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Christmas border chaos “must not be repeated”

Logistics UK labels Christmas gridlock in Kent a national embarrassment, calling for urgent review of traffic management and welfare arrangements for HGV drivers



Trade body Logistics UK has warned that the “national embarrassment” of the Christmas border disruption in Dover “must not be repeated”.

Kent’s roads were congested with HGVs after France closed its border for two days before Christmas due to concerns about the spread of a new Covid variant.

France subsequently lifted the travel ban after the introduction of driver testing, and congestion continues to ease despite issues with the speed for testing, however Logistics UK has written to the government requesting an urgent review of its traffic management and welfare arrangements for HGV drivers.

In a letter to transport minister Lord Agnew, the trade association pointed to shortcomings in the government’s plans

in the event of border disruption. These shortcomings led to chaos on roads in Kent and left thousands of drivers stranded without access to basic hygiene and food provision facilities, the trade body said.

Elizabeth de Jong, policy director at Logistics UK, stressed it is vital that arrangements are fast-tracked so that any drivers facing similar delays under post-Brexit customs procedures can access the facilities they need.

“That drivers should have to spend two days at the side of the road, without adequate toilet facilities or the immediate provision of hot food, was a national embarrassment, and the need to rely on the generosity of the charities, businesses and local residents, and the support of the Armed Forces, must not be repeated.

“In the first few months of the year, the

UK relies on fresh food supplies from across the Channel to keep our supermarkets stocked. But this lack of concern for driver welfare could impact on the willingness of EU hauliers to send their drivers to this country, and we want to protect the integrity of the supply chain.”

De Jong added: “With new customs procedures in place from 1 January 2021, it is vital that all the systems needed to support hauliers as they move across our borders are in place and in full working order.

“From 1 January, the industry will need regular, nationwide real-time information feeds from the government on the status of all ports, combined with early insight where traffic building. This will highlight where problems are likely to occur and help delays to be mitigated.”

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