

11 November 2021

New proposals to maximise Thames' shoreline

National Highways today (Thursday 11 November) set out plans to revise its proposals for land next to the River Thames to ensure it can be maximised in the best interests of the Thames Estuary.

An area of river frontage, which lies between the Port of Tilbury and the proposed Lower Thames Crossing tunnel entrance in Thurrock, is currently planned to form part of a new public park and environmental mitigation for the Lower Thames Crossing. However, through consultation with Thames Freeport it has become clear the land would form a key part of the Port of Tilbury growth plans as part of its Freeport proposal.

As requested by Thurrock Council, National Highways has agreed that it will change its proposed use of the river frontage, to ensure the Freeport's potential is not impacted by the Lower Thames Crossing scheme. Working with the Port of Tilbury and Thurrock Council, National Highways will be considering an update to the land use in the local area so that it can provide the new Tilbury Fields public park and environmental mitigation, as well as ensuring the river frontage can be maximised for the benefit of the Thames Estuary.

The Thames Estuary is the UK's number one growth opportunity. The area is uniquely placed to support the country's economic growth, our post-COVID recovery and the Government's levelling up agenda. Over the next decade billions of pounds of private and public money will be invested to maximise the economic, trade, job and connectivity opportunities the Thames Estuary holds.

Critical to this growth are the Thames Freeport and the Lower Thames Crossing and it is vital these two ambitious projects are delivered in partnership. The Freeport has the

potential to deliver 25,000 new jobs and will have improved connections to the rest of the country via the Lower Thames Crossing, part of the biggest investment in the UK's roads for a generation. Together, they represent a huge opportunity to maximise the land to the north of the Thames, which has been under-utilised for decades.

Matt Palmer, Lower Thames Crossing Executive Director, said: “One of our top priorities is supporting economic growth across the Thames Estuary and the Government’s Freeport proposals will play an important role in the region’s future. We are committed to working with our partners in the area to unlock the full potential of the region.

“We welcome the opportunity to review and update our plans for Tilbury Fields so we can support the Freeport’s ambition to create jobs and trade, while also providing the local community with a fantastic new park with views across the estuary.”

Leader of Thurrock Council, Councillor Rob Gledhill, said: “Thurrock Council welcomes this move by National Highways to incorporate the Freeport proposals into the Lower Thames Crossing design. Both the Lower Thames Crossing and the Thames Freeport are significant schemes, that will impact and benefit Thurrock. Whilst Thurrock Council remain opposed to the route of the Lower Thames Crossing this announcement does ensure that the Thames Freeport riverside opportunity is guaranteed, we will continue to work with both National Highways and the Ports to ensure the best outcomes for our community.”

National Highways will be using the additional time required to revise its Tilbury Fields proposals to consider further improvements to its Lower Thames Crossing plans following its Community Impacts Consultation held earlier this year. The revisions to the Tilbury Fields proposals and any further changes to the Lower Thames Crossing plans will be shared with communities and stakeholders. It intends to submit its DCO application to seek permission to build and operate the crossing in 2022.

National Highways is also in discussions with the Department for Transport, Thurrock Council, Port of Tilbury, and London Gateway, on what further changes to the strategic road network are needed to support growth ambitions for the area.

The existing ports at Tilbury are important for the economy of Thurrock and, following discussions with Thurrock Council and the Port of Tilbury, a separate project to develop options for a dedicated Tilbury Link Road improving connectivity between the Port and the strategic road network via the Lower Link Road Thames Crossing has been launched by National Highways. The proposed Freeport has increased the importance of this link, and National Highways will continue work with Thurrock Council and Port of Tilbury to explore how to best to fund and bring forward such a project.

Stuart Wallace, Chief Operating Officer, Forth Ports Limited, said: "The Thames Freeport plans exist amongst a constellation of supportive initiatives that will amplify the impact of the Freeport, this includes the Lower Thames Crossing which will relieve pressure on the region's road network. The Port of Tilbury, along with its partners, has developed a strong case for the Thames Freeport demonstrating the significant economic and regeneration benefits that the Freeport can bring to Thurrock and the wider Thames Estuary through the use of the riverside land. We have worked collaboratively with the Lower Thames Crossing team and Thurrock Council to ensure that both the Freeport and the Crossing can bring the maximum benefit to the local area and its residents.

"We are pleased that the necessity for the Tilbury Link Road is now recognised and that this will be delivered; further maximising the benefits that can be derived from both the Lower Thames Crossing and the Thames Freeport. We will work in partnership with both National Highways and Thurrock Council to deliver the link road & the Lower Thames Crossing in the required timescale."

National Highways has also proposed to take on Thurrock Council's responsibility for operating & maintaining the A13 east of M25. This would allow National Highways to

provide support to London Gateway traffic from the M25 and the future Lower Thames Crossing.

For more information on the proposed Lower Thames Crossing scheme, please visit: highwaysengland.co.uk/our-work/lower-thames-crossing/

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

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For further information please contact Highways England's press office (24hrs) on 0844 693 1448 and select the most appropriate option below:

- Option 1: **National enquiries** (9am to 5.30pm) & **out of hours for urgent enquiries**
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