



Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
ME14 1XQ

By email:
IntermodalHGVConsultation@dft.gov.uk

4th January 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

Heavier Intermodal Freight Trial Consultation

Draft Response from Kent County Council

Enclosed is Kent County Council's (KCC) draft officer response to the Department for Transport's (DfT) Heavier Intermodal Freight Trial Consultation. The draft response will be discussed by Members of KCC's Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 19th January, after which further information in response to this consultation will be submitted. We appreciate that the Department has allowed us additional time given how important freight issues are in Kent.

We are also grateful to Government for recently granting KCC temporary powers to issue penalty notices in parts of Kent to prevent vehicles parking in inappropriate locations while they wait for the correct customs clearance approvals as a result of the UK's new relationship with the EU.

As previously discussed with the Department, KCC also needs to be given enforcement powers, through secondary legislation to enact Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, to allow for Penalty Charge Notices to be issued by councils to prevent HGVs from using unsuitable roads. These powers would also enable us to prevent any heavier vehicles from using unauthorised routes as part of this trial.

A proposed lorry control zone to restrict HGVs from using unsuitable roads continues to be an essential requirement for Kent. This along with the continuation of the successful use of HGV parking enforcement and the expansion of official lorry parking capacity, is evidence of how KCC and the Department can work together to deliver improvements to the way HGVs are managed throughout the county.

We would therefore like to build on this relationship to ensure that any outcomes that this trial delivers can benefit Kent.



Yours sincerely

Simon Jones
Director for Highways, Transportation and Waste



Heavier intermodal freight trial Consultation questionnaire

Moving Britain Ahead



Main consultation questions

Your organisation: Kent County Council

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1 Should a trial of 48 tonnes maximum laden weight on specific routes for domestic intermodal journeys in principle be permitted?

Freight transport through Kent is a significant issue for the county which causes substantial disruption to people's lives. Many of our rural roads that pass through historic towns, villages and hamlets are unsuitable for HGVs and therefore lorries blight our communities with noise and vibration, poor air quality and road safety issues. Due to Kent's position as an international gateway, large numbers of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) that travel through the county park in inappropriate locations which causes road safety, litter and antisocial behaviour issues. In addition to this, when there are delays at the Port of Dover and/or Eurotunnel which result in the use of Operation Stack or Brock, the disruption affects the whole county.

It is essential that we have as many tools as possible in our armoury to address the HGV problems that we see across our network on a daily basis. The ability to control lorry movements will be critical to this, therefore in association with this trial, we would also recommend the rolling out of a suitable lorry control zone to properly regulate and monitor vehicles of this nature.

This proposed new trial of Heavier Intermodal Freight should allow for more goods to be carried in a single load and enable more freight to be transported by rail through improved efficiency of train loadings from HGVs, thereby reducing the number of lorries on the road. However, this would only create more capacity for increases in HGVs in the future. There would also be an



additional road maintenance burden from heavier vehicles, especially for structures and road pavement.

It is vital that a trial is coordinated, and data shared, with local authorities, to mitigate our concerns on the impacts of these potentially heavier vehicles on roads and structures that we have the statutory responsibility to maintain. The routes for this trial should only be selected after further consultation with the Highway Authority.

The principles of the proposed Heavier Intermodal Freight Trial align with a number of KCC's existing policies and strategies, including the Kent Environment Strategy (2016), the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (2020), the Freight Action Plan (2017) and the draft Kent Rail Strategy (2021), all of which support the objective of delivering modal shift of freight from road to rail.

2 Should a trial be restricted to intermodal journeys with a rail leg or also include domestic intermodal journeys with a water leg?

The trial should not preclude any particular intermodal freight journey.

3 Is 50 miles the right maximum distance for any road leg? If no, should the distance be shorter, longer, no distance limit?

The trial should include a distance that gives valuable outputs without adversely affecting businesses and residents. Of more concern to KCC would be the alignment of the proposed road leg, and the roads and structures to be used by the heavier vehicles. Ideally, they would primarily use the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and/or existing routes identified for abnormal indivisible loads.

4 Is four years the right duration for a trial? If no, should it be shorter or longer?

We would prefer that the trial is reduced from four to two-years with a one-year review, provided that useful data could be obtained about both vehicle movements and highway asset condition.



5 Does the attached impact assessment consider the main likely effects of a trial sufficiently? Are there any additional effects / impacts that you think have not been reflected?

The Impact Assessment mentions an assumed increase in maintenance cost but it is not clear what the supporting rationale is behind the assumption, or whether the effect of increased weight on road asset deterioration is linear. It is also not clear what the potential impact on the trial data might be from street works or road works on the highway affecting the designated route, and how potentially this could be captured in the evaluation.

The Impact Assessment has only considered the strategic impact of EU Exit on national freight movements. Any trial put forward for Kent would need to consider its role as an international gateway to and from the EU, with significant volumes of roll-on, roll-off HGVs passing through the county. There would need to be consideration as to how any disruption in cross-channel freight movements may impact the suggested route for a trial in Kent.

6 Do you have any views on the potential trial designs discussed in the impact assessment, or suggestions of alternative ways to source counterfactual data?

KCC currently has no views on the potential trial designs discussed in the impact assessment.

7 Should a local authority be able to block the introduction of routes if a trial route would incur excessive costs related to assessment and strengthening of specific structures? Is between £0.15m and £0.5m a suitable level for excessive costs? Should Local Authorities be able to seek financial contributions for such costs of up to 50% from participating operators?

KCC as the Highway Authority would only consider the need to block a particular trial in our area if we could evidence that the trial was not safe; would put highway users at risk; or would have an unacceptable social impact.

We strongly oppose that local authorities should be expected to cover any of the costs of upgrading or strengthening assets. Our maintenance funds are quite distinct from any other funding, and even though we accept there is scope for wider benefits from the trial, upgrading or strengthening assets ought to be



separately funded. It is important that the part of DfT leading on this trial understands the wider highway maintenance and funding picture.

Our view in Kent is that DfT funding for local road maintenance is insufficient and has not kept pace with the scale of asset deterioration. Nor has it taken into account population and traffic growth; and in Kent's case, that we are the gateway to Europe. For roads alone, we have a £500m backlog and an annual shortfall in funding to maintain highway assets in steady state condition. Our Structures team in particular is also significantly underfunded, though that needs to be illustrated in asset lifecycle analyses.

Covering the costs of upgrading or strengthening assets for this trial will simply involve money being taken away from other maintenance priorities, such as roads that have failed or structures that need maintenance/strengthening. With these points in mind, KCC insists that the trial should be designed such that the excessive costs are as low as possible, and operating contributions are as high as possible. Local authorities cannot contribute financially to the pilot trials.

Our structures would need to be assessed either as a review of any previous assessments or as a full-blown assessment, just to check the proposed trial routes can take the 48 tonnes. As we would have to appoint external consultants to undertake this work, we do not agree that the local authority should fund this. It is only after this would we be in a position to understand if any strengthening would be needed or its extent. Therefore, the cap of £0.5m would not seem to be sufficient to cover the unknown liabilities. Given the constraints on budgets, it is not sustainable to divert funds away from already identified strengthening works for a limited trial against the greater benefit to road users of the other works. We suggest that local authorities have a guarantee of funding and/or advance funding to undertake this work.

8 Do you have any further comments?

Further to points made above, KCC requests that the trial evaluation should include quantitative analyses of the effect on asset lifecycles of these heavier loads. Clearly this will depend on volumes, loads, etc., but if this initiative is rolled out, Local Highway Authorities will want to consider whether they would need to change their lifecycle assumptions for these routes in their maintenance programmes, and also whether they would want to change the specification for road construction on these routes going forward.



For structures in particular, the imposition of heavier loadings will have some impact on the whole life of individual assets, such as bearings, movement joints and surfacing. They could require a shorter life cycle of maintenance, or more critically their replacement, at significant cost. On any chosen route not all the structures may be owned by one highway authority, with route approvals and requirements for strengthening needing to be shared.

KCC would also like to know, if the trial succeeds on the trial routes, what safeguards are proposed to prevent a later extension to the highways network as a whole?