

Update on the Freight Strategy for Kent

A report by the Head of Transport & Development to the Joint Transportation Board

Matters for Information

Summary

1. It was announced in September that Kent Highway Services has launched a major action programme to tackle the problem of lorries causing disruption and traffic chaos on narrow country lanes and rural roads in Kent. This report outlines these proposals.

Background

2. For many years the issues of Heavy Goods Vehicles in rural areas has been debated at this board particularly in respect to the Yalding area where the issue has been subject to several petitions. In response to these petitions it has been previously reported that Kent County Council will produce a Freight Strategy detailing how it will deal with the issue of Heavy Goods Vehicles in rural areas. In September Kent Highway Services launched a major action programme to tackle the problem of lorries causing disruption and traffic chaos on narrow country lanes and rural roads in Kent.

The Programme

3. The work, which is expected to take between 12-18 months, will involve a complete overhaul of Kent's current lorry-route map, a county-wide review of lorry directional and regulatory signs, a review of Traffic Regulation Orders such as weight, height and width restrictions – which set out where Heavy Goods Vehicles are prevented from driving – and working with satellite navigation firms to ensure this new information is provided to drivers. Kent Highway Services is also in consultation with the two leading industry bodies, the Freight Transport Association and the Road Haulage Association.
4. Due to a dramatic rise in the number of businesses operating out of rural industrial units and farm buildings over the past few years this has contributed significantly to problems with lorries using country roads. District councils are responsible for approving the development of industrial units and the licences that allow them to operate. Kent Highway Services will also look at working more closely with the planning authorities, so that it is consulted on preferred lorry routes when operating licences are granted.
5. Kent Highway Services will also tackle specific, local lorry-related issues by developing tailored plans to fix them.
6. The major strategic issues of Operation Stack, Lorry Road User Charge and Lorry Parking are being covered in new Local Transport Plan for Kent which is currently out for public consultation (Highway Improvement Schemes & Local Transport Plan report refers).

Views of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste

7. On the launch of the action plan Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste, Nick Chard, said:
8. "Lorries can cause tremendous problems for residents and businesses when they use the wrong road and get stuck. They also rumble through our small villages day in, day

out, in some cases causing damage to property. Of course, businesses have to use our roads as part of their normal operations, but at the moment we do not have a full picture of the best routes for them.

9. What we want to do is put lorries on the best available routes for them. We will look at where HGVs want and need to travel and map out routes that will minimise disruption to residents and other businesses.
10. Lorry traffic is expected to grow significantly over the next couple of decades. The work we are carrying out will mean we are well prepared in advance to tackle the demands this growth will place on our county.”

Accountable Officers:	Andy Corcoran & James Hammond	08458 247 800
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