

Press release: Lower Thames Crossing opens its doors at first of sixty public events

People who live, work and travel across Kent, Thurrock, Essex and beyond are being invited to shape plans for Britain's biggest road tunnel as Highways England hosts the first of 60 public engagement events on the multi-billion pound Lower Thames Crossing project today (Tuesday 16 October).

A consultation was launched last week into updated proposals for the project, a new 14.5 mile road linking the M2 in Kent with the M25 in Essex, including a 2.4 mile tunnel under the river. Starting this week, the project team are taking to the road to meet local people, explain the plans and answer questions.

Today's event, at Orsett in Essex is one of 25 public information events being held over the coming weeks, along with pop up stalls and visits by the team's mobile visitor centre to various locations across Essex, Thurrock and Kent.

Businesses and organisations from across the region have welcomed the plans, which will nearly double road capacity across the Thames while halving some journey times at the existing Dartford Crossing, where traffic will be reduced by almost a quarter.

Highways England Project Director for the Lower Thames Crossing, Tim Jones, said:

The Lower Thames Crossing will be among the biggest and most complex new roads ever built in the UK, and we are providing a wide range of information about the project, its impacts and benefits. We want to help people understand the proposals and have their say to help shape the plans. These events are an excellent opportunity to do just that.

People will be able to see the changes we've made since the preferred route was announced last year, and how we've responded to the feedback we've received. And of course they will be able to put questions directly to members of the project team. I encourage anyone with an interest to come along to one of our events to make sure their voice is heard in this once-in-a-generation opportunity for Britain's roads.

Councils and business and industry groups from across the region have reiterated support for the project as the consultation gets underway.

Leader of Medway Council, Cllr Alan Jarrett, said:

We fully support the proposal for an additional crossing and investment in the wider road network. A Lower Thames Crossing will not only reduce congestion on the Dartford Crossing, but it will also bring with it economic benefits to both sides of the river; it will bring more visitors into the south-east and would benefit commuters.

Medway is fast becoming known as the new economic powerhouse for the south-east, and although we already have great transport connections, such as a high speed rail service into central London, a new crossing will be a major catalyst to drive further economic development.

We will be submitting a response to Highways England's consultation and would encourage residents and businesses to attend a consultation event to find out more about the proposal and how the crossing would affect them, as well as provide their feedback.

How the northern portal of the Lower Thames Crossing, in Essex, will look

Cllr Peter Fleming, Leader of Sevenoaks District Council, said:

"The importance to the Sevenoaks District of the Lower Thames Crossing cannot be underestimated. The potential reduction in HGV movements both in and through the District and the subsequent reductions in congestion and improvement in air quality are just some of the benefits that will accrue our communities and businesses after the crossing is delivered."

Cllr Roy Whitehead, leader of Chelmsford City Council said:

Chelmsford City Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on Highways England's latest consultation on the Lower Thames Crossing. Providing another strategic crossing of the River Thames is crucial in relieving the existing congested bottleneck at the Dartford Crossing and will provide a catalyst for further economic growth in Chelmsford and across Essex.

Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE, leader of the London Borough of Bexley said:

The Thames Gateway is poised to help the country and the capital prosper and grow. Transport infrastructure – including river crossings – it essential for this to happen, so I welcome this consultation and the prospect of investment in this important project.

Christian Brodie, Chair of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), said:

This marks the important next step for this urgently needed and game changing project which will help us drive forward the economy of the South East. I would urge every business to back this vital investment in infrastructure and participate in the consultation.

Denise Rossiter, Chief Executive Officer of Essex Chambers of Commerce, said:

We are extremely pleased that this important Consultation has been launched for a ten-week period. Essex Chambers have strongly supported the need for a Lower Thames Crossing from the very start. The time now is for businesses to have their say and we would encourage you to visit the Lower Thames Crossing website to learn more about this fantastic project that will help Essex prosper economically, logistically and be a global leader.

Jo James, Chief Executive Officer of Kent Chambers of Commerce, said:

The Lower Thames Crossing will open up new opportunities, enabling businesses across Kent and the wider South East to achieve their growth potential and will have a significant impact on our future prosperity.

As the ten-week consultation opens, I would strongly urge businesses to put their views forward by responding to the consultation.

Malcolm Bingham, the Freight Transport Association's Head of Road Network Policy, said:

FTA, which represents more than 17,000 logistics businesses, urges government to press ahead with construction of the Lower Thames Crossing as soon as possible to ease congestion and improve road capacity in this area. Traffic congestion at the Dartford Crossing is already unbearably high and it is predicted to return to pre-Dart Charge levels by 2020. The M2/M25 route is a vital cog in the country's freight machine and it must continue to work as smoothly as possible to ensure that British companies can trade without delays both domestically and internationally.

Richard Christian, Head of Policy and Communications, Port of Dover, said:

The UK's reliance upon continued frictionless trade at the Port of Dover has been accepted at the heart of Government. So has the need to preserve it. For a port handling £122bn or 17 per cent of the UK's trade in goods, and with half of that trade moving beyond London to keep factories busy and shops full in the Midlands and

the North, the Lower Thames Crossing is an investment in the long-term economic success of the UK as a whole. The Port continues to press hard for a Government commitment to other complementary strategic investments such as the dualling of the A2 to Dover which, together with the Lower Thames Crossing, will help protect jobs and livelihoods, keep traffic flowing and prices low for British consumers.

Glyn Jones, Chief Executive Officer, Stobart Aviation, said:

Stobart Group is proud to support this visionary and important infrastructure project. It will make a major contribution to sustainable growth and significantly enhance mobility for both people and goods across the river. We look forward to working with colleagues in the Lower Thames Crossing team to help deliver this transformational scheme.

Since the preferred route announcement by Transport Minister Chris Grayling MP in April 2017, changes were made to reflect feedback including:

- making the whole route three lanes, not two
- introducing a new rest and service area west of East Tilbury
- a new design for the Tilbury junction, removing the proposed Tilbury link road to reduce traffic on the local road network
- extending the tunnel so the tunnel entrance in Kent is 600 metres further south to reduce the visual impact and protect access to a community church
- lowering road by five to six metres in places to reduce its visual impact
- moving the road 80 metres further east where it passes Chadwell St Mary to increase the distance from residential properties

All information is also available on the [consultation page](#).

The consultation period runs until Thursday 20 December.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.