



Lower Thames Crossing
Project update

Summer 2019



Director CIP, Chris Taylor.

Foreword

Welcome to the Lower Thames Crossing consultation update

At the end of 2018 we held the most comprehensive consultation Highways England has ever undertaken and we received a record breaking response with around 15,000 people attending our 60 events and almost 29,000 people sharing their views on our proposals. I would like to thank everyone who took part.

Since the consultation we have been reviewing all of the feedback and our commitment to you is to consider each and every response we received and to use that feedback as we continue to develop our proposals ahead of submitting our Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

We will publish a full consultation report as part of our DCO application, however to keep you updated on progress we are now issuing an interim update on the key themes we heard during the consultation. This update sets out levels of support for and opposition to our proposals and some of the suggestions made as to how we can improve the design of the Lower Thames Crossing.

There is significant support for our proposals with more than 80% of respondents supporting the need for a new crossing and 70% supporting the location, however we recognise that there are a number of areas of concern. Our work now is focused on continuing to improve our proposals. It is vital we get all aspects of the design, construction and operation right to minimise the impacts and maximise the benefits.

We received a record breaking response with around 15,000 people attending our 60 events and almost 29,000 people sharing their views

The level of detail in the feedback we received through our consultation and our comprehensive programme of ground investigations means we want to take additional time to improve our proposals and to develop our DCO application.

We now intend to submit our DCO application in summer 2020. This does not impact on our overall programme and we are on target to open the Lower Thames Crossing in 2027 as we have further developed our approach to construction to schedule work concurrently and reduce the overall time required for construction.

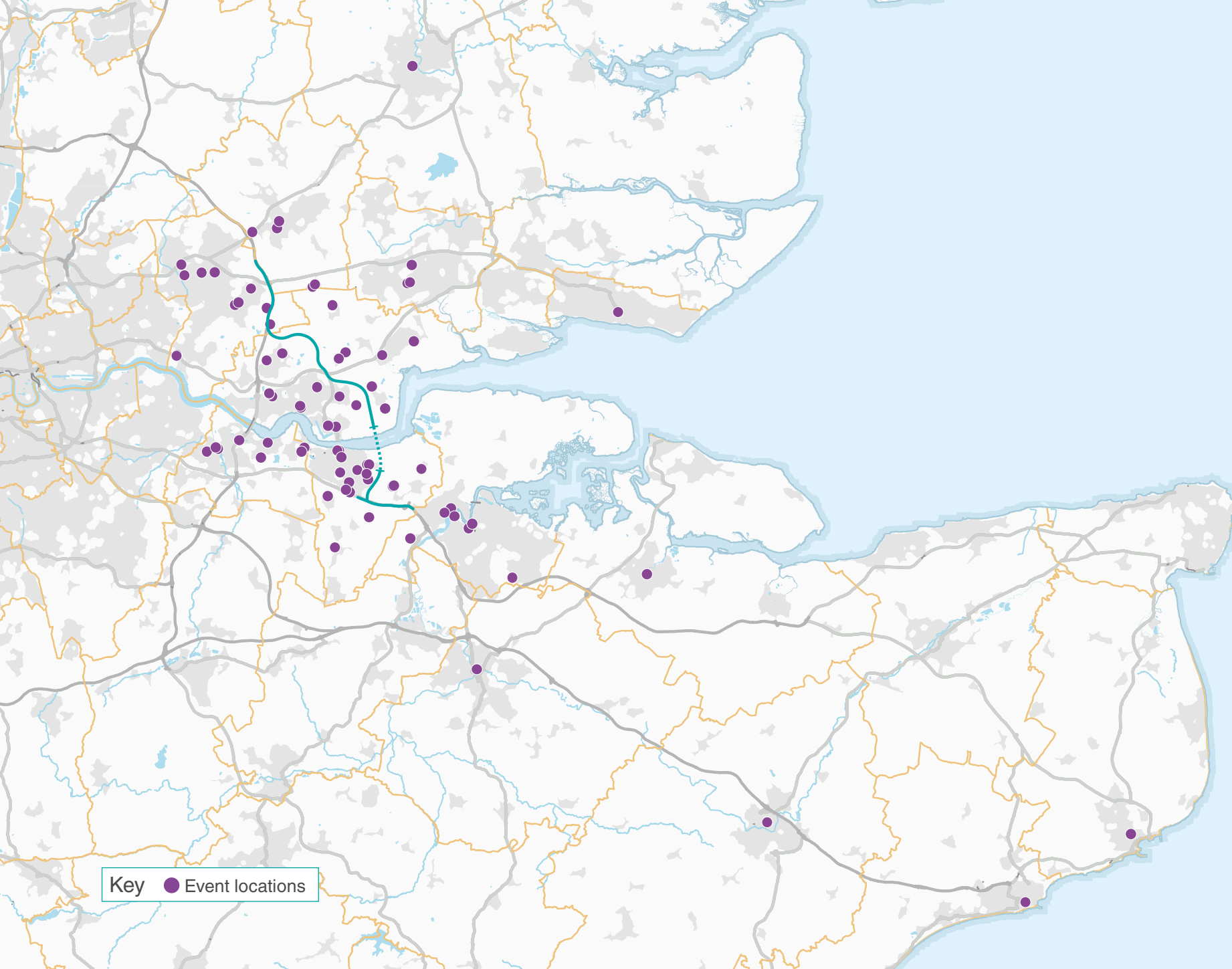
Ahead of submitting our DCO application in summer 2020 we will continue to review the feedback we received during last year's consultation and consider it as we develop the design of the route. We will share design updates with stakeholders and communities and we may need to consult further on proposed changes. We will of course keep communities, customers and stakeholders updated as our plans progress. We may also choose to consult further on proposed changes to the project as it develops.

Please visit our website www.lowerthamescrossing.co.uk to sign up to our email updates or follow us on Twitter @lowerthames to keep up to date.

Thank you again for your continued interest in the Lower Thames Crossing.

Chris Taylor
Director, Complex Infrastructure Programme
Highways England

It is vital we get all aspects of the design, construction and operation right to minimise the impacts and maximise the benefits



The consultation

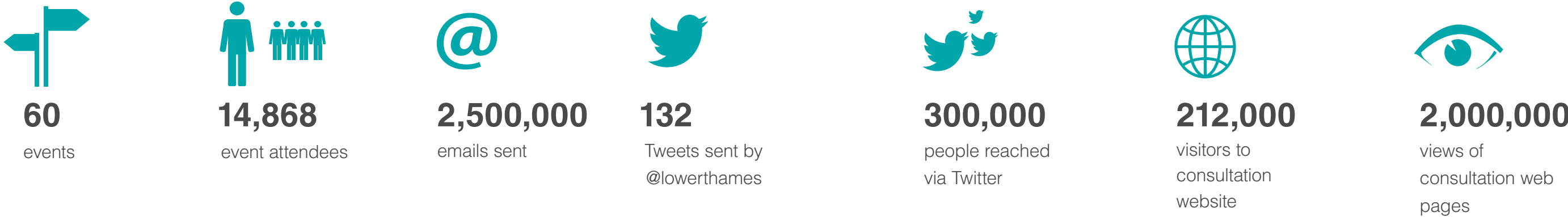
A ten-week consultation ran from 10 October to 20 December 2018 providing stakeholders and the public with an opportunity to have their say on our proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing.

Working with our stakeholders

We attended more than 100 meetings with stakeholders including local authorities, statutory environmental bodies, business representatives and local elected representatives including MPs and ward councillors.

Promoting the consultation

We issued three news releases that were widely covered across local, regional and national news outlets. We received more than 300 pieces of coverage on radio and television, online and in newspapers.



Welcome

Lower Thames Crossing consultation event

Here's what you will find on panels around the room:

- What is the Lower Thames Crossing?
- Why the Lower Thames Crossing is so important
- The route
- Local communities and the environment
- Building the Lower Thames Crossing
- Using the Lower Thames Crossing
- The story so far



Your responses

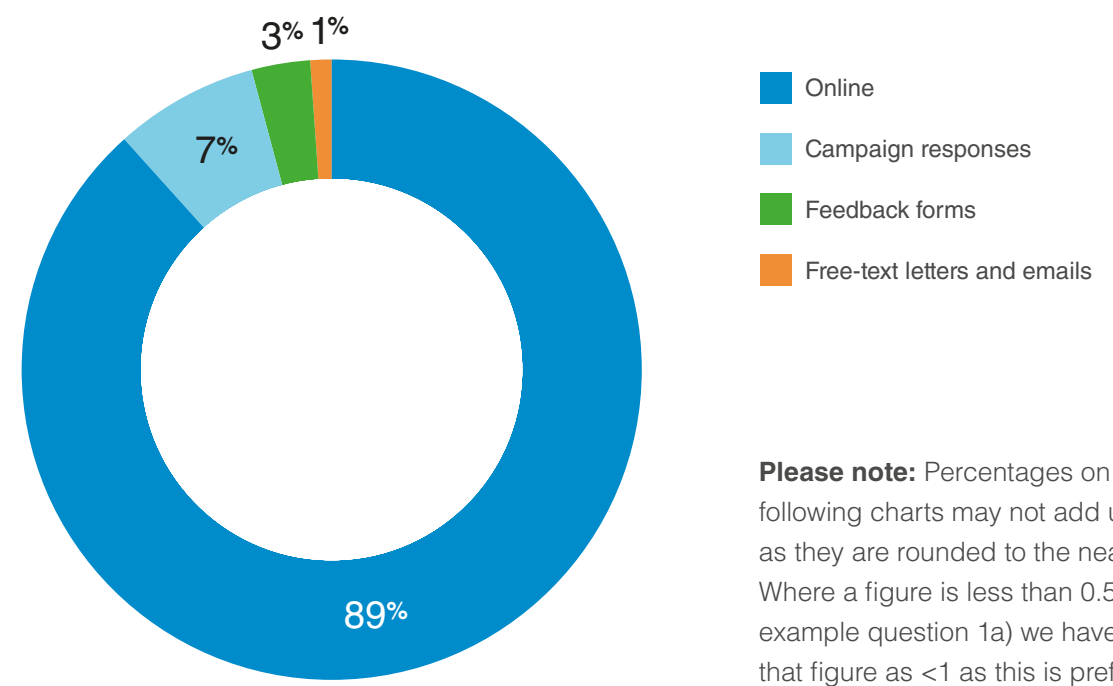
28,493
responses received.

This is a record for a consultation of its type. The consultation responses were received and analysed by Traverse, an independent company specialising in public consultations.

To view Traverse's Executive Summary of the issues raised during the consultation please visit www.lowerthamescrossing.co.uk. The full statutory consultation report providing detailed information about the consultation process, the issues raised and our responses to them will be published as part of our Development Consent Order application.

The following pages provide a summary of the responses received during the consultation.

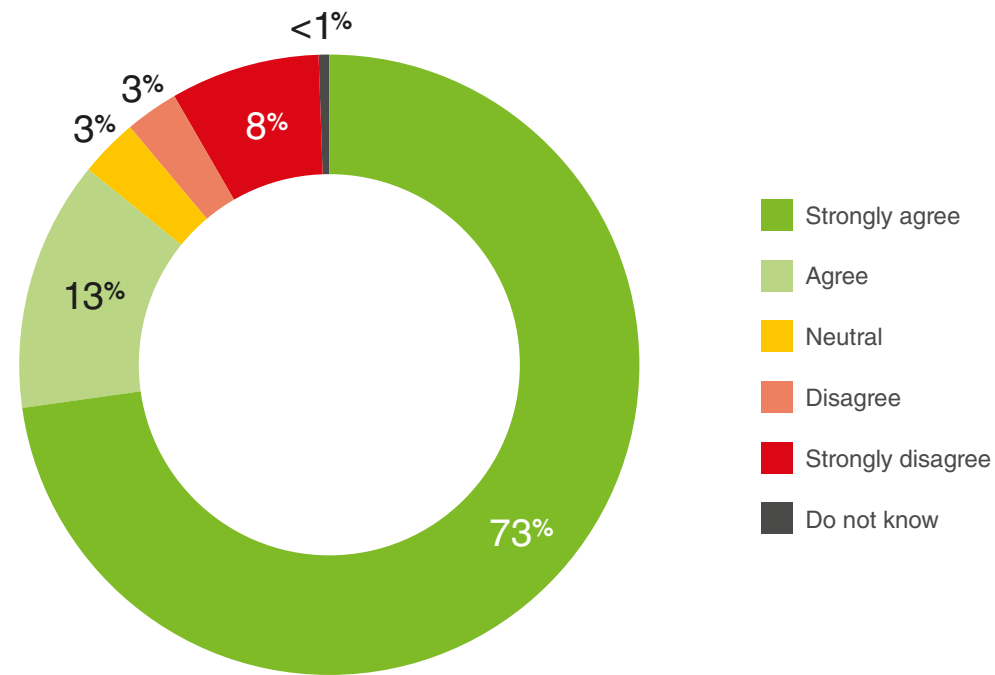
How we received the responses



Please note: Percentages on this and following charts may not add up to 100%, as they are rounded to the nearest percent. Where a figure is less than 0.5% (For example question 1a) we have displayed that figure as <1 as this is preferable to 0%.

The need for a new crossing

1a. Do you agree or disagree that the Lower Thames Crossing is needed?



Highlighted comments

Support

Want to alleviate the existing levels of congestion on the Dartford Crossing on the M25 and the strategic and local road network, highlighting time spent in traffic and the financial cost and health impacts associated with heavy congestion.

Opposed

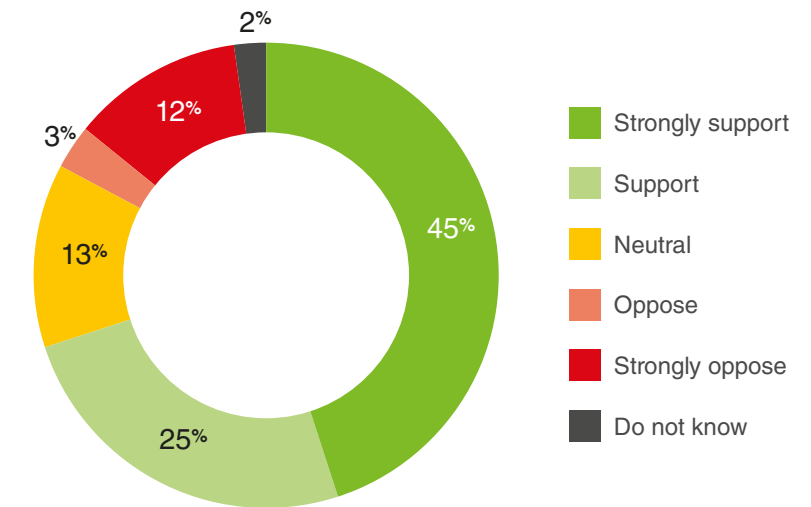
It won't improve the current traffic situation and might make it worse by attracting more cars. It would disrupt local communities and worsen air quality.

Suggestions

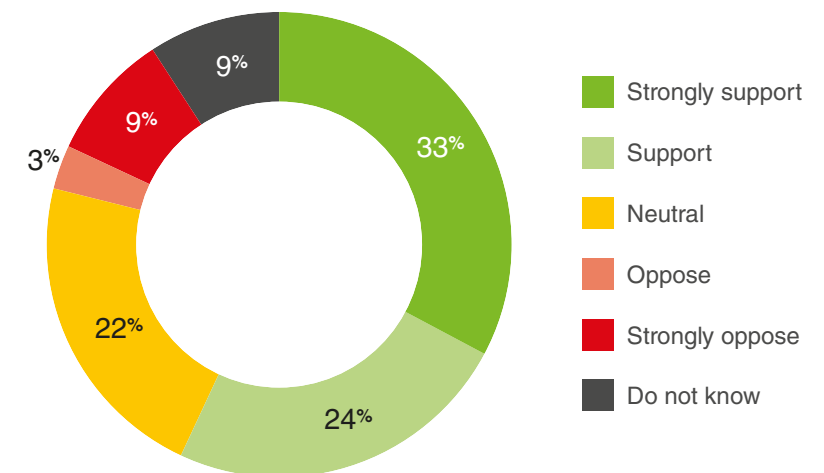
Invest more in public transport, particularly rail, and find ways to reduce the volume of traffic on the road. Find alternative ways to move freight to reduce the number of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on the road.

The location of the crossing

2a. Do you support or oppose our selection of the preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing?



2b. Do you support or oppose the changes we have made to the route since our preferred route announcement in 2017?



Highlighted comments

Support

It would alleviate traffic congestion and improve the resilience of the road network whilst reducing journey times and providing a more direct route between areas.

Opposed

It is too close to the Dartford Crossing to offer a real alternative or it would attract more traffic onto the already overcrowded local road network.

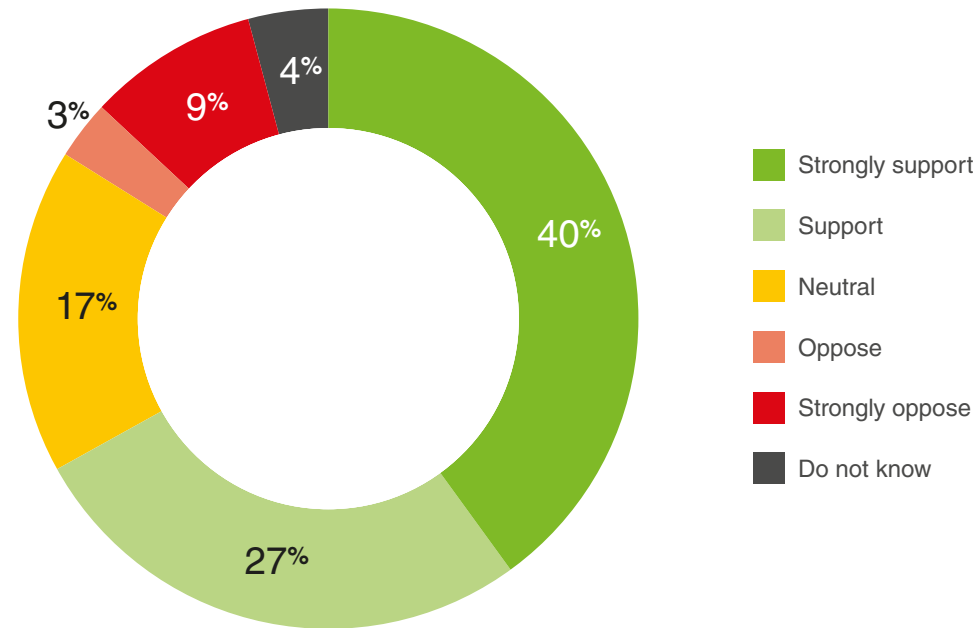
Suggestions

Other locations for a crossing both east and west of the preferred route were suggested, including options previously considered by the Department for Transport (DfT).

Sections of the route

South of the river in Kent

3a. Do you support or oppose the proposed route south of the river?



The crossing

3c. Please give us your comments on the tunnel, the north and the south tunnel entrances and any other feedback you have on this part of the preferred route.



Highlighted comments

Support

Supporters of this section make similar arguments to those who support the location of the preferred route. Bridges and embankments are a necessary part of the design and the inclusion of green bridges is a good thing.

Opposed

Concerned about traffic and the impact on the existing road network and the already congested A2. Impact on residential areas and the visual impact of bridges. Impact on designated sites such as Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Suggestions

Go back to the previously considered Eastern Southern Link, upgrade the existing local road network or make changes to the design such as making the tunnel longer.

Highlighted comments

Support

Want the tunnel built as soon as possible. Support the use of a tunnel rather than a bridge, the number of lanes and the location of the tunnel entrances.

Opposed

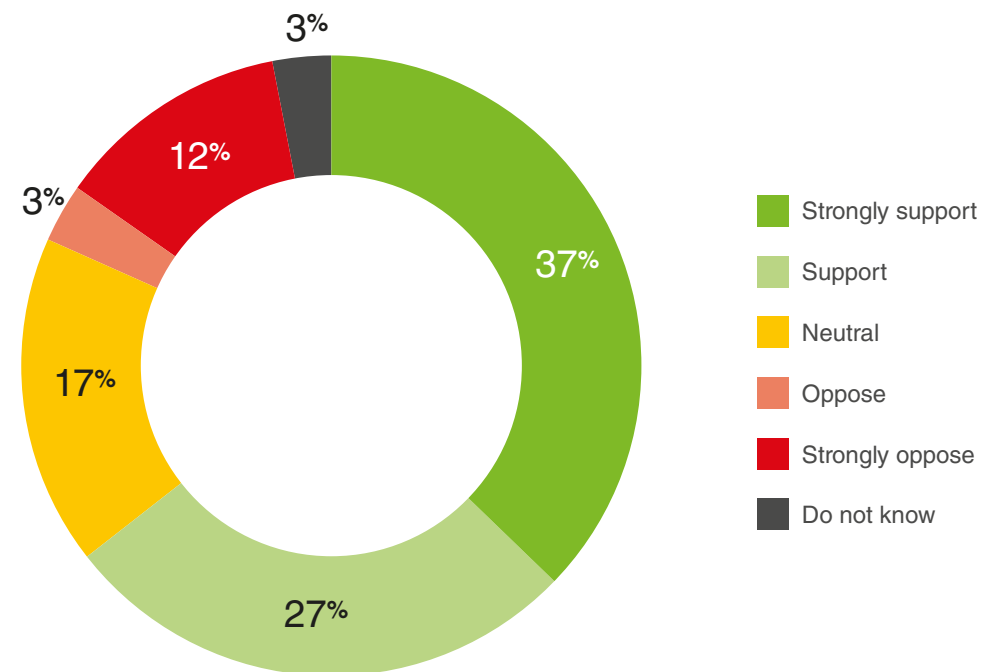
It would have a negative impact on air quality, noise, wildlife and the green belt. There may not be enough lanes to meet future traffic demand and concerned that HGVs using the tunnel could hold up traffic like at the existing crossing.

Suggestions

The tunnel must be future-proofed to cope with increasing traffic volumes. It should have more lanes, be longer, there should be more tunnels or it should be a bridge instead.

North of the river in Thurrock and Essex

3d. Do you support or oppose the proposed route north of the river?



Highlighted comments

Support

Supporters make similar arguments to those who support the location of the preferred route. The design of bridges, viaducts and embankments is sympathetic to local surroundings.

Opposed

Would negatively impact communities in Thurrock and could make already high levels of pollution worse. Might make the A13, Orsett and Ockendon more congested. The viaduct over the Mardyke is too high and should be changed to reduce its impact.

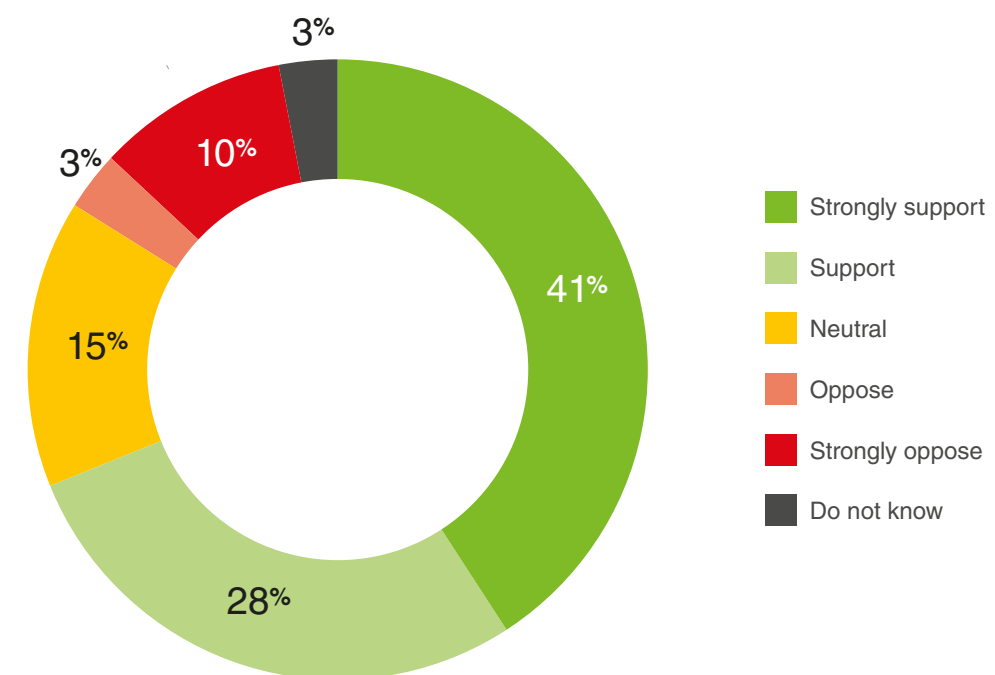
Suggestions

Route should be changed to one suggested during the 2016 route consultation. It should link to the A12 or the M11 and the existing local road network should be improved.

Connections

Connections south of the river in Kent

4a. Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M2/A2?



Highlighted comments

Support

It will take traffic away from some sections of the A2 and help to reduce traffic at the Dartford Crossing.

Opposed

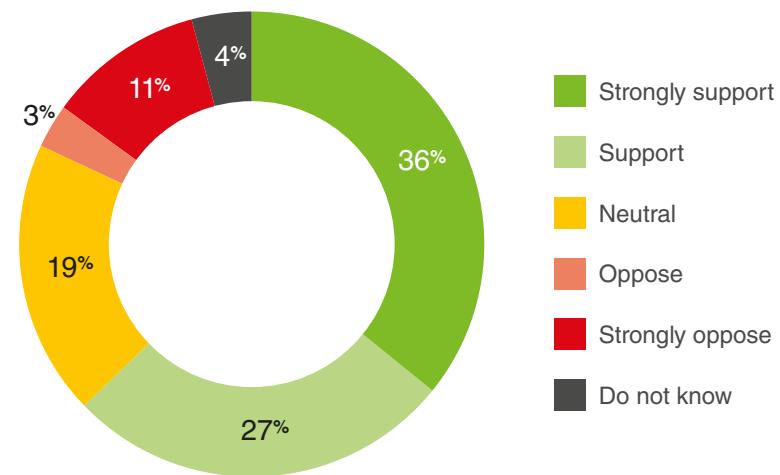
Potential impacts of the new road on both major and local roads in Kent have not been properly considered. The removal of the junction with the A226 could restrict local access. There are also concerns about the impact on local communities, wildlife and air quality.

Suggestions

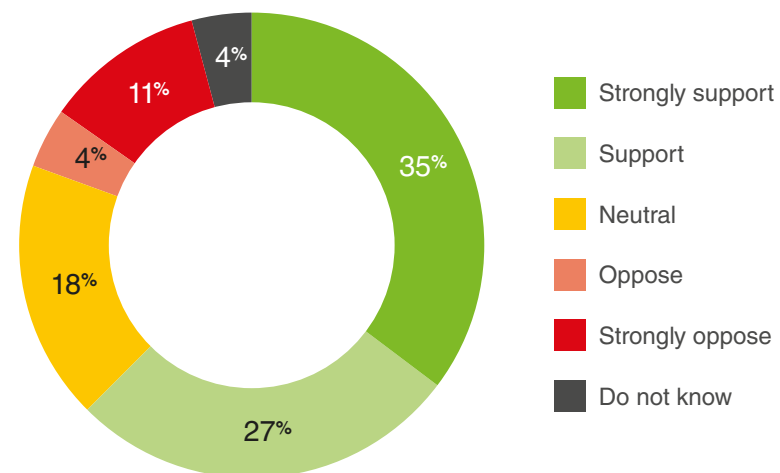
Add the 'C variant' link to the M20 which was explored in our previous studies. Improve the existing strategic road network in Kent, including the M2, A2, M20 and A20 and connections between them.

Connections north of the river in Thurrock and Essex

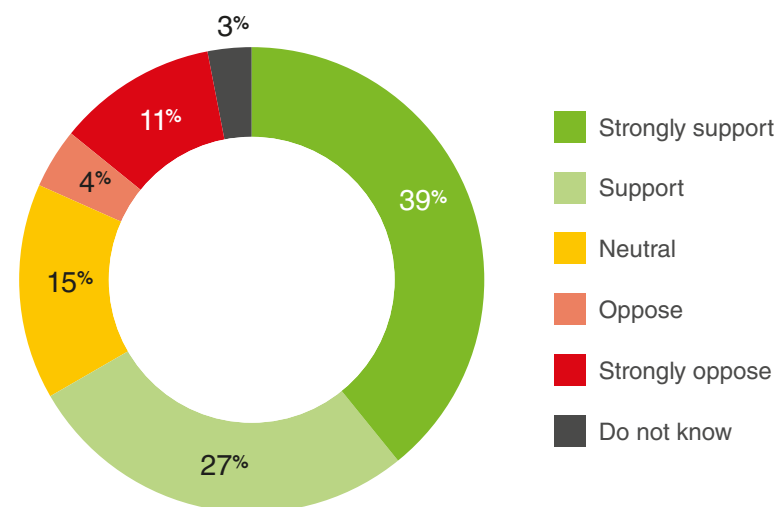
4c. Do you support or oppose the proposed Tilbury junction?



4d. Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the A13/A1089?



4e. Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M25?



Highlighted comments

Support

Potential impacts on local communities have been minimised. The connections would smooth traffic flows, reduce pollution and support the economy. The junction with the A13/A1089 would provide access to one of the key arterial roads through South Essex.

Opposed

Would negatively impact local communities, make congestion and air quality worse. Concern that the junction with the A13/A1089 would add more traffic to the A13 and local roads and make certain journeys take longer.

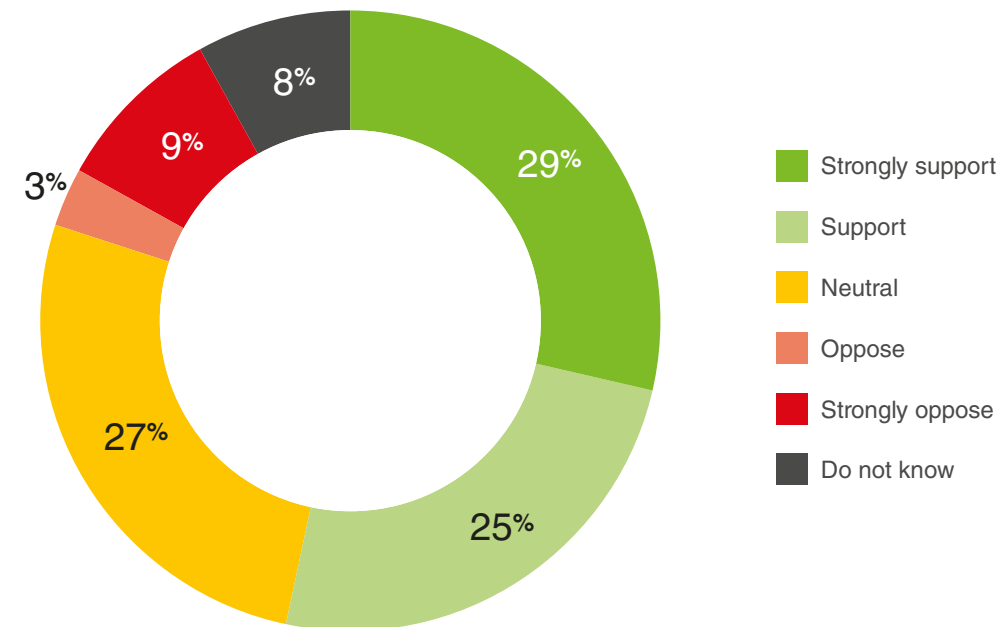
Suggestions

The link road from Tilbury junction should be included to provide access to Tilbury port area and stimulate the local economy. There should be direct access between the Lower Thames Crossing and the A127.

Concerned about impact of elevated sections of the junction with the M25 and the impact on local woodlands. The changes to junction 29 of the M25 could attract more traffic to the already busy A127.

Walkers, cyclists and horse-riders

5. Do you support or oppose our proposals in relation to public rights of way?



Highlighted comments

Support

Public rights of way should be maintained or reinstated.

Opposed

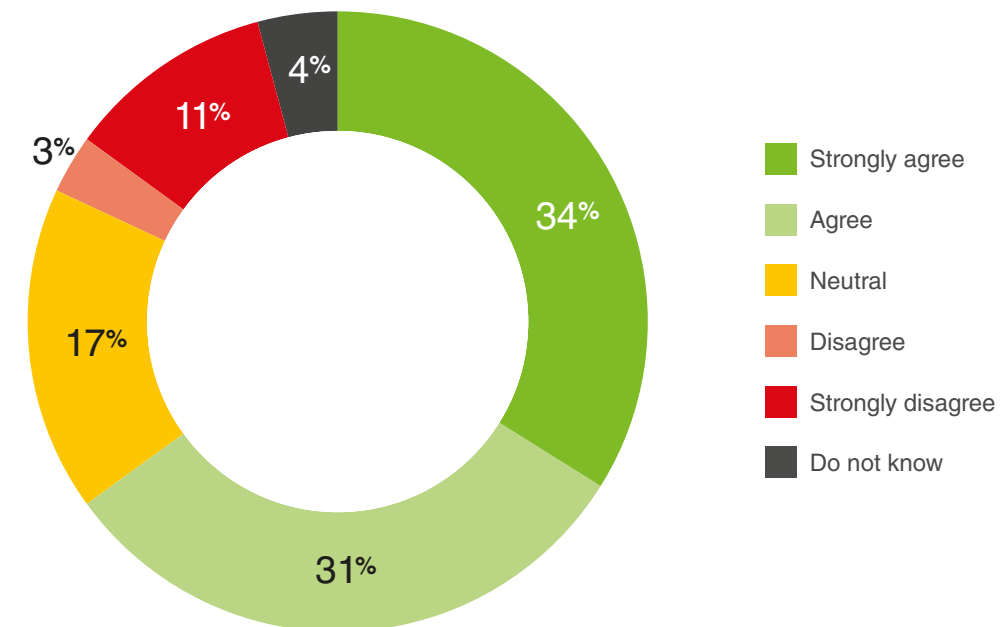
Object to any loss of public rights of way and commitments to these and non-motorised users are not strong enough. Easing congestion must be prioritised over allowing non-motorised users to use the crossing.

Suggestions

Non-motorised users should be able to use the tunnel in some way such as on a parallel route or tunnel or via a shuttle service.

Environmental impacts

6a. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed measures to reduce the impacts of the project?



Highlighted comments

Support

Air quality would improve with better traffic flow. Biodiversity and the visual landscape should be protected and noise pollution minimised.

Opposed

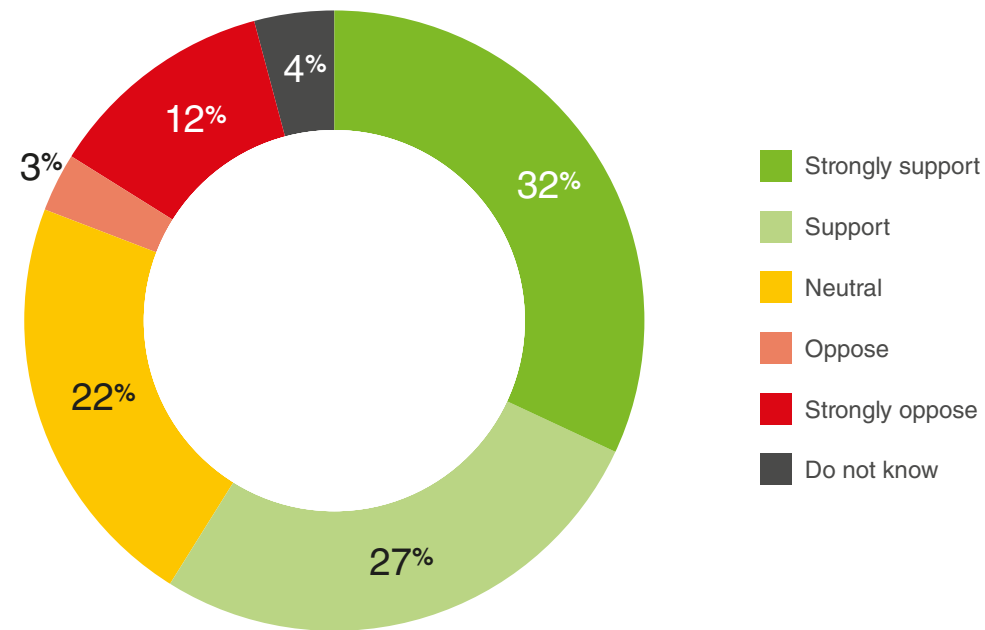
Environmental considerations have not been given sufficient weight including air and noise quality, biodiversity, climate, community and the landscape. A campaign organised by stakeholders raised concern over potential loss of ancient woodland.

Suggestions

Tree planting, using renewable energy and creating community facilities. Various ways to reduce the impact on wildlife species.

Development boundary

7a. Do you support or oppose the proposed area of land we require to build the Lower Thames Crossing?



Highlighted comments

Support

The land is needed and impact on the local community and environment has been minimised.

Opposed

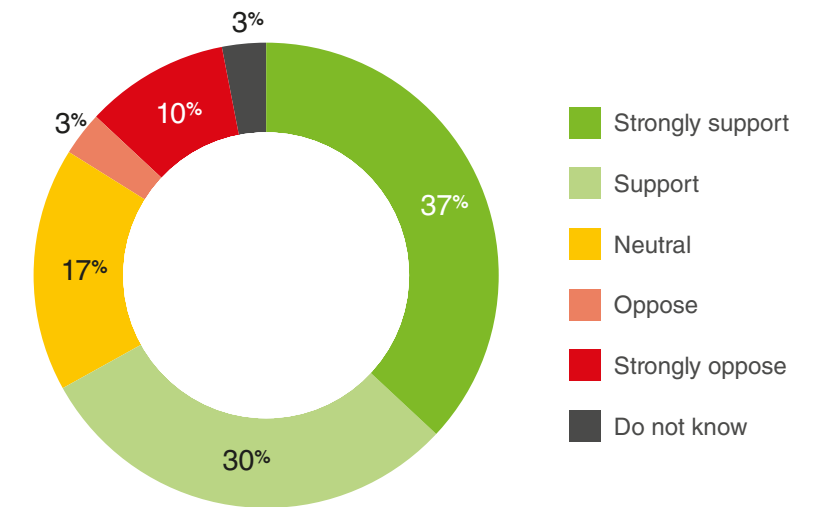
Concerned about how much land is needed, how many homes could be demolished and how this would affect local communities. Risk that the project would lead to further urbanisation of the local area.

Suggestions

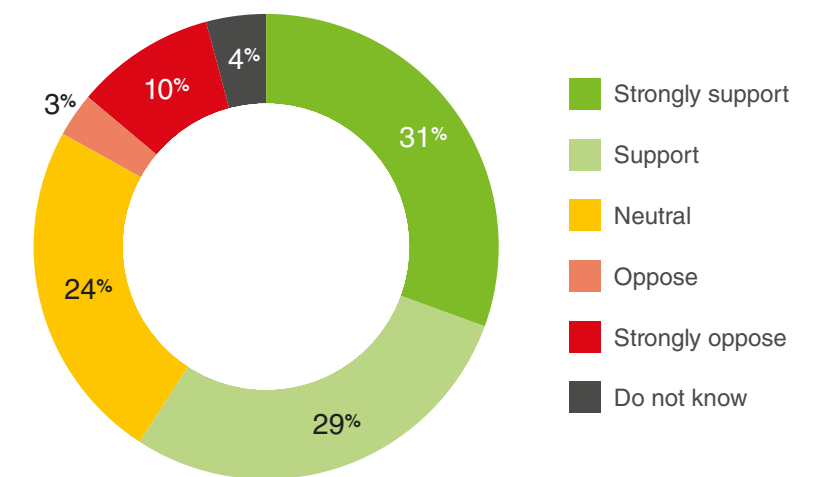
Suggestions related to specific properties and negotiations between Highways England and landowners.

Rest and service area and maintenance depot

8a. Do you support or oppose our proposals for a rest and service area in this location?



8b. Do you support or oppose our proposals for the maintenance depot in this location?



Highlighted comments

Support

Existing services are in short supply and inadequate. Parking for HGVs on the route is needed. The service area would create local jobs and regenerate the local area.

Opposed

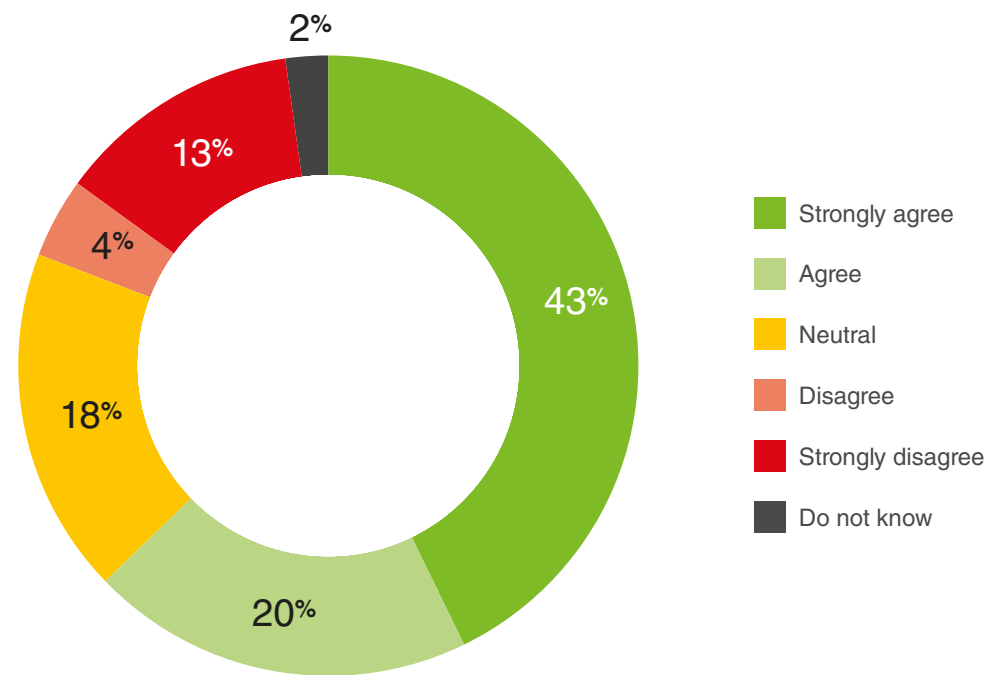
It is not needed and should not be at the proposed location. It is too close to residential areas.

Suggestions

More HGV parking should be provided along with green space and an outdoor area.

Traffic

9a. Do you agree or disagree with the view that the Lower Thames Crossing would improve traffic conditions on the surrounding road network?



Charges for using the crossing

10. Please give us your views on our proposed approach to charging users of the crossing.

Highlighted comments

Support

Traffic forecasts show congestion would reduce, particularly at the Dartford Crossing.

Opposed

Forecasts are unreliable or fail to consider things like planned housing schemes and current traffic patterns. The new crossing would not improve traffic. Improvement would be temporary as extra capacity would be quickly filled or it would make traffic worse by attracting more cars onto the roads.

Suggestions

The route should be future-proofed by increasing the number of lanes and improving existing roads like the A229 at Blue Bell Hill. Various suggestions were put forward for how HGVs could be better managed.

Highlighted comments

Support

The traffic flow would be better regulated if a variable charging model was used. Free-flow e-charging could keep traffic moving and reduce delays. Charging is necessary to pay for the project and manage traffic demand..

Opposed

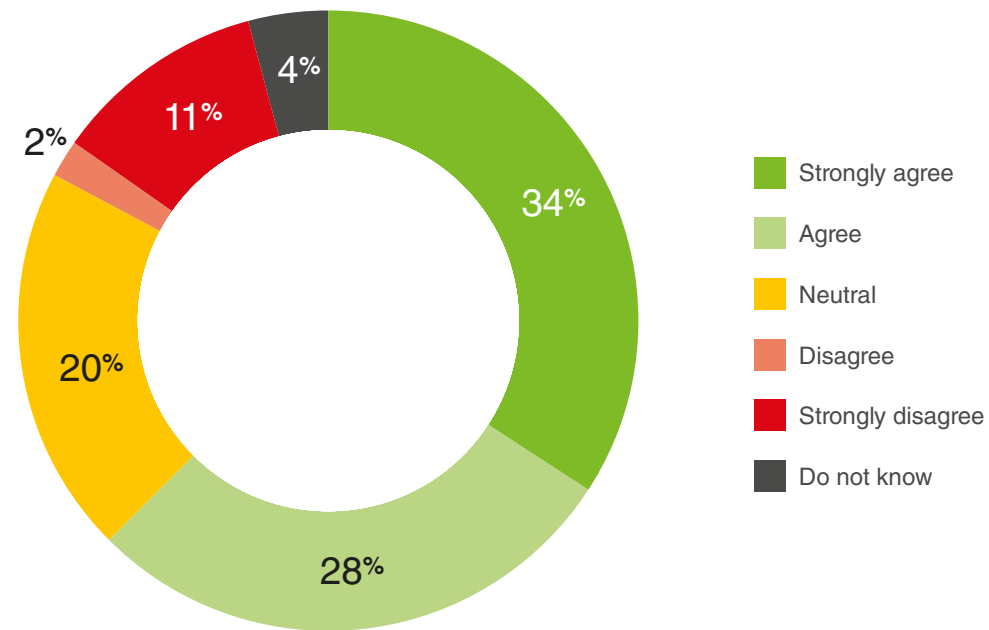
The crossing should be free to use. An emissions-based charging model would stop people from using the crossing or might punish those who can't afford a new car. Toll booths could be better than a free-flow e-charging system for preventing non-payment.

Suggestions

The charge should be affordable and could be the same or lower than the charge at the Dartford Crossing. Measures should be put in place to make sure overseas drivers pay the charge. Local discounts should be considered.

Building the crossing

11a. Do you support or oppose our initial plans for how to build the Lower Thames Crossing?



Highlighted comments

Support

Some disruption is inevitable but the proposed mitigation measures are welcomed. The building works should be done on time or faster to minimise disruption.

Opposed

Building the crossing will negatively impact local communities and the environment. Concerned about how long the crossing will take to build and if the project will be built.

Suggestions

Local companies and workers should be employed to build the crossing, benefitting the local community.



Utilities and pylons

12. Please let us know any views you have on the proposed changes to utilities infrastructure.

Highlighted comments

Support

The changes are needed for the project but should be done in the least disruptive way.

Opposed

Concerned about disruption to supply, pylons being located close to homes and the cost of the proposals.

Suggestions

Electricity lines should be placed underground to minimise the visual impact.

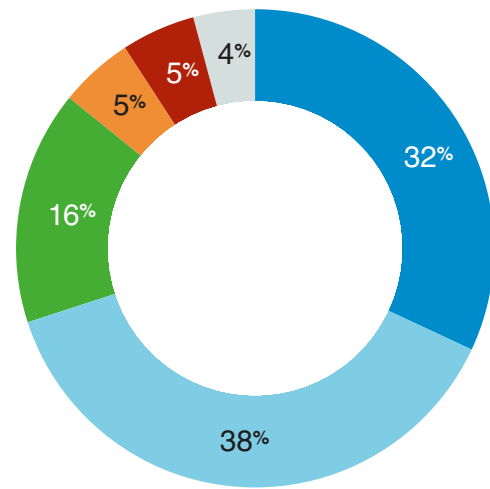
Other comments

13. We would like to know what is important to you. Please let us know if you have any other comments about the Lower Thames Crossing.

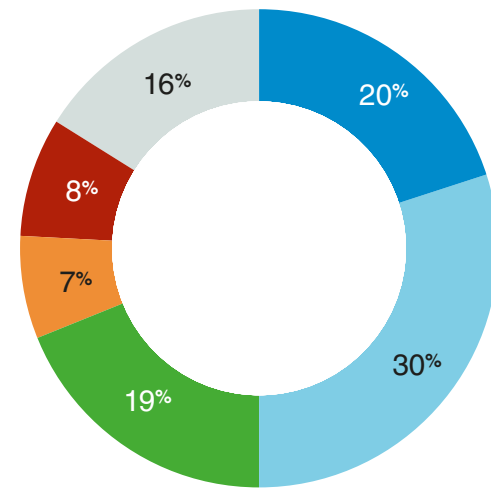
The responses to this question have been summarised in the relevant sections of this update. For example, comments about the general need for the Lower Thames Crossing have been included with the responses to question 1a The need for a new crossing.

The consultation

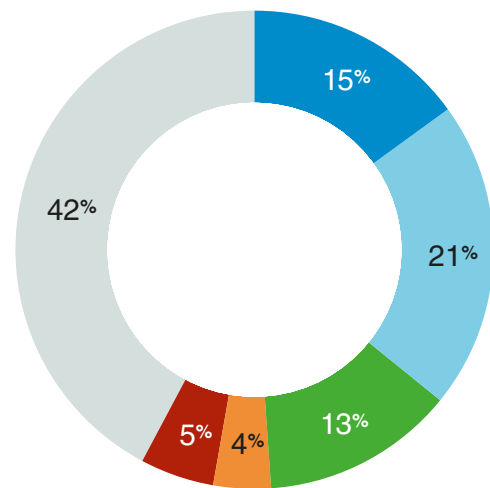
14. Please let us know what you think about the quality of our consultation materials, our events, the way in which we have notified people about our plans, and anything else related to this consultation.



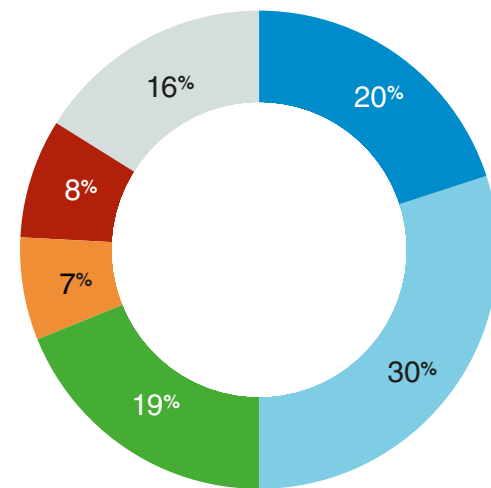
Information



Events (quality)



Events (location)



Promotion



Highlighted comments

Support

The materials and events were helpful and informative. The use of “before and after” pictures and the “fly-through” video was good. Grateful for the opportunity to comment on the proposals.

Opposed

Don't believe feedback given will influence decision making and the decision has already been made. Information was biased or there was not enough and the consultation was poorly advertised. Some found the events to be inaccessible due to their time and location.



Next steps

We're continuing to work through people's comments in detail and as we consider the responses we received we may make changes to the design to improve the scheme. If we make significant changes to the design, we may carry out further consultation on those changes. We will keep you informed should we decide to do so.

It is vital we get all aspects of the design right to ensure we maximise the benefits of the Lower Thames Crossing while also minimising the impacts on communities and the environment. We continue to work with stakeholders to shape the design and understand the impact on local communities.

Given the quality and volume of responses we received to our consultation and the important information we continue to receive through our engagement with stakeholders we intend to take additional time to consider the feedback and we now expect to submit our application for a Development Consent Order in summer 2020. This does not change our target of opening the road in 2027.



Considering feedback from the consultation, developing the design and preparing our submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

We will make our submission to the Planning Inspectorate, which will include feedback from the consultation. This is called the DCO application.

The Planning Inspectorate has 28 days to decide if the application meets the required standards to proceed, including whether our consultation has been adequate.

You can register with the Planning Inspectorate as an interested party and make formal representations about the project. You will then be kept informed of progress and opportunities to be involved.

The Planning Inspectorate has six months to examine our application. This is called the DCO examination period. Registered parties can send written comments to the Planning Inspectorate and can ask to speak at a public hearing.

The Planning Inspectorate will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport within three months of the end of the examination period.

The Secretary of State then has three months to issue a decision. This will be followed by a public announcement. If approved, construction could begin soon after.

The Lower Thames Crossing opens to traffic.

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