

24-hour border crossing begins

By STEVE BALL

CONTAINER trucks are on a roll. For the first time last night, they crossed the border round-the-clock.

But the impact of noise and traffic – how many residents would be disturbed by the vehicles driving past their homes – is yet to be determined.

The Highways Department said it had built noise barriers to protect residents at three locations near the border.

But no noise impact assessment had been done for the route from the Lok Ma Chau crossing to the container port in Kwai Chung.

Sha Tin District Board chairman Choy Kan-pui said he had been kept in the dark: "It has come as a surprise. The Government should have informed us how much traffic they are expecting. We asked for the statistics, but they have not given them to us."

The department also said it did not know what the noise implications would be if truck drivers used the crossing at full capacity.

Up to 240 trucks were expected to pass through the checkpoint every hour – against more than 1,500 during peak rush hours.

Alex Chan, an engineer in the Highways Department's New Territories Region consultants management office, said: "We don't know how many drivers will go through Sha Tin. We don't have those exact figures, and we need to conduct some interviews with the drivers in the coming weeks."

Mr Chan said a noise impact assessment conducted last year by Binnie Consultants had recommended that noise barriers be built on the New Territories Circular Road near Chuk Yuen Tsuen, on San Sham Road near the border crossing and on a flyover near the Choi Yuen Estate in Sheung Shui.

All those barriers had been built, he said. "The Choi Yuen Estate is the most problematic area."