Dear Chair,

Update on DfT’s Implementation of EU Exit

I am writing ahead of the hearing on 13 February to update the Committee on the progress of our EU Exit preparations since I last wrote on 21 December.

We have continued to make significant progress on our EU Exit planning and have updated our governance arrangements to reflect our current operational focus on ‘no deal’ planning. A Delivery Group chaired by the Director General for International, Security and Environment and attended by Director Generals and Directors now meets twice weekly to oversee our preparations and swiftly address any issues affecting the programme. In terms of the delivery of our 17 contingency projects, key achievements include: the Post Office started issuing International Driving Permits (IDPs) on 1 February; the window for applications for road haulage permits closed in late January and applicants heard this week whether they will receive a permit; vehicle manufacturers have started the application process for UK vehicle type approvals, with current applications to the Vehicle Certification Agency representing 99% of new car registrations; and we have laid 51 Statutory Instruments out of the 66 that make up our EU Exit programme.

In late December the European Commission published further guidance on ‘no deal’ planning accompanied by a number of legislative proposals, including three relating to aspects of transport: air services, aviation safety and road haulage. If adopted, these would maintain basic connectivity for aviation and road haulage for a limited time. The first discussions have taken place in Council Working Groups and the European Parliament’s Committees and we are monitoring developments closely. In parallel, we have stepped up our bilateral contacts with Member States so that we can put in place the necessary bilateral arrangements for roads and aviation if the legislative proposals cannot be adopted in time.

Since I last wrote further progress has been made on Operation Brock. The key infrastructure elements on the M20 and M26 are complete, and the barrier on the
M20 will be ready for deployment from mid-March. A live test of the route from Manston airfield to the Port of Dover took place on 7 January and provided sufficient assurance of the flow rates from Manston to Dover. A table top exercise involving 180 local stakeholders took place on 10 January to test the phasing and compliance strategy. The Operational Plan has now been agreed by the Kent Resilience Forum. A Special Development Order for the use of Manston Airport was laid on 23 January, which will extend the level of use and the facilities that can be provided at the site.

The Department is continuing to work on contingency arrangements to ensure the continued flow of priority goods through ports in the event of the UK leaving the EU without a deal. The NAO’s memorandum sets out how we have let contracts to secure ferry capacity for displaced flows across the Dover straits to provide essential capacity for the highest priority goods, including medical supplies.

We continue to work closely with business and other transport stakeholders to ensure that they and their customers are prepared for the UK’s exit from the EU. We have developed two audience-based communications campaigns – one for business and one for citizens. As part of the business strand, we have successfully delivered the first phase of our haulage campaign in partnership with 25 key industry stakeholders to encourage hauliers to apply for ECMT permits, ensuring the haulage industry is prepared for a ‘no deal’ scenario. This campaign is now entering phase two, which will focus on trailer registration and also potential ‘no deal’ actions, such as the need for IDPs and Green Cards when driving in the EU. The citizens campaign supports the overarching HMG Public Information Campaign that ensures UK nationals have all the information and advice they need to continue to plan and book their travel to Europe, including the need for IDPs and Green Cards.

We also continue to work closely with other government departments including HMRC and the Border Delivery Group, Defra, the Home Office, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and their Posts to ensure business and travellers both in the UK and Europe have all the information they require. Since my last letter to the Committee on 21 December 2018 we have continued our series of roundtables with transport stakeholders. In January alone we have had roundtable meetings covering aviation, road haulage, private motoring and rail. The Secretary of State and Maritime Minister have also had a series of conversations with major maritime stakeholders and a further roundtable including businesses in this sector is scheduled for early February.

I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Yours sincerely,

Bernadette Kelly CB  
Permanent Secretary