

**From: Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport**

**Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport**

**To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee- 16 September 2015**

**Subject: Solutions to Operation Stack: Freight Fluidity for the UK's Gateway to Europe**

**Classification: Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of Paper: N/A**

**Future Pathway of Paper: N/A**

**Electoral Divisions: All**

## **Summary**

Operation Stack has been in force for 32 days in 2015 for a number of reasons including French industrial action, migrant issues at the Channel Tunnel and operational factors with the Tunnel.

The European Gateway Strategic Delivery Group, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Matthew Balfour, has been working over a number of months to identify and agree a package of on and off highway measures to minimise the impact of Operation Stack.

The recent escalation in number of instances and volume of HGVs involved in Operation Stack during June and July has however, finally brought this matter to the attention of national government. This report provides an update on the current position.

## **Recommendation:**

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to receive and note this report.

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 Following the instance of Operation Stack in January 2015 as a result of a fire in the Channel Tunnel, a multi-agency task force was set up to identify both immediate short term solutions to alleviate the impacts of congestion around

Dover arising from Port bound HGV traffic, as well as longer term solutions to reduce the instances of Stack and the severity of its impact when it is called.

1.2 This group, the European Gateway Strategic Delivery Group, oversaw the implementation of the Dover TAP – a traffic management measure to hold HGV traffic outside Dover which is then released as port capacity becomes available. Work also progressed to consider longer term measures for on and off highway solutions. This work included consideration of:

- Smart Motorway Implementation on the M20;
- 2 way contraflow on the M20 London-bound carriageway;
- Additional lane on M20 coast-bound carriageway to queue HGVs;
- More effective use of Variable Message signing across the network
- Improved communication between partners and with public
- Options for lorry park holding areas close to M20
- Use of Intelligent Transport Systems for managing “virtual” Operation Stack queue

1.3 The overall objective of the group was to deliver a report to Government detailing an agreed solution in the Autumn. The concentration of Operation Stack instances during June and July with 521 hours since 23 June however, has clearly elevated this to a national issue. The involvement of Government via various Departments as well as communication with COBR, has given the European Gateway Strategic Delivery Group and the Strategic Co-ordination Group responsible for the immediate response to Operation Stack when it is called, the opportunity to accelerate this work to put definitive solutions to Government. These solutions cover both short term immediate actions to better manage Operation Stack as well as a preferred solution that would more effectively manage Operation Stack in future.

## **2. Current Position**

2.1 The relevant agencies through the Strategic Co-ordination Group have agreed with Government a revised means of dealing with Operation Stack should it be called over the coming weeks. This will entail calling Stage 1 of Operation Stack (M20 J8-9) for all traffic. When it becomes apparent that Stage 2 will be needed (M20 J9-11) at that point Dover bound HGVs will be diverted to, and parked at, the former Manston Airport site in Thanet.

2.2 This site can accommodate approximately 3,500 vehicles. HGVs will be routed along the A299 Thanet Way to the former airport and as the port has capacity, HGVs would be released in small convoys (approximately 20 vehicles at a time) and routed along the A256 to Dover. The agreement between Government and the owners of the former Manston Airport site is for the period of 3 months. Beyond that the use of this site for Operation Stack parking will be reviewed.

2.3 Channel tunnel traffic would be parked on the M20 between Junction 8 and 11 depending on the volume of the Stack. The advantage of this proposal is that the need to close the London bound M20 will be removed meaning the worst of the impact on movement around Kent as experienced in the most recent instances of Operation Stack should be avoided.

2.4 In addition to the above, COBR, the Government crisis response committee, requested that a preferred solution to Operation Stack be put to their meeting of 21 August 2015. Highways England and Kent County Council, working in collaboration with all relevant agencies, therefore commissioned further work to meet these timescales in identifying the optimum package of measures. The package of on and off highway measures, including preliminary costings and delivery timescales, presented to COBR comprised:

- Strengthening the hard shoulder M20 J8-10 coastbound and amendments to central reserve J10-11a to improve resilience and flexibility of use of link
- Potential improvements to A20 in and around Dover to increase capacity and remove bottlenecks
- Increased use of traffic technology to improve communications and management of Operation Stack
- Potential lorry park close to the M20 capable of catering for approximately 4,000 HGVs.
- Potential extension of STOP24 lorry park site capable of catering for up to 1,000 HGVs.

2.5 The above on and off highway measures, if delivered, could potentially cater for around 5,500-6,500 HGVS. 1,500 of these would be held on carriageway. The preliminary cost for this package is £468m. The key issues identified around implementation concern certainty of funding, who will deliver, and timescales for delivery. Early work is being undertaken to work through these issues and devise detailed project plans, however it is likely that considering planning and construction timescales, while some measures could be delivered in the short term, for others the timescales could be over the next 2-3 years.

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 There are no direct costs attributable to Kent County Council arising from the recommendations in this report. The most recent work carried out to identify a preferred solution as requested by Government has largely been funded by Highways England. Where KCC has incurred some costs e.g. investigating land titles and holding early discussions with landowners, it is intended that recompense is sought for this from Government. KCC has provisionally secured £3 million Local Growth Funding towards the cost of delivering additional overnight lorry parking. Subject to Local Enterprise Partnership agreement, it is feasible this funding could be put towards the delivery of an off highway Operation Stack lorry park.

### **4. Legal implications**

4.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **5. Equalities implications**

5.1 There are no equalities implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

## **6. Other corporate implications**

6.1 There are no other corporate implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

## **7. Governance**

7.1 A Steering Group is in the process of being established to oversee the delivery and progress of this work. It is likely to involve representatives of KCC, Highways England, Shepway DC, Dover DC, Ashford DC, Port of Dover, Eurotunnel, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue and the Department of Transport. A Planning Sub-group is also being established to specifically consider the planning process to support delivery of the off highway lorry park sites.

## **8. Conclusions**

8.1 In the aftermath of the Operation Stack events of January and then summer 2015, substantial work has been undertaken by Kent County Council and its partners to identify a more efficient immediate response to Operation Stack as well as a more permanent solution to reduce the impact Stack has on Kent. This report updates on the latest work in this regard.

### **Recommendation:**

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to receive and note this report.

## **Background Documents**

N/A

## **Contact details**

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