

*May 2017*

Kent County Council has been campaigning for a new Lower Thames Crossing to be built for more than 15 years to relieve the congestion and overloading at the existing Dartford Crossing, which with peak flows often exceeding 162,000 movements per day has long exceeded its design capacity of 135,000 vehicles a day.

The Dartford Crossing is closed over 300 times per year for an average of 30 minutes, but it typically takes three to five hours for the roads to return to normal following a closure.

A new crossing will provide much needed network resilience and create a new strategic route from Dover to the Midlands and the North, essential for this international gateway with an average of 10,800 HGV movements per day through the Channel ports, which is growing year on year and is forecast to continue to grow by 5% per year. A new crossing will deliver economic prosperity for Kent, the South East and the wider UK, supporting an estimated 6,000 new jobs and add 12.7 billion to the local economy.

KCC strongly reiterates the necessity for Highways England to deliver the upgrades to the connections between the M20 and M2 – including the A229 and A249 – and the wider network improvements desperately needed along the A2/M2 to support the splitting of traffic between the M2/A2 and M20/A20 corridors.

KCC is pleased that the Government has selected the Western Southern Link, which was KCC's own preferred route on the Kent side of the crossing, as this will minimise the environmental impacts and avoids the village of Shorne. The chosen route has greater opportunities for tunnelling or using cuttings for part of the route to reduce the noise and visual impact.

KCC will provide input to the plans as they are developed to ensure that any negative impacts are mitigated and so that Kent's residents get the best deal from this significant investment in the infrastructure.

What must happen now is for Government to give reassurance to those affected by the new road and so KCC will continue to insist that a generous compensation package is provided for property owners affected.

KCC fully appreciates the distress that this proposal has caused to the local community but due to the transport and economic benefits that a new Lower Thames Crossing will provide, we believe this is the right decision for the county, and indeed the country.

In a report produced by the Department for Transport dated 9 July 2003, one of the several schemes then recommended by the study as possibly being justified in the longer term, subject to resolving potential environmental impacts, is the improved Dover access via A2 capacity improvements between Lydden and Dover, effectively dualling the last seven miles.

The Secretary of State is not asking the Highways Agency to prioritise work on the route at this stage. KCC is trying to get the Department for Transport to review dualling of the last stretch of the A2 to Dover.

I have heard "there are A2 extension plans going ahead." This is incorrect. "There are no A2 extension plans are going ahead" currently.

Geoffrey Lymer  
Kent County Councillor

Dover West Ward