



The Road Haulage Association

25 January 2019

Dear Member of Parliament,

The Road Haulage Association represents lorry operators who have responsibility for the movement of goods by road. Members range from owner-operators with a single vehicle to those with fleets in excess of 2,000 vehicles. The Association has over 7,200 operators in membership who between them account for 250,000 UK-registered heavy goods vehicles. Our members are at the coalface of the supply chain and we understand its vulnerabilities.

We understand what a 29 March exit from the EU entails and the overwhelming deficiencies of the preparations for our area of the supply chain. We have been engaging across government with the Department for Transport, HM Treasury, HMRC, DExEU and others since late 2016.

For most of that time and across all departments, there has been a complacent failure to understand the importance of the road haulage sector and the scale of what will occur in the event of an uncontrolled no-deal exit from the EU.

Do not believe reassurances that preparations are advanced and well developed. We can categorically say that this is not the case. If preparations for customs and other border tasks were under control we would not be needing massive holding areas for lorries and would not need new backup ferry services. Eleven thousand vehicles a day use the Dover Straight – an essential business and supply chain lifeline between the UK and the continent. Even a two-minute customs check at Dover would create a 20-mile traffic jam within a matter of minutes and no amount of planning at other smaller ports or at Manston Airport can mitigate this fact.

A transition period gives time for vital new processes and systems to be put in place across the supply chain such as efficient new border technology to avoid disastrous queues at Channel and North Sea ports and across the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

For the good of the country you must find a way to avoid the 29 March cliff edge exit. The current withdrawal agreement is a solution which will keep supermarkets, construction, schools, hospitals, the motor industry and other sectors operational. However, there are other ways too. If not this agreement then you must secure an alternative that retains frictionless trade and borders whether it is an extension of Article 50 or simply not proceeding with Brexit.

The RHA has never taken a political view on Brexit but the Association's board of directors is clear that any arrangement that includes a transition period is essential to avoid unparalleled damage to the supply chain and as a result the people and businesses of the UK.

Any outcome delivered by Parliament that fails to deliver this would be irresponsible and so we urge you to ensure that a 29 March exit from the EU without a transition is avoided.

The road-based supply chain in the UK and the EU are not ready and cannot be ready by that date. This is not laziness on the part of the businesses concerned, it is a result of key decisions not being taken by authorities that have made it impossible for these businesses to prepare.

Yours sincerely

Richard Burnett
Chief Executive

Andrew Howard
National Chairman

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