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Response to The Secretary of States Consultation Letter.

Deadline 7<sup>TH</sup> August 2024

We as an interested party have no comments to make on the latest SoS letter. We feel the need to once again write, due to the possibility that this consultation could be the last opportunity to express our objections before the SoS, makes an imminent decision on the DCO. We hope that this submission will be accepted and taken into account as we have engaged and responded to nearly all deadlines.

We, as a family have been living with the proposed Lower Thames Crossing over our heads now for 7 years. We have responded and asked questions to nearly all the consultations explaining our concerns due to our property being so close to the development boundary.

During the consultations the applicant failed to respond to our concerns, due to this proposal being a design and build project, meaning changes in the design will be ongoing.

Our concerns have been mentioned time and time again in the form of letter communication, which has been accepted as evidence by the former Secretary of State.

**Some of our main concerns we would just like to touch upon are;**

1. Our 200-year-old property has no foundations this design and build project would cause significant damage to our property, due to only being 75 metres approx. away from the proposed North Road Green Bridge.
2. At present we have no flooding issues as our property it is situated on high ground but this will not be the case when we are situated at the bottom of the propose Green Bridge, again due to the design and build concept, the applicant has no idea how the drainage situation will be achieved to prevent flooding from happening.
3. We have concerns about UXO (UNEXPLODED ORDINANCES) which are present near and around our property. Zenitica shows a low risk but local historians/residents have indicated there are many ordnances scattered in North/South Ockendon. This is due to the closeness of being near to the Hornchurch Airfield. There needs to be an evacuation process/plan in place before any spade is put in the ground.
4. We have been told there could be a time when access to our property will be a challenge or non-existent, will we be offered an alternative place to reside?
5. Who holds contractors' accountable when problems occur? I would like this clarified before works start.

Since the proposed route was chosen it has caused much stress and anxiety, resulting in health issues

[REDACTED] while the proposed road is built and extra air pollution during and after construction, due to pollution levels which are already above EU levels in this area.

South Ockendon, as well as other areas of Thurrock will be in a toxic triangle trapped between the M25 A13 and the proposed LTC. Thurrock have already got one of the highest amounts of COPD related illnesses in the country.

### **NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE**

Even in the beginning when this proposed route was chosen it didn't meet the scheme objectives and is even more out of date now and needs to be scrapped.

National Highways are flogging a dead horse and unfortunately have been allowed to carry on spending tax payers' money, like it's going out of fashion, as so to speak, they are allowed to mark their own homework and seem to be a law to themselves.

1. The LTC would **NOT FULFILL ITS OBJECTIVES** as the Dartford Crossing would still be over capacity if the LTC were built. Traffic on the Dartford Crossing would be back up to present levels within 5 years. The current Dartford Crossing has a capacity for 135, 000 vehicles per day, yet it regularly sees 180,000 per day. That means it needs to see a reduction of more than 25% to bring it back down below capacity. The LTC will only take 4% off at am peak times and 11% in the pm peak times.
2. The LTC would cost £10 billion ++ making it more expensive per mile than HS2.
3. The business case for the scheme is very weak, with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of only 0.48-1.22 (very low value for money.)
4. The LTC is a smart motorway by stealth, at the beginning when the route was chosen NH announced it would be a smart motorway, when smart motorways were pulled due to them being dangerous and causing fatalities, NH retracted and said it will be a trunk road with smart technology it still is designed to smart motorway standards with no hard shoulder.
5. The LTC passes through 14.3 miles of green belt some of this land, especially in South/North Ockendon is Grade 1 agricultural land, there is only 5% left in the country. At present, it is used for growing herbs and salad. Agricultural land left untouched running adjacent to the proposed road will only be viable for crop growing if NH maintain these run-off ponds, on a regular basis. They contain toxic pollutants from road tyres exhausts (PM2.5) and are a health hazard for humans and wildlife habitat. It has been reported by the new Civil Engineer that NH have failed their statutory duty by being negligent /ignoring this vital environmental protection. It has also been reported that run-off water ponds which facilitate the M25 have not been maintained /cleared for many years. The Wilderness ponds which have a natural water course running through them will be affected by the run off ponds as they will be in close proximity to each other. NH are proposing to divert this water course by building a retaining wall through the top pond to avoid going through a land fill site, due to cost.

We don't know how or where this water will be diverted to or if the ponds will end up amalgamating together. Water at present flows along ditches to the Mardyke, water pollution and this diversion would be very harmful to wildlife, especially to the water voles that reside in this vicinity.

6. During a time when countries are in conflict and food supplies are in a crisis, we need to be protecting our farmland and encouraging more farmers to grow our countries food to help alleviate this.
7. The proposed LTC will generate 6.6 tons of carbon, concrete will be added to help construct a viaduct which will be situated on the fens, which will add to an area which already floods on a regular basis. Climate change is the main factor of why it's becoming more frequent. There are no provisions for wind barriers on this section of the viaduct where windmills have been placed in the past. It will be elevated in an area with diverse weather conditions, visibility will be compromised due to fog. The Mardyke viaduct will be at the same elevation as the existing crossing, which gets closed on a regular basis due to high winds.
8. NH claims that the LTC would have 'large economic benefits' but have no evidence to back these claims. The Ports also have serious concerns about this claim, due to the placement of the new tunnels being in the deep section of the Thames where the Free Port has been given the go ahead to expand. They are not only challenged with the ever-changing current, due to climate change which will cause the Thames to be dredged more frequently to accommodate larger/heavier freight cargo ships. Also adding to this challenge is the depth of the proposed tunnels, which are to be built without scour. NH claim that this additional works is not required and is costly. The scour would protect the tunnels, going forward, so the positioning of the tunnels could hinder economic growth.
9. NH claims that The Lower Thames Crossing will have a life expectancy of 100 years. Though this Follie isn't needed in this area it is also an out-of-date money haemorrhaging project and not fit for purpose. NH have been given the opportunity to come up with a project, which would alleviate the traffic at the Dartford Crossing but shockingly it fails this in every respect to do so.  
The costs have dramatically risen over the years and this as shown by the constant trimming at every consultation. Lanes have been reduced in areas such as JUN 29 M25, down to 2 lanes, A2 Bluebell Hill down to 1 lane, these changes will cause bottle necks. The Tilbury link road was removed in the early stages, all of these changes will have to be delivered as stand-alone projects for traffic to be kept moving.  
In some areas the depth of the LTC has been raised to save on HGV movement costs through construction causing a worse legacy of Air, Light and Noise pollution for residents to endure. This will dramatically affect North/South Ockendon, which will affect the rare habitats in the Wilderness, which was given ancient/well established woodland status in January 2024.
10. There are no provisions for public transport or for non-motorised users on this proposed road.

11. NH are not considering how or planning how traffic will migrate between the two crossings when there are incidents, there would not be adequate connections, which would result in yet more chaos, congestion and pollution throughout the regions, both sides of the Thames.

### **Bankrupt Thurrock Council**

All 49 members of Thurrock council are opposed to the LTC. We hope that the council will be able to comment accordingly. Due to their lack of money the consultants employed to give evidence were disbanded in late December 2024 which was when the planning inspectorate DCO process came to an end.

### **Rising Costs**

Since NH has given its latest cost back in 2022 costs have risen immensely and the SoS needs to question what the current cost is now and a projection cost on the value if it was to be postponed.

Construction/material costs have risen by 40%

Wages are rapidly increasing and inflation as soared.

Fuel and energy prices have almost doubled. NH have always stated that hydrogen would be the way forward when constructing the LTC. Recent information as been disclosed that NH have relaunched their clean -hydrogen tender after failing to secure a supplier last year this will cost 67% higher in price to power construction equipment will the SoS take this added cost into account?

With Global financial pressures and ever rising construction costs this project will never be able to justify the building costs.

### **Alternatives**

We all know that something needs to be done to alleviate the existing crossing, but this £10 Billion project is not the answer. The SoS needs to seriously look past all the layers of greenwash NH have been spinning for so many years, and to educate government bodies/MPs on why this proposed scheme is not only an environmental disaster but is not fit for purpose.

### **£10 billion is a lot of which could be used to alleviate:**

1. NHS and social care.
2. Crumbling schools and hospitals.
3. Pay for pot holes and maintenance on our existing roads which are causing serious accidents.
4. Provide better transport links to level up the North.

It has been reported that the new SoS has promised to 'Deliver the biggest overhaul to transport in a generation'.

### **They include 5 key priorities being:**

1. Improving performance on the railways and delivering forward rail reform.
2. Improving bus services and growing usage across the country.

3. Transforming infrastructure to work for the whole country, promoting social mobility and tackling regional inequality.
4. Delivering green transport.
5. Better integrating transport networks.

Scrapping the LTC would pay for most of these priorities as the proposed Lower Thames Crossing fails in all these key priorities the SoS is trying to deliver.

#### **Public Transport alternatives going forward.**

At a reduced cost GB Rail freight -London Gateway intermodal trains could accommodate and remove 129 HGVs per train from our roads.

Thames Gateway Tram link would be a transport connection between Essex and Kent, which would be a £900 million project that promotes employment and sustainable growth.

Network Rail suggestion/plan to allow more freight through the Channel Tunnel, which would reduce HGV numbers from all UK roads, including the Dartford Crossing.

#### **Conclusion**

The proposed LTC doesn't come close to meeting any of these 5 key priorities and doesn't meet scheme objectives. It is a monumental waste of public funds, which is desperately needed elsewhere. Its 6.6 tons of carbon admissions would be not only detrimental to local residents but would affect the atmosphere further afield. The whole proposed route fails against World Health Organisation Standards for PM2.5 and the UK law on air pollution (PM2.5). It would generate massive levels of Air, Noise and Light Pollution and destroy solar farms, community forests, ancient woodland and Grade 1 Agricultural land. Wildlife would be destroyed, some species like water voles would not survive being moved as they are very territorial. Expensive Green Bridges will not create connectivity for bats as NH have admitted there is no mitigation for bats.

National Highways know that this project fails. Tim Jones, previous project manager said before his departure "**This won't solve the problems at the Dartford Crossing**" and the current National Highways CEO Nick Harris commented "**Building nothing is the best solution**"

Perhaps the Secretary of State should listen to these comments from these men who once were or who at present are in a high position at National Highways, as these comments alone should be enough evidence to scrap the proposed Lower Thames Crossing once and for all.