

THAMES CROSSING ACTION GROUP

Dear TaxPayers Alliance

We are aware of your various campaigns, including your opposition to HS2 over serious concerns of the cost to British taxpayers. However, I'm afraid we are seriously concerned that you have been showing support towards the proposed Lower Thames Crossing. Please allow us to share our concerns with you.

The current predicted cost of the proposed LTC is £6.4-**8.2 billion of taxpayers' money**, and we all know that these large scale projects always run over budget too.

Allow us to break that down for you. The LTC is 14.3 miles long, so at a cost of £8.2bn this means that **the cost per mile of LTC would be nearly £573.5m per mile**. This is a lot **more expensive per mile than HS2, which is around £307m per mile** of track.

The figures above also do not take into account **other associated costs that are being hidden away, which we consider to be a false economy**, and an attempt by HE to make the LTC benefit cost ratio appear better than it actually is.

For instance, the current Blue Bell Hill Improvements consultation clearly states that the improvements are needed as a direct result of the proposed LTC.¹ At this stage the scheme is anticipated to cost around £142m.

There is also the matter of the Rest and Service Area and Tilbury Link Road, both of which have been removed from the LTC project, but are still being discussed as stand-alone projects. (*The Tilbury Link Rd even features in RIS3 as a pipeline project*).

Not to mention the fact we have identified bottlenecks within the proposed LTC design which would no doubt need additional upgrades if the LTC goes ahead and our predictions are proven to be correct. Is this also an attempt by HE to future proof their own job security with more future projects?

Various local authorities have spoken up publicly over serious concerns of the negative impact that the proposed LTC would have in the impacted areas, including Thurrock² and Brentwood³.

This clearly shows that HE are misleading people over the true benefit cost ratio of the proposed LTC, and that current predicted cost is ludicrously high.

¹ <https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/A229BluebellHill/consultationHome>

² <https://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com/impacts-to-thurrock/>

³ <https://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com/brentwood-borough-councils-concerns-over-ltc/>

This is without even taking into account the additional cost to the NHS for healthcare as a result in air pollution related illnesses in the impacted areas. The proposed route creates a toxic triangle with the A2/M2 along the bottom, and the M25 and LTC up each side.

The cost to agriculture with many farms being negatively impacted by LTC, including loss of highest level Grade 1 land. Or the cost to the Environment with the loss of greenbelt, countryside, both regular and ancient woodland and trees, and harm to wildlife and habitat.

Yet with the predicted **LTC cost now having risen to £8.2bn** HE have been decidedly quiet about the predicted **economic benefits, which were last estimated to be around £8bn**. To date HE have refused to provide us with a current figure for predicted economic benefit.

You may also find our response to the recent Spending Review consultation of interest⁴

In addition consider the following points that show that **the proposed LTC is not fit for purpose**.

The original remit for a new river crossing was to solve the problems that are suffered due to the Dartford Crossing. However, Highways England's own figures prove that the Dartford Crossing would still be over capacity even if LTC goes ahead.⁵

Also, before he resigned in July 2019, Tim Jones LTC Project Director, stated numerous times publicly that the proposed LTC would not solve all the problems we suffer with due to the Dartford Crossing.⁶

Many are not aware of the fact that Highways England have not taken into account how traffic would migrate between the two crossings when there is an incident, and that there are not adequate connections in place. This will of course create absolute chaos, congestion and more pollution in areas where pollution levels are already illegally high.

On the topic of pollution, and with the Environmental Bill being debated, and speculation that the UK should enshrine World Health Organisation (WHO) standards on PM2.5 into law, we would also point out that there is evidence that the whole proposed LTC route would fail against WHO standards for PM2.5.⁷ There are also serious concerns over the significant increase in carbon emissions caused by LTC, which would hinder the UK from being able to meet its commitment to the Paris Agreement and to net-zero emissions by 2050.⁸

HE have also not taken into account other major developments in the area when planning the proposed LTC. Projects such as the London Resort theme park in Kent, which is an NSIP that would introduce a lot more new traffic to the area, not considered in LTC planning. As well as the Local Plans in the areas surrounding the proposed LTC, which under Government guidelines means tens of thousands of new homes, and supporting infrastructure. Not to mention many other developments that are proposed. To be spending such extortionate amounts of taxpayers money on the proposed LTC whilst knowing that it is not fit for purpose and will still leave everyone suffering with even more congestion and pollution that the proposed LTC would create simply should not be allowed.

⁴ <https://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com/comprehensive-spending-review-response/>

⁵ <https://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com/lower-thames-crossing-is-not-fit-for-purpose/>

⁶ <https://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com/it-wont-solve-dartford-crossing-issues/>

⁷ <https://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com/ltc-toxic-triangle/>

⁸ <https://transportactionnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/TAN-response-to-LTC-2020-consultation-web.pdf>

Of course we are aware of the argument and need for the problems we all suffer with due to the Dartford Crossing to be solved, but the proposed LTC is not it. That said we also believe that with the huge changes in behaviours as a result of COVID-19 which should also be taken into account before billions of pounds of taxpayers money is spent.

An alternative which we prefer, if a new crossing has to go ahead, would be Option A14. A long tunnel from around junction 2 on the M25 through to between J30/29. It would finally complete the M25 as a true motorway orbital, filling in the current gap of the A282, the problem that HE were originally tasked to solve. If built to modern standards there would be no need to stop traffic every 15-20 mins to escort hazardous vehicles as is currently the case at the Dartford Tunnels. This route would take all the national traffic, leaving the current crossing for local traffic. This route would be far less destructive, and also being a long tunnel would mean air could be filtered which would also result in improved air quality.

Despite the fact that in 2013 there was more support for a crossing at location A, the only route options that went to public consultation in 2016 were variants of Option C⁹, of which we have ended up with C3. The whole consultation process has been severely inadequate and flawed, which is a serious concern.

We hope that the above info highlights to you the fact that **ultimately the proposed Lower Thames Crossing would create a toxic triangle that destroys homes, greenbelt, ancient woodland, grade 1 agricultural land, wildlife habitats, communities and much more, all at a huge cost to British taxpayers. We the residents who will be impacted by the proposed LTC, and indeed all British taxpayers whose money would be spent on this ludicrous and unfit for purpose crossing deserve better.**

Thank you for your time and consideration, we would welcome your comments, and hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards

Laura Blake
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⁹ <https://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com/how-the-preferred-route-was-chosen/>