

RESIDENTS' ANGER OVER A20 QUEUING PROJECT

Traffic noise nightmare keeps us awake for hours

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Members of two communities vividly described the maddening effects of Dover's traffic queuing system.

Aycliffe families in Dover say they have had to listen to lorry horns blasting day and night because of the Traffic Assessment Project (TAP).

And neighbours in Capel-le-Ferne have lorries thundering through the B2011 when truckers use it as a rat run.

Details were revealed after Dover MP Charlie Elphicke held a public meeting at Aycliffe Church Centre on Friday evening. More than 60 residents attended, leading to standing room only.

Trevor Osborne, of Old Folkestone Road, Aycliffe, said afterwards: "There is the noise of beeping, tooting and revving-up of engines at night time.

"Some nights it's not just a toot-toot. Drivers sit there with their hand on the horn for two or three minutes sometimes, and their horns are loud."

Truckers make the noise when they are held up by traffic lights used for the TAP to stop too many vehicles, especially lorries, swamping central Dover.

Lorries are held on the neighbouring A20, as little as 20 yards from the Aycliffe estate.

Meanwhile, Bruce Knight-Smith, of New Dover Road, Capel-le-Ferne, told of his village being used as a rat run when lorries try to avoid the TAP.

He said: "It's been horrendous. For the last three months we've been waking up at 2.30 every morning and been unable to get to sleep."



Lorries queued up on the A20 near Aycliffe, Dover, during the Dover TAP

Picture: Roger Golding

Mr Knight-Smith had told the meeting: "The traffic going through our village is like thunder. It's horrific. Why is there no control?"

Other Capel-le-Ferne residents told of 40-tonne lorries "hurtling down" their main road.

Parish clerk Maureen Leppard said she had repeatedly written to Highways England about the problem and parish council chairman Keith Pilcher said that Capel had been "split in two" by the TAP.

The meeting heard that Alkham Valley Road and Folkestone Road at Maxton and central Dover were also being used as rat-runs.

Simon Jones, regional director for Highways England, said his agency and the Port of Dover were looking to redirect trucks onto the A2/M2 rather than M20/A20. A signage system would be used all the way back to the M25 but there would have to be liaising with Kent Highways, he said.

Highways England had been called on by Aycliffe residents to move the TAP lights further back from their estate.

But it had refused, saying that



Aycliffe resident Trevor Osborne

would lead to tailbacks going into the Round Hill Tunnels at Folkestone.

Aycliffe resident Gary Dodd challenged this, showing a photograph of a traffic queue allowed to build up in the coastbound tunnel during Operation Stack.

Mr Jones, said that there needed to be a buffer zone for traffic before it went from 70mph to a 40mph zone with a possible queue. He said that the TAP had been used 42 times this year and only once overnight, on May 27, and its use meant less need for Operation Stack.



Capel-le-Ferne resident Bruce Knight-Smith

£85M SPENT ON PORT PARKING

The problem of the Dover TAP has been eased by more space being provided for lorries in the Port of Dover.

Emma Ward, general manager for security and safety, said the harbour board had invested £85 million in the last couple of years to create extra room for lorries inside the port.

She said: "Since then the TAP has been reduced from five times a week to two. With the development of the Dover Western Dock regeneration project there will be more room for lorries to wait."

The meeting had also heard of the problem of foreign lorry drivers breaking the 40mph limit and avoiding paying fines by escaping back to the Continent. Mr Jones said that efforts were being made to trace those drivers through their companies.

Insp Ian Swallow said that British police lacked the powers to give these drivers on-the-spot fines like they do in France. He said that Kent



MP Charlie Elphicke and Ray Williams

Police would support tougher legislation but rogue lorry drivers could be brought to heel through roadworthiness checks. Mr Elphicke suggested another meeting should be held in September. He said three strands now needed to be followed up.

Firstly, looking as to whether the TAP traffic lights should be moved further back; secondly, aiming for stronger powers to fine offending foreign lorry drivers; and thirdly, preventing places such as Capel being used as rat runs.

The meeting heard Highways England had installed a gate on the Aycliffe estate entrance to stop lorries wandering in. Others present included Dover council chief executive Nadeem Aziz and the meeting was co-chaired by Ray Williams, of the Aycliffe Residents' Forum.



Insp Ian Swallow

'National 70mph limit will be restored later this summer'

Nearly 30 new signs are being installed to vary the speed limit on the A20 when Dover TAP is not used.

Highways England says that 29 permanent electronic signs are being put up to allow the limit to go up to the usual 70mph when the traffic restriction is not in place. They will be up and running later this summer.

The limit has been permanently at 40mph between Dover and Folkestone since the TAP was brought in, causing complaints that traffic is being made to go artificially slowly.

But to allow the national speed limit to be re-instated ahead of the summer holiday period, temporary rotating signs will be installed while work continues to install the permanent electronic signs.

Simon Jones, regional director for Highways England, said: "We

know that restoring the national speed limit on the A20 is a priority for the many thousands of commuters, hauliers, holiday-makers and local people who depend on this vital road every day, and we are working hard to make it happen.

"Since we started construction in May we have already laid seven miles of cabling and dug 25 trenches under the A20. Now it is time to install these new signs and get them working."

Since April 2015, traffic lights have been in place at the end of the A20 dual carriageway near Dover for the TAP. Highways England says that the controversial 40mph speed limit was put in place for safety.

The lights have reduced congestion in Dover town centre and helped air quality, it added.

The lights have been used over 200 times to keep traffic flowing

through Dover town centre.

The work also involves 10 miles of ducting and more than seven miles of cabling have been installed to support the new signs. Three new weather stations are being added as well as four fog signs to enhance the information provided to drivers.

Barbara Buczek, Port of Dover director of corporate development, said: "The A20 Dover approach is a crucial artery that gives businesses, consumers and holidaymakers access to international markets, goods and destinations through one of Europe's busiest ports.

"Being able to hold lorries on the A20 during peak traffic periods helped facilitate UK trade worth £119 billion last year."

The 40mph limit is in place for Dover-bound traffic between the Round Hill Tunnels at Folkestone and Aycliffe.

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