

Helen Whately MP

Statement to Faversham Local Engagement Forum: 12th October 2016

Lorry Parking

I am very sorry I can't be with you this evening, but thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit to the meeting my thoughts on lorry parking. I wish I could be with you in person, as I have been doing a lot of work on the problem of HGV fly-parking - spending time with Kent Police to understand their perspective on problem, also KCC, borough councillors and Highways England. I recently called a debate in Parliament to raise the issue with the Roads Minister.

As you will know from your own experience, around this part of Kent lorries fill lay-bys, line up on the hard shoulder of slip roads, crawl onto the verges of lanes and tuck themselves away in housing estates. None of these places have facilities for drivers, so as well as the problem of huge HGVs parked on the roadside, there's also littering and fouling of verges and hedges with human waste. Residents nearby are understandably upset, and it's pretty bad for the drivers themselves.

My debate in the House of Commons was attended by MPs from all over the country, showing that this isn't just an issue for Kent – although we do suffer particularly because of the volume of freight traffic going to Dover, exacerbated by the situation in Calais.

I'm pleased to report that the Minister for Roads committed to looking into how many more lorry parking spaces are needed and how they can be made available. He said he will take a "fresh look" at freight parking, considering enforcement as well as the availability of parking. And he wants to do more about litter on roadsides. I'm looking forward to taking him up on his offer to meet me and other Kent MPs as well as councillors and hauliers to thrash out some concrete solutions. I've written to him to follow up, and as soon as I have an update, I will share it with the Town Council.

As I expect you will hear this evening from a county council representative, KCC are also working hard on the lorry parking problem.

You will probably remember well how Operation Stack affected this area last year. Progress is being made towards a permanent solution; the new lorry area at Stanford West is due to open next year, providing 3,600 spaces.

I have received some letters expressing concern about the construction of a large lorry area which will only occasionally be used. However, given the problem of fly-parking and shortage of spaces at existing lorry service areas, it must make sense to use some of the new lorry area outside of Operation Stack to make up the shortfall. I

have urged Highways England and the Roads Minister to include this in the lorry park plans.

While we are on the subject of roads, I should mention I am campaigning for Brenley Corner to be upgraded, and also for Highways England to consider improving the M2 to cope with expected increases in traffic.

I hope this update is helpful. I look forward to hearing the outcome of your discussions this evening and will help in any way I can.

Helen Whately
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent