

Government invests £35 million to protect critical freight routes

Vital freight routes into, out of and around the UK will continue to run smoothly, thanks to a multi-million-pound government scheme to help ensure critical goods, such as food and medical supplies, can move freely.

The government has signed agreements with 6 operators to provide up to £35 million to help ensure there is enough freight capacity to prevent disruption to the flow of goods.

The decision has been made to protect 16 of the most important routes covering the Channel, the Short Strait, the North Sea and routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland which were previously at risk of closure due to a drop in demand as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). They will now be designated as Public Service Obligation routes for a period of up to 9 weeks.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

From the very beginning of the outbreak, we have committed to do whatever it takes to minimise the disruption caused by COVID-19.

By taking this action, we have helped protect the movement of goods and services in and out of the UK, safeguarding the flow of supplies across the Union.

The Department for Transport is working closely with the transport sector and devolved administrations to monitor the situation on all freight routes (not just those in the scheme) in order to ensure critical goods, such as food and medical supplies, can move freely.

The agreements follow the UK, French and Irish governments' [pledge to work together on temporary measures to ensure COVID-19 does not threaten vital freight routes between the countries.](#)

UK Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, Irish Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Shane Ross, and French Minister of Transport, Jean-Baptiste Djebbari, said the nations are united by trade and we will continue to engage closely to help keep freight moving.