

Kent Freight Action Plan

A report by the Director of Kent County Council Highways and Transportation Board

Summary

1. This report describes the current progress with the Kent Freight Action Plan (FAP) and the next steps in the process before it is formally adopted.

Purpose of the report

2. To update Members on the Kent FAP and the consultation process.

Background

3. The Traffic Management Team has been working to form a draft Kent FAP that will effectively help to address concerns with the movement of freight both through and within the county.

4. The FAP sets out the vision to:

Promote safe and sustainable freight distribution networks into, out of and within Kent, which support local and national economic prosperity and quality of life, whilst working to address any negative impacts on local communities and the environment both now and in the future.

5. The draft FAP has been specifically written to include actions achievable by Kent County Council (KCC), albeit some of them by working with partner organisations. Hence, schemes like Foreign Lorry Road User Charging have been omitted because the decision to implement such a tax regime lies with central government and KCC does not have a direct influence over it. Furthermore, the emphasis of the FAP is on road haulage as this has the greatest impact on our residents and, clearly, the highway.
6. The draft FAP has at its heart six objectives under which a number of action points sit. Some of these actions are already being undertaken, others are beginning to take shape and the rest are for the future development. Timeframes for all actions will be assigned.

Objectives and selected action points

7. This section will outline the six objectives and provide example action points for each.
8. Objective 1: To find a long-term solution to Operation Stack.
 - 8.1 Operation Stack is a relatively rare occurrence. Aside from the financial burden on Kent Police and other agencies, the primary negative effect is on business activities in East Kent.
 - 8.2 Action point: KCC will continue to progress the Operation Stack lorry park scheme adjacent to the M20.
9. Objective 2: To take appropriate steps to tackle the problem of overnight lorry parking in Kent.
 - 9.1 In 2005, the Kent Overnight Lorry Parking Study found there was demand for 1000 spaces in the county but a supply of only 450 official and 220 unofficial

spaces. It was also found that signing on trunk roads was poor, likely resulting in greater use of unofficial and unsuitable sites to avoid the possibility of getting lost.

- 9.2 Action point: KCC are working on updating the recommended lorry route maps for Kent that will also show lorry parking facilities. These will be distributed online and through industry associations.
 - 9.3 Action point: KCC will continue investigating the feasibility of new truck stops at various locations along the M20/A20 and M2/A2 corridors.
10. Objective 3: To effectively manage the routing of HGV traffic to ensure that such movements remain on the strategic road network for as much of their journey as possible.
- 10.1 Probably the most widely recognised issue with HGV routing is overreliance on satellite navigation systems that have been designed with cars in mind resulting in large vehicles using inappropriate routes or getting stuck.
 - 10.2 Action point: KCC are investigating the development of a lorry route journey planner that would sit on the KCC website so that hauliers would be able to input specific vehicle details, such as weight and height, and generate a suitable route.
 - 10.3 Action point: KCC are working with some boroughs and districts, including Maidstone Borough Council, as they start the procurement process for waste collection. Advice is being provided on key routes to keep refuse vehicles off at peak times.
11. Objective 4: To take steps to address problems caused by freight traffic to communities.
- 11.1 This objective will cover some of the common freight-related incidents that are reported to KCC and the range of interventions that KCC can make.
 - 11.2 Action point: To continue to use positive signing to direct HGVs onto the strategic road network.
 - 11.3 Action point: To use width, weight and height restrictions where appropriate. However, KCC recognises that the success of these measures is largely down to enforcement, which is done on a priority basis.
 - 11.4 Action point: KCC will continue to work in partnership with industry bodies and freight generators. For example, KCC is currently working with the National Farmers' Union to produce an article in their regional newsletter that highlights seasonal issues, such as slow moving vehicles, as well as offering support to the farming community.
12. Objective 5: To ensure that KCC Highways and Transportation continues to make effective use of its role in forward planning and development management to reduce the impact of freight traffic.
- 12.1 Involvement in forward planning and development planning enables KCC to influence freight movements and, therefore, to reduce their impact on local communities where possible.
 - 12.2 As the highway authority (excluding trunk roads), KCC can recommend that the district council (as the planning authority, except for "County matters" applications) imposes conditions of planning consents and/or enters into legal

agreements with developers. Such conditions can be made with the aim to minimise any impact on the physical road network as well as the surrounding properties.

- 12.3 KCC H&T is also involved, in partnership with the district councils, with the forward planning of development through the preparation of local development frameworks/local plans and related local transport strategies.
- 12.4 However, KCC also monitors applications for Goods Vehicle Operator Licences (GVOL), which are made to the Traffic Commissioner. These licenses relate to sites at which HGVs are based and from which they operate.
- 12.5 Action point: To continue to comment on Operator Licences and work with districts and boroughs in doing so.
- 12.6 Action point: To recommend that necessary planning conditions be placed on sites to minimise any impact on the road network and local communities.

13. Objective 6: To encourage sustainable freight distribution.

- 13.1 Many people use home delivery for goods but a large proportion of deliveries fail and have to be redelivered. This primarily uses smaller vehicles but there is great potential to reduce the number of these on the roads and, therefore, their impact on congestion, air quality and noise.
- 13.2 Action point: To support and promote alternative delivery networks.
- 13.3 Action point: To investigate the use of workplace deliveries within KCC.

14. The Traffic Management Team intends to begin internal consultation on the initial draft soon. This will ensure any current projects and processes that can help alleviate the negative impacts of freight transport have been included.

Consultation process

- 15. The Traffic Management Team intends to begin internal consultation on the initial draft FAP soon. This will ensure that any current and future projects and processes that can help alleviate the negative impacts of freight transportation have been included.
- 16. Once this is complete, the new version of the FAP will be sent to partner organisations for comment, including the districts and boroughs, industry bodies and KCC Members.
- 17. After the consultation process is complete, the FAP can be adopted by the County Council.

Conclusion

- 18. The issues discussed in the Kent FAP are not new but the document presents an opportunity to show residents and businesses in Kent that KCC is aware of the problems and working to alleviate them.