

THAMES CROSSING
ACTION GROUP
www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com

30th August 2022

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Dear Mr Rees-Mogg

We are writing to you in your position as Minister of State (Minister for Brexit Opportunities and Government Efficiency), which we know includes responsibility for the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

We also understand that you have concerns about the wasting of large amounts of public money on huge infrastructure projects, which is why we felt the need to contact you regarding the proposed Lower Thames Crossing (LTC).

The original reason for a new Thames crossing was because of the problems suffered due to the current Dartford Crossing. The current crossing has a design capacity of 135,000 vehicles per day, yet regularly sees 180,000 per day. This means that we'd need to see a reduction of more than 25% to bring it back below capacity.

Yet the proposed LTC would take as little as 4% in the am peak and 11% in the pm peak, and is estimated would increase cross river traffic by around 50%¹. Clearly this would not solve the problems.

Not only that but National Highways are not considering or planning how traffic would migrate between the two crossings when there are incidents, of which there are currently around 3000 at the Dartford Crossing alone per year, and there would not be adequate connections.

Just two quick example scenarios.

- Incident at the Dartford Tunnels, traffic comes off the M25 onto the A2 coastbound to reach the LTC, only to find there is just one single lane from the A2 coastbound onto the LTC.
- Incident at the QE2 bridge, traffic comes off the M25 onto the A13 eastbound only to find there is no access to the LTC from the A13 eastbound, and instead has to go all the way to the Stanford A1014 junction, up around a busy traffic lighted roundabout (alongside Thames Freeport traffic), and back westbound on A13 to LTC slip road just past (but not accessible) from the Orsett A128 junction.

If instead traffic comes off M25 onto LTC, the M25 at this point would be 5 lanes going onto just two lanes southbound on the LTC. It would not be long before M25 traffic was backed up to junctions 29 and 28 with rat running via any route possible.

Put simply the result would be more chaos, congestion and pollution.

And the financial cost of the hugely destructive and harmful Lower Thames Crossing that is not fit for purpose, and won't solve the problems at the Dartford Crossing? The ever-rising cost is currently up to £8.2bn which is likely to rise further due to the ongoing delays, rising construction costs, increases in carbon net zero costs and other factors.

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Further assessment of the true financial cost should be considered too. If the proposed LTC goes ahead other associated works would also need to be funded. For instance, the Tilbury Link Road and Blue Bell Hill improvements have both at one time been part of possible LTC routes, yet are both now being progressed as stand-alone projects. The Port of Dover have publicly called for the A2 near Dover to be dualled to accommodate traffic using the LTC too. There are other roads that various representatives have also declared would need upgrading as a direct result of the LTC if it goes ahead, including Gallows Corner. The way it is now designed results in local road networks being utilized as part of the LTC design, and will result in further funding being needed to cover the increased usage of these local road networks. To avoid including these associated costs would be a false economy.

The proposed LTC would be hugely destructive and harmful, as well as not meeting any of the scheme objectives and being unfit for purpose. The carbon emissions of the project are estimated to be over 7 million tonnes. The whole route fails on WHO-10 levels for PM2.5 (air pollution) which has been proposed to be enshrined into UK law by the end of Oct 2022. There are also serious concerns that it is being designed to 'smart' motorway standards.

It would destroy and impact homes, lives, health and well-being, greenbelt, thousands of acres of agricultural land (inc grade 1 listed) at a time of serious food security issues, woodland (inc ancient woodland), wildlife and habitat, solar farms, businesses, communities and more.

National Highways themselves have admitted in their own report that failure to deliver the LTC is Extreme and likely, and as an existential threatⁱⁱ.

Is spending £8.2bn+ of taxpayers' money on a hugely destructive and harmful project that is not fit for purpose really considered Government efficiency?

Thank you for your time, we are happy to discuss further, and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards

Laura Blake

Chair – Thames Crossing Action Group

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cc. Stephen Metcalfe MP, Jackie Doyle Price MP, Adam Holloway MP, Louis French MP, Julia Lopez MP, Thurrock Council, Gravesham Borough Council, London Borough of Havering

ⁱ <https://lowerthamescrossingthurrock.co.uk/wider-debate-is-needed-on-the-merits-of-ltc-creating-a-new-m25-outer-orbital-route>

ⁱⁱ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002845/Highways_AR21_Interactive.pdf (pages 48 and 54)