

## A federated arm of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership

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Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin M.P.  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

24 March 2016

Dear Patrick

### **Lower Thames Crossing**

I write in relation to the route consultation 2016 for the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) strongly agrees with the proposal of Highways England to construct a new bored tunnel crossing the Thames to the east of Gravesend and Tilbury.

We would urge the Government to act decisively and quickly to see the construction of the new crossing within the shortest timeframe reasonably practical. A new crossing on this European trading route is essential if we are to retain our global competitiveness, and stimulate economic growth in Kent and Medway.

As the federated arm of the Local Enterprise Partnership, we are very conscious that the Gross Value Added for the Thames Gateway, both north and south of the river, lags significantly behind the average for the UK, the South East, and the Northern Powerhouse cities. Heavy congestion on a daily basis hampers and restricts business growth, and without investment, we fear new housing and job opportunities cannot be successfully realised. The time to act is now.

Partial or full closure of the existing crossing occurs over 300 times a year, and it typically takes 3 to 5 hours for the roads to clear. The suggestion that a new crossing on Route A at Dartford is still under consideration is an issue of significant concern to KMEP and our local businesses. We are conscious that the highway network leading to the existing crossing and to location A is not designed to withstand incidents and cannot provide the network resilience that is essential.

The attached consultation response details in depth the reasons for KMEP's support of Location C.

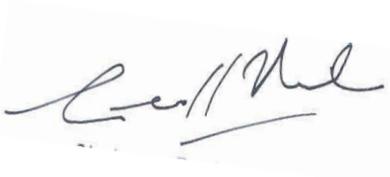
In our consultation response, we emphasise that, to truly unlock economic growth, the new crossing must be accompanied by a package of funded improvements to the wider Kent motorway and road network.

The number of HGVs travelling through the Channel Ports continues to grow, as you'll be aware from your recent visit to Dover. These commercial vehicles will travel to the new crossing either by travelling up the M2 and A2 (which is single-lane carriageway for part of the journey), or alternatively by travelling up the M20 and turning off at the Maidstone junction to reach the M2 via the A229 or A249.

KMEP feels it is imperative that proposals to upgrade the link between the M2 and the M20, and to add capacity to the A2/M2 must be developed *concurrently* to the proposal for a new Lower Thames Crossing, to ensure the new crossing relieves congestion and does not simply displace it to the next weakest point in the network.

Thank you for taking these points into consideration. Representatives from KMEP would welcome the opportunity to discuss these comments in person with you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Miles', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Geoff Miles**  
KMEP Chairman

CC. Kent and Medway MPs