

By email to Consultation Inbox lrc.consultation@traverse.ltd
Tim Jones, Project Director Tim.Jones@lowerthamescrossing.co.uk

20th December 2018

**Lower Thames Crossing Statutory Consultation:
South East Local Enterprise Partnership response**

Dear Tim

We are pleased to offer the South East Local Enterprise Partnership's strategic response to the statutory consultation on the **Lower Thames Crossing**. As you know, we are the biggest LEP in the country by most empirical measures and, together, we are representative of many of the organisations who are directly impacted by the proposed scheme.

Improving cross-Thames connectivity is a critical underpinning of our future economic vitality. At a time when uncertainties around the economy abound, and the strain on our existing infrastructure is unrelenting, a project which promotes new economic linkages – and therefore resilience - between Essex and Kent is to be warmly welcomed. On that basis, the South East LEP **supports** the Lower Thames Crossing.

As an organisation, we are committed to maximising the local benefit from the investment, and playing our part in minimising the disbenefits. We should highlight our recognition of **Thurrock Council's objection** to the scheme and considered this at length at our recent Strategic Board meeting. We would like to work on the understanding that the views of individuals and organisations who have justified concerns about the scheme, like Thurrock Council and the Thurrock Business Board, will be given the utmost attention as the project continues to Development Consent Order stage.

We are also keen to ensure that Government policy is fully taken into consideration and would suggest that the Department for Transport's own [Port Connectivity Study](#) is a material consideration as the scheme design matures. Sir John Armitt's Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission also set an ambitious vision around development and, particularly, housing. The Lower Thames Crossing has to be an enabler here; it demands an approach rooted in multi-agency partnership with a keen focus on delivery.

It would not be prudent to repeat verbatim the views expressed by our federated area boards or by other organisations represented on the South East LEP Strategic Board. Nevertheless, we have undertaken to amplify the following positions which were raised at our Board meeting or have been reported to us directly. The comments highlighted below reflect South East LEP's consistent position on the crossing: firstly, that there are enormous **economic opportunities** afforded to us here to which we must respond over the coming years; and secondly, that matching **upgrades to the connected network** must be delivered concurrently for any real local benefit to be felt.

Area	Comments
<i>Major economic implications and areas for focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growth enabled through reliable access to new markets locally. A positive transformation of Travel to Work Areas (TTWA) and Travel to Learn Areas (TTLA), removing previous barriers between Essex and Kent in terms of learning and employment. We should look to work in partnership to capitalise on this and ensure a positive legacy around skills. - It will be incumbent upon all of us to optimise opportunities relating to the opening up of sites for inward investment, further job creation and housing. We expect that these considerations will inform the next phases of planning for the crossing. - We anticipate a significant pick up in employment opportunities through the six year construction phase. There is a requirement to ensure that these jobs are taken up by local people where possible and that local business supply chains are enabled to engage appropriately. - There is limited access to the crossing from the Thurrock area (including from the Port of Tilbury), which seems incongruous when you consider that the impact of the crossing is most keenly felt there. The removal of access since previous consultations surely means that the local economic benefit is concomitantly reduced and this is a shared local concern which has to be picked up.
<i>Strengthening ancillary routes – North</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is clear that resilience must be built into the wider networks across the LEP to ensure that congestion is eliminated rather than driven further down the road. This will include some serious commitment from Highways England on mitigations around the Fairglen Interchange (A127, A13, A130) and Howe Green (A130, A12) junctions and wider investment in the A127. - We share the disappointment about the removal of the Tilbury Link from the scheme. We think that its absence is a retrograde step, eliminates the potential for local business growth and seems to ignore the national economic significance of substantial growth at the Port of Tilbury. - The design of the Tilbury Junction must pay due regard to future growth in the area and change to accommodate new exits and links. It is not sufficient future proofing for this junction to just service the rest area. - Similarly, we are surprised that there is no link from the A128 junction at Orsett Cock to access the LTC southbound or northbound, given the opportunity for growth that this would otherwise provide. - At the A13 Interchange we recognise that there would be clear demand for northbound crossing traffic to access the A13 westbound and for eastbound traffic on the A13 to access the southbound crossing similarly. Provision for this should be included in the scheme.



*Strengthening
ancillary routes –
South*

- It is clear that resilience must be built into the wider networks across the LEP to ensure that congestion is eliminated rather than driven further down the road. In Kent this relates to the **M2/A2 corridor** as follows:
 - Upgrading M2 J7 at Brenley Corner to improve flows between the A2 and M2, removing the connection with local network
 - Dualling the A2 from Lydden to the Port of Dover
 - 3-laning of the M2 to handle increased flows. This is essential along the route of the motorway and an imperative between junctions 4 and 5.
- **Linkage between M20 and M2** as follows:
 - Improvements to linkages between the two motorways to avoid impending local traffic. Specifically this manifests as upgrades to the A229 (Bluebell Hill) and A249 (Detling Hill). The traffic modelling rather understates the impact of the additional crossing on these two pinch points.
 - Lorry park provision becomes an even more important consideration. A network of lorry parks ought to be delivered across the M2 and M20 to eradicate inappropriate parking which is currently blighting the network and stands to increase with the new crossing.

It is perhaps reflective of the foresight and ambition of the senior politicians and senior business leaders on the South East LEP board, that we have also looked beyond the Lower Thames Crossing – specifically to the longer term requirement for multimodal **crossings further east** to accommodate the sustained growth of our area and further improve north-south connectivity. We would wish to engage in those conversations with the Department for Transport and Highways England in due course.

For now, our focus should be on supporting the Lower Thames Crossing and ensuring that we all work together to realise the **maximum possible benefit** across our whole area. Local communities, particularly in Thurrock, need to be convinced of the opportunity rather than the imposition.

Our ability to trade and to grow has never been under more scrutiny. We should therefore push ahead at pace, whilst respecting and responding to local requirements at every possible step.

Yours sincerely

Christian Brodie
Chairman
South East LEP