

Written evidence submitted by Eurotunnel (RDF0018)

Eurotunnel welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to this enquiry. Eurotunnel operates Le Shuttle freight services through the Channel Tunnel. 1.6 million trucks use Eurotunnel's services each year, with this vital link providing an unrivalled service in terms of speed, frequency, and reliability for our customers. Eurotunnel transports a wide variety of goods including food, drink, pharmaceuticals and medicines, parcels and couriered goods, electronics and computer parts, automotive parts, and components for industry, making the route critical for any business that needs to move their goods securely and quickly.

25% of UK – EU trade passes through the Channel Tunnel¹, and the effective operation of the cross-Channel supply chain is dependent on the fluidity of Eurotunnel's services. This submission focuses on how this resilience can be maintained and improved, both through industry work and Government's policies.

Infrastructure – capacity and resilience

The Short Straits is the preferred choice for the vast majority of the cross-Channel road freight market, with over 90% of trucks coming into the UK using either Eurotunnel or the Port of Dover. Trucks choose to travel via Eurotunnel to ensure the secure, rapid arrival of their goods. With a crossing time of just 35 minutes and up to 6 departures an hour, Eurotunnel facilitated €138bn of trade in 2016 between the UK and EU². Improving access to, through and from the Short Straits should therefore be a Government priority in ensuring the resilience of a key gateway between the UK and continental Europe.

The Channel Tunnel provides a key link in several supply chains across the UK, including industries in the Midlands, north of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as onward connections to the Republic of Ireland using the 'landbridge'. Support for the Short Straits benefits the whole of the UK, as many businesses prefer to use the direct motorway connections this route provides over less frequent, longer ferry routes with a shorter road connection. Government measures to support UK ports should be focused on building

resilience where traffic wishes to travel, over those that directly intervene in the market.

With the Channel Tunnel providing a motorway-to-motorway connection between the UK and continental Europe, ensuring these networks are maintained is crucial. We welcome the delivery of the Lower Thames Crossing, an essential second route for goods moving north of the M25. While the M20 remains the primary route to the Channel Tunnel, it is also the primary route for goods and passengers travelling to and from the Port of Dover. The M2/A2 provides an important alternative route but does not have the capacity to carry large volumes of traffic due to the variable nature of the route, the number of roundabouts and the single carriageway on arrival in Dover. Upgrades to the A2 trunk road east of Canterbury and into the Port of Dover would strengthen the resilience of both the M2/A2 corridor and the M20, providing distinct routes for freight traffic travelling to Eurotunnel and the Port of Dover. This would also alleviate concerns around diversion of traffic away from the M20 to the M2/A2 when the Lower Thames Crossing is built.

Border procedures and the impact on road freight

As a binational company, providing both the terminal and carrier for active modes of transport, Eurotunnel has worked closely with both the UK and French governments to introduce procedures that move the checking of goods away from the physical border. Our customers have the option to provide physical barcodes (both UK Goods Movement References, and their French equivalents through the SI Brexit system) to our agents, or to provide their barcode details in a Eurotunnel Border Pass prior to crossing. The Border Pass allows customers who have their documents to swiftly pass through our check in and pit stops, as their VRN is recognised and paired with their customs documents.

The data is then sent to both sets of authorities, with pairing during the 35-minute crossing and a status given if a customer is required to present at a UK Inland Border Facility or at our Centre Douane-SIVEP in Coquelles. This system is the only way that border checks could be implemented at a site where trucks are continuously processed. It also provides the flexibility that our customers require when presenting documents before transiting. Customers do not make

bookings for a specific service, instead an account service means a last-minute decision can be made to use Eurotunnel.

As the Government begins to introduce its 2025 Border Strategy, further measures that support the movement of checks away from the border and ease the process for traders and hauliers (such as a Single Trader Window and trusted traders' schemes) are hugely beneficial to ensuring the smooth movement of goods through the Channel Tunnel. Procedures such as a freight registered drivers' scheme have previously been considered by Home Office yet never implemented. A scheme would involve freight drivers uploading certain details (usually biometric) that would be used to check their identity when they pass through our site. With many drivers using Eurotunnel's service more than once a week, this would further improve fluidity through our terminals and consequently the movement of goods into and out of the UK.

Supply chains and challenges faced

Eurotunnel has seen an increase in the number of empty trucks moving from the UK to the EU post-Brexit, with 50% of trucks travelling not containing any goods. With increased documentation, costs and other administrative necessities, many businesses have chosen to stop exporting goods to the EU, particularly those who export SPS goods where the documents required are highly specific and can result in long delays at border facilities if they are incorrect. Hauliers have also chosen to consolidate loads or not take on those that may slow down the truck if it is likely to be inspected.

The Government's move to allow more cabotage will allow European hauliers to recoup some of the costs of bringing a truck over to the UK before sending it back to pick up the next load, however there is still a loss associated with empty trucks. Measures to encourage businesses to export to the EU should be explored by the Government, including those that directly support traders and hauliers with completing the relevant declarations.

Many drivers from the EU do not permanently live in the UK, instead regularly crossing back and forth or staying during the working week to adhere to drivers' hours. Improvement to driver facilities across the UK is vital to ensuring that European drivers are willing to take loads to the UK, including parking, rest, shower, and food facilities. Eurotunnel recently opened Le Truck

Village, a secure truck park next to our French terminal to provide drivers with some of these facilities before they cross over to the UK.

Decarbonising freight

As a rail operator, Eurotunnel is looking to increase the levels of freight trains through the Channel Tunnel, as well as decarbonising the road freight that travels through. Eurotunnel has been awarded Carbon Trust Standard certification since 2007, showing our commitments to continuously reducing our carbon footprint through our operations. Consequently, for a truck, a shuttle journey emits 12 times less in greenhouse gases than the equivalent journey by ferry. Moving towards zero emissions for HGVs will require input from the industry and we will work with Government on the various measures that will see a change to the sale and maintenance of HGVs, ensuring that European hauliers are able to comply with regulations. Eurotunnel is also looking at how vehicles using alternative fuels can safely travel through the Channel Tunnel, to ensure that hauliers moving towards zero emissions can continue to use our services.

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Endnotes

¹ EY (2016) [Economic footprint of the Channel Tunnel Fixed Link](#)

² EY (2018) [Economic footprint of the Channel Tunnel in the EU](#)