

Government secures critical freight flows as UK nears end of transition period

Vital medical supplies and other critical goods will continue to be smoothly delivered into the UK whatever the outcome of negotiations with the EU, thanks to multi-million-pound Government contracts announced today (Tuesday, 13 October 2020).

The Government has signed agreements with four ferry operators to provide capacity equivalent to over 3,000 HGVs per week, mitigating the risk of disruption as the UK and EU adjust to new border processes at the end of the transition period.

The contracts with Brittany Ferries, DFDS, P&O and Stena, collectively worth £77.6 million, will focus on nine routes serving eight ports in areas less likely to experience disruption. These include Felixstowe, Harwich, Hull, Newhaven, Poole, Portsmouth, Teesport and Tilbury.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

“As the transition period comes to an end, we are putting the necessary measures in place to safeguard the smooth and successful flow of freight.

“Securing these contracts ensures that irrespective of the outcome of the negotiations, lifesaving medical supplies and other critical goods can continue to enter the UK from the moment we leave the EU.”

The contracts will be in place for up to six months after the end of the transition period.

Contracts were awarded through the successful use of the Government’s Freight Capacity Framework, which sees a shortlist of experienced freight operators bid for contracts.

The framework, introduced in 2019, has guaranteed a much faster and more efficient procurement process over its four-year life. Should the contracts not be required, termination costs would reflect a fraction of the full contract amount.

Routes out of Dover and Folkestone across the short Strait remain a vital corridor for trade between the UK and mainland Europe. These routes have played a key role this year in maintaining the flow of critical goods into the country throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Government continues to work with key local stakeholders and industry to prepare for the end of the transition period.