

Chris Taylor - Highways England Director, complex infrastructure programme
Director Complex Infrastructure Programme
Highways England
Woodlands
Manton Lane
Bedford
MK41 7LW

Reference No. HW28436

23 March 2020

Dear Chris

I am writing to respond to the supplementary consultation on the Lower Thames Crossing.

I wrote to your Chief Executive, Jim O'Sullivan, along with other Kent MPs, on 5 December 2018 to set out our view on the proposed development as part of the statutory consultation.

Whilst we welcomed the economic benefits the Lower Thames Crossing would bring to Kent, we also highlighted the need for investment in other sections of the road network. This is crucial to prevent traffic problems being shifted downstream from Dartford to other parts of Kent.

I'm assured that the impact of the Lower Thames Crossing was taken into account in decisions around the Government's second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2), which was published earlier this month. I was pleased to see the M2/A2 junction at Brenley Corner, in my constituency, listed as one of the schemes to benefit from development funding ahead of RIS3.

There are still concerns about how this project will impact the road network in Kent and I would be grateful if you could address the points below.

- i. **Need for investment.** Whilst I'm pleased Brenley Corner has been included as a pipeline project for RIS3, there are many other roads in Kent that require investment – particularly with the increases in traffic forecast from the Lower Thames Crossing. In the letter to Jim O'Sullivan of 3 December 2018, Kent MPs set out the main schemes that needed investment for this project to deliver benefits throughout the Channel corridor. I attach the original letter and would be grateful for an update from Highways England on these schemes.

- i. **Co-ordination.** One of the main frustrations from constituents is that major infrastructure projects are not co-ordinated with other works. On current projections, the Lower Thames Crossing is expected to open to traffic sometime in 2027/28. As Brenley Corner has been included as a pipeline project for RIS3, due to start in 2025, there is a risk that work to improve

Brenley Corner could coincide with the opening of the Lower Thames Crossing, putting considerable strain on a junction which has already exceeded capacity. I urge Highways England to complete the upgrade work at Brenley Corner before opening the Lower Thames Crossing.

- iii. **Disruption to the M2.** The M2 is used by many of my constituents to get to work and is needed for accessing London and other parts of the country. It's crucial that disruption to the M2 is kept to a minimum during the construction phase of the Lower Thames Crossing. I urge Highways England to prioritise night working and school holidays to carry out the work. Some of the worst traffic incidents in Kent are caused when there are delays to both the M2 and M20. I hope Highways England will do all it can to ensure free flowing traffic on the M20 when the M2 is closed or has limited access during the construction phase. This needs to include carrying out any planned work to the M20 before work on the Lower Thames Crossing begins.

The Lower Thames Crossing could bring significant benefits to people in Kent, but only if it is part of a wider strategy to improve the Channel corridor. Local motorists, including in my constituency, need to be the main beneficiaries of this project.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Whately MP

Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

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