

Application by National Highways for an Order granting Development Consent for the Lower Thames Crossing (Ref. No. TR010032)

Submission for Procedural Deadline B – 26 May 2023 Emergency Services & Safety Partners Steering Group (ESSPSG)

Introduction

1. Following receipt of the Action Points from the Programme Meeting which took place on 16 May 2023, we, the ESSPSG, are writing to the Examining Authority (ExA) in advance of this next procedural deadline. You will be aware of formation, membership and involvement of the ESSPSG in the DCO process from our previous correspondence.

Purpose of this Submission

2. We are grateful to the ExA for formally requesting the preparation of a collective Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between National Highways (NH) and all of the members of the ESSPSG, alongside those SoCGs which may be prepared between NH and individual members of the ESSPSG (including those requested in the Rule 6 letter for police forces).
3. At its most recent meeting on 11 May 2023, members of the Steering Group expressed clear support for continuing with the collective ESSPSG Statement of Common Ground. The main reasons are to ensure that:
 - a) the SoCG sets out a comprehensive, inter-agency view addressing the full range of issues relevant to its members; and
 - b) the effort already put into the draft collective SoCG – which has been in preparation for many months now - is not lost or dissipated.
4. We understand that the ExA does not want the collective SoCG to inhibit progress on any separate SoCGs. We also acknowledge that there may be benefits in a separate SoCG to cover a specific location or localised circumstance – for instance between NH and Kent Police force in relation to Nitrogen deposition and traffic speed controls.
5. However, NH have stated, in a meeting following the Programme Meeting on 16th May, that their current priority is to progress the individual SoCGs (including those for the Police forces); and that they will not progress the collective SoCG for the time being. We are concerned that this approach will neglect the timely development of the collective Statement of Common Ground. In our view, this could fail to grasp opportunities for efficiency and the benefits of an overarching, multi-agency view from the wider ESSP SG membership.

6. In light of this, the ESSP SG makes the following request to the ExA:
- a) that the ExA requests NH to give priority to development of the collective SoCG over the preparation of separate SoCGs between NH and individual members of the ESSPSG.
 - b) that the ExA requests the first formal draft of the collective SoCG is jointly agreed and submitted at Deadline 1 (18 July 2023)

**Emergency Services and Safety Partners Steering Group
for the Lower Thames Crossing**

25th May 2023