Department for Transport

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Helen Whately MP
House of Commons
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Dear Helen,

Operation Stack – Manston Airfield

Further to the briefing meeting held on 31st July, I wanted to update you on the development of short term relief options for Operation Stack on the M20 motorway in order to assist hauliers, the local Kent economy and affected nearby communities.

As I said at the meeting, I am sorry for the inconvenience that many people have experienced over the last few months. The Department for Transport understands and recognises that the impact on the road network in Kent has been intolerable for many local people, communities and business when, unfortunately, Operation Stack has had to be implemented to deal with the recent spate of incidents in France.

On 4th August the Department for Transport announced that Manston Airfield will be used on a temporary basis to help reduce pressure on the M20 for freight traffic to the Port of Dover during Operation Stack. An operational plan was subsequently developed and agreed by the Kent Police and freight will be diverted via the M2 to Manston Airfield. It will be held there and called forward when ferry capacity becomes available. Eurotunnel freight will continue to use the M20 during Operation Stack.

Manston Airfield was chosen as a preferred single site location as it provides the most capacity and offers opportunities for separation of Port and Tunnel traffic to free up two-way traffic flow on M20. Other sites considered were ruled out due to either access, location or capacity issues.

We have now signposted the freight route to Manston Airfield; the route from the Airfield to the port; and the route together with reception, marshalling and release facilities at the site has been tested using a group of HGVs.

We intend to live-trial the site for progressively larger numbers of vehicles when Operation Stack is in place, during which the impact on the local road network and the Port of Dover will be assessed before the facility becomes fully operational.

The Department has put a robust communications plan in place to advise HGV and car drivers, and hauliers of the new arrangements for accessing the Port of Dover during Operation Stack. I am attaching the English version of a multi-lingual leaflet that has been distributed by email using established channels.

This short-term measure will provide immediate relief to those living around the M20, but the Government continues to work with Kent County Council, Kent Police and Highways England on a range of medium to long term solutions which will meet the needs of the whole of Kent and the interests of British industry. Our priority is to keep traffic and goods moving and ensure people on both sides of the Channel can go about their lives as normally as possible whilst longer term arrangements for other 'HGV holding area' sites that could offer a permanent solution are being investigated.

I will continue to ensure that you are kept up to date with plans for longer term solutions and how the new arrangements for operation Stack have worked.

Yours,

Andrew

ANDREW JONES

OPERATION STACK

Changes in vehicle holding arrangements for freight travelling to mainland Europe using Port of Dover

When Operation Stack is in place, freight traffic bound for the Port of Dover may be diverted from the M20 to Manston Airfield in East Kent where it will be held until it can be directed to the Port of Dover. If you:

- are travelling to the Port of Dover, and you ignore the diversion signs and join Operation Stack on the M20 you will be turned round and told to go to Manston Airfield. This will add at least 15 minutes to your journey
- arrive at the Port of Dover whilst Operation Stack is in place without being processed through Manston, you will be told to go to Manston Airfield. This will add over an hour to your journey and mean 75 unnecessary miles as you will not be permitted to use the A256 northbound
- are carrying live animals or other priority freight and intend to use Port of Dover, you should proceed to Manston Airfield and you will be fast-tracked so you can continue your journey.
- are using the Port of Dover, diverting to Manston using the signposted roads will ensure you board a ferry in the shortest possible time
- are using the Channel tunnel you should continue to use the M20 where you will be held in Operation Stack from junction 8, as and when necessary.

Designated routes to the Port of Dover via Manston

Follow the signed diversions at all times. A map of the designated route is shown of the reverse of this leaflet. Electronic messaging will appear on signs across the motorway network from the Midlands southwards. It will direct you to the appropriate routes if your destination is the Port of Dover.

- If you are travelling southbound from the Dartford Crossing, signs will divert freight onto the M2/A2.
- If you are travelling eastbound along the M20 from the M25, signs will divert freight to the M2/A2 using junction 7 of the M20 and A249.
- Once on the M2, you will be directed by signs along the A299 at all key junctions to Manston Airfield.
- On leaving Manston, you will be routed to Dover on the A256 using signs.

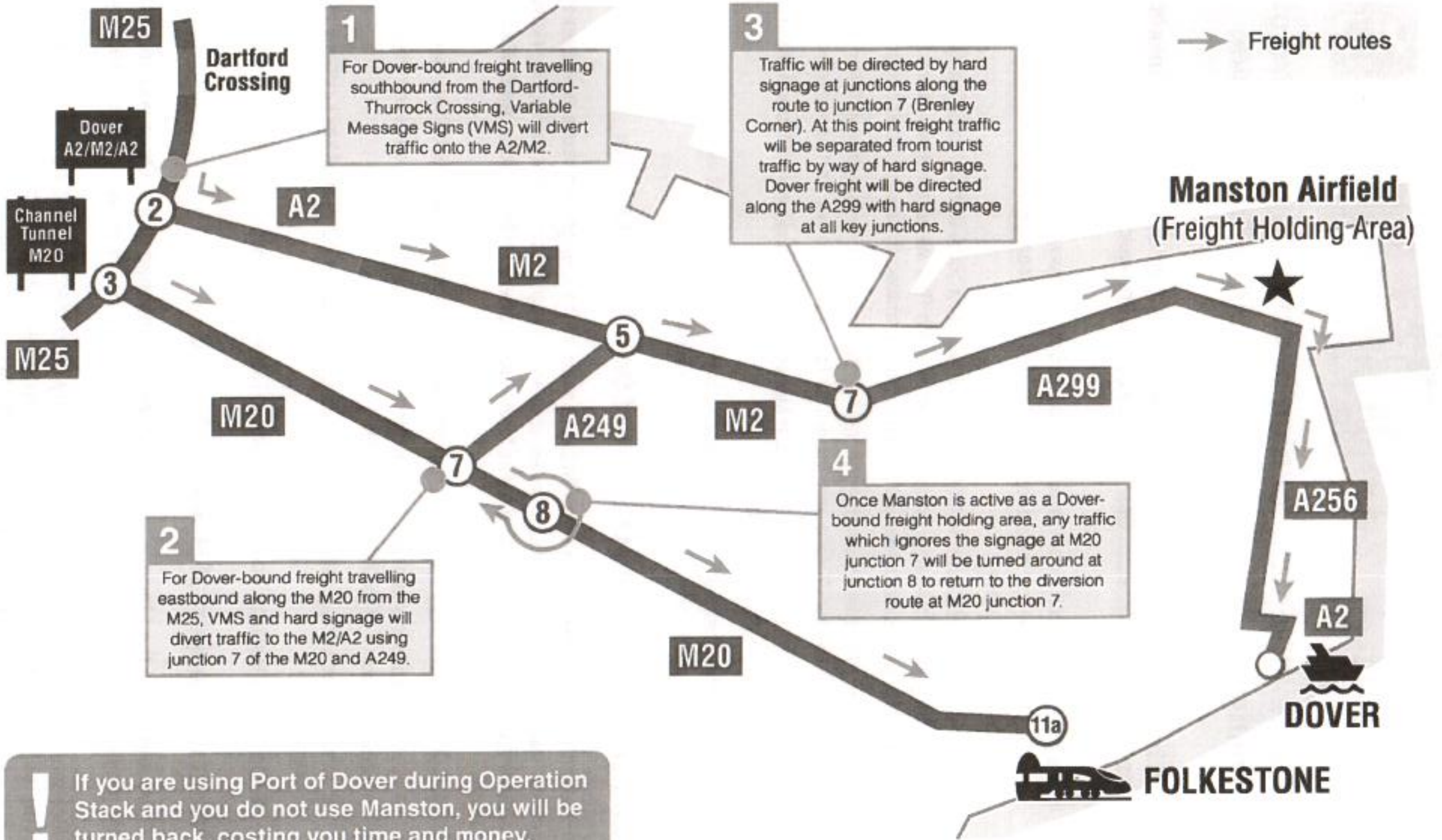
What will happen at Manston Airfield

Entry and exit to the Manston site will be through manned gates. Once you are on site you will be processed and held in designated parking areas. Facilities will be available for you to use.

Release from the Manston site will be strictly controlled. You will be issued with a pass enabling your vehicle to proceed to the port to the next available ferry. You will not be able to travel from Port of Dover without a valid pass – do not attempt to bypass the system.

As Operation Stack fills, freight traffic heading to the Port of Dover will be diverted to Manston Airfield, before being sent onto the port. .

Routes for freight



! If you are using Port of Dover during Operation Stack and you do not use Manston, you will be turned back, costing you time and money.

Highways England N150301