Q209 Graham Stringer: Can you answer the question about how many miles are significant when you are looking at that?

Jim O’Sullivan: You have to create enough single carriageway road to park 4,000 trucks. A truck is 30 metres long, so 4,000 x 30 metres is what you would have to build. Even once you have built that, in Stack conditions we need two queues—a Eurotunnel queue and a ferry port queue. We might just get one lane with the Eurotunnel queue in the outside lane and the ferry port queue in the newly built lane. We might just get one lane of traffic through the middle of those two queues.

Q210 Graham Stringer: But you would get other benefits of having a bigger motorway.

Jim O'Sullivan: You would get other benefits of having a bigger motorway.

Q211 Graham Stringer: That is what I am trying to get at—the comparison between, as you say, bringing forward the investment in the M2 and the M20 compared with £250 million.

Jim O'Sullivan: But the cost-benefit analysis for bringing forward the investment in the M20 does not work in comparison with other road projects at this time.

Q212 Graham Stringer: But we are not comparing it with other road projects, are we? We are comparing it with a lorry park that may not be used.

Jim O'Sullivan: That is true, but when I take the M20 business case and I add £250 million to it and say, “What would happen if I widened the M20 instead of building this lorry park?” the numbers still do not stack up for building that motorway now.

Q213 Graham Stringer: Let me ask the question in a different way. What is the cost of widening the M20 and the M2?

Jim O'Sullivan: I would have to get back to you with that, but it is significantly higher. It is disproportionate.

Q214 Graham Stringer: Can you send us that information?

Jim O'Sullivan: I can. We are doing 40 kilometres of the A14 at the moment and it is £1.4 billion-ish.

Q215 Graham Stringer: So it is six times.

Jim O'Sullivan: Yes. It is possibly four to six times, but I will get you that number.

Q216 Chair: What will the £250 million be spent on? Is it all lorry park or is it to do with adjacent roads as well?

Jim O'Sullivan: It is just at the option stage. Depending on the option stage, it will be the construction of the lorry park itself. It is 500,000 square metres of tarmac. There is a huge drainage programme as part of that. I cannot remember the number, but it fills something like six or 10 Olympic swimming pools every day if it rains. There are environmental concerns that are expensive to address, in particular not allowing water polluted with diesel to run into drains and local watercourses.

We would probably need a pumping station to manage the flow of that water into local watercourses. There would be minimal welfare facilities for drivers and other occupants of the lorry park. There would be security, in terms of keeping the site secure when it is not in use. In one of the options we actually have to build a bridge over the motorway because it is in two pieces. There is a piece of the scheme that is north of the motorway and a piece that is south, and in order to join the two we have to put up a bridge. That is roughly where

the money will go. It is up to £250 million. We will spend the minimum we need to spend in order to make this thing feasible and make it work.

Q217 Chair: Is security a one-off cost or an ongoing cost?

Jim O'Sullivan: There will probably be ongoing costs. We will need to inspect the facility. We will need to make sure that the perimeter fence is secured. There are risks and hazards around having a site of that size that is not regularly occupied. The costs will be in the order of the low hundreds of thousands a year, we think.

Q218 Mary Glendon: Following what has been said, what discussions have there been with Departments like DEFRA or the Home Office regarding the implications for their policies and budgets of developing the lorry park? Have there been any?

Andrew Jones: There have been conversations regarding the causes of the disruption. Discussions on things like security implications and the actions taken in conjunction with the French authorities, for example, would be a Home Office matter and not a Transport matter. We have officials from all the Departments concerned meeting on a regular basis to discuss all the implications. Jon is the representative of the Department for Transport on that group.

Jon Griffiths: That work is around the disruption currently in Calais. It is co-ordinated around the impact on the UK that has been going on for a number of months now. To take the Minister's point further forward, if I may, we have not had a direct conversation with the Home Office around the security of the site, because in the future it will be a matter for Transport to look after. Our liaison with DEFRA will be through normal statutory planning methods and processes, so it will be through non-governmental bodies such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and the like, which Highways England will consult with at the right time. No, we have not spoken to DEFRA, Home Office Ministers or officials specifically on this, but we are in touch as part of wider cross-government action.

Q219 Chair: What was the percentage of compliance with Operation Stack last year?

Jim O'Sullivan: We do not have an exact number. It was very high, but there were a number of notable breaches where people behaved badly. They were much more anecdotal than statistically relevant. We had people bypassing the Stack arrangements and turning up directly at Eurotunnel. It is very difficult for Eurotunnel to turn these people away, so some of them were actually carried. We had people forging permits and turning up at the port with a permit they had printed themselves. We had people claiming to have perishable goods on board when they did not. We prioritised perishable goods.

We will not put a truck into Stack if it has children, so another habit was that a number of people deliberately carried their families on their trucks so that they would get priority down to the port. We have a number, but it was not statistically significant in the compliance. Those exceptions and examples highlight the difficulty of policing a scheme that is either software-controlled or controlled across multiple sites.

Q220 Chair: What plans do you have for policing it in the future?

Jim O'Sullivan: It will not be radically different from the current Stack arrangements, except that it will be off-road. We will be writing new standard operating procedures to ensure that it is as effective and as efficient as it can be.

Q221 Martin Vickers: Many of my constituents are involved in the haulage industry. It is a major centre and it is costing them dear. Although I appreciate all the complexities of the problem, I just do not get the feel that we are actually close to a solution. What can I tell my constituents? We have to identify the resources, there are planning considerations and so on. When can we expect the end game?

Andrew Jones: I have to say that I do not think that is quite right. Let me just say where we are. We have had a consultation on two sites. That consultation ran from 11 December to 24 January and it had a significant amount of response. There was public engagement through the consultation and some public meetings. The results of that are being analysed but we are moving at very significant pace. The whole thing has been about what we can do to get the holding off the highway as fast as possible. We are talking about a multiple array of questions, but their resolution is being developed in parallel and not in consequence.

I am anticipating a recommendation to come to me as a result of the Highways England analysis over the course of the next few weeks. This is a matter of urgency. From crisis point in the summer time to developing costed schemes and winning the argument to secure up to £250 million in the autumn spending review and a consultation analysis with a decision shortly is going at quite some pace.

Q222 Martin Vickers: But do we have a date?

Andrew Jones: We do not have a final date for it. We are trying to develop everything as quickly as possible. We know exactly how urgent this is. We have not set a final date for when it will be, but we know that urgency matters and that is why “as soon as possible” has been our maxim throughout.

Jim O'Sullivan: We would very much like to have some part of it available by next summer. How big that will be depends on the construction process, the planning process and how much co-operation we get from stakeholders. We would very much like to enter summer 2017 with some part of this scheme available. It goes back to the point I made earlier. If you can alleviate any part of the number of trucks that are parked on the road, you bring some benefit. Therefore, we would like to have it available for 500, 1,000 or 1,500 trucks—whatever we could manage next summer—and then finish it as quickly as the construction will allow.

Q223 Graham Stringer: I have two or three questions to follow up on that point. What I am not clear on, and maybe I should be, is the decision-making process. If you go ahead with a project costing £250 million, which budget will it come out of?

Andrew Jones: It is a Department for Transport budget. We had extra funds allocated to us in the autumn spending review from the Treasury. It is a DFT budget. It is not a county council budget or anything like that. It is not a Highways Authority budget. It is a DFT budget.

Q224 Graham Stringer: Is the decision-making process entirely with you, Minister?

Andrew Jones: Yes, but it is fair to say that I will be involving the Secretary of State as well at all possible opportunities, because it is a big deal and it is a national issue. It is up to the Department to make these decisions. We are involving the local councils in the area. I have met with the local chamber, councils and colleagues here. I intend to continue to do that. They have valuable input to the whole question.

Q225 Graham Stringer: Mr O'Sullivan previously said that taking 500 lorries or 1,000 lorries off the road has a benefit. One of the points that has been put to the Committee is that investing time and resources in a policy of having a big parking scheme is stopping the private sector investing in smaller private parks that will alleviate fly-parking. Do you recognise that as a problem?

Andrew Jones: We have had many years when Operation Stack has been used. It goes back to 1988. It is certainly fair to say that right across the country we see issues with fly-parking; it is raised by communities on a regular basis. Are we deterring investment? Speedy delivery of this project will provide the economic certainty that people need when they are making investments. There is no evidence of that problem particularly having taken place.

Q226 Chair: Commercial truck stop providers in Kent tell us that the planned lorry park being used for overnight parking will actually stop them expanding. That is a specific claim. Do you think that is just self-interest or would you take it seriously?

Andrew Jones: There is nothing wrong with businesses being self-interested.

Q227 Chair: I want to explore if you think that is a real point. You are being a bit dismissive about it.

Andrew Jones: They may well have a concern, but we have not yet decided what we are going to be doing. There are four options in the consultation, so it is premature to make any judgments because we have not made that decision yet.

Q228 Huw Merriman: In terms of the £250 million cost, I am conscious that others are potentially looking for change. When we had the leader of Kent County Council before us at the end of last year, I recall that he mentioned that a lorry park somewhere in the vicinity of junction 11 should be delivered within a £40 million or £50 million budget. I note, Minister, that you mention that it is a Department for Transport budget rather than Highways England, but will it be possible for Kent County Council to feed in their views on why they think something could be built for significantly less than £250 million, or has that conversation already taken place? I ask that because I know that sometimes there is tension with local authorities who believe they can deliver more value for money than, perhaps, Highways England, or at least there is more of a tendering process.

Jim O'Sullivan: Without going into the commercial specifics, we have a number of examples where our purchasing power for large projects is better. We get a better deal than local councils, purely because we use road-building companies with long-term relationships and advanced procurement techniques. We are almost a single purpose

vehicle in that respect, whereas councils have a variety of skills. Generally speaking, we get a better deal than local councils from our road-building companies. For large infrastructure projects like this, we know that when we manage them nationally—we manage some projects nationally and some locally—we get much better value for money, both in the procurement activity and the project management activity. I would be delighted to meet with somebody who shows me how we can do this work for £50 million.

Andrew Jones: I have met with Kent County Council. I have been down to County Hall and we have also had officers from Kent up to the Department. When the announcement was made, I received a letter from Paul Carter, the leader of Kent County Council. It reads: “I am absolutely delighted to learn from the spending review that up to £250 million will be provided for a major new permanent lorry park to take the pressure off Kent’s motorways and roads in the event of Operation Stack.

I am very grateful to you and George Osborne for carefully considering our case. Kent County Council stands ready and willing to work with Highways England so that a permanent solution can be delivered as fast as possible. Thank you again for supporting this essential infrastructure. I will make sure the good news is publicised far and wide across the county.” I view that as a supportive letter, built upon the supportive meetings and communication we have had with them.

Q229 Huw Merriman: I recognise that. When Kent County Council were before us at the end of last year they just wanted a solution. Now that they know that up to £250 million will be funded by a different organisation from them, I imagine they are pretty happy, and rightly so. To come back to Mr O’Sullivan’s point, there is no better way to find out that Highways England is cheaper than by having a comparison set alongside. I am certainly conscious that my county council, East Sussex, with the Department for Transport, is able to deliver a road for £120 million between Hastings and Bexhill. That was not a Highways England project. That type of tendering would be welcome to test Mr O’Sullivan’s assumption.

Jim O’Sullivan: We work widely with local councils on roads. Cornwall County Council is doing work for us at the moment because we consider it to be the appropriate provider. We work very closely with councils on these schemes, and we are quite happy to talk through the costings. All of our contracts are available to county councils. We do not have commercial secrets between us. I am quite happy to meet with Kent County Council and talk through what the cost estimates are and where the money is going. As I said, we are open to better, cheaper and more cost-effective ideas, not just from councils but from all sorts of organisations.

Andrew Jones: That principle of openness is very important. Being able to deliver value as we ramp up for the biggest investment in our highways in a generation is absolutely fundamental. Your underlying point is absolutely fair. Nobody has any right to any business, and challenge is a good thing.

Q230 Graham Stringer: Previously, you gave us some examples of lorry drivers’ initiatives in beating the queue. Is it going to be more difficult to enforce queueing if we take the lorries down roads to a lorry park? If people are parked on the M20, there is a queue, isn’t

there? Is it going to be more difficult to enforce the correct priority if you have to go to a lorry park?

Jim O'Sullivan: We have looked at this, because you have to do some feasibility work in terms of how it is going to work and operate. We examined that point. We monitor the roads south of Stack to see if anybody is on them who should not be. Historically, when we have done Stack we sterilise a section of motorway, so we expect to see only cars on that section, and if we see a truck the police will pull it to one side and find out what it is doing there. If it is a local delivery, that is one thing; if it is Stack, it gets sent back. On a different section of the motorway we may have to do it in a different way, but we will use the same arrangements in terms of, for want of a better word, policing the abuse.

Andrew Jones: That also builds on the point that was made earlier about locating the site near the port and near the routes to the port.

Jim O'Sullivan: It would be very difficult to send somebody back 80 or 100 miles who has committed an abuse, whereas we think four or eight miles back up the road to the lorry park is achievable.

Q231 Chair: Who would be responsible for monitoring what is happening and enforcing the rules?

Jim O'Sullivan: The current arrangements are that it is a contingency authority in Kent. It is the local gold command led by the police force.

Q232 Chair: It would be the police force.

Jim O'Sullivan: They are currently the lead agency for that.

Q233 Chair: Have you discussed this with the police?

Jim O'Sullivan: We have discussed the current Stack arrangements with the police extensively in terms of how we support them and what our role is. We have been in discussion with Kent police, and we recognise that a new lorry park needs a new set of standard operating procedures. We will be working with Kent police and with Kent County Council and other agencies to see which organisations should fulfil which roles under the new arrangements.

Q234 Chair: Will they be getting any additional funding to fulfil those responsibilities?

Andrew Jones: We do not supply police funding through the Department for Transport, as you will appreciate.

Q235 Chair: Is the Home Office involved in this? Mrs Glendon asked you that earlier when looking at this particular aspect.

Andrew Jones: There are mechanisms for police services that face significant extra costs to apply to the Home Office for further budget. They applied to the Home Office for extra budget last year. I think they were unsuccessful, but there are mechanisms through the Home Office to apply should it be necessary.

Q236 Chair: It is being dealt with through those mechanisms rather than as part of the plan.

Andrew Jones: Yes, that would be correct.

Q237 Chair: Could you clarify the position in relation to Manston airport? What is your agreement with Manston airport?

Andrew Jones: Manston airport was a very important part of providing short-term immediate relief. Basically, Manston is acting as a back-up lorry park already, because it is a large piece of flat tarmac. However, it was never envisaged to be a long-term solution, primarily, of course, because of its location and access to the port of Dover from its site. The use of Manston is there. It is still there as a back-up. The commercial arrangements we have with the airport—obviously we have hired it—are commercially sensitive. As Patrick wrote to you and highlighted, we will not be revealing the commercial costs.

Q238 Chair: How long have you hired it for?

Andrew Jones: That goes back to renegotiations on cost, so if we say how much we are going to do, we are giving away all the negotiation. We have a back-up in place.

Q239 Graham Stringer: Why is that commercially sensitive? There is no competition.

Andrew Jones: If you say how much you are going to pay for something in advance, the chances are that you will not be able to get a better deal on it.

Q240 Graham Stringer: So the deal has not been signed.

Andrew Jones: No, we had a deal that was done at the time and that was signed months and months ago. We are looking potentially to extend that deal. We said we would keep the use of Manston and the impact on local roads under review, but, as we are looking to provide greater longevity in the use of Manston as our safety net, those further negotiations are potentially compromised if we do them in public.

Q241 Graham Stringer: I can see that. Will you release the figures when agreement has been reached?

Andrew Jones: Let's have a look at that. Generally, it is a very positive measure; I am all in favour of transparency—obviously one of the themes of the last few days.

Q242 Graham Stringer: We are too, but we have found the current owners of Manston to be less than transparent and straightforward with this Committee in the past in terms of their commitments to the area to keep the airport going. Certainly I, and I guess the rest of the Committee, would be interested in the figures once an agreement has been reached.

Andrew Jones: Let me have a look at that. I do not want to break any commercial confidences, but I agree with the principle of transparency.

Q243 Chair: You will not tell us how long your agreement is for, what the financial arrangements are or how long you anticipate this continuing. You said it was being used as a back-up. Can you tell us to what extent Manston has been used up to now?

Jim O'Sullivan: We have not actually used it at all yet.

Q244 Chair: You have not used it at all. No, I thought not, but I thought the Minister said it had been used.

Andrew Jones: It is a back-up, but it is just an unused back-up.

Q245 Chair: It is an unused back-up. That is a new definition of the word “used”. It is an unused back-up.

Jim O'Sullivan: If you recall the circumstances last year, as the July commercial peak ended and we went into August, in August we did not implement Stack at all but it took us until about the end of July to get the agreement with Manston in place. As we came through September and October, we realised that given the scale of the project we are going to build—if we build it; if the Secretary of State and Andrew agree it—we cannot get it finished until sometime next year. Therefore, for this year we approached the Department and said, “We think it would be advisable to have Manston available this summer as well.”

Last year, we checked all the routes to and from Manston. We carried out truck manoeuvring on Manston. We tested the queueing and the marshalling of trucks within the arrangements that we had put in place. We put the signage up. We tested the routes between Manston using our own HGV vehicles—impact protection vehicles and the like; we did testing with those vehicles to make sure that the routes were suitable for large vehicles and that they could see traffic signals and signs. Even though we did not use it in August, we did not know whether or not we would need it for September. By the time we entered September, the thing had been rigorously and thoroughly tested for its suitability.

This summer we introduced TAP in Dover town centre, which works well. We worked with Kent police and with the harbour authority to predict traffic flows coming down the M20 and compare them with the ferries coming in, and to advise the police not to call Stack too early. One of the things about Stack is that it is actually self-fulfilling. If you call it, you get trucks and they will fill a section of the motorway. If we can avoid calling it and take a little bit of congestion, we will.

We did all that during last summer. This summer, given that we cannot get this project built, we approached the Department and said, “We think that TAP plus different protocols around Stack, plus the use of Manston, will be appropriate this year.” The Department is currently looking at that for us.

Andrew Jones: There are also improved commercial arrangements at both the port and the tunnel. The tunnel has a new five-lane check-in system and more on-site parking. That will create space for a further 80 HGVs. The port of Dover has a new freight holding facility for a further 250 lorries to help reduce impacts across Dover town. In the more medium term, Eurotunnel are introducing three new freight shuttles per hour. Each of these shuttles has the capacity to handle 32 vehicles, so that is 32 lorries per hour, which

gives 96 per hour extra capacity. The port of Dover is expanding its western docks cargo facility for next year. That will create space on the eastern docks. There is quite significant investment from the private sector to improve capacity, both this year and the next.

Q246 Chair: I just want to go back to the mysterious Manston arrangement. The police told us that they would not be able to police the traffic to and from Manston. Is that your understanding? That is what the police said.

Jim O'Sullivan: That is not my understanding.

Andrew Jones: They have not said anything to me.

Q247 Chair: It is not your understanding.

Andrew Jones: They have not said anything like that to me, no.

Q248 Chair: The Chief Constable of Kent told the Home Affairs Committee on 14 July last year, "We cannot logistically do that," saying that they would be unable to escort freight traffic from the M20 across the county to Manston along the inadequate routes that it would be necessary to use.

Andrew Jones: Which date was that—the 14th?

Q249 Chair: That was a statement from the Chief Constable of Kent. All I can do is repeat it. Maybe you know something that he does not.

Andrew Jones: Since that date, we have done our deal with Manston and they have not said anything separately from that.

Chair: Well, that is the Chief Constable's view. Thank you very much for coming and answering our questions.