

End of EU Transition: How ready are we? Webinar discussion

On the 11th December 2020, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership hosted a public webinar discussion on what the South East is doing to prepare for the end of the UK Transition.

The webinar provided an opportunity for businesses to hear from key South East organisations, local Chambers of commerce and Local Authorities about how the South East is preparing its business community for the coming changes on the 1st January 2021. If you weren't able to join the discussion, you can [watch it back on the SELEP website](#).

Main points raised by speakers and subsequent discussions are set out below:

[Listen from: 3.48](#) **Doug Bannister, CEO of the Port of Dover**

- Overall trade resilience beyond port capacity: operating model, vessels, deployment and frequencies to build an overall profile on trade resilience
- Port of Dover's key assets, including its short crossing, resilience and track record of managing through disruption, effectively dealing with challenges and clearing backlog quickly

[Listen from: 6.25](#) **Trevor Scott, managing director of Simarco Logistics**

- Exports
 - High level of engagement from businesses trying to understand complexities
 - Companies are beginning to 'understand the new normal' in terms of commercial paperwork
 - Outstanding issues that need clarity including costs – duties, import VAT in the EU, etc.
- Imports:
 - Less pressing issues due to 6-months postponed VAT and light-touch checks at borders
 - No-deal scenario, with goods held up at warehouses
 - Current lack of clarity on Northern Ireland

[Listen from: 10.45](#) **Dr Charles Trotman, Senior Business and Economics Advisor for Country Land and Business Association**

- Food supply chain; labour supply and the migrant labour force; pressures that will be felt by agriculture and farmers

[Listen from: 13.44](#) **Cllr Trevor Bartlett, Leader of Dover District Council**

- Keep Dover Clear
- Additional local traffic control powers
- Work on M2, A2, A256 and A20, as well as improvements to prevent accidents at hotspots in Dover

[Listen from: 16.10](#) **Cllr Roger Gough, Leader of Kent County Council**

- Kent's main concerns: keep traffic moving, ensure business can continue and that residents and businesses can go about their lives without significant disruption after 31 Dec 2020
- Three levels of defence: trader/haulier readiness; support systems in place, such as Check an HGV is Ready to Cross the Border system and the Kent Access Permit; and traffic management
- Operation Fennel, designed to ensure that by a series of escalated steps, we can manage with some 7,000 HGVs being held across Kent

[Listen from: 22.50](#) **Ana Christie, CEO of Sussex Chambers of Commerce**

- Estimated declarations increase from 55 million to 300 million for businesses that import and export
- Training and shortage for customs agents



Further discussion points:

- Possibility of an Austria-type deal
- Businesses stockpiling and shortage of containers and pallets
- Shortage of hauliers and impact of current 30% increase in traffic on the roads
- Maintaining fluidity
- Operation Stack
- Main sectors impacted, both positively and negatively including food and drink; digital and technology; and manufacturing

Asks and actions of SELEP:



Get greater clarity from Government on systems that need to be ready and enabled to ensure a smoother transition



Keep businesses up to speed as new decisions are being made during the first quarter of 2021



Alert Government to where the real problems are occurring over the first and second quarters of 2021, and suggest quick solutions



Hold further panel discussions for businesses in 2021



Continue Ministerial Roundtables with MPs - focusing on the outcomes of the EU Transition

