

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

## Lower Thames Crossing Task Force

The meeting will be held at **6.00 pm** on **15 March 2021**

Due to government guidance regarding the COVID-19 virus, members of the press and public will not be able to attend the meeting of Lower Thames Crossing Task Force on 15 March 2021. The meeting will be available to watch live at [www.thurrock.gov.uk/webcast](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/webcast)

### Membership:

Councillors Fraser Massey (Chair), Gerard Rice (Deputy Chair), Luke Spillman, John Allen, Andrew Jefferies, Sara Muldowney, Terry Piccolo and Sue Shinnick

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### Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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**1 Apologies for Absence**

**2 Minutes**

**5 - 18**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force meeting held on 15 February 2021.

**3 Items of Urgent Business**

To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**4 Declaration of Interests**

**5 Environmental Impact Assessment Update**

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**Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:**

Please contact Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to [direct.democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:direct.democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)

Agenda published on: **5 March 2021**

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## DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

### Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

### When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



**Does the business to be transacted at the meeting**

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

**any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?**

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

**What is a Non-Pecuniary interest?** – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

### **Pecuniary**

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

**Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:**

- **Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;**
- **Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and**
- **leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon**

**If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps**

### **Non- pecuniary**

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



**You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.**

## Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
  - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
  - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
  - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together
2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
  - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
  - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
  - Fewer public buildings with better services
3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
  - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
  - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
  - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force held on 15 February 2021 at 6.00 pm

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**Present:** Councillors Fraser Massey (Chair), Gerard Rice (Deputy Chair), Luke Spillman, John Allen, Sara Muldowney and Sue Shinnick

**Apologies:** Councillors Andrew Jefferies; Peter Ward, Business Representative; and Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director LTC.

**In attendance:** Steve Plumb, Ecology and Biodiversity Officer  
Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Laura Blake, Thames Crossing Action Group Representative  
Westley Mercer, Thurrock Business Board Representative  
Robert Quick, Resident Representative

Chris Stratford, Senior Consultant

Highways England Representatives:  
Gary Hodge – Technical Lead  
Claire Donnelly – Lead Architect  
Steve Roberts – Technical Director  
Poulomee Basu – Stakeholder Engagement (Local Authorities)  
Phil Stanier – Stakeholder Engagement (LTC)  
Andrew Kay – Landscape Architect  
Ben Craggs – Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Lead

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Before the start of the meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded, with the video recording to be made available on the Council's website.

### **41. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew Jefferies; Peter Ward, Thurrock Business Representative; and Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director LTC.

### **42. Minutes**

The minutes of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Task Force meeting held on 18 January 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

### **43. Items of Urgent Business**

The Chair stated that he had agreed to one item of urgent business, and explained that Highways England (HE) would be giving a presentation on landscape design, green infrastructure, and walkers; cyclists; and horse-riders (WCH). The HE Lead Architect began the presentation and explained that it would cover the summary principles of the project; the landscape integration of the proposals; and the walking, cycling and equestrian proposals in Ockendon, the A13 junction, and the Chadwell Link. She stated that the proposals outlined in the presentation were those that had been submitted at the last iteration of the Development Consent Order (DCO) submission, and covered 2300 hectares both north and south of the river, including ancient woodland such as Rainbow Shaw in Chadwell St Mary. She explained that due to the current proposals part of Low Street Pit would be lost, including some invertebrates, but described how this would be mitigated against.

The HE Lead Architect then explained that habitats associated with arable land, and grassland could be impacted by the scheme, such as through direct loss, habitat degradation, and fragmentation. She stated that HE would create habitats to replace those which would be lost and the replacements would often be better than the current habitat. She stated that HE would be replacing arable land with species-rich grassland and woodland, which would strengthen the existing links and create new habitats. She added that HE would be following the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) guidance when moving flora and fauna to new habitats, and would create green corridors where necessary. The HE Lead Architect commented that there were approximately 100 species in Thurrock, including some bats, badgers and great crested newts, which were protected species whose habitats would need offsetting with specific mitigation. She explained that Thurrock would see a net overall gain of 15% in habitat, and double the woodland lost through the scheme would be newly created. She explained that approximately 400 hectares would be converted from arable farmland to natural habitats and hedgerows, as well as increasing the number of watercourses and wildlife ponds. The HE Lead Architect added that a new Benefits Steering Group had been created covering legacy, which included Thurrock Council and other local authorities, to discuss developing wildlife projects and habitat enforcement. She stated that HE and the LTC team were committed to developing £1million of project funding for wildlife, including £250,000 to the Essex Wildlife Trust to increase the water vole population through control of the mink population.

The HE Lead Architect then discussed tree planting and outlined that the tree palette would mostly be native, broad-leaf woodland in Thurrock, including beech, hornbeam and nurse species, which were faster growing to increase screening, whilst oak and other trees grew more slowly. She stated that the tree palette needed to be submitted at DCO within the Design Principles and provided a selection of potential trees and woodland that would be planted. She explained that the final mix and density would be decided after DCO grant and would be modified based on ground conditions and existing stock. She also explained that at certain important sites, such as Rainbow Shaw, soil salvage would be undertaken to translocate species such as rhizomes, fungi,



and the seed bank, and help to establish the eco-system. She stated that to the north of the river up to approximately 385,000 trees would be planted, although some of these would not survive into adulthood.

The HE Lead Architect then explained that principles of landscape integration, such as through false cutting and earth bunds on both sides of the road to provide a visual and acoustic screen. She explained that these measures were being used across the route, including when the route was in an actual cutting or on an embankment. She explained that one of the main principles of integrating landscape structures was to ensure there were no linear features, such as fences on top of earth bunds, which would draw the eye. She explained that architects worked with the local geology and planting to ensure landscape integration, including by slackening the earth bund slope and planting where appropriate to disguise the route alignment. She explained that some parts of the route, for example the Mardyke Viaduct, would not be able to have earth bunds as this would reduce flood storage on the fen, but the team could use tree planting or fences as an alternative. She commented that earth bund slopes could be covered in meadowland or species-rich grassland where appropriate to reduce linear features and follow existing topography.

The HE Lead Architect then explained the elements that influenced the landscape integration proposals. She began by describing the engineering requirements and constraints on landscape integration, such as existing utilities, infrastructure, bridges, access roads and attenuation ponds. She described the next influence element, which was proposed environmental mitigation, such as noise barriers, ecology, and flood plains which also had an impact on the level of landscape integration that could take place. She explained that the existing landscape also had an influence, as any landscape integration had to be appropriate to the local context and tailored to the route. She stated that HE had undertaken a Green Infrastructure Study with local stakeholders, which helped to identify current routes used by WCHs and identified any potential new routes. She stated that the objective of the study had been to understand existing Public Rights of Way, areas of heritage, and woodland, and as part of this had spoken to sixteen stakeholder groups and local authorities to discuss upcoming projects. She described that the third stage of the study would be to incorporate WCH proposals into the route, including any proposals which would be directly affected by the LTC. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that Thurrock had been consulted on the Green Infrastructure Study in 2018 and had helped HE to identify existing ecology and WCH projects. He added that the LTC team had liaised with stakeholders such as the Essex Wildlife Trust and the RSPB as part of this study. He felt that the main issue with the study had been that it had been ecologically led, and did not focus on the wider aspects of green infrastructure, such as public health and increasing exercise levels across Thurrock. He felt that the Green Infrastructure Study needed to be updated with more relevant projects added, and he and the Senior Consultant were working with HE on this deficiency.

The HE Lead Architect then moved on and explained that a WCH Assessment had been carried out, which had looked at the process,

objectives and current capabilities from current census data of WCH across Thurrock. She described how the LTC team had looked at current WCH routes that would potentially be severed by the scheme, which would be combined with public consultation responses and assessed. She stated that there were currently sixty WCH projects in Thurrock that needed to be analysed. She commented that the key conclusions of this assessment had been that north of the A13, WCH users were often covering large, inter-urban distances as part of their leisure routines, but were not often commuting to work in this way. She stated that therefore the LTC team had focussed on WCH routes that allowed residents to access the countryside and improve leisure facilities. She then explained that south of the A13, WCH users were often commuting east to west from East Tilbury and Linford into Chadwell St Mary and Grays, and were therefore more focussed on the commuter WCH routes. She explained that further detail on the WCH routes, such as surfacing and access control would be captured at DCO submission. She stated that 22km of WCH routes would be upgraded or entirely new in Thurrock, for example footpaths would be upgraded to bridleways and 9km of new commuter roadside tracks would be installed to create a more coherent route network. She summarised and stated that key documents would be reviewing and assessing the existing character of WCH routes, and a tailored approach to mitigation would be undertaken.

The HE Lead Architect then moved onto the Ockendon Link and described how the current character was a rolling landscape of low ridges, the railway line and the M25, as well as arable farmland, hedgerows and small woodland. She added that there were also small dispersed settlements and the landfill site. She explained that the HE team had undertaken a survey of bat roosts in this area, and had found a large bat roost in Benton Farm, which would be need to be mitigated and offset to ensure that the bats migratory routes were not severed. She added that the Thurrock green infrastructure project, the Green Grid, was also already underway to connect Belhus Park, Little Belhus Park and Thames Chase Forest Centre, which would include a new green route and a forest circle route. She stated that the route alignment had identified that the LTC could potentially sever the forest circle and green route, which would need to be mitigated against. She added that the environments of the current forest circle and green routes were not of the best quality, for example there were no footpaths along North Road, which led to increased numbers of collisions between cars and WCH users. She added that there was also not a north-south cycle route, for example Dennises Road went under the M25, but did not include a WCH route. She explained that the LTC team had identified these gaps in WCH routes and were working to link the routes in the future. She added that the team were currently working out how much benefit the new, proposed WCH routes would have for residents, such as decreased journey times and improved accessibility to areas such as the station, doctor's surgery and areas of employment. She felt that the LTC could improve WCH links across the borough, which would have a benefit to WCH users and a broader cross-section of residents.

The HE Lead Architect then explained that these proposals had been included in the last iteration of the DCO submission, including a WCH track along

Dennis Road to link North Ockendon with Thames Chase Forest Centre. She added that the LTC team were also in discussions regarding upgrading the current level crossing with an overbridge to improve the safety for residents wishing to access the Thames Chase Forest Centre. She felt that with these improvements residents would be able to complete the forest circle route, and improve access to services and the countryside. She then described the importance of North Road, for WCH users, green infrastructure links, and the local bat population, and the LTC team were therefore proposing a green bridge for North Road. She stated that the road would be maintained and a segregated route to the east of North Road would be added for WCH users, as well as planting on either side to increase the habitat for bats and badgers, who would move across North Road. She described how the proposal was based on the Weymouth Relief Green Bridge, which had set a precedent.

The HE Lead Architect then described the landscape design that would be used at the Ockendon Link, which would include planting to the north at Thames Chase. She felt that this would improve the habitat for wildlife as this area was currently blocks of woodland along field boundaries. She added that no cut and cover would be included in this area to ensure there was not too many trees lost, but a retaining wall would be used instead and forest would be replanted at the edge of the route. She explained that false cutting would be used where appropriate, for example at the North Road Green Bridge, which would be approximately 4/5m above the LTC to screen nearby residents and the Public Right of Way. She added that new footpath would also be introduced across the LTC at North Road and Dennises Road to link these areas with Little Belhus Park and Thames Chase.

The HE Lead Architect then described the landscape surrounding the A13 junction, which would be an extensive structure. She described how the landscape was rolling and included areas of clay and gravel soil, as well as marshland, arable fields and the edge of urban areas. She stated that the A13 was currently running through these areas, and currently included sparse ridge planting. She added that the A13 junction was also close to the windmill along Baker Street and the Gammonfields Travellers Site. She explained that the LTC team planned to plant as much as possible around the junction for screening, but the trees would grow over the course of ten to fifteen years, but faster growing trees, such as willows would be included to increase screening as quickly as possible. The HE Lead Architect stated that the traveller's site would be relocated and shielded by planting. She added that Blackshots Nature Reserve would need to decrease in size to accommodate the route, but the LTC team were working to ensure the amount of open space in the area increased and new ponds were added for the great crested newt species. She explained that the team were currently in discussion with Thurrock Council regarding Blackshots Nature Reserve and the types of habitat and design they wished to see. She then explained that the route came close to residents in Baker Street, and screening measures would be put in place, such as acoustic barriers, false cutting 2m above the LTC and tree planting. She explained that she had spoken to landowners near the Baker Street Windmill, who had wished for no earthworks on their property. She mentioned that on the other side of the route in Chadwell St Mary, a 4m

false cutting above the slip road would be included, as well as an acoustic barrier. She summarised and stated that there would also be sizable woodland pockets to the east of the A13 junction, would be accessible from Baker Street under the A13 and LTC for maintenance access.

The HE Lead Architect then described the WCH approach in this area, and stated that the priority around the A13 junction was WCH commuters, particularly along Stifford Clays Road, who used the WCH route for school and access into Grays. She explained that a new cycle lane would be added which would run parallel along Stifford Clays Road. She then described the existing WCH provision along the A1013 and at Orsett Cock Roundabout, and described how a new segregated WCH route was being proposed near Baker Street running east to west, which would improve links to Green Lane and the Mardyke Valley. She summarised and stated a new bridge would also be included over the Orsett Showground which she felt would be good for equestrian riders.

The HE Lead Architect then moved on and discussed the landscape surrounding the Chadwell St Mary Link, running from the A13 to East Tilbury, Linford and Chadwell St Mary. She stated that the majority of this land would be returned to agriculture once the construction of the route was completed, but would also include new grass areas and woodland. She explained that the current landscape character was rolling farmland, edge of urban areas, dry valley, ancient woodland at Rainbow Shaw and important roads such as Hoford Road and Muckingford Road. She commented that new planting would be included in the scheme as compensation for the loss of Rainbow Shaw, and this would be introduced near to Orsett Golf Course, which would help link up green infrastructure and create new habitats. She then explained the B-Lines Project, which had been undertaken by Buglife and had studied insect pathways across the borough. She stated that some of these insect pathways intersected with the Chadwell St Mary Link and stepping stones would need to be included in this area to ensure species could continue to move east to west. She described how Thurrock provided a good habitat for numerous invertebrates, and included areas of species-rich grassland. She described how Hoford Road and Muckingford Road would become Green Bridges to ensure that insects, bats and badgers could cross the LTC. She stated that Muckingford Road was also important for WCH users to access Chadwell St Mary, Grays and East Tilbury, but explained that although it was good for cars, there was no footpath for WCH users. She stated that areas around East Tilbury had increased cycling and walking capacity due to a younger population, as well as a low level of car ownership, but a low level of actual cyclists and walkers. She felt that this could be a key WCH commuter route for local residents. She added that Hoford Road was a protected laneway and was important for WCH leisure, but not for commuters as 4x4s could access the route, which was a sunken lane. She explained that although they would both be green bridges, they would have very different characters, as Muckingford Road would contain a segregated WCH route, and Hoford Road would be a natural track with raised beds on either side. She added that the WCH route along Muckingford Road would be extended for 120m into East Tilbury.

The HE Lead Architect then described how a new attenuation pond for the route would be included in the scheme, as well as 4m false cutting, acoustic barriers, and woodland planting throughout the Chadwell St Mary Link. She explained that the planting would follow the path of the valley and not the route alignment. She stated that the team were currently discussing a number of projects and proposals, such as additional green links, the Hatch report recommendations, increased mitigation for example around Tilbury Fields, and projects, such as the Tilbury-Stanford-le-Hope Riverside Project and Blackshots Nature Reserve. She summarised and stated that the maintenance and management of the ecology would be outlined in the Outline Ecology and Landscape Management Plan (OLEMP).

Councillor Spillman began questions and asked if HE could quantify the amount of wildlife, trees and invertebrates would be potentially destroyed by the scheme. The HE Lead Architect replied that ancient woodland would be decreased by 4.35 hectares, but would be replaced by 18.3 hectares of new planting in the area. She stated that she did not know the exact number of trees and insects that would be destroyed. Councillor Spillman then asked how many new trees would reach maturity, and who would maintain these trees. The HE Lead Architect replied that the team had to decide if they would plant densely in the understanding that not all trees would reach full growth, or plant sparsely and allow all trees to mature. She stated that the HE team would be providing whips, which although would be small when introduced, stood more chance of survival compared to older trees, which often died when moved. She stated that trees required a lot of maintenance, and the OLEMP would outline who would maintain. She added that if the tree planting fell into the category of essential mitigation, it was HE responsibility to maintain, but Thurrock Council might have areas which they wished to have control over. Councillor Spillman then asked how insects would be moved, as they would be difficult to catch, or if they would be destroyed. He also asked how confident the HE team felt regarding the repopulation of new habitat areas, as the new route could increase insect mortality, and affect biodiversity. The HE Lead Architect responded that the route would mostly be going through arable farmland, which was not good for biodiversity. She stated that DEFRA had recently introduced guidelines to increase the number of hedgerows, and sustainable farming methods to increase biodiversity. She added that where areas of biodiversity were lost, such as at Low Street Pit, HE would replace these with larger habitat areas, so she felt confident that biodiversity would increase in the area. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that numerous insects and invertebrates were killed when crossing roads, so Thurrock and HE were working with Natural England to ensure that offsite mitigation took place, particularly for key invertebrate species that needed open mosaic landscape and brownfield sites. He stated that these areas could be created near the north portal, which would be of a suitable level.

Councillor Spillman, the Chair, and the Thames Crossing Action Group (TCAG) Representative agreed that they wished to see the evidence base regarding biodiversity and tree planting levels. The HE Lead Architect stated that the team were using best practice and were engaging with Natural

England regarding biodiversity. She added that the team were also looking at the success of previous similar projects and were sharing these with Thurrock's officer team. The TCAG Representative questioned if the Wilderness was being considered as ancient woodland. The HE Lead Architect responded that the Wilderness had not been designated as ancient woodland, so was not considered as such. She added that the only woodland designated as ancient which would be impacted by the route, was Rainbow Shaw, but would look into the suggestion of Wilderness as ancient woodland. The TCAG Representative then questioned if the North Road Green Bridge would be made of concrete, and if it would be bigger or wider than the Weymouth Relief Green Bridge. The HE Lead Architect replied that she did not know the measurements for the Weymouth Relief Green Bridge, but stated that the North Road Green Bridge would have a 9.3m carriageway, 3.5m wide WCH route and 7m of green planting on each side, with hedgerows but not trees. She stated that it would be a multifunctional bridge, but would not be the same as Muckingford Road.

The Chair then stated that residents would be disturbed during the construction phase of the route, and questioned if the 22km of proposed upgraded WCH routes could be opened before the route. The HE Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Lead responded that the HE team were currently considering this as an option, but the plans and proposals were not yet detailed enough to make a decision. He stated that the team would try and open WCH routes as soon as it was reasonable, but there were no specific figures or dates available yet. The HE Lead Architect added that this had been challenged in the Hatch Report, and HE were currently discussing with Thurrock officers. The Chair then questioned if the trees would be planted during the construction phase, to ensure they had time to mature before the route was opened. The HE Lead Architect replied that the worst-case scenario would be the trees were planted post-construction, but the team would be working to avoid this outcome.

Councillor Muldowney then questioned the Chadwell St Mary Link and asked if the new WCH routes would benefit local residents, particularly those who regularly undertook local historical walks. The HE Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Lead replied that footpath 97, which went through Chadwell St Mary and up to Rectory Road would be upgraded to bridleway standard to Rectory Road Bridge, and an equestrian zone would be included at Orsett Showground. He added that the WCH route from Muckingford Road to Linford and East Tilbury would also be upgraded for recreation and commuters. He stated that this would connect to Coal Road and further connect to Public Right of Way 58, and Coalhouse Fort. Councillor Muldowney then questioned what cutting would be included where the route came close to Chadwell St Mary houses. The HE Lead Architect explained that 4m of false cutting including earthworks would be included, so residents should be screened. She stated that she would look into what acoustic barriers would be included in this area, and reply via email after the meeting. She added that current WCH links in Thurrock focussed on east to west, rather than north to south, but a good WCH connection would be added from Chadwell St Mary to Orsett fenland, and any Public Rights of Way disturbed during construction would be

reinstated.

Councillor Allen stated that Thurrock had lots of invertebrates, as well as the great crested newt, which was a protected species. He questioned if any great crested newts that were found during construction would be caught and moved to a safer place. The HE Lead Architect replied that the team would be providing new habitats for the great crested newt population, such as a new pond in Blackshots Nature Reserve. The HE Landscape Architect added that in Chadwell St Mary there was currently poor provision for the great crested newt, such as open mosaic fields, but these would be replaced with ponds and new habitats created. He stated that any newly created habitats would be constructed outside the development boundary before route construction to ensure that species could be safely translocated. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that there were standard ecology processes for collection and movement, as well as for construction workers who found great crested newts during their work. He explained that great crested newts were well understood in Thurrock, but some specialist invertebrates were less well understood, and needed additional work to understand their habitats and needs. Councillor Allen questioned if any insects or invertebrates found in Thurrock were a protected species. He added that Thurrock also had protected snakes such as adders, and sought reassurance that these would be protected throughout the process. Councillor Allen also questioned the number of juvenile trees and saplings that would be planted, and how they would be cared for. The HE Landscape Architect replied that the majority of trees would be whips and bare root trees, which would be better situated in the landscape. He stated that the team would look at the average failure rate of the trees, and would plant densely in the expectation that some may not grow or some of the trees would need thinning out. He added that bare root trees also had a much more successful rate of survival compared to standard tree, and would form a woodland canopy quicker. He stated that this quick development of canopy would decrease the amount of invasive weeds on the forest floor, as well as providing shelter for animals in the woodland under-story. He added that in all woodland some tree loss was expected, but hopefully the majority of saplings planted in this scheme would survive. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that denser tree-planting often needed thinning, which meant that whichever option was decided, roughly the same of number of trees would be there at the end of the process.

The Senior Consultant stated that if any Members wished particular WCH routes be opened earlier than others, to let officers know so these could be prioritised in the discussion with HE. He also added that if Members had particular additional WCH links that they wished to be discussed, to also let officers know. He also explained that a survey had to be conducted regarding birds, mammals, and invertebrates, and EIA regulations meant that this has to be carried out within two years of DCO submission, so might need updating, but that Thurrock Council were aware of where all protected bats and great crested newts lived. The Chair stated that a detailed discussion regarding the phased opening of Public Rights of Way might be good at a later Task Force Meeting.

Councillor Rice questioned what false cutting would be situated near Chadwell St Mary, and if any tree planting would be involved. He also asked for a copy of the slide regarding false cutting at Chadwell St Mary so he could share with residents. The HE Lead Architect replied that this slide had been shared at a previous meeting on 21 September, but would be sent over. She explained that there would be lots of woodland and hedge planting in this area. The HE Technical Lead added that the precise location of false cuttings was also included in map book 3, which also contained detailed engineering plans. Councillor Shinnick asked if any wildflower planting would take place in Thurrock. The HE Lead Architect commented that wildflower planting was a principle included in the scheme, and was described as species-rich grassland. She explained that the species-rich grassland could improve the soil, the natural seedbank, improve biodiversity, and pollination.

The TCAG Representative sought clarification regarding the Public Right of Way (PRoW) moving east to west on the A1013, as she understood that a connection already existed in this area. The HE Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Lead confirmed that a PRoW did already exist in this area, but that it was currently a pavement with some signage, and would be improved as part of the scheme to an offset WCH track, 3.5m wide and 2m from the road. The TCAG Representative questioned if the surface of this WCH track would improve. The HE Lead Architect replied that the surfacing would be consistent with current standards.

The TCAG Representative then questioned how space could be gained at Blackshots Nature Reserve. The HE Lead Architect replied that more publically accessible open space would be included as part of the scheme. She described how currently the fields surrounding the nature reserve could not be accessed by the public, but HE were in discussion to change the planning designation of the land, so it could be categorised as open space. The TCAG Representative queried the impact the scheme could have on Grade 1 agricultural land. The HE Lead Architect replied that a conversation was ongoing between agricultural landowners and HE, particularly regarding areas for species-rich grassland in Chadwell St Mary. She explained that if landowners had certain requests regarding their best output fields, HE would listen and could take these suggestions on-board.

Councillor Spillman felt that although lots of woodland planting would be taking place, the majority of this would be near the route, and he felt the scheme did not include any large scale green infrastructure developments. He felt that this should be discussed with Thurrock officers, including the potential for a new nature reserve in Ockendon to increase social value for residents. The HE Lead Architect replied that HE were currently discussing some green infrastructure developments with Thurrock officers.

The Resident Representative queried which stakeholders had been approached for the Green Infrastructure Survey, and questioned if the Task Force would be able to see their inputs. The HE Lead Architect replied that numerous DEFRA bodies, as well as the RSPB, Kent and Essex Wildlife Trusts, Bug Life, Natural England, Land of the Feanns, and other smaller



groups in Kent had been consulted. She added that Thurrock officers had seen the output of the Green Infrastructure Survey, which included comments from stakeholders and areas of further discussion. She added that the HE Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Lead had also spoken to local cycling and equestrian groups for their input. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that the survey was approximately 300 pages long, and the team had not yet completed detailed analysis on this document. He mentioned that lots of stakeholder groups had been approached for their comments by HE and local people had also been given the chance to make comment.

Councillor Allen drew the Task Force's attention to a recent article in The Guardian which outlined the Transport Secretary's proposed review of the environmental impacts regarding new infrastructure projects, including the LTC. He stated that air pollution in the form of particulates was still emitted from electric vehicles, and felt this was important to note.

#### **44. Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

#### **45. Summary of Energy White Paper, December 2020**

The Senior Consultant introduced the report and stated that it summarised a government white paper, which was a tool for discussing future potential legislation, and was released on 14 December 2020. He explained that it outlined the Prime Minister's plan for a green COVID-19 recovery, and was split into four parts: transforming energy supply; reforming energy supply; fairer deals for energy consumers; and a green pandemic recovery. He explained that the government wished to decrease carbon emissions by 230million tonnes, as well as increasing the number of green jobs available by 220,000. The Senior Consultant highlighted page two of the report which outlined what support would be available for the roll out of electric vehicle charging, including a £2.8billion government funding package, which could be used on the LTC. He stated that this was the only proposal which might directly affected the LTC, but other proposals could affect the development of Thurrock's Local Plan. He gave the examples of all new homes built not using gas power by 2025; new homes having zero carbon emissions; and increasing the clean energy supply across the country.

The Chair highlighted that this White Paper did not directly affect the LTC, but questioned if new homes could be connected to hydrogen gas and if the LTC could affect future hydrogen grid connections. The Senior Consultant replied that the government was mainly focusing on nuclear and off-shore wind for the majority of its future clean energy supply, but hydrogen power was emission free and the government did want to develop approximately 5 gigawatts of hydrogen power by 2030. He stated that this was more likely to be used for housing infrastructure than for cars.

Councillor Spillman felt it was good to see the pace of change regarding

environmental concerns, including the proposed removal of all gas boilers. The TCAG Representative questioned if the consultation which had been undertaken regarding the power plant in East Tilbury would have a conflict with the LTC. She added that electric vehicles still emitted PM2.5 from brakes and tyres, which she felt was dangerous for local residents as it could enter people's bloodstreams. She added that the electricity needed to power electric vehicles was still largely produced from fossil fuels and asked the Task Force to advocate for the government adoption of WHO guidelines regarding PM2.5. Councillor Allen echoed the TCAG Representatives comments regarding PM2.5 and electric vehicles, as he agreed that they still had a carbon footprint. He felt that the government should focus on hydrogen energy, which had no emissions. The TCAG Representative added that she felt concerned regarding the Environmental Statement, which HE would submit and the air quality data which could be contained within the report. She highlighted the work of the Transport Action Network, who were currently undertaking a legal challenge regarding RIS2 and the National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN), so that it was reviewed and updated. Councillor Muldowney questioned if the Transport Action Network could present to the Task Force. The Chair replied that March's meeting would be busy, but would consider it for later in the year.

#### **46. Mitigation/Legacy Benefits Prioritisation (Verbal Update)**

The Senior Consultant began the verbal update and informed Members that this had been discussed at January's Task Force meeting, and since then Thurrock officers had met with HE to discuss the 57 recommendations made in the Hatch report. He stated that officers had been challenging HE regarding mitigation which could be accepted, but felt that HE had been accommodating to some of the proposed mitigation. He highlighted that not all of the mitigation fell under HE's remit, and Thurrock would be discussing these areas, such as with the Department for Transport, who might be responsible for some measures. The Senior Consultant gave the example of the hypothecation of toll money for use by Thurrock Council, which fell under the Department for Transport remit. He stated that a more detailed report would be brought before the Task Force in March, which would highlight which items had been agreed and how, and would seek Members guidance regarding the prioritisation of items that were still up for discussion. He stated that the list of accepted items from the Hatch report was still being finalised with officers and HE, but would be shared before the Task Force in March. He summarised and highlighted that written answers to questions to HE from the previous Task Force meeting, would be shared with Members next week.

Councillor Muldowney questioned what mitigation would be included at the Asda roundabout. The Senior Consultant stated that the Tilbury 2 development had proposed mitigation, as well as the London Resort, whose DCO had recently been accepted. He explained that the LTC would need to account for both of those schemes when proposing mitigation, and as it was a critical roundabout for HGV use during construction, and that any potential additional mitigation would hopefully happen in advance of any construction.

The Resident Representative highlighted that air quality data had been promised to the Task Force at January's meeting. He questioned whether this had been received yet, or if HE had updated their route visualisations. The Senior Consultant stated that the air quality data had been shared with Thurrock officers, who had not yet had time to analyse it in detail. He added that air quality data was also included in the Environmental Statement, which was part of the DCO documentation and was approximately 50,000 pages long. He then highlighted that visualisations, as seen in today's presentation, would be necessary to be included for the next proposed public consultation covering design, structures, landscape, GI, and PRoW. He stated that he would make the point strongly to HE that Task Force Members had requested additional visualisations, including an updated fly-through. The Chair echoed this point and felt that the visualisations in the recent presentations had been much improved and needed to continue as they helped residents understand the size and look of the route. He welcomed the potential for more visualisations of a similar quality in the future.

The TCAG Representative stated that it was now public knowledge that the Assistant Director of LTC would be leaving Thurrock and thanked her for her hard work and invaluable experience during Task Force meetings and behind the scenes. She again thanked the Assistant Director and hoped any replacement would continue the hard work and keep up the high standard of the Task Force. The Chair echoed her statement and thanked the Assistant Director for her work.

Councillor Muldowney questioned whether or not the Task Force meeting would go ahead due to the purdah period. The Senior Democratic Services Officer replied that there was currently a meeting scheduled for April, but this would be last meeting of the municipal year.

#### **47. Work Programme**

The Senior Consultant highlighted that March would be a busy meeting, with reports on CO2 emissions; an update on the Health and Equalities Impact Assessment and the Environmental Impact Assessment; and an update on the economic mitigation list.

Members did not wish to add any other items to the Work Programme.

**The meeting finished at 8.34 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**

# LTC Task Force Paper

## Lower Thames Crossing Task Force – EIA Update

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This paper has been prepared to provide an update to the LTC Task Force on the current position of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) associated with the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) project.
- 1.2. This Paper covers the following items:
- **Stakeholder Engagement** - where we are in the process to date, in terms of draft technical EIA documents received from Highways England.
  - **Summary of Council's concerns** - what concerns have been raised by the technical team to date, in response to the LTC draft Environmental Statement (ES) Chapters, issued to the Council for comment in July 2020.
  - **Outstanding Council concerns** – Highways England's response to the Council's concerns relating to the LTC draft ES Chapters, issued to the Council in February 2021 and which issues remain a concern to the Council. It should be noted that, these concerns are still draft and have not been through a formal review.
  - **Next steps** – programme for further engagement

### 2. Stakeholder Engagement - Where we are in the process to date

- 2.1. Highways England has issued the Council with the following technical documents on EIA:

| Highways England technical document                 | Date issued by Highways England | Date of Council response | Date of Highways England response                                     |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Technical Note for Statement of Common Ground (EIA) | 29 January 2020                 | 13 May 2020              | No response provided as comments on draft ES supersede this document. |
| Technical Note for Cumulative Effects Assessment    | 6 March 2020                    | 6 October 2020           | 3 Feb 2021  |
| Code of Construction Practice and REAC              | 18 <sup>th</sup> August         | 6 October 2020           | 3 Feb 2021  |
| Draft ES Chapters.                                  | 2 and 14 July 2020              | 12 October 2020          | 3 Feb 2021  |

### 3. Summary of concerns raised by the Council in response to the draft ES Chapter

- 3.1. Highways England consulted the Council on the draft ES in July 2020. The ES included the following chapters: Air Quality, Cultural Heritage, Landscape & Visual, Biodiversity, Geology and Soils, Material Assets and Waste, Noise & Vibration, Population and Human Health, Road Drainage and Water Environment, Climate and Cumulative Effects Assessment.
- 3.2. The Council assessed the draft ES chapters, using the following methodology:
- **Purple** = priority matters that require urgent attention by Highways England;
  - **Red** = matters that need addressing/require amendment prior to DCO submission (due to gaps, inconsistencies and missing information/data);

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- **Amber** = matters that Highways England has moved towards accommodating but which still require further work with the Council required prior to DCO submission; and,
- **Green** = satisfactory, no action required.

3.3. A summary of the RAG rating result of the draft ES review is provided in Table 1 below to illustrate broadly the number of concerns made by the Council.

Table 1: Summary of RAG rating on the draft ES Chapters

| EIA Topic                     | Policy, Legislation and Guidance |       | Assessment methodology |       | Baseline conditions |       | Project design & mitigation |       | Assessment of impacts |       | Cumulative impacts |       | Monitoring |       |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|------------|-------|
|                               | C                                | O     | C                      | O     | C                   | O     | C                           | O     | C                     | O     | C                  | O     | C          | O     |
| Air Quality                   | Green                            | Green | Amber                  | Amber | Amber               | Amber | Amber                       | Amber | Amber                 | Amber | Green              | Green | Amber      | Amber |
| Cultural Heritage             | Amber                            | Amber | Amber                  | Amber | Amber               | Amber | Amber                       | Amber | Amber                 | Amber | Amber              | Amber | Amber      | Amber |
| Landscape                     | Green                            | Green | Green                  | Green | Amber               | Amber | Amber                       | Amber | Amber                 | Amber | Amber              | Amber | Amber      | Amber |
| Terrestrial Biodiversity      | Amber                            | Amber | Amber                  | Amber | Amber               | Amber | Amber                       | Amber | Amber                 | Amber | Amber              | Amber | Amber      | Amber |
| Geology and Soils             | Green                            | Green | Amber                  | Amber | Green               | Green | Amber                       | Amber | Amber                 | Amber | Amber              | Amber | Amber      | Amber |
| Materials                     | Amber                            | Amber | Green                  | Green | Amber               | Amber | Amber                       | Amber | Amber                 | Amber | Green              | Green | Amber      | Amber |
| Noise and Vibration           | Green                            | Green | Amber                  | Amber | Amber               | Amber | Amber                       | Amber | Amber                 | Amber | Amber              | Amber | Amber      | Amber |
| People and Human Health       | Amber                            | Amber | Amber                  | Amber | Amber               | Amber | Amber                       | Amber | Amber                 | Amber | Amber              | Amber | Amber      | Amber |
| Water                         | Amber                            | Amber | Amber                  | Amber | Amber               | Amber | Amber                       | Amber | Amber                 | Amber | Amber              | Amber | Amber      | Amber |
| Climate                       | Amber                            | Amber | Amber                  | Amber | Green               | Green | Amber                       | Amber | Green                 | Green | Green              | Green | Green      | Green |
| Cumulative Effects Assessment | Green                            | Green | Amber                  | Amber | Amber               | Amber | x                           | x     | Amber                 | Amber | Amber              | Amber | Amber      | Amber |

### 4. Outstanding concerns despite Highways England's response and DCO submission

- 4.1. Highways England has provided a response in February 2021 to the issues and concerns raised in the Councils response to the draft ES Chapters in early October 2020. These are set out as either a clarification; the issue is resolved in DCO version 1 (DCOV1); will be resolved in DCO version 2 (DCOV2); or, is an issue which needs further discussion and should be addressed through the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) logs.
- 4.2. The technical team are currently reviewing Highways England's responses to determine whether the issue has been dealt with appropriately.
- 4.3. Due to length and complexity of all the outstanding issues of the EIA, the next section only focuses on issues that are a major concern to the Council, i.e., would have been identified as red or purple in the initial exercise of the review of the draft ES Chapters. These issues are outstanding and are still a major concern for the Council despite Highways England's response (February 2021).
- 4.4. Some issues are progressing through the Hatch Mitigation Report, however, we are yet to receive any formal confirmation of the measures which are agreed. Where there has been indication from Highways England to incorporate measures within the DCO, these are referenced in the sections below as 'Measure xxx'.

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### 5. Air quality

#### 5.1. Screening out of emission from barges and Non-Road Mobile Machinery

- The screening out of emissions from barges and Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) was not supported and reliance on TG (16) was considered inappropriate as this relates to whether such activities would cause issues in a potential Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), primarily due to SO<sub>2</sub> emission from Fuel Oil and not whether significant adverse NO<sub>2</sub> or PM<sub>10</sub> impacts would occur. Whilst it was accepted that Highways England has assessed emissions from NRMM within the ES, this would need to be validated in the form of a detailed review of the Air Quality Chapter submitted October 2020 in DCOV1.
- Screening out barge emissions is unlikely to be accepted given the Planning Inspectorate comments (26 November 2020): *'The ES considers 'road only' outlier position which is not sufficient, and Highways England need to consider multi-modal approach, this is all deferred for later consideration, which means that mitigations have not been fully assessed'*.

#### 5.2. Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) mitigation

- The mitigation of the construction phase relies on emission controls of the NRMM, however, without more details of the proposed plant, it was not possible to determine that emissions will be adequately reduced. Highways England responded stating that emissions from NRMM will be temporary and minimised through the application of mitigation measures, including meeting the emissions standard requirements of the London Low Emission Zone for NRMM across all construction compounds and activities. However, whilst NRMM are by their nature 'temporary' their presence could extend for several years at some key construction locations and clarity is required that the mitigation will also be applied to any onsite portable power generators. It is therefore considered that greater detail is required to screen out impacts from such activities.

#### 5.3. PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> monitoring

- PM<sub>2.5</sub> should be considered by Highways England in accordance with other DCO projects and further discussions are required. Whilst accepted that DMRB LA105 does not require monitoring where a Project does not cause significant effects, given the scale of the Project, uncertainty as to traffic flows and emissions and widespread impacts, some monitoring to demonstrate this lack of a significant would seem prudent. As previously communicated, the absence of PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> monitoring within close proximity to the affected road network is considered a limitation.

#### 5.4. Assessment of impacts and mitigation

- Whilst Highways England has provided a response to the issues raised on the review of the draft ES Chapters, the technical teams have not validated this response and a full review of the ES Chapters in DCOV1 will need to be conducted to determine whether issues remain and further comments will need to be issued to Highways England.

### 6. Cultural Heritage

#### 6.1. Adequacy of the Desk Based Assessment:

- The Council still have concerns regarding the quality of the Desk Based Assessment (DBA) and how this is being used to support the ES. The Council was concerned of the assessment of value throughout the document. There were also concerns regarding the supporting documentation used in the ES, which had not been updated and needed to be so. This included the assessment of the post medieval forts and the assessment of the World War I and II heritage assets. These needed to be revisited with further information provided. At present there was no assessments of the Holocene and only an initial enhanced assessment of one of the buildings to be demolished.

#### 6.2. Adequacy of mitigation measure for archaeological/heritage assets:

- At that time, the REAC has only a reference to the proposed WSI in relation to Archaeology and building recording. It was recommended that this needed to be in much more detail as with ecological requirements. It was suggested that we need separate REAC sections in dealing with the excavation of the Scheduled Monument, recording of the listed buildings for demolition, further evaluation both for trenching and areas such as the tunnel mouth area.

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### 6.3. Incomplete archaeological survey work, especially near the tunnel mouth:

- There was still concern that a considerable part of the development and especially the tunnel mouth had not been archaeologically assessed. As this was likely to be the first area of major works during the construction project, there was potential for major hold ups to the scheme if the impact had not been identified.

### 6.4. Assessment of impacts and mitigation:

- Whilst Highways England has provided a response to the issues raised on the review of the draft ES Chapters, the technical teams have not validated this response and a full review of the ES Chapters in DCOV1 will need to be conducted to determine whether issues remain, and further comments will need to be issued to Highways England.

## 7. Landscape and Visual

### 7.1. Adequacy of landscape mitigation proposal:

- Highways England stated the landscape scheme had been developed holistically. Further mitigation was proposed, which would need to be reviewed in detail to ensure that the mitigation is in keeping with the local landscape character and not the bare minimum. Further example of landscape mitigation was provided in Highways England's response.
  - Woodland planting at Tilbury to strengthen an existing wooded ridgeline
  - Woodland planting along the river corridor near the Chadwell link
  - Wetland creation in the Mardyke Valley
  - Planting to parcels of land following rectangular field pattern at Ockenden Link
  - Extensive parcels of woodland planting around the A13 and M25 junctions

### 7.2. Assessment of impacts and mitigation:

- Whilst Highways England has provided a response to the issues raised on the review of the draft ES Chapters, the technical teams have not validated this response and a full review of the ES Chapters in DCOV1 will need to be conducted to determine whether issues remain and further comments will need to be issued to Highways England.

## 8. Terrestrial biodiversity

### 8.1. Adequacy of biodiversity mitigation proposal:

- There was a concern throughout the process that there would be a reliance on small-scale areas immediately adjacent to the road to provide mitigation rather than trying to deliver larger areas that would be more sustainable. The mitigation areas around Coalhouse Fort form the largest block, but there was no clarity over long term management. Work was being progressed on further enhancement projects. Discussion with Highways England on potential ideas for the Tilbury - Stanford Le Hope Riverside area would help support landscape restoration, biodiversity mitigation and enhancement, improve access, strengthen the cultural heritage connection, and provide health and well-being benefits to the community. The Council is currently awaiting visualisations from Highways England to demonstrate how Highways England could maximise the potential of the area.

### 8.2. Biodiversity net gain:

- Whilst Highways England has responded to the Council's previous comment on biodiversity net gain and stated that the project will achieve 15% net gain, the Council wish to see this legally secured within the DCO, which it currently is not.

### 8.3. Assessment of impacts and mitigation:

- Whilst Highways England has provided a response to the issues raised on the review of the draft ES Chapters, the technical teams have not validated this response and a full review of the ES Chapters in DCOV1 will need to be conducted to determine whether issues remain, and further comments will need to be issued to Highways England.

## 9. Geology and Soils

### 9.1. Assessment of impacts and mitigation:



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- Whilst Highways England has provided a response to the issues raised on the review of the draft ES Chapters, the technical teams have not validated this response and a full review of the ES Chapters in DCOV1 will need to be conducted to determine whether issues remain, and further comments will need to be issued to Highways England.

### 10. Materials and Waste

#### 10.1. Construction waste handling:

- There was limited information as to the actual implications of the waste handling strategy. Planning Inspectorate (PINS) comments on construction waste (26 November 2020). *'The ES considers 'road only' outlier position which is not sufficient, and Highways England need to consider multi-modal approach, this is all deferred for later consideration which means that mitigations have not been fully assessed'*. Furthermore, PINS stressed that the Site Waste Management Strategy should have an interface with the Transport Assessment and the navigation elements for the construction period, particular as a significance threshold of 1% of landfill has been set for England rather than the study area. Highways England has issued to the Council the Outline Site Waste Management Plan (18 February 2021), which is currently under review. Also, a Materials Handling Plan will be issued in May.

#### 10.2. Zero waste target:

- Project commitments have been set in line with Highways England Guidance (2019) Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB): Volume 11, Part 13 (LA110) Material assets and waste. It was understood that Highways England did not intend to have a zero-waste target due to the size of the project (particularly considering the number of contaminated sites transacted by the alignment). Further justification is required.

#### 10.3. Assessment of impacts and mitigation:

- Whilst Highways England has provided a response to the issues raised on the review of the draft ES Chapters, the technical teams have not validated this response and a full review of the ES Chapters in DCOV1 will need to be conducted to determine whether issues remain, and further comments will need to be issued to Highways England.

### 11. Noise and Vibration

#### 11.1. Noise emissions from construction traffic:

- Significant adverse impacts were predicted. However, it was not clear how these will be mitigated. Construction traffic would be mitigated through the traffic management measures implemented through best practice measures in the CoCP and REAC. Until the DCOV1 versions are reviewed, the Council's concerns remain.

#### 11.2. Assessment of impacts and mitigation:

- Whilst Highways England has provided a response to the issues raised on the review of the draft ES Chapters, the technical teams have not validated this response and a full review of the ES Chapters in DCOV1 will need to be conducted to determine whether issues remain.
- Earth bunds and noise barriers are proposed along the route to reduce noise. However, it is vital to ensure that there is an appropriate provision (Hatch Report Measure M15). A review of the proposed noise barriers will be conducted to determine the efficacy and potential visual impacts of the noise barriers on those communities that will be directly affected.

### 12. Population and Human Health

#### 12.1. Transparency at CIPHAG:

- Prior to the DCO submission (23 October 2020), CIPHAG met over an 18-month period. During this time, very limited information was shared with members on the impacts identified and how this shaped the scheme or informed mitigation. Highways England has recently proposed to reform CIPHAG with greater transparency and opportunities for feedback and discussion. The first CIPHAG meeting is likely to commence in late March with further meetings prior to the DCO re-submission later this year. The Council has raised concerns relating to the HEqIA, which will need to be addressed as part of the CIPHAG, these are:

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- Agreement of the scope and methodology of the assessment;
- Sufficiency of information provided on the baseline conditions and the opportunity to comment on these specified conditions and offer any further data/analysis/assessment;
- The extent and adequacy of various mitigation measures; and,
- The level of geographical granularity of reporting to ensure that inequalities are appropriately considered.

### 12.2. Employment and skills plan:

- The Council are unaware if its comments on the Skills and Legacy Plan have been incorporated into the version submitted at DCOV1 (October 2020), a review of this Plan will be conducted. However, discussions have progressed and it is understood that Highways England are in the process of providing a target for local labour and apprentice use during the construction of the project (Measure CLS3).

### 12.3. Economic benefit to the local community:

- Highways England predicted a large beneficial impact to the economy, which appears to be based largely on employment and connectivity. Factors such as the desirability of an area, attractiveness and environmental attributes, all influence economic success. The £7bn estimated benefit to the economy did not consider local degradation due to borough-wide blight or these poorer environmental outcomes and therefore this potential benefit was considered to be over-reported. Highways England has responded *'The impacts of the Project on the local and wider economy are now described as part of the Economic Appraisal Package contained within Appendix D of the Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report (Application Document 7.7). Chapter 13 describes impacts as they relate to development land and specific businesses (for example changes arising from land-take, changes to access and connectivity improvements).'* Accommodations are being sought through the Hatch Mitigation Report (Measure CLS11) to provide small capital grants schemes to facilitate aesthetic, public health, cohesion and environmental improvements within the community (up to £100,000 pa).

### 12.4. Assessment of impacts and mitigation:

- Whilst Highways England has provided a response to the issues raised on the review of the draft ES Chapters, the technical teams have not validated this response and a full review of the ES Chapters in DCOV1 will need to be conducted to determine whether issues remain and further comments will need to be issued to Highways England. The impacts on local residents on changes in air quality and noise are noted as being contained within the HEqIA and draw on findings from the ES Air Quality and Noise and Vibration Chapters. The Council will need to validate this, as well as comments provided in response to human health in terms of accessibility and severance during construction and human health impacts in term of access to open space and nature.
- There was a heavy reliance on the Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) to deliver appropriate mitigation during the construction phase. For example:
  - The REAC did not include any definition as to the implementation or strategy for the WCH (walking, cycling and horse riding) network mitigation package. However, further discussions have progressed in terms of ensuring local people are kept fully up to date with the construction process and are given adequate information and warning of issues, such as severance or environmental damage and community disruption, impact on community facilities and PRoW severance/disruption are minimised (Measure CLS10).
  - The mitigation strategy did not address the transport impacts of the construction, phase in terms of fear and intimidation, safety or driver delay.

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- The commitments did not specifically reference legacy benefits, such as the potential for positive impacts on population and human health as a result of improved and enhanced open space and recreational provision (which will support a high-quality residential environment and provide a valuable amenity resource to surrounding residential areas). Paragraph 5.162 of the NPSNN states 'access to high quality open spaces and countryside and opportunities for sport and recreation can be a means of providing necessary mitigation and/or compensation requirements', but there was no specific reference to this element.

### 13. Road Drainage and the Water Environment

#### 13.1. Accuracy of baseline information:

- The Council previously raised concerns on the accuracy of the baseline data and sources of flood maps used in the assessment, as well as relevant guidance.

#### 13.2. Assessment of impacts and mitigation:

- No embedded mitigation was proposed during the review of the draft ES Chapter for the construction phase. Surface Water, Groundwater and Ordinary Watercourse Flood Risk/ Water Quality would need to be managed during 'construction' and it would be expected that a works-specific Construction Management Plan is submitted to the LLFA for approval in advance of any works being carried out, outlining hazard, risks and associated mitigation measures. An ambitious Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) Strategy should be promoted, which should include how climate change is considered. Further discussions with Highways England have taken place and Hatch Report Measure M16 may be agreed, promoting flood risk mitigation and water quality improvement through SuDS.
- Whilst Highways England has provided a response to the issues raised on the review of the draft ES Chapters, the technical teams have not validated this response and a full review of the ES Chapters in DCOV1 will need to be conducted to determine whether issues remain. This includes a review of the Flood Risk Assessment, which was not previously shared in July 2020. The Council will need to validate the assessment provided in DCOV1 in terms of flood impacts from surface water and groundwater sources and the risk to communities within Areas of Critical Drainage.

### 14. Climate '

- See separate Task Force Paper on 'CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions'.

### 15. Cumulative Effects Assessment

- Highways England issued the Technical Note for Cumulative Effects Assessment on 6 March 2020 to the Council and requested comments and input to the Long List and Short List of consented schemes to be included within the Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) by the 31 March 2020. The Council provided comments on the Long List and Short List as well as growth areas to be included within the CEA on 6 October 2020. The Council has requested the cut-off date to provide an updated list of consented schemes and growth areas for inclusion into the CEA for DCOV2.

### 16. Next Steps

- The technical teams have reviewed Highways England's response to the Council's comments on the draft ES Chapters in early October 2020.
- To progress the issues raised on the draft ES Chapters, the technical team will need to review the ES Chapters as submitted at DCOV1 (October 2020) to be able to validate the response issued by Highways England and determine the appropriateness of the response.
- It is likely that there will be outstanding issues and further comments as a result of the review of the ES Chapters. Further discussions are likely to be required for all technical topics, which will be captured in the next series of Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) meetings.

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# LTC Task Force Paper

## Lower Thames Crossing Task Force – Health Impacts Update (2)

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### 1. Introduction

1.1. This Paper covers the following matters:

1. **Where we are in the process to date** – in terms of consultations, draft technical documents received from Highways England and the Community Impacts and Public Health Advisory Group (CIPHAG).
2. **Summary of Council's concerns** – what concerns have been raised by the Council's Public Health Team in response to the LTC consultations so far and draft technical documents.
3. **Next steps** – including the review of Highways England's response to the Public Health Team's concerns regarding the draft Health and Equalities Impact Assessment (HEqIA) and the review of the HEqIA submitted with DCOV1 in October.

### 2. Where we are in the process to date

#### Public LTC consultations

2.1. A summary of the Public Health Team's responses to the Statutory, Supplementary and Design Refinement consultations was provided in the Health Update Paper presented to the LTC Task Force on 12 October 2020. These comments have therefore not been repeated in this Paper.

#### Technical documents for the LTC Development Consent Order

- 2.2. As part of its technical engagement relating to the LTC Development Consent Order (DCOV1), Highways England issued approximately 39 draft technical documents to the Council for their comments prior to the submission of the LTC DCOV1 in October 2020.
- 2.3. Highways England provided a working draft of the HEqIA to the Council on 3 August 2020. The Council's Public Health Team reviewed the working draft of the HEqIA and provided feedback to Highways England on 1 October 2020, highlighting any concerns that the Team had and any information that was still missing. The response to Highways England was caveated with the fact that the comments served as initial feedback on the assessment, as a detailed review with input from all relevant professionals was not possible at the time due to the pressure on Council services from Covid-19. It stated that the Council reserved the right to undertake a detailed Quality Assurance (QA) review of the draft report at later stages and/ or when it was completed for the DCO submission, at that point in time.
- 2.4. The Public Health Team's comments on the LTC draft technical documents, including the working draft of the HEqIA are summarised in Section three of this Paper.
- 2.5. In February 2021 Highways England provided a response to the issues and concerns raised in the Public Health Team's response to the draft HEqIA in October, prior to the DCOV1 document. Highways England has provided a response in the following way:
  - If the comment is a matter of clarification, which has now been provided.
  - If/how the comment has already been addressed in DCOV1 (including signposting).
  - If/how the comment will be addressed in DCOV2. If a Project position is not yet available a direction of thinking has been provided.
  - If the comment is under discussion, i.e. is already in the SoCG logs.
  - If the comment should be added to the SoCG logs for further discussion.
  - Additional commentary on how a comment has been addressed as well as additional signposting has also been included throughout.
- 2.6. The Public Health Team are currently reviewing Highways England's response to determine whether each issue raised has been dealt with appropriately.

## LTC Task Force Paper

### **The Community Impacts and Public Health Advisory Group**

- 2.7. The Community Impacts and Public Health Advisory Group (CIPHAG) was established in 2018 by Highways England for the LTC and comprised: an external chairperson; members of the LTC team; representatives from each of the local authorities potentially affected by the LTC scheme; and, Public Health England. The purpose of this group was to meet regularly to discuss topics which include community, health and equalities.
- 2.8. Nine CIPHAG meetings have been held since November 2018 and the last CIPHAG meeting was on 21 July 2020. During this time, very limited information was shared with members on the baseline, impacts identified and how this shaped the scheme or informed mitigation. Highways England has recently proposed to reconvene the CIPHAG and reform it with greater transparency and opportunities for feedback and discussion. Highways England have confirmed that the CIPHAG is to reconvene and a number of meetings will be held prior to the resubmission of the LTC DCO later in 2021. The Council is still in discussion with Highways England over its form, content and frequency.

### **3. Concerns raised by the Council's Public Health Team in response to the LTC draft technical documents (including the HEqIA)**

- 3.1. The following concerns have been raised by the Public Health Team during the course of the CIPHAG meetings and in response to the working draft HEqIA and the early draft Environmental Statement chapter on Population and Human Health that were shared with the Council prior to the submission of DCOV1 in July 2020:

#### **General comment**

- The Council raised concerns to Highways England's with regards to the programme, the adequacy of technical engagement to date, the time available to enable a period of meaningful technical review and engagement to address stakeholder comments and explore and agree appropriate mitigation, prior to the submission of the DCO application on 23 October 2020. These concerns were exacerbated by the challenges experienced by the Council, and other public bodies, in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **HEqIA reporting**

- Clarification of roles, responsibilities, funding and governance of the HEqIA.
- The draft HEqIA was issued without the associated appendices and a number of documents referenced, which presented further challenges to the Council in reviewing the draft HEqIA.
- A non-technical or executive summary should have been included in the HEqIA.

#### **Baseline data**

- Detailed baseline data was not shared with the CIPHAG to enable an iterative discussion and agreement on the baseline conditions that were used for the HEqIA.

#### **Assessment of impacts**

- Stakeholders attending the CIPHAG were not been invited to be included in discussions on the assessment of impacts, very limited information has been shared with members on the impacts identified and how this has shaped the LTC scheme or informed mitigation. This stakeholder engagement is fundamental to meaningfully identifying impacts and shaping associated mitigation.
- For the evidence base in each section the search strategy needed to be made clear, the methods and sources used and their relevance to the project. It should have been demonstrated that the evidence presented was sufficient to inform the assessment of the likely impacts.
- The strengths and sources of evidence and how each impact identified was supported by the evidence gathered, lacks clarity. The Welsh Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) QA review recommends presenting this as a table format with the key impacts identified alongside which type of evidence supports each finding: community health profile, evidence review, stakeholder's views or a combination of these.



## LTC Task Force Paper

- There was no reference to the timescales and/or duration of impacts for some of the topics in the HEqIA.
- The HEqIA needed to consider the magnitude, severity and likelihood of the various relevant health and equalities impacts, which the assessment did not undertake and it should.
- Assessments in the HEqIA should have been broken down by geographical area and for vulnerable/sensitive populations identified for clarity of reporting and to enable specific mitigation to be developed and specific consideration should have been given for groups with protected characteristics.
- How will health impact be assessed for unforeseen live changes that may occur during the various construction stages? The HEqIA should have at least acknowledged that the proposal may be subject to ongoing construction variances and therefore HEqIA implications would require modification, as appropriate.
- The HEqIA appeared to under report on opportunities (or lack specifics) in areas such as green infrastructure and the report lacked clarity as to what is actually proposed. Non-specific terms were used such as greening, woodlands, landscaping; but quality, scale and magnitude of improvements were not made clear at that stage.

### **Mitigation and monitoring**

- There was no section for monitoring and evaluation of impacts or details of how the information would be used.
- The HEqIA lacked clear recommendations against the impacts identified to either:
  - a. Prevent or mitigate potential negative impacts/unintended consequences.
  - b. Maximise the benefits and opportunities for positive impacts.
- There should have been a proposed plan for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations identified.
- There was an over-reliance on signposting to other environmental assessments for mitigation. It needed to be clear how the health impacts identified and assessed would be specifically mitigated.
- There was no summary of how mitigation might be guaranteed (unless included within the project design) or secured within the DCO within Tables 8-1 and 8-2 or elsewhere. Furthermore, where monitoring was referred to, how would it be undertaken and secured, this should have been covered.
- Good practice and essential mitigation are to be included in the Code of Construction Practice (CoCP). A working draft of the CoCP and Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) was received on 18 August 2020. Initial comments were that the CoCP did not provide any details of the mitigation measures proposed, and the REAC, which forms a critical part of the CoCP in understanding the propose mitigation, was limited in information.

- 3.2. We have highlighted below four key specific issues of concern to the Council and which were set out in detail in our comments in early October 2020, prior to the submission of the DCOV1. Also, it should be noted that some of the following issues may be resolved and further issues added over the coming months during ongoing technical discussions.

### **Accessibility and Severance**

- Impacts for Thurrock residents were not clear, particularly which residents may be impacted by access to what facilities, assets or employment. If accessibility impacts last for years then it should have been considered as impeded access and so mitigated.
- It is necessary to consider access to all key facilities – education, employment, healthcare, public transport hubs and shopping facilities, all are important to be covered in the assessment.
- Severance was identified for small parts of Thurrock with particular negative impacts identified for vulnerable groups. This was unmitigated and supporting documents were missing to be able to review in more detail.

## LTC Task Force Paper

- Adverse severance impacts were identified for elderly populations during the operational phase at one location in Thurrock. The report goes on to say that the severance identified is not considered to be significant 'due to other factors such as the presence of existing pedestrian refuges and traffic controlled crossings at relevant locations.' Further maps/information were not included to support this assumption. The Council requested further verification here to ensure that elderly groups are not being inadvertently isolated within this specific location.
- Visual severance from noise barriers was not considered and should have been included.

### Access to Open Space and Nature

- There were likely to be some losses around Tilbury/East Tilbury with a perceived loss of access to nature that needed to be included in the assessment and mitigated.
- The assessment needed to include people on low incomes and deprived areas and with long-term conditions with the sensitive communities.
- Overall, the assessment of open space needed to consider/assess the quantity, quality, accessibility and value of open space and replacement land and within its consideration of impacts/effects.
- Generally, mitigation or replacement open space needed to be high quality and be delivered early to benefit local residents, especially in relation to the replacement of the Ron Evans Memorial Park at Blackshots.
- The 'so-called' temporary closures/diversions of footpaths/cycleways needed further thought and mitigation, so as to support the Council in delivering increased usage.

### Air quality

- The Council has raised previous concerns to the consultation regarding the baseline monitoring and the limited PM<sup>10</sup> baseline monitoring issue has not been resolved, i.e. not covering PM<sup>2.5</sup>.
- Assessment summary of the A13 and surrounding roads did not consider cumulative impacts (widening of A13) and this area was highlighted as of particular concern.
- The draft Air Quality ES Chapter stated that no operational monitoring was proposed, as it was not considered to be required, however, some monitoring would provide reassurance as to impacts, especially in relation to public anxiety.
- The HEqIA relied on the identified significance of the air quality impacts on the Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) defined in the EU Directive. The assessment of air quality in the HEqIA was therefore considered to have the following limitations:
  1. the HEqIA consideration of air quality impacts failed to account for the fact that the health effects of the pollutants concerned are 'non-threshold' (particularly in the case of PM<sup>2.5</sup>) and adverse health effects occur well below the AQOs.
  2. relying solely on the assessment of significance of the Air Quality Chapter, which was predicated to the risk of exceeding the annual average AQOs, was therefore not considered an appropriate approach and did not account for health effects due to increase concentration of pollutant that remain below the AQO.
  3. the equality assessment of construction was limited to a single sentence that did not seem to be proportionate given the scale of activities.
  4. the Distributional Impact Assessment (not provided) identified that the air quality impact on the most deprived quintile is greater than for the total population, but concluded there is no differential impact. It was unclear how this conclusion was reached.

### Noise and vibration

- The evidence base section did not appear to acknowledge cumulative impacts from other noise sources.



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- Essential mitigation identified for the operation phase of the Project included a low noise/thin surfacing system surface being laid on all new and altered roads making up the Project. The draft Noise and Vibration ES Chapter stated that this provided a reduction in road traffic noise of 3.5 dB(A). What would the acoustic performance be after 5 or 10 years? If it is not the same, then the assessment needed to cover impacts without the noise reduction applied to the surface.
- Essential mitigation for the operation phase also included noise barriers. Little information is provided; therefore, the Council was seeking details from Highways England to determine the likely efficacy as well as potential visual impacts of the barriers on those communities that will be directly affected.
- The Council was concerned with the one-way communication proposed for informing residents of noisy works, particularly noisy work such as percussive piling. There was no attempt to resolve the adverse impact. Further details should be provided in an updated REAC.

3.3. As noted in Section two above, the Public Health Team are currently reviewing Highways England's response to the issues and concerns raised regarding the draft HEqIA submitted as part of DCOV1, in order to determine whether the issue has been dealt with appropriately.

### 4. Next steps

- The Council will discuss the CIPHAG meeting timetable with Highways England in order to build in adequate time for the Authorities to undertake a proposed joint QA review of the HEqIA, yet to be coordinated, and provide feedback to Highways England prior to the next CIPHAG meeting.
- The Public Health Team will complete their review of Highways England's response to the Council's comments on the draft HEqIA received in February 2021.
- To progress the issues raised on the draft HEqIA, the Public Health Team will then need to review the final HEqIA as submitted at DCOV1 (October 2020) to be able to validate the response issued by Highways England and determine the appropriateness of the response.
- The Public Health Team will propose to undertake a joint QA review with the other Authorities of the final HEqIA submitted at DCOV1.
- It is likely that there will be outstanding issues and further comments as a result of the review of the final HEqIA submitted at DCOV1 and to be submitted at DCOV2. Further discussions are likely to be required, which will need to be captured in the CIPHAG meetings.

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## LTC Task Force Paper

### Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) DCO – CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. At the Task Force meeting on 14 December 2020 (as recorded in the minutes, page 7) Councillor Muldowney highlighted L20 (now L21) in the Hatch Report mitigation list and felt it was good to see that carbon emissions offsetting would be discussed. She stated that carbon emissions would increase during route construction and operation, asking that if Highways England did not meet carbon emission guidelines, would money be granted to Thurrock Council. It was noted that concrete production drastically increased carbon emissions and this would be a problem for Highways England during construction of the scheme, as well as emissions during route operation. It was understood that Thurrock Council were currently working with Highways England on a Carbon Offset Fund, to be discussed during the mitigation meetings.
- 1.2. Within the main Hatch Report, published on 24 February (and its Non-Technical Summary) and with both documents now available on the Council's website - <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/thames-crossing/lower-thames-crossing-proposals>, page 86 sets out the following:

'Measure L20 (below) links closely to this with a proposal to establish clear annual targets for low emission vehicle usage to ensure emissions levels along the route are kept to a minimum. This could be monitored using the toll information, with financial penalties in place if targets are not met. This money would then fund green, sustainable carbon-reduction initiatives in the borough to off-set the impacts. Similarly to L18, this measure would also need to be implemented on the Dartford crossing to ensure both crossings are equally attractive for drivers to use'.

| Measure L20                  | Target (with penalties) for ultra-low emission vehicle usage on the LTC  |   |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Additional Description       | Ensure high levels of low-emission vehicle usage through establishing clear annual targets with financial penalties payable to the Council in the event of exceedance to offset local air quality impacts. |   |
| Type and Scale of Benefits   | Impact Areas   | Air quality   |
|                              | Qualitative Impact   | Reduce the negative impacts of higher emissions traffic and use any shortfall towards targets to fund green and sustainable initiatives |
|                              | Monetary(if applicable)  | n/a   |
| Scale of required Investment | Overall  | Dependent on target being met   |
|                              | % request from HE  | 100%  |
| Priority                     | High   |   |

| Measure L21            | Carbon offsetting of the LTC scheme  |  |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Additional Description | Generation of energy through willow planting to offset the carbon cost of the LTC scheme |  |
|                        | Impact Areas   | Environment, air quality, climate change |

## LTC Task Force Paper

|                                     |                                 |   |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Type and Scale of Benefits</b>   | <b>Qualitative Impact</b>       | These measures would offset the carbon created through the construction and operation of the LTC scheme and provide financially self-sustaining initiatives which contribute to a more sustainable Thurrock |
|                                     | <b>Monetary (if applicable)</b> | n/a   |
| <b>Scale of required Investment</b> | <b>Overall</b>                  | Medium - Initial £77,500 to establish coppice and willow plus upfront site restoration  |
|                                     | <b>% request from HE</b>        | 100%  |
| <b>Priority</b>                     | Standard                        |   |

### 1.3. The Hatch Report goes onto highlight further details of these measures:

'This measure promotes the planting of Short Rotation Coppice (SRC) and Short Rotation Forestry (SRF) willow in Thurrock to generate biomass for energy is a primary way for carbon from the LTC scheme to be offset. The Council commissioned a feasibility study in early 2020 looking at possible sites for planting, which can be shared with Highways England. The study finds that SRC could be planted on the former landfill site at Buckingham Hill, and that this site has sufficient area to produce a significant quantity of biomass fuel. It is likely this site would need to be restored before planting could occur. Spoil from the LTC tunnelling works could be used by Highways England or a partner organisation to restore the site.

A business case for the planting has been prepared and finds:

- Establishment costs for 18ha of SRC/SRF on the site would be £77,500 (after the site has been restored);
- Once established, SRC/SRF planting on the site would be revenue-generating and self-sufficient;
- Planting could be underway from 2021 and the SRC could be ready to harvest starting from winter 2024/2025;
- Substitution of fossil fuel derived heat with biomass heat from the SRC and SRF produced could lead to a saving of over 3,500 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over a 22-year period.

A joint venture delivery model between a commercial company and the Council would be sought to plant and manage the willow. If Highways England funded the establishment costs of £77,500 this could kick-start willow planting in Thurrock and provide an immediate benefit of c.15,000 trees being planted on the Buckingham Hill site (very close to the LTC). The establishment of this first site with the help of Highways England would then make smaller, more strategic planting sites viable across the borough'.

## 2. Current Highways England's Response

2.1 Within the original DCOV1 submission in October 2020 is the Environmental Statement (ES), which contains detailed assessments by topic area. One topic covered is 'Climate' and the Council reviewed an early draft chapter (provided to the Council in July 2020) and raised several issues: the lack of reference to the changing policy/legislative environment; the need for adequate monitoring; and, the need for providing much more detail about offsetting measures. Highways England responded to the points raised in February 2021 confirming that accommodating updates will be undertaken and stating that there is further detail within DCOV1, which the Council has yet to review.

2.2 In addition, the Council commented on the Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) in relation to 'Climate' indicating that further commitments are required to include embodied carbon from the use of materials and measures to reduce emissions, to include specific targets for Greenhouse Gases (GHG) during construction and provide commitments to improve resilience to climate change. The Council is still in the process of

## LTC Task Force Paper

reviewing the DCOV1 documentation to determine if all these matters have been addressed adequately or if further comments are necessary.

- 2.3 Although the Council has held a number of informal and positive meetings with Highways England over recent weeks to explain the 57 mitigation measures and they attended the 18 January Task Force to set out progress on including various measures into the DCO documentation, there has been no formal communication of their reaction to these measures yet.
- 2.4 Also, it is understood that Highways England, as part of LTC, are developing an Electric Vehicle Strategy that will include opportunities related to infrastructure, policy and market for all vehicle types. As part of developing this strategy, initially Highways England are seeking to understand local authority initiatives.

### 3. Current and Related Government Policy

- 3.1 Notwithstanding the above, Government through the DfT published its 'Decarbonising Transport – Setting the Challenge' Plan in March 2020 (80pp) – [Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/739460/road-to-zero.pdf). This was the likely result of the amendment of the Climate Change Act 2008 in June 2019, to require the UK to meet net zero by 2050. It sets out current transport modes and their GHG emissions; existing strategies and policies; the projected trajectory of forecast GHG emissions; the challenge and its six priorities; and, an outline of the engagement process to a final Plan. So, this initial document sets out the beginning of a process setting out the current situation and the emission reductions needed. It was followed by a consultation from July-August 2020 requesting ideas about the next steps to reduce emissions in transport. The final Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP), is likely to be published in spring 2021, but should set out in detail what government, business and society will need to do to deliver the significant emissions reduction needed across all modes of transport, putting the UK on a pathway to achieving carbon budgets and net zero emissions across every single mode of transport by 2050.
- 3.2 It is noted that the Transport Action Network (TAN) is undertaking/seeking to undertake two legal challenges of Government (DfT and Highways England) policy towards roads (transport is the largest sector for GHG emissions with 27% (with roads accounting for 90%, as set out - [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/739460/road-to-zero.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/739460/road-to-zero.pdf)):
- Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2) – challenging the Government's approval of its RIS2 £27b strategy (published in March 2020) on climate grounds, stating it did not take account of specific climate change objectives and did not include the impacts of air pollution or undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) within their assessment process.
  - National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN) – challenging the Government's refusal to review this policy, which it contends does not account for climate change and is out-of-date on matters of air pollution, biodiversity and design.
- 3.3 Clearly, Government policy towards a green growth agenda has been the subject of several key changes over recent years and further changes are likely. Any such formal policy and legislative changes will be required to be accounted for with the emerging DCO re-submission documentation.

### 4. Previous DCO Documentation

- 4.1 A 'Carbon and Energy Plan' (approximately 100pp) was submitted as an Appendix to the ES as part of DCOV1. It is not yet clear if this would be included in the subsequent DCO application or amended prior to re-submission. Notwithstanding this, it should be noted that carbon emissions from infrastructure account for 53% of the UK's total emissions. As a major infrastructure project, Highways England needs to ensure LTC contributes to the UK's net zero carbon goal. This Plan therefore sets out how it will do this by quantifying its likely carbon emissions and setting out methods for reducing them.

## LTC Task Force Paper

- 4.2 Highways England quantified LTC's emissions covering the construction phase and a sixty-year operational phase using the best available data. The carbon emissions resulting from the construction and operation of the Project are estimated to be 5,272,562 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) from operational traffic (over 50%), construction materials and enabling works emissions, maintenance and repair works, construction waste and risk items. Further details of the components are set out in the report.
- 4.3 In order to comply with the DfT's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges standards LA 114 'Climate', Highways England states that it has reduced emissions by including mitigation measures embedded in the preliminary design and by embedding carbon reductions in the construction stage through the procurement process to ensure that the Contractors are contractually bound to comply with relevant commitments.
- 4.4 The report sets out how reductions have been achieved, such as use of low carbon materials/operations, reduced size of assets (portals, bridges and junctions), changes to concrete/cement mix (involving more (from 50% to 65%) Ground Granulated Blast-Furnace Slag (GGBS)), planting trees and vegetation, reducing materials used, increasing electric plant and energy efficient equipment, contractors' to reduce emissions beyond the baseline and quantify/report emissions (during construction and operation) and a range of other measures involving compliance with other standards.

## 5. Summary and Next Steps

- 5.1 Progress on Hatch Report – the Council is in ongoing discussions with Highways England in its response to the measures set out in the Hatch Report and awaits its initial formal response, following which further discussions will be held to secure as many mitigation measures as possible prior to the DCO re-submission.
- 5.2 DCO Documentation and Commitments – the Council officers have not yet reviewed the Carbon & Energy Plan or had any discussions on its content. Furthermore, it is not yet clear what any Council required commitments will be or how they will be secured within the DCO documentation, although comments on the REAC have been made in October 2020 and responded to in February 2021. It is assumed that construction commitments for emissions will continue to be part of the CoCP and REAC (probably beyond those set out as CC001 – CC008). The final Carbon & Energy Plan within the DCO re-submission is also likely to be affected by recent changes in Government policy and legislation.
- 5.3 The Council will be undertaking a detailed review of the DCOV1 soon, once the above-mentioned responses to previous technical comments have been assessed and a further update can be provided at that time.
- 5.4 Legal Challenges – it is not yet known what the outcomes will be, but the RIS2 challenge may well have an outcome later this year.
- 5.5 LTC Response to Government Policy – once the Transport Decarbonisation Plan is finalised approximately in spring 2021, it will be the responsibility of Highways England to demonstrate their contribution to reducing emissions and then hopefully reflect that within parts of the DCO documentation and commitments. Furthermore, any other formal policy and legislative changes by Government will be required to be accounted for within the emerging DCO re-submission documentation.

**Lower Thames Crossing Task Force  
Work Programme 2020/21**

Dates of Meetings: 15 June 2020, 20 July 2020, 17 August 2020, 21 September 2020, 12 October 2020, 16 November 2020, 14 December 2020, 18 January 2021, 15 February 2021, 15 March 2021, 19 April 2021

| Topic                             | Lead Officer        | Requested by Officer/Member |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>15 June 2020 - Cancelled</b>   |                     |                             |
| <b>20 July 2020</b>               |                     |                             |
| Nomination of Chair               | Democratic Services | Officers                    |
| Nomination of Vice-Chair          | Democratic Services | Officers                    |
| LTC Consultation Presentation     | Anna Eastgate       | Members                     |
| Task Force Priorities List        | Anna Eastgate       | Members                     |
| Work Programme                    | Democratic Services | Officers                    |
| <b>17 August 2020 - Cancelled</b> |                     |                             |
| <b>21 September 2020</b>          |                     |                             |
| Highways England Attendance       | Anna Eastgate       | Members                     |
| Task Force Priorities List        | Anna Eastgate       | Members                     |
| Work Programme                    | Democratic Services | Officers                    |
| <b>12 October 2020</b>            |                     |                             |
| Economic Mitigation List          | Anna Eastgate       | Members                     |
| Health Impact Assessment Update   | Anna Eastgate       | Members                     |

|  |                     |          |
|--|---------------------|----------|
| Work Programme   | Democratic Services | Officers |
| <b>16 November 2020 - CANCELLED</b>  |                     |          |
| <b>14 December 2020</b>  |                     |          |
| DCO Withdrawal & Next Steps  | Anna Eastgate       | Officers |
| A303: Questions and Comments   | Anna Eastgate       | Officers |
| Economic Mitigation List   | Anna Eastgate       | Members  |
| Work Programme   | Democratic Services | Officers |
| <b>18 January 2021</b>   |                     |          |
| Highways England Attendance – Matt Palmer Introduction and Design Presentation | Anna Eastgate       | Members  |
| A303: Legal Challenge Update   | Anna Eastgate       | Members  |
| Economic Mitigation List   | Anna Eastgate       | Officers |
| Work Programme   | Democratic Services | Officers |
| <b>15 February 2021</b>  |                     |          |
| Energy White Paper   | Anna Eastgate       | Members  |
| Mitigation/Legacy Benefits Prioritisation – Verbal Update                      | Anna Eastgate       | Members  |
| Work Programme   | Democratic Services | Officers |
| <b>15 March 2021</b>   |                     |          |
| Environmental Impact Assessment Update   | Anna Eastgate       | Members  |
| Health Impacts Update  | Anna Eastgate       | Members  |
| CO2 Emissions  | Anna Eastgate       | Members  |
| Mitigation Update – verbal report  | Anna Eastgate       | Members  |



|                          |                     |          |
|--------------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Work Programme           | Democratic Services | Officers |
| <b>19 April 2021</b>     |                     |          |
| Economic Mitigation List | Anna Eastgate       | Members  |
| Work Programme           | Democratic Services | Officers |

Clerk: Lucy Tricker  
Last updated: 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021

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