

KMEP welcomes decision by Highways England to consult on a new Thames Crossing to the east of Gravesend and Tilbury

The Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) has warmly welcomed the decision by Highways England to consult on a new bored tunnel crossing the Thames to the east of Gravesend and Tilbury. At their board meeting last week, KMEP voted overwhelmingly in favour of this route (known as option C in Highway England's 2013 consultation), recognising the free flow of traffic from Kent to Essex stimulates economic and business growth and unlocks access to housing and job opportunities.

Geoff Miles, Chairman of KMEP said "Kent and Medway are the Gateway to Europe. Every year over 2.4 million road haulage vehicles travel through the Port of Dover and a large proportion of these HGVs use the Dartford Crossing to reach their final destination. The existing crossing reaches capacity at peak hours and is closed on average 300 times a year due to incidents. To empower businesses to operate effectively in the South East, it is essential for new capacity to be added to the road network. The findings of Highways England's assessments have shown a new crossing at Dartford cannot add sufficient resilience to the road network and would not maximise economic growth within the region."

The Highways England's consultation now seeks the opinion of businesses and residents on how the bored tunnel should connect to the existing road network, with three options on the northern side and two options on the southern side (as shown on the map below).



KMEP encourages businesses and SMEs across the South East to express their views by responding to the consultation available at: <https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/cip/lower-thames-crossing-consultation>

Over the coming month, KMEP will formulate its response to the consultation and consider the impact of the proposed crossing on the current traffic flow and the local business communities.

Their submission is expected to highlight that there must be ample capacity within the new tunnel with three lanes travelling in each direction to future proof the design. Also, a share of the future revenue stream should be dedicated to fund a package of further motorway and road improvements across the wider network. These improvements will add resilience to the M2/A2 corridor and support better connectivity for those travelling from the M2 to the M20 (using Bluebell or Detling Hill) and then onto Dover.

The consultation closes on 24 March.

Further information about the benefit to businesses is also available at: <http://new-thamescrossing.co.uk/index.html>

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