

Weekend work to activate Operation Brock

The Government announced last week that Operation Brock – a series of measures that improve Kent’s resilience in the event of disruption to services across the English Channel – will be active from Monday 28 October, in preparation for the UK’s exit from the EU on 31 October.

A significant part of Operation Brock is keeping the M20 open in both directions by using a contraflow 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.

The M20 contraflow is planned to be in place by 6am on Monday 28 October, and in preparation Highways England will carry out roadworks on the M20 over this weekend as the contraflow is activated.

Highways England south east operations director Nicola Bell said:

Operation Brock is part of a set of measures put in place to allow the M20 and the rest of Kent to keep moving in the event of cross-channel disruption. We have worked extensively with our partners in Kent to ensure that the county is as prepared as possible for any disruption to cross-channel services. We thank road users in advance for their patience while we carry out this necessary work.

To enable the contra-flow to be activated, sections of the M20 will be closed this weekend. The M20 will be closed in both directions between junction 7 (for Maidstone) and junction 9 (Ashford) overnight tonight and tomorrow night from 8pm until 6am each night. Saturday night’s closure may be cancelled depending on how much work can be completed on Friday. On Sunday night, the coastbound carriageway only will be closed from 8pm between junctions 7 and 9, reopening at 6am on Monday, with the contraflow up and running.

Whenever the M20 is closed, signed diversions will be in place. Overnight closures may also be required on this section the following week if there is remaining work to complete.

From Monday, drivers will need to follow the different layout on the M20 from just north of Junction 8 (for Hollingbourne/Leeds) to Junction 9 (Ashford). Lorries heading for mainland Europe will be routed down the coastbound carriageway, with a 30mph speed limit in place. All other traffic will be directed onto the London-bound carriageway, with two lanes in each direction operating at 50mph.

Elsewhere along the M20, work continues to upgrade 6.5 miles near Maidstone to a smart motorway, and to create a new junction at Ashford, junction 10a.

Work at junction 10a is being fast tracked to have key sections of the new junction open for traffic by 31 October. Resurfacing work between junction 12 and 13 of the M20 is also underway between Monday and Friday this week.

About Operation Brock

Operation Brock is an interim measure and was successfully deployed in March 2019, and crucially keeps the M20 open in both directions using a contraflow system. As with its March deployment, Operation Brock has stages that can be deployed sequentially, scaling up or down to meet demand. This is how Operation Brock will work:

- In recent years there have already been significant improvements to the holding capacity in the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel, as well as the A20 on approach to the port, where peaks of traffic arriving at the Port of Dover can be managed by traffic lights toward the end of the dual carriageway
- If this increased capacity looks set to be reached, Highways England and Kent Resilience Forum partners can activate a contraflow on the M20 between junctions 8 and 9. Lorries bound for mainland Europe will be queued on the coastbound carriageway, with cars using a clearly signed contraflow on the London-bound carriageway
- If the M20 becomes full, lorries heading for the Port of Dover will be directed to Manston Airfield, while the M20 is used to hold traffic for Eurotunnel. Traffic lights on the A256 will help to manage traffic arriving at the port from Manston, similar to the existing system on the A20
- If the M20 holding area becomes full after Manston airfield has been activated, the coastbound M26 could additionally be used to hold lorries heading for the Eurotunnel terminal
- Lorries would move through the queue in sequence and would be released from the front of the queue as soon as there is capacity in the port and tunnel terminals.
- Instructions for lorry drivers will be clearly signed, well managed and monitored at every step.
- The holding areas are all temporary and will be stood down as soon as they are no longer needed. They will be safe and secure with appropriate welfare facilities and access for emergency services throughout.
- The queuing system only applies to drivers of lorries heading to mainland Europe from Kent. All other drivers should check conditions before setting out and, if they are crossing the channel, check with their service operator for updates.

The deployment will help to demonstrate Kent's preparedness for disruption and allow the contraflow to be in place for any traffic disruption in the coming weeks. Three lanes in each direction could be restored, with a 50mph limit, if Operation Brock is assessed as unlikely to be required in the following weeks.

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

[How Operation Brock will affect your journey](#)

[Government advice for car drivers in Europe after Brexit](#)

[Government advice for bus and coach drivers in Europe after Brexit](#)

[Government advice for HGV drivers in Europe after Brexit](#)

[How Kent County Council has prepared for Brexit](#)

[Kent's joint action plan for dealing for disruption](#)

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.