

carrying more food and goods than ever before

The figures show that despite the unprecedented restrictions put in place in England, the crossing regularly carried more traffic than it was designed for and now carries more food and goods than ever before.

The Dartford Crossing is one of the UK's most important strategic roads, linking some of the country's key manufacturing centres, distribution hubs and ports. Built almost 60 years ago, it has a total design capacity of 135,000 vehicles a day, but it carries more than 180,000 on its busiest days.

The new traffic data highlights that whilst the measures put in place to manage the Covid-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on traffic levels throughout the UK, traffic has quickly returned to levels last seen before the pandemic.

The demand on the Dartford Crossing remained high throughout the pandemic. Goods vehicles travelling through the crossing continued to play a vital role moving essential goods to supermarkets and homes. With the changing working and shopping patterns in England, 42% of vehicles using the Dartford Crossing are now goods vehicles, compared with 33% in 2019. The crossing saw its busiest day ever for HGV traffic in December 2020. Dartford Crossing traffic volume data also revealed:

- Dartford Crossing traffic has now returned to levels last seen before the pandemic, as traffic flows have rapidly bounced back to overcapacity.
- following the first national lockdown in March 2020, traffic levels on the Dartford Crossing dropped dramatically by 62.5%, from 182,658 in April 2019 to 68,288 on the equivalent day in 2020, however for the majority of 2020 the crossing was operating at or above its design capacity
- December 2020 saw the busiest day ever recorded for HGV traffic, which is now consistently above 2019 levels.
- prior to lockdown approximately 33% of vehicles on the crossing carried goods; the figure is now approximately 42%
- the crossing's busiest day ever recorded was on Tuesday 20 February 2018 with a massive 206,713 vehicles

Matt Palmer, Executive Director for the Lower Thames Crossing, said:

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a momentous impact on every part of our daily lives including when and how we travel. Throughout the pandemic the Dartford Crossing played and continues to play a crucial role in almost everything we do from delivering essential goods to our shelves and our doorsteps, to visiting friends and family or getting to work. These figures show the case for the

Lower Thames Crossing is stronger than ever, the changes as result of the pandemic although having dramatic impact on traffic more widely, have not impacted the strategic traffic crossing Dartford, this only reinforces how crucial crossing the Thames is to our way of life.

Despite improvements and 24-hour monitoring, the Dartford crossing is still over design capacity and that inevitably causes congestion and delays. The Lower Thames Crossing would almost double road capacity crossing the Thames east of London, providing a reliable connection that will add billions to the economy. But it also has a more immediate role in the economic recovery from Covid-19 by creating tens of thousands of jobs and hundreds of opportunities for local people and businesses in its construction.

This update comes as a new survey revealed that almost nine out of ten Dart Charge business account holders support the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, which would relieve congestion and improve air quality by diverting over 13 million vehicles away from Dartford every year.

The Dart Charge business account survey found that 88% of the 2,299 businesses who responded to the survey support the Lower Thames Crossing. 82% believe that current traffic congestion is a major challenge for their business, and 89% said they would value an alternative road crossing of the River Thames, east of the Dartford Crossing. The businesses surveyed included household names, major industry and small businesses from across the UK.

Dave Lilly, proprietor of Lilly Transport, said:

We lose up to 20 hours a week on each vehicle due to congestion. The Lower Thames Crossing will provide major relief by removing a large amount of traffic travelling east from the present crossings.

The proposed Lower Thames Crossing will almost double road capacity between Kent, Thurrock, Havering and Essex. It will add billions to the economy by creating a reliable new connection between people and jobs, businesses and customers. It will also play an important role in the region's recovery from Covid by employing over 22,000 people and upskilling local businesses during its six-year building phase.

The ambitious proposals will also help the region build back better by improving air quality across the region, creating over 500 hectares of improved habitats for wildlife, as well as new greenspaces for local communities including a community woodland, two new public parks, and over 46km of new or improved public pathways.

Highways England is in the middle of its Community Impacts Consultation for the Lower Thames Crossing, which runs from 14 July until 8 September, before submitting a Development Consent Order application later this year. If given the green light, construction is expected to start in 2024 and take around

six years, with a target opening date between 2029 and 2030.

Full details of the consultation are available on the [consultation web site](#).

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.

[Combined paracetamol and ibuprofen medicine approved for general sale](#)

Press release

Nuromol, a medicine that contains 200mg of ibuprofen and 500mg of paracetamol per tablet will become available without the need to visit a pharmacy



Following a public consultation, the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is making Nuromol, a medicine that contains 200mg of ibuprofen and 500mg of paracetamol per tablet available without the need to visit a pharmacy.

Dr Sarah Branch, Director of Vigilance and Risk Management of Medicines at the MHRA, said:

This reclassification to general sales list will help people to manage their pain where paracetamol or ibuprofen alone have not provided adequate pain relief.

Wider availability of medicinal products and improved patient access and choice remain high on the health agenda. The MHRA is committed to improving access to medicinal products for self-care where it is safe to do so.

Nuromol is used for the temporary relief of mild to moderate pain associated with migraine, headache, backache, period pain, dental pain, rheumatic and muscular pain, pain of non-serious arthritis, cold and flu symptoms, sore throat, and fever when paracetamol or ibuprofen alone have not provided adequate pain relief.

While most people can take paracetamol, ibuprofen is not suitable for everyone, and it is also important that people do not exceed the recommended dose of 1 or 2 tablets not more than 3 times a day. Patients are also advised not to take more than one paracetamol-containing medicine at the same time.

The MHRA's decision to reclassify this product follows a review by the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) and a public consultation. The CHM advises ministers on the safety, efficacy and quality of medicinal products.

The consultation response is available [here](#)

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[Architects invited to shape future of profession](#)

- Call to evidence launched today for those working in architectural and built environment professions
- Call to evidence will run for 12 weeks and will explore the regulatory framework and role of Architects Registration Board (ARB)
- Part of a wider review aimed at modernising regulation, improving diversity and upholding UK's global reputation in architecture

Architects from across the UK are being given the opportunity to shape the future of the profession, as part of a wholesale review that will modernise regulation and improve accessibility and innovation in the sector.

Launching a [call for evidence](#) today, 16 August 2021, Housing Minister Christopher Pincher urged those working across the architectural and built environment professions to share their views and contribute towards a better future for the industry.

The call for evidence will run for 12 weeks, focusing specifically on the

role of the [Architects Registration Board \(ARB\)](#), and will form the first part of a wider review of architectural regulation, including thematic workshops and interviews with sector representatives.

Initial findings from the review will be provided to the Housing Secretary by Spring 2022, with the outcome expected in the Summer.

Housing Minister, Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

Our architectural sector is one of the best in the world – with first-class educational institutions, world-leading practices, and a healthy export market.

The review we are launching today builds on this outstanding legacy, looking to the future and exploring the changes we need for an innovative, accessible and broad profession that delivers better, greener and safer design and construction.

Alan Kershaw, Chair of the Architects Registration Board, said:

ARB has set an ambitious agenda that will modernise and transform the way we regulate. It's essential that we have a renewed and modern policy framework to match.

The government's review asks important questions about policy and regulation and we look forward to playing a full part in shaping and supporting an architectural profession that is fit for the future.

This builds on a recent consultation on changes to the way architects are regulated, and work which is currently being conducted by the ARB through their public engagement exercises.

It also follows the [launch](#) of the [Office for Place](#), which will draw on Britain's world-class design expertise to support communities to turn their visions of beautiful design into local standards all new buildings will be required to meet.

The review will complement existing work and will invite responses on wider aspects including:

- How the profession can become more diverse and accessible
- Whether the current regulatory regime is fit for purpose
- The role of the regulation of architects in ensuring a more sustainable built environment
- How the government can promote innovation in the sector

New Director General announced for Customer Strategy and Tax Design

News story

Jonathan Athow will replace Ruth Stanier from October 2021.



HM Revenue and Customs Chief Executive and Permanent Secretary Jim Harra announces today that Jonathan Athow has been appointed as the new Director General for the Customer Strategy and Tax Design Group. This follows the departure of Ruth Stanier from the role as she undertakes a 12-month career break.

Jonathan is currently Deputy National Statistician and Director General for Economic Statistics at the Office for National Statistics and will join HMRC from the beginning of October.

Jim Harra, Chief Executive and First Permanent Secretary said:

I'm pleased that Jonathan Athow will be stepping into this critical leadership role working to build a trusted, modern tax administration system – one that brings in revenue for public services, makes it easy to get it right, is valued and trusted.

Jonathan Athow, Director General for Customer Strategy and Tax Design, said:

I am delighted to be returning to HMRC. It is a department that has done so much to support the country during the pandemic and will be hugely important as the economy recovers in providing the taxation to fund our public services and supporting businesses and people across the UK.

I am excited to be joining HMRC and Customer Strategy and Tax

Design at this important time.

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