

The LTC should not go ahead for the following reasons:

-The LTC will harm human health

The LTC will only divert approx. 14% of traffic at the Dartford Crossing, whilst vastly increasing vehicle emissions in Gravesham and Thurrock. It will not fix the problems at the Dartford Crossing, which will still be over-capacity. The whole route would fail to meet WHO PM2.5 standards designed to protect people from harm. The impact this level of pollution has on human health is well documented. People will die as a direct result of toxic air from this scheme. Years of healthy human life will be lost. Baby's and children's development and cognitive functioning will be adversely affected and they will develop chronic health problems which will further burden already overwhelmed local healthcare services. Moreover, the smart motorway Highways England are proposing (in all but name), and changes to the A2, will cause chaos, accidents and deaths, and should not be permitted given the evidence and recent rulings against smart motorways. More roads mean more vehicles, more pollution. The LTC won't fix the awful traffic and pollution at Dartford - it will replicate it. We need to be reducing emissions with better public transport, more efficient use of the river and northern ports, new traffic calming technology, higher toll charges, and a ban on more polluting vehicles using the Dartford Crossing.

-The LTC will devastate the local environment

Irreplaceable ancient woodlands and habitats for endangered species will be destroyed. Swathes of greenbelt and SSSIs will be lost. Noise and light pollution and nitrogen deposition will have further deleterious impacts on wildlife. To propose that compensation planting and 'green' bridges will mitigate this demonstrates ignorance of the singular value of ancient woodlands, which are a lifeline in the fight against ecological collapse and climate change and provide a priceless source of connection with nature and history. Their destruction would also rob this generation, and all future generations, of an invaluable amenity that protects and improves mental and physical health. Scientific evidence on the trajectory of climate change and species extinction is clear, as is the impact on human health and survival. Surely, now is time to draw the line, and protect the last few pockets of ancient woodlands from development - especially developments which will release vast quantities of carbon and accelerate climate change still further.

It was astounding, that at the last minute, HE proposed reducing the amount of compensation tree planting. Given that the LTC would harm more ancient woodland than any other road scheme, the extent of compensation planting proposed previously was already entirely inadequate. No number of new saplings can compensate for the loss of ecologies evolved over centuries. The woodlands on which HE wants to build are Sites of Special Scientific Interest, home to rare wildlife, including dormice, great crested newts and hundreds of species of fungi. The carbon absorption capabilities of ancient woodlands are vast compared to newly planted woods, which would take many hundreds of years to have anywhere near the same impact. Much more land for new trees is therefore needed to absorb the same amount of carbon as a small area of mature woodland.

-The LTC disregards legally binding climate change targets

Climate change has reached a tipping point where we are seeing accelerating ecological collapse and extreme weather conditions around the world, including here in the UK. The LTC is entirely at odds with pledges to combat global heating. It is astounding that this development could be contemplated given its hugely adverse impact on carbon emissions, ecology and human health. The UK has pledged to be carbon neutral by 2050 in an attempt to avert catastrophic climate change. Yet the LTC will emit an estimated 6million tonnes of carbon. Granting permission for this

development would be a hugely regressive step running counter to government promises to tackle the climate emergency. The LTC is entirely at odds with transport decarbonisation plans. Ignoring the science and disregarding legally binding carbon targets seems quite insane - especially given the enormous cost of this project at a time of economic crisis, and the limited and uncertain benefit to people

affected by congestion at Dartford. The LTC accounts for much of the road investment programme and should be halted while the Transport Select Committee conduct their inquiry into the programme. Further, updates to the National Networks Policy Statement are required before the LTC can be considered in light of the the UK's legal commitment to net zero. How can this project be given permission when the UK has committed to net zero by 2050, when the Environment Act has enshrined in law the halting of species abundance decline, the protection and restoration of wildlife rich habitats, and legal requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain.

-The LTC does not offer value for money

In a cost of living crisis when huge spending is needed to bolster the NHS and address record waiting times, to decarbonise the economy, retrofit homes and protect against the effects of extreme weather, HE are proposing to spend Â£9 billion on a scheme that will emit enormous amounts of carbon, destroy solar farms, and degrade some of the country's most important SSSIs. Aside from the enormous cost of building the LTC, erosion of the natural world is itself costly to the economy. Grasslands, woodlands and wetlands prevent flooding, pollinate crops, protect our health, promote biodiversity and help prevent against future pandemics. We must make more space for nature - not replace what little is left with more roads. Scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that conserving nature is a sound investment decision. The LTC, which will actively destroy nature in order to further pollute the planet, makes no sense morally, ecologically or economically.

HE's consultation has been inadequate for these reasons:

-HE have not adequately assessed flood risks and the impact of rising water levels over the coming decades.

-Projected costs are not accurate or honest when parts of the scheme - Tilbury Link Road, Blue Bell Hill Improvements, a Rest and Service area- are presented as separate stand alone projects.

-Proposed compensation planting includes already ecologically valuable grasslands & pasture - compensation planting should be about creating new natural resources not re-labeling or destroying existing habitats.

-Misinformation and greenwashing has been rife throughout. Highly dubious statements like 'the LTC will improve air quality' and 'will have no impact on nitrogen deposition' have been presented to the public without any data.

-Why has Highways England reduced the amount of compensation tree planting when in previous consultations it said this planting was required to counteract the harmful impact of nitrogen disposition from the LTC on regional ecologies? How was the nitrogen disposition assessment was carried out, and how could requirements have changed between consultations?