

Press release: New study looks to get better value from public sector intellectual property and know-how

As part of work to get better value from its assets, the Government is working to fully utilise and generate greater value from its intellectual property and know-how such as waterproof smartphone coating and rapid Ebola testing.

Press release: 26,000 share their views in Thames Crossing consultation

People have had their say on proposals for a major new road to link Kent, Thurrock and Essex as the consultation ended on Thursday 20 December.

The Lower Thames Crossing is Britain's biggest road project since the M25 was built and the consultation was the latest chance for people to help shape the once-in-a-generation opportunities that the crossing will provide.

The Lower Thames Crossing will nearly double road capacity across the river Thames and almost halve northbound journey times at Dartford Crossing when it opens to traffic in 2027. Highways England began the country's most comprehensive consultation into a roads project on Wednesday 10 October, hosting 60 events which nearly 15,000 people attended.

These events have been in addition to the wide ranging online consultation, which has seen around 26,000 replies come in. The vast majority of responses so far have been online, with people from every corner of the UK engaging with the project, demonstrating how important the multi-billion pound scheme will be.

Tim Jones, Project Director for Lower Thames Crossing, said:

The Lower Thames Crossing consultation is arguably the most significant that has ever been held into a UK road scheme and we have had an excellent response with more than 26,000 people sharing their views. We have endeavoured to ensure that everyone who has an interest has had the chance to have their say so that we can take those views to develop the best possible project.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to come to our

events and to respond to the consultation, the feedback we have received will play an important role in the evolution of our design. We will continue to work with Local Authorities, communities and stakeholders as we continue to develop our proposals to maximise the benefits and reduce the impact locally, regionally and nationally.

The Lower Thames Crossing will connect communities, boost the economy and add vital extra resilience to the road network while reducing pressure on the existing Dartford Crossing. It is set to be the most ambitious road project since the M25 opened 30 years ago and will include the UK's longest road tunnel.

The 14.5 mile route connecting Gravesham in Kent and Thurrock in Essex is expected to reduce traffic at Dartford by 22 per cent with 14 million fewer vehicles using it every year. It will almost halve the morning peak average journey times between M25 junctions 1b and 31 from nine minutes to just five.

The project will create a new, three-lane dual carriageway connecting the M2 near Rochester and the M25 in Essex between North and South Ockenden. It would include a 2.4 mile-long tunnel under the Thames between Gravesend and Tilbury – the longest road tunnel in the UK – and, at over 50 feet wide, the third largest bored tunnel in the world.

These latest plans include an updated, more detailed design which aims to maximise the project's huge benefits and includes significant changes to minimise the impact on local communities and the environment.

The next stage of the project's development will be to work through people's comments in detail and use them to produce an updated design which will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for planning consent. The application and examination process will offer people a further opportunity to share their views on the project. Subject to statutory processes construction could start in 2022, with the new road opening to traffic in 2027.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Press release: 26,000 share their views in Thames Crossing consultation

The number of responses is a record for a consultation of its type.

Press release: Signs help to identify flood risk car parks

Motorists across the North East can now get information on car parks at risk of flooding in a new project from the Environment Agency and local authorities.

Press release: Signs help to identify flood risk car parks

The joint project is working to identify all car parks in Tyne & Wear at risk of flooding. The first two areas to be identified are the Quayside in Newcastle, near the Swing Bridge, and low lights car park at North Shields Fish Quay.

Signs have now gone up in both car parks advising people to check tide timetables, sign up to the Flood Warning Service and information on alternative parking locations. In Newcastle, the council will advise when the car park is going to be closed.

The Environment Agency's Taryn Al-mashgari, Flood Community Engagement Officer for Tyne & Wear, said:

The signs are not to deter people from parking there as the vast majority of the time there are no issues. But we want people to be more informed about flooding – it's absolutely vital people understand how they can find out what the current flood risk is and what to do to keep themselves safe. These car parks are in flood risk areas and during particularly high tide they are liable to flooding.

It's particularly important for visitors where people might not be aware of the flood risk. This way that they can be more informed about the current and upcoming flood risk and ensure it's safe to park there.

The same signage will be used at flood risk car parks across Tyne & Wear. Taryn is also working with local authorities to identify car parks also at risk of surface water flooding. Councillor Nick Kemp, Newcastle City Council cabinet member for Environment, added:

Extreme weather events are an unfortunate challenge we all face from time to time so anything we can do to get one step ahead is a positive move. Flooding can strike in an instant and warning drivers of the potential of it occurring by leaving their cars in at-risk locations provides another layer of preparation to go with the defences which have already been invested in.

The work carried out with our partners like the Environment Agency is not intended to deter people from using these car parks, we simply aim to raise awareness of the risks.

Councillor Carole Burdis, North Tyneside Council's whose portfolio includes Community Safety, said:

It's great that, alongside our partners, we're taking vital steps to ensure the safety of our residents by giving them early warning of flood risks. We are committed to protecting the public and keeping everyone informed as much as possible of current flood risks and how to keep safe.

The project is part of the Environment Agency's ongoing work with local authorities to raise awareness of flood risk in our communities and ensure people know how to prepare.

Driving through flood water risks lives – just 30cm of water is enough to float your car. Those travelling over Christmas and through winter are urged to check their route for flood warnings. If you find your way blocked by flood water always turn around and find another way – never take the risk.

For more information on what to do in a flood visit [the gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk)