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PRESS RELEASE

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REAL PROGRESS ON ENDING TRAFFIC CHAOS

Sandwich is starting to see real progress on ending the traffic chaos it has endured for so long – that's the message coming out of a high-level meeting held today at the Guildhall.

The Traffic Summit, convened and hosted by Craig Mackinlay MP, was attended by stakeholders able to make a difference, including senior representatives of the Town, District and County Councils; Sandwich Town Team; Kent Police; Kent Fire & Rescue; Stagecoach; Discovery Park; business leaders, and heritage interest groups.

Welcoming everyone attending, Mr Mackinlay emphasised that Sandwich had the best chance in a generation to solve its serious traffic problems and the risk they pose to the town's people and its historic buildings – and that he, and local residents, wanted to see results in 2016.

Major steps forward discussed at the meeting and coming soon include:

- The introduction of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order restricting HGV access to Sandwich (except for deliveries and emergency services), and gateways at each entrance to the town marking where the 7.5 tonne weight restriction starts - these will be put in place in April or May 2016, if not sooner;
- Measures at Breezy Corner to protect pedestrians and buildings, to be implemented (subject to public consultation) in autumn 2016 – this is to allow time for plans to be agreed by key road users;
- Consultants to be appointed within the next fortnight to look at the town's traffic management needs holistically, and as a priority to start looking with Kent County Council Highways at traffic calming in New Street, Moat Sole, Strand Street and High Street, to see if immediate measures should be taken or if they should form part of a wider town plan, and
- A high-level meeting to take place in April between representatives of Dover District Council and Sandwich Town Council with the Leader of Kent County Council to discuss the Highways depot on Ash Road.

Public consultation will be a key part of all this work, so that local residents and businesses can have real influence in shaping sustainable solutions to Sandwich's traffic crisis.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Sandwich, Cllr Paul Graeme, said: "Sandwich Town Council has delivered on its promise to agree stages 1 and 2 of the traffic consultancy and to allocate money from developer contributions to get this work done. I'm immensely grateful to Craig Mackinlay MP, Dover District Council and Kent County Council for their support. With their backing, engagement from all key stakeholders and involvement of local people, we're on track to solve our town's traffic problems once and for all".

Craig Mackinlay MP said: "Through these Sandwich Traffic Summits we have found a framework for joint working with key partners which is clearly a model for resolving what hitherto were seemingly insoluble problems. As Historic England have said today, this is a model that other communities across the country will want to study as a means of dealing with their own traffic challenges.

"We have heard from KCC today of the concrete steps that are now being taken to restrict HGVs coming into the town and implementing measures to deal with the unacceptable situation at Breezy Corner. So by May, residents will see things are happening and I will remain on top of this to ensure it does."

MJ Holloway, Dover District Councillor for Sandwich who has coordinated the last four Traffic Sandwich Summits, and promoted the KCC/DDC/STC partnership on traffic, said: "The hard work in getting everyone to work jointly with the common aim to improve Sandwich's environment and prosperity is now about to pay off. I hope that over the coming months, residents will engage proactively and constructively with KCC, STC, and the Consultants to ensure that as a community we make the right decisions – this is the best chance we'll have in a generation to sort out Sandwich's traffic bedlam once and for all".

Richard Ralph, Chairman of Sandwich Town Team, said: "After today's traffic summit I am beginning to believe that solutions to the town's traffic problems are finally within grasp. It has been a long and at times difficult process, but we are getting there. None of this would have been achievable without the extraordinary cooperation of all the parties involved, individual and corporate, public and private, and indeed without the support of so many residents of Sandwich. We owe all our partners a great debt of gratitude. In the short term, it will be a huge achievement if we can finally put an end to the besieging of the town, especially properties around Breezy Corner, by enormous HGVs which have no business coming through Sandwich. And we pin great hope on the traffic management consultancy to suggest imaginative longer term solutions. Difficult decisions no doubt still lie ahead, but with goodwill and a spirit of compromise, we shall succeed".

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