

9.112 Joint Position statement: Blue Bell Hill

- 1.1 At Issue Specific Hearing 7 on 11 September 2023 the Examining Authority directed the Applicant and Kent County Council to:
- 1.2 *“Undertake a workshop with KCC in respect of Blue Bell Hill and then present a joint paper on the outcomes including any agreed matters and a present a pathway to mitigating any unacceptable effects at Blue Bell Hill including bridging the current 15% funding gap in respect of the Large Local Major improvement scheme.” [Action Point 7 – [EV046e](#)]*
- 1.3 The Applicant and Kent County Council met on 25 September 2023 to discuss their respective positions.

Kent County Council position

- 1.4 Kent County Council made reference to their previous submissions (for example Paragraph 8.30, 8.34, 8.35, and 8.38 of the Local Impact Report [REP1-241], and specifically to their Deadline 4 Post-event submission [[REP4-308](#)] which included a response to an Action Point from Issue Specific Hearing 4 - “Action for Kent County Council: Local Road Network Impact Mitigation: Security” , setting out their request of the Applicant, and providing three options including:
 - 1.5 *“• A Requirement should be added to the DCO for the Applicant to carry out these works at its own expense.*
 - 1.6 *• In the alternative, the Applicant should fund KCC to carry out such works (approximately £235 million based on current programme, subject to scheme development).*
 - 1.7 *• If Government does provide the Large Local Major (LLM) scheme funding for the mitigation works, then the Applicant should provide the 15% match funding (approximately £35 million based on current programme, subject to scheme development) towards those works.”*
- 1.8 Kent County Council noted at the workshop on 25th September that the pathway for delivery of highway interventions to Blue Bell Hill in the form set out above could be provided by the Applicant through a Section 106 Agreement (conditional on the scheme getting planning consent), a Side Agreement, or as a Requirement of the DCO conditional on monitoring and mitigation of the wider impacts (thereby not requiring a change to the Order Limits).

National Highways Position

- 1.9 The Applicant acknowledges that the LTC would result in changes to traffic flows from baseline positions, such as changes to flows on the A229, but has set out its position that the impacts at Blue Bell Hill are acceptable (as assessed at Table 7.12 and 7.13 of the Transport Assessment [[REP4-148](#)] which summarises that while journey times on opening are likely to increase in the 'Do Something' case over the 'Do Minimum' case that these relative increases are not significant); that any highway interventions to Blue Bell Hill are subject to a funding decision by the DfT; and that the process to enable that funding decision to be made is already underway. The Applicant considers this to be the appropriate pathway to delivering highway interventions at Blue Bell Hill and therefore does not consider that using the Project / DCO as a pathway is appropriate.
- 1.10 National Highways further stated that the inclusion of works at Blue Bell Hill had been considered earlier in the project development as the "*C variant*" options considered prior to the Preferred Route Announcement. To include Blue Bell Hill into the project now (via inclusion in the Order Limits, or a commitment to fund works from the LTC budget) would be to circumvent and undermine the decision of the Secretary of State regarding the preferred route.
- 1.11 National Highways has re-considered the options and considers the Project as submitted remains the most suitable option. Furthermore, following the announcement on the preferred route of the Secretary of State, the funding profile for the Lower Thames Crossing was developed. That funding profile does not consider Blue Bell Hill, as that scheme would be subject to a separate funding agreement with the DfT. The disbenefits associated with the impacts at Blue Bell Hill have been accounted for in both the BCR (1.22 on a 60 year appraisal, and 1.66 on a 100 year appraisal) as well as the overall planning case and the Applicant is confident that the benefits significantly outweigh the disbenefits, and there is a clear and overriding case for the Project to address congestion at the Dartford Crossing.

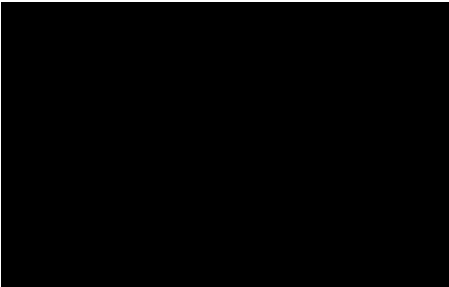
Joint position / Summary

- 1.12 Kent County Council has proposed options for routes for the Applicant to deliver, fund or part-fund highway interventions to Blue Bell Hill. The Applicant does not consider that these options are necessary or required to make the Project acceptable in planning terms, notes that any funding decision would need to be made by the DfT (and this process is underway), and notes that an option for delivering highway interventions to Blue Bell Hill as part of the scheme has previously been considered and not taken forward by the Secretary of State. As such, National Highways does not agree to the pathways put forward by Kent County Council for delivering highway interventions at Blue Bell Hill through the DCO. This matter remains a matter not agreed.

Signatures



Tim Wright (Lower Thames Crossing, Head of Consents)



Simon Jones (Kent County Council, Corporate Director, Growth,
Environment & Transport)