



## Tree Strategy Consultation Response

**Thames Crossing Action Group** represents thousands of people who are strongly opposed to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing. We object to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing for many different reasons and do not consider the project to be in any way fit for purpose.

Further details of our objections can be found on our website  
[www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com](http://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com).

We are responding to this Tree Strategy Consultation as we believe more needs to be done to save and protect trees in this country.

We are disgusted and angered by Highways England's blatant disregard for the damage they are proposing with the proposed Lower Thames Crossing and all their other road projects.

Your consultation materials state that "The £640m Nature for Climate Fund announced in the March 2020 budget provides significant funding for tree planting...". When the Government is proposing spending £8.2bn or £27.4bn on the LTC and Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2) the proposed amount to be spent on tree planting is ludicrous inadequate.

The Government has pledged to be Carbon Net Zero something that will not be in any way possible if RIS2 progresses. Our response to the recent Transport Decarbonisation Plan Consultation can be found at <https://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/TCAG-Transport-Decarbonisation-Plan-Consultation-Response.pdf>. Please read it and accept it as part of this response, since trees are a major factor in decarbonisation.

We need a lot more trees to be planted throughout the country. And just as importantly we need to ensure that the trees we already have are saved and protected.

The proposed Lower Thames Crossing would destroy and impact many trees and woodlands, including some ancient woodland and veteran trees. This is totally unacceptable.

We have tried to find out more detail as to just how many trees would be impacted, but Highways England refuse to provide this information. They keep saying that this kind of information will be released within their Environmental Statement which won't be available to us until Development Consent Order (DCO) stage.

We do not feel it is fair or adequate that developers including Government companies like Highways England should be able to hide this kind of info away from the public until so late in the project timeline. LTC consultations have asked us, the public, for our opinions on how the LTC would impact the environment, yet when we ask for simple information such as how many trees would be impacted they refuse to provide the info.

We would ask that any Tree Strategy should include mandatory requirements on all developers, regardless of whether they are private or Government companies to have to declare this kind of info during consultation stages of projects to allow the public clear and informative materials by which they can make informed decisions on the environmental impacts of such projects.



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We would also ask that there be mandatory requirements for new tree planting for all developments. We feel that the amount of planting and the size of the trees planted should reflect the negative impacts of the project. The current practice of planting such small trees/whips is outdated and unacceptable.

There should also be mandatory requirement that any trees planted have to be well cared for, maintained, and protected for fixed periods of time, if not indefinitely. When developments are going to be in place forever, such as roads, railways, buildings etc then the negative impacts are not going anywhere, so any environmental mitigation tree planting such reflect the same.

We present the example of Thames Chase Community Forest which was planted as a form of mitigation when the M25 was built. Yet now with the proposed LTC some of this forest would be lost and impacted. This can in no way be considered acceptable. We also note that you refer to Thames Chase, in the Consultation Technical Annexe, as an example of the successful regeneration of derelict land to woodland. If you are so pleased and proud of this regeneration then why are the Government allowing Highways England to propose destroying/impacting it with the proposed Lower Thames Crossing?

Also at threat of destruction/impact from the proposed LTC are Shorne Wood, Brewers Wood, Brices Plantation, Ashenbank Wood, Cole Wood, Codham Hall Wood, Claylane Wood, Jeskyns Community Woodland in Kent, and Rainbow Wood, Ashen Shaw, Folkes Lane Woodland, Hobbs Hole, Frank Wood, The Wilderness in Essex.

The Ministerial Forward in your consultation document states "A Chinese proverb tell us: the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now. Never was this truer". Even more truer is the fact that it is ludicrous to consider destroying trees that have already been planted, especially those that are considerably established, and in some cases long ago enough to be considered ancient.

As well as planting more trees the Tree Strategy Plan must take this into account and ensure that with immediate effect trees are saved and protected.

There should also be no difference in protection of trees just because a development is considered a supposed Project of National Significance. Having a healthy environment and clean air to breath is of far more importance and significance to the Nation than any development ever could be.

Now more than ever the public identify how important our trees and the time we spend outdoors are. Not only due to climate emergency, but also for our own direct and immediate health and well-being. During the COVID-19 crisis more and more people have been spending time outdoors and appreciating the positive benefit that has on their lives and wellbeing. We need to ensure that instead of destroying the environment, with projects like the proposed LTC and other RIS2 projects, we are instead ensuring that we save, take care, and protect all of our trees and the environment in general.



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Trees and the environment need to be prioritised and rated of the utmost importance.

We do not feel that your proposed increase in tree cover in England from 10% to just 12% by 2050 is adequate. That's still less than a third of the European average.

We cannot allow things to continue as they are. We need more native trees being planted on a huge scale. We need to stop projects that will destroy trees immediately.

We can no longer rate the economic benefits of developments are more important than everything else.

We need a healthy environment; we need healthy and happy people. Anything else is a false economy. Businesses will suffer if people are too sick to work. Sick staff can't work. People not working don't have money to be spending. Sick people mean more financial pressure on health care. It doesn't matter how much money is being made, you can't sit and count it, or spend it if there is no clean air to breathe.

We need trees and plants to ensure the future of a healthy and habitable environment for us and wildlife to exist.

We need to stop development such as new road projects like the proposed LTC and other RIS2 projects immediately, and not allow destructive development to continue. We need a Tree Strategy to ensure that we are planting more trees, and saving and protecting the ones we already have, to help the environment and clean the air we breathe.

We would of course be happy to discuss any of the points raised in this response further should you wish, please do not hesitate to contact us.