

Our ref: CEO 17989223
Your ref: HW/SP

Helen Whately MP
via e-mail to: helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk

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25 August 2015

Dear Mrs Whately,

Thank you for your letter of 29 July addressed to Graham Dalton about the use of contraflow on the M20. This falls within my area of responsibility and so has been passed to me for response. I am sorry for my late reply. Your letter seems to have been delayed and was only received on 11 August. Please also note that Graham Dalton has left Highways England and we have a new Chief Executive Officer, Jim O'Sullivan.

Highways England looked into the possibility of a temporary contraflow system on the London-bound carriageway of the M20 when the coastbound carriageway is closed for Operation Stack. It was decided, however, that a contraflow would present a significant and unacceptable risk to the safety of road users and those required to work within it. We have presented our reasons to our partners, including Kent Police and Kent County Council, who support our decision. The reasons for this are:

- Using freestanding cones, the quickest way to set up a contraflow, to separate lanes of traffic for a long stretch of a motorway would expose drivers to the risk of collision with oncoming traffic.
- Any incident within the contraflow would be difficult for emergency services to access and could cause severe and unpredictable delays.
- Because of the extent of the traffic management involved, a contraflow could not be easily switched on and off (taking several days to put on and take off). This would delay the full re-opening of the motorway, or the contraflow would have to remain in place 24/7.
- Congestion would be experienced at the entry to the contraflow section and at all adjoining junctions with local roads. A contraflow would cause disruption on the London-bound M20.
- A contraflow would also reduce the flexibility of Operation Stack, reducing the space available for queuing HGVs. We required the additional capacity on the north bound carriageway on two occasions during June and July which would otherwise not have been available if a contraflow was in place.

We are, however, continuing to work with our partners to urgently review what other measures could be put in place to minimise disruption to local communities and allow safe, prompt and orderly movement of freight to the Port of Dover or Channel Tunnel.

Following the recent meeting on 31 July with the Minister for Transport, Rt Hon Andrew Jones MP, it was announced that Manston Airport is available for use as an emergency lorry park if needed. Kevin Bown, Asset Manager for Kent, and all Kent parties are working at pace to examine other immediate and long term solutions to better manage freight movement in Kent.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Kevin Bown directly as I am aware you have done already. He can be contacted by phone on 0300 470 1046 or at kevin.bown@highwaysengland.co.uk.

Yours sincerely



David Brewer
Executive Director