

THAMES CROSSING ACTION GROUP

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27th March 2022

Dear Mr Andrews

We are emailing after learning about a letter you have sent to Local Authorities dated 18th Jan 2022, regarding the Department for Transport's (DfT) position on the Major Road Network (MRN) / Large Local Major (LLM) programme following the Spending Review.

We understand that the DfT's position now is that all Local Authorities and Sub-National Transport Bodies should consider whether projects would meet a set of guidelines that includes:

- Reducing congestion
- Supporting economic growth and rebalancing
- Supports all road users
- Supports the Strategic Road Network (SRN)
- Not making carbon worse and lead to a lower Value for Money, especially now the cost of carbon has been increased substantially.
- Should support active travel and bus improvements

In keeping with these points we would like to draw your attention to the fact that:

- The proposed Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) would still leave the Dartford Crossing over capacity, and with all the associated congestion and pollution. It would also bring new congestion since there are not adequate connections between it and the existing road network. As well as the fact that National Highways are not considering and planning how traffic would migrate between the two crossings, if LTC goes ahead, when there are incidents and there would not be adequate connections, meaning yet more chaos, congestion and pollution. It would therefore not reduce congestion.
- On the topic of economic growth, the original remit of a new crossing was to solve the problems of the Dartford Crossing. However it has slowly morphed into being about economic development rather than fixing traffic issues. That said, National Highways have refused to release an estimated figure of economic growth/benefit to the public. It is therefore impossible to know whether it would support economic growth, and is also questionable as to whether this should be a priority of the project anyway.
- The proposed LTC would be classified as an All-Purpose Trunk Road, but is being designed to 'Smart' Motorway Standards (using smart technology, having no hard shoulder), and would

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only be able to use be used by vehicles that can legally use a motorway. It would therefore not benefit all road users.

- It would also have negative impacts to local and existing road networks, due to poor planning and lack of adequate connections. It would therefore not support the SRN.
- The proposed LTC is estimated to emit over 5 million tonnes of carbon emissions. The carbon costs for construction alone have increased by 230% since the increase to carbon costs. It is estimated that the overall cost of carbon for construction and the first 60 years of operation would be over £1bn.

The current estimated cost of the LTC project is now up to £8.2bn (a considerable increase from £3.72bn in 2016), and that was announced before the rise in carbon costs. It can therefore in no way be considered to not be making carbon worse, and does not represent good Value for Money.

- The actual LTC route does not allow for any active travel, there would be no provision for using active travel to cross the river. The poor design and lack of adequate connections also means that the proposed route would not be viable for bus routes.

With all this in mind we would ask whether projects in RIS2, such as the proposed LTC will be reviewed and assessed on the same new guidelines? And if not, then respectfully, why not? After all, many of these new guidelines are vital in the climate emergency, and climate change does not discriminate what type of road project is causing the harm.

We thank you for your time and consideration, and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Thanks and kind regards

Laura Blake

Chair – Thames Crossing Action Group

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CC to – Adam Holloway MP – Gravesham; Stephen Metcalfe MP – South Basildon and East Thurrock; Jackie Doyle-Price MP – Thurrock; Julia Lopez – Hornchurch and Upminster; Thurrock Council, Gravesham Council, Havering Council.