

Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce meeting, 17 December 2020

News story

Joint statement on progress made by the taskforce at its meeting on 17 December 2020.



The tenth meeting of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was held yesterday, 17 December 2020.

It was chaired by Transport Minister, Baroness Vere. Attendees included the Project Director Dana Skelley plus representatives from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London (TfL), and the Port of London Authority.

Dana Skelley, speaking on behalf of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce, said:

At yesterday's taskforce we were glad to be joined by Sir John Ritblat and representatives from Fosters & Partners and COWI who presented their proposal for a temporary bridge, involving laying a truss over the existing bridge structure. We agreed to explore the proposal in more detail.

Following the publication last week of DfT-commissioned [reports](#) by consultants AECOM and Professor Norman Fleck, taskforce members discussed the reports' conclusions and recommendations. We look forward to the completion of a report by the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham's consultants' Mott MacDonald, and of the blast cleaning of the bridge's two western pedestals.

The taskforce was also pleased to confirm that, starting 20 December, Sundays will be a regular day when river users can schedule transits under the bridge, under certain controlled conditions.

Finally, the taskforce reaffirmed its commitment to restoring the Bridge to full use – to all forms of traffic including motor traffic.

The taskforce agreed to meet again in the new year.

The Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was set up by the Department for Transport in September 2020 to work towards safely reopening the Hammersmith Bridge. The taskforce is chaired by Baroness Vere and includes representatives from TfL, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority and the Port of London Authority.

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[Armed Forces support for vaccine roll-out in Wales](#)

Members of the Armed Forces will be deployed across Wales this winter to help set up and operate vaccination centres in the community.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart and the Defence Minister for the Armed Forces James Heapey have approved a Military Aid to the Civilian Authorities (MACA) request for the Welsh Government. The MACA provides more than 90 service personnel to support Wales' Health Boards in rapidly establishing and operating vaccination centres.

As the vaccination programme is rolled out during the rest of December and into January, military personnel will support the setting up of additional capacity as greater quantities of vaccine are made available. And for the first time since the vaccine has been rolled out, trained defence medics will also support the administering of the vaccine.

The military aid request runs between 4 January to 28 February 2021 and will see members of the Armed Forces delivering the vaccine, setting up equipment and carrying out a number of other functions.

Welsh Secretary Simon Hart said:

The roll-out of the vaccine is a considerable logistical challenge, so we have approved the deployment of Armed Forces personnel to help with its distribution in Wales.

The use of the military to help with this vital work shows how we

can pull together to meet the needs of the whole of the United Kingdom as we tackle the pandemic.

With case rates high across many areas of Wales, it is important that we continue to support the Welsh Government. The huge number of vaccines that the UK Government has procured and the assistance of the Armed Forces in distributing them will help turn the tide in this fight.

Defence Minister James Heappey said:

Since the beginning of the pandemic, our Armed Forces have stepped up to support health services across the UK.

In Wales, our personnel have already helped with the distribution of PPE, construction of a temporary hospital in Cardiff and, most recently, the rollout of community testing in the South Wales Valleys.

I'm pleased we can now support the vaccine rollout and I am proud defence has responded quickly to support this urgent task.

After becoming the first country to approve a vaccine for use, the UK Government has bought vaccines on behalf of all parts of the UK and distributed them around Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland ahead of last week's (8 December) initial rollout.

Approved vaccines will be available across the UK, free at the point of delivery and according to need.

Vaccination will be managed by the health services in each nation: NHS England and NHS Improvement, NHS Wales, NHS Scotland, and Health and Social Care Northern Ireland. Armed Forces personnel have deployed to assist the NHS and the Devolved Nations with planning and logistic support for the delivery of a vaccine.

The UK Government has also invested over £230m into manufacturing a vaccine. The UK Government will also meet the cost of vaccines which will be distributed to all nations of the UK, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

The MOD currently has around 14,000 personnel held at graduated readiness as part of the Winter preparedness 2020 Package. This package will ensure defence remains ready to respond to requests for support at necessary pace, including but not limited to COVID-19 support.

ENDS

Post-Christmas work to activate Operation Brock

Operation Brock – a series of measures that improve Kent’s resilience in the event of disruption to services across the English Channel – will be deployed overnight on Sunday 27 December, with the contraflow active from Monday 28 December, in preparation for the end of the EU Transition Period on 31 December 2020.

A significant part of Operation Brock is keeping the M20 open in both directions by using a contraflow road layout on the M20 London-bound carriageway between junctions 8 and 9 (from Maidstone to Ashford) and directing lorries heading for mainland Europe onto the coastbound carriageway, where they can be queued if necessary.

To make sure the contraflow is deployed safely, the M20 will be closed overnight in both directions between junctions 8 and 9 on the nights of 27 and 28 December.

Traffic volumes permitting, the M20 will close at 10pm on 27 December with both carriageways set to reopen by 10am on 28 December, or earlier if possible. These times have been chosen to minimise disruption to road users and avoid the key Christmas travel period. The M20 will also be closed overnight on 28 December between 10pm and 10am.

Once the barrier is in place, the road will reopen in its new configuration, with HGVs and other freight heading for the Port of Dover or Eurotunnel using the coastbound carriageway on the M20, where it will be queued if necessary. All other traffic – including local freight – should follow the signs and cross over to enter the contraflow on the M20 London bound carriageway. Drivers should look out for signs directing them to either stay on the coastbound carriageway or to enter the contraflow. All cars and motorbikes should enter the contraflow.

Highways England south east operations director Nicola Bell said:

The live test last weekend went really well with the contraflow system operating as expected. It gave us and our Kent Resilience Forum partners a valuable insight into timings for deployment and was a very successful exercise. The test also gave the DVSA the opportunity to test their plans.

The two moveable barrier machines worked exceptionally well with over 14,000 tonnes of concrete blocks being moved in just a few hours, together with more than 8,000 cones.

Head of Kent Resilience Team Mark Rolfe said:

To help keep the county moving, the Kent Resilience Forum has brought together Department for Transport, Highways England, Kent Police, and Kent County Council to agree a single plan to minimise the impact of any cross-Channel disruption.

Ensuring the M20 moveable barrier is in place ahead of Transition Day is part of this plan and our joint commitment to keep Kent's transport network running safely and providing reliable travel information.

About Operation Brock

Operation Brock is a series of measures which crucially keeps the M20 open in both directions using a contraflow system. As with previous deployments in 2019, Operation Brock has stages that can be deployed sequentially, scaling up or down to meet demand. When Operation Brock is in force it is a legal requirement to use the signed routes only for HGV journeys to Port of Dover and Eurotunnel. Depending on the scale of disruption, and whether HGVs are travelling to Port of Dover or Eurotunnel, they will be directed to a holding site. Failure to comply with instructions may result in fines and further delays. Kent Police take decisions on when to use the different phases of the system. Options include:

- A20 Dover TAP: A queuing system which holds lorries until space becomes available at the Port
- M20 Moveable Barrier: A concrete barrier that can be deployed quickly between junctions 8 and 9 of the M20 to install a contraflow. HGVs bound for Dover and/or Eurotunnel will be held on the coastbound carriageway
- Manston Airfield: an off-road site designed to hold traffic heading for the Port of Dover. Border readiness checks will take place here to ensure hauliers have the correct paperwork
- Ashford Sevington Inland Border Facility: an off-road site next to junction 10A of the M20, likely to be used if the M20 contraflow approaches capacity

For more information on Operation Brock and other contingency measures in Kent, visit:

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration remit letter: 2021 to 2022](#)

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[NHS Pay Review Body remit letter: 2021 to 2022](#)

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