

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Lower Thames Crossing Task Force

The meeting will be held at **6.00 pm** on **15 February 2021**

Due to government guidance regarding the COVID-19 virus, members of the press and public will not be able to attend the meeting of Lower Thames Crossing Task Force on 15 February 2021. The meeting will be available to watch live at www.thurrock.gov.uk/webcast

Membership:

Councillors Fraser Massey (Chair), Gerard Rice (Deputy Chair), Luke Spillman, John Allen, Andrew Jefferies, Sara Muldowney, Terry Piccolo and Sue Shinnick

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force meeting held on 18 January 2021.	
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to direct.democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **5 February 2021**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- **Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;**
- **Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and**
- **leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon**

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force held on 18 January 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Fraser Massey (Chair), Gerard Rice (Deputy Chair), Luke Spillman, John Allen, Sara Muldowney and Sue Shinnick

Laura Blake, Thames Crossing Action Group Representative
Robert Quick, Resident Representative
Peter Ward, Business Representative

In attendance: Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing and Transport Infrastructure Projects
Steve Plumb, Ecology and Biodiversity Officer
Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Chris Stratford, Stantec Senior Consultant

Highways England Representatives:
Matt Palmer – Executive Director
Sam Stopp – Local Government Lead
Gary Hodge – Technical Lead
Claire Donnelly – Lead Architect
Steve Roberts – Technical Director
Poulomee Basu – Stakeholder Engagement (Local Authorities)
Phil Stanier – Stakeholder Engagement LTC

Before the start of the meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the video recording to be made available on the Council's website.

33. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

34. Minutes

The minutes of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Task Force meeting held on 14 December 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

35. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of the urgent business.

36. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

37. Highways England Attendance - Matt Palmer Introduction and Design Presentation

The Assistant Director LTC introduced the new Highways England (HE) Executive Director, Matt Palmer, and stated that the Development Consent Order (DCO) submission had been withdrawn and, HE had implemented a new staff structure and Matt Palmer reported directly to the Director of HE. She added that the LTC team now had a separate division within HE. She mentioned that Thurrock's Ecology and Biodiversity Officer had also joined the meeting, as he had worked closely with HE on some of the issues that would be highlighted in the presentation.

The HE Executive Director added that he had started the job five and a half months ago, and his aim had been to reorganise and refocus the LTC project. He stated that he had previously worked on the Heathrow third runway project, as well as other large national infrastructure projects, and felt that everybody's voices should be included in these decisions, such as local authorities, residents and businesses. He felt that the project would be better if all stakeholders worked together, and highlighted that the new HE team would be listening and engaging with stakeholders on a more regular basis. The HE Executive Director explained that he was not a highways engineer, so felt that this project was not simply a road, and wanted to work with Thurrock on local benefits for the Council and community.

The Chair stated that the Task Force could now ask questions of the HE Executive Director, before the presentation began. Councillor Spillman began questions and stated that he appreciated the new approach by HE, as previously he had felt that they had not focussed on potential benefits that the proposed route could bring. He added that HE had previously not worked hard enough to sell potential benefits to the Task Force or general public, and felt that potential mitigation measures should be discussed openly to ensure the best mitigation was implemented. The HE Executive Director responded and thanked Councillor Spillman for his comments. He stated that he had first-hand experience of living by a newly opened road and understood the impact and benefits it could have for local residents. He stated that previously HE had focussed too heavily on the route, rather than the community. He stated that although the Task Force could not change the route alignment, they could work together to ensure all parties understood the benefits and disadvantages.

Councillor Allen questioned if it was still possible to influence HE regarding issues such as cut and cover near population centres. He felt that HE and the Council should discuss potential mitigation in more depth, such as road surfaces, cut and cover, and tree planting to ensure the route was right by design. The HE Executive Director replied that although there would be some flexibility, due to the stage of the project the route alignment would fundamentally not change on large issues such as cut and cover. He stated that the Hatch report outlined 57 potential mitigation measures, of which 50% were already being worked on by HE. The Assistant Director LTC added that

a detailed technical paper had been brought to the Task Force in December 2019 which outlined why cut and cover was not a suitable option, for example due to topography, additional environmental impact, future local plan development, and ground conditions. She stated that there was still numerous mitigation measures that could be pursued, instead of cut and cover.

The Thames Crossing Action Group (TCAG) Representative thanked HE for attending the meeting and asked if any further consultation would be undertaken. The HE Executive Director replied that HE were currently considering the potential of future consultation, as they now had time due to DCO re-submission, which the team were working out how to use most effectively. He stated that HE would work more closely with local councils such as Thurrock, and wanted to have meaningful conversations with residents in the future. Councillor Rice asked if there was a possibility of moving the route away from population centres such as Chadwell St Mary and Orsett Heath, as the route came within 500metres of people's homes. The HE Executive Director responded that the route selection team had worked hard to balance a variety of pressures, but understood that the route would still affect some people. He explained that the route alignment was inflexible, but additional mitigation such as trees and noise protection would be sought.

Councillor Muldowney stated that she appreciated the new HE approach, but asked if it was too late for significant change to occur. She stated that Thurrock would need substantial levels of mitigation to ensure that residents' health did not deteriorate due to the route. She described how Thurrock already had increased rates of COPD and heart/lung issues, and she did not want resident's lives to be shortened due to the proposed route. Councillor Muldowney asked if it would be possible for HE to start a fund for those impacted by the route, or move those residents worst affected on either a temporary or permanent basis. The HE Executive Director responded that the health and air quality data collected by the HE team was a positive story, which did not show large areas of poor air quality due to the route. He stated that HE had been busy with the DCO submission, but would share this information with Thurrock Council. He added that HE had also included a blight fund for those who needed to move due to the proposed route. The HE Executive Director stated that he would confirm in writing when the blight fund could be used by local residents.

The HE Technical Lead then began his presentation and gave a brief update on the Hatch report. He stated that 57 mitigation proposals had been included in the Hatch report, and currently 27 of these proposals would be included in the emerging re-submission, although this number could increase in the future. He stated that the DCO re-submission would categorise the mitigation into three areas: direct; council-led support; and legacy. The HE Technical Lead stated that key measures were still under consideration and the levels of potential mitigation measures were still a work in progress. He outlined some measures that were still being discussed such as sustainable public transport, for example electric shuttle buses between Stanford-le-Hope station, or other stations, and the main compound. He added that HE were also working on mitigation such as: council-led communications to ensure that mitigation

measures were implemented by HE; a permanent bridge over the Tilbury loop line; increased internet and 5G provision within the compound and locally; and enhanced public rights of way and the completion of the Two Forts Way project. He summarised and stated that HE were working with Thurrock officers on these mitigation measures and the Statement of Common Ground would look at how these measures could be delivered, and would be included in the DCO's next submission. The Senior Stantec Consultant stated that the Council would be scrutinising these measures and how they provided for in detail, and would report back to the Task Force as soon as possible.

The HE Lead Architect then introduced herself and stated that she had a specialism in landscape architecture on large-scale infrastructure projects. She began her presentation by outlining the architect's process on the project, which began with the design narrative. She stated that the design narrative for LTC had begun in 2017 when the appointed team had analysed the context surrounding the proposed route, and how the new road could be integrated into its surroundings. She stated that most of the area around the route in Thurrock was marshes, forests and communities, so the team had worked on mitigating areas such as junctions with heavy woodland planting on ridges. She explained that the next stage was the iterative design process, which was separated into design principles and the project design report. She commented that the design principles document was forward-looking and had been submitted at DCO.

The HE Lead Architect then moved onto the third stage in the process which was preliminary design, and although this stage did not include lots of detail, it added layers of refinement to the DCO submission. She explained that the levels of design moved from baseline, which focussed on engineering and the width of bridges etc., to additional design principles which focussed on material palate, to post-DCO approval which focussed on the contract terms, design codes and delivery of the designs. She then outlined enhancements that had been made to the scheme since DCO submission, such as improving public rights of way, and outlined to the Task Force some of the big structures that had been improved. She described how some of the overbridges over LTC would be green bridges, such as along Hoford Road and Muckingford Road. She stated that although they would both be green bridges, they would be treated differently as they had different uses.

The HE Lead Architect added that the team had looked at every structure along the proposed route in Thurrock and categorised them depending on which required improvement. She explained that the team had then discussed these structures with the independent HE Design Review Panel, who had focussed on the structures that most needed enhancement. She stated that this included the North Orsett Fen Viaduct and the Mardyke Viaduct; Thames Chase Bridge; and the North Portal Service Building. She stated that there had been a good base level of design on all these structures, but a level of detail was needed above what had previously been included in some drawings. She started by explaining the north portal detail and stated that both the north and south portal would be very large structures that had to be similar due to them being a pair. She stated that the landscape surrounding the north

and south portals was different, so would require different engineering. She added that the area surrounding the north portal had originally been marshland that had become valuable over the centuries due to its closeness with the river for defence, industrial and agricultural purposes. She explained that it was a challenging site as the north portal exited in the middle of a Victorian landfill, which meant the land shifted and changed often. She described how the land was also in a flood zone, so the architectural team needed to protect against flooding whilst maintaining emergency access. She stated that the north portal would be surrounded by earth bunds, with two access roads sitting atop those bunds. She added that the portal buildings would be integrated into the landscape through the use of sloping and green roofs, using a restrained material palette. She explained that the location of the portal service buildings was constrained by the tunnel, as it would require access roads, service provision, and emergency access. She described how the main service building would be 82metres long x 42metres wide, and the majority of the building would contain firefighting kit and necessary PPE. She added that the building would also be the main corralling point for emergency services to meet if required. She explained that the building would be made of permeable paving and materials to keep the building cool and increase sustainability.

The HE Lead Architect then moved onto the area known as Tilbury Fields, which would be included in the landscaping scheme due to the amount of earthworks produced during tunnel excavation. She stated that the wooded ridge currently in Tilbury Fields would remain to form cutting along the route, and additional woodland planting would occur to improve noise mitigation. She stated that because of this Public Right of Way 202 would be moved and reconnected. She felt this was a good landscape, with views to both Tilbury and Coalhouse Fort, as well as numerous defensive batteries, and could be celebrated more if some innovations were included in the scheme. She explained that HE were working to create some highpoints along the river so people walking along the route could see both forts and the natural landscape. She explained that the ideas in this area had to be constrained due to the contours of the land, and the aim to return the land to pasture once the route had been completed. She added that the team could still create a landscape marker as well as implementing the proposed Two Forts Way, which would reinforce the walk and make it more enjoyable for users.

The HE Lead Architect then described the Tilbury Viaduct, which would rise over the Tilbury loop line. She explained that it would be a clean structure with a minimum of 6metre clearance, and although it would be prominent in the landscape, would be in proportion with surroundings. She stated that she had zoomed in on the DCO submission photos, which now more clearly showed that the woodland planting already in the area would screen the road from view. She added that the team had also created a CGI view from a non-public right of way, and this highlighted how the Tilbury Viaduct would be made of v-shaped piers which would form a good height and sit in a natural bowl. She explained that the team still needed to integrate the abutments on either end of the viaduct, and include earthworks and noise barriers in their projections.

The HE Lead Architect then explained how the Mardyke Viaduct and Orsett Fen Viaduct had also been enhanced through the process. She felt that both of these fens were very beautiful, and provided long views across the landscape to Basildon and Brentwood, as there was not a lot of development in the area. She stated that she had mapped the green infrastructure in the area, and felt that the Mardyke Trail was pivotal, and wanted to link this with the forest loop at Thameside Chase for non-motorised users and equestrians. She explained that both viaducts spanned a number of water courses, and were also on a floodplain which meant that both viaducts would need to be raised and could not use lots of earthworks, such as screening or false cutting, as this would decrease the effectiveness of the flood volume on the plain. She described how both areas of fen land had been drained several years ago, but there was a wish amongst local community groups to re-wet these areas, as this would make the area more interesting, increase biodiversity and improve flood characteristics. She stated that there were also some areas of wooded wetland, which also improved the natural habitat and views. She commented that HE also wished to link up public rights of way, as well as create new ones to link these fen areas with Green Lane. She explained that the team had designed a longer structure to ensure improved clearance over the water courses and improved access to access roads. The HE Lead Architect explained that the longer spans led to a deeper structure, but felt that this would still maintain views for people using the public rights of way. She added that the longer and more equal spans also improved clearance and headroom for non-motorised users under the route. She summarised and stated that the design principles were still under discussion and all features of the design were subject to quality control measures.

Councillor Spillman began questions and asked if more woodland could be included in the fens to add social value and improve the experience of people visiting the area and using the public rights of way. He felt that wetland did not have much social value, and this could be improved by increasing the amount of woodland planted. The HE Lead Architect responded that as the landscape was currently fens and therefore very flat, woodland planting would be out of character with the area. She explained that locally, woodland planting was currently used in the corner of fields and this had been replicated in this design. She added that the Land of the Fens Community Group had been consulted on this issue, and had felt it should be returned to wetland. She added that open space provision had been included elsewhere along the route, such as community woodland near the A13 junction.

Councillor Muldowney questioned the 27 items that had been agreed by HE from the Hatch report, and asked if the Task Force could receive this list. The HE Technical Lead responded that he would pass onto officers to distribute amongst the Task Force. Councillor Muldowney then highlighted the design aspect of the viaducts, and felt that although the design had been improved, the overall views across the fens would still be lost. She questioned if planting around the Tilbury Viaduct would be kept. The HE Lead Architect replied that some trees would have to be removed during construction phase, but these would be replaced and additional trees would be planted. She felt that this would soften the impact of how the structure was viewed. She added that she

could not quantify how many trees would be gained in Thurrock, but stated that there would be a net gain and these figures could be sent to officers.

The Thurrock Business Representative stated that the Port of Tilbury were engaging with HE on a regular basis, and reinforced that the Port had the largest aggregate construction terminal in the UK, and felt this should be utilised during route construction. He highlighted that 50% of all construction traffic could be removed from local roads if HE utilised the port. He explained that even though the Port of Tilbury were engaged with HE, he felt this issue should be on the agenda for discussions between Thurrock Council and HE. He also highlighted that the design included new things such as a water vole area at the tunnel emergence and bridge over the Tilbury loop line. The Thurrock Business Representative stated that although no Link Road was included in this scheme, he questioned if the new changes would still allow a Tilbury Link Road in future. He felt that the Link Road would be, particularly if Thurrock's Freeport bid was accepted. The HE Technical Lead responded that the HE team were in discussions with the Port of Tilbury and Thurrock Council regarding construction traffic. He added that the new designs had tried to keep areas where the future Link Road might be built clear of mains and utilities works, although some emergency access roads had had to be included. He stated that these access roads could be moved at a later date if the Tilbury Link Road was agreed.

The Chair questioned the height of the Tilbury Viaduct, and asked if the 6metres of clearance was from the ground or from the tops of the railway power lines. The HE Lead Architect responded that the 6metre clearance was from ground level, but still allowed for clearance of trains and associated power lines. The TCAG Representative questioned the flood aspect, and asked if this had been reviewed following recent heavy flooding in the area. The HE Technical Lead responded that HE had worked with the Environment Agency on an updated flood risk assessment, which had taken into account the recent flooding. He stated that the risk assessment also looked at potential flooding risk 50-100 years in the future. The TCAG Representative then questioned why the A13 junction had not been included in the presentation, as she felt this would be good to visualise, especially with woodland planting included. She also questioned who would maintain the woodland once it had been planted. She felt that it would be good to see additional design ideas before the next DCO submission, as officers would be under pressure at this point to analyse all documents submitted. The HE Lead Architect responded that the presentation had only focussed on three things due to time pressures at the Task Force, but not much work had been completed on additional A13 visualisation. She stated that additional woodland would be planted at the junction, particularly on the Blackshots edge for people living on Baker Street. She added that due to the scale of the junction, it would be difficult to look at it in a granular level. The HE Lead Architect explained that the team were currently working on the Landscape Management Plan, which would look at the maintenance of woodland, and would be submitted at DCO. She added that the draft document could be brought before the Task Force at a later stage. The HE Executive Director added that he would ensure the figures surrounding tree planting in Thurrock

were provided to the Task Force.

The Resident Representative questioned when the detail surrounding mitigation during the construction phase would be seen. He stated that lots of construction would be occurring near Chadwell St. Mary, Linford and East Tilbury, and a level of detail would be needed on this. The HE Executive Director responded that the team were currently working on how to present information regarding construction visualisations and mitigation. He stated that they were currently trying to find some meaningful views that the Task Force would find valuable, but he would take this away and come back to the Task Force with this information.

Councillor Muldowney felt that this information would be needed before DCO submission to ensure officers had enough time to analyse all the documents and information submitted. She questioned if the HE team had any information regarding bridleways, as there were lots in Thurrock. The HE Lead Architect responded that she had another presentation regarding public rights of way and upgrading pathways to bridleway standard, which could be presented to the Task Force at a later date. She added that the HE team were currently in consultation with local landowners as they had reported anti-social behaviour on quadbikes along bridleways. She explained that the team were currently discussing access control, to allow for wheelchair users and equestrians to access the bridleways but not quadbike riders. The HE Executive Director added that he would take this issue as an action and discuss how best this could be shared with the Task Force. The Stantec Senior Consultant commented that any further presentation on public rights of way proposals should be integrated with Green Infrastructure proposals, possibly at the next Task Force. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that he had been involved in conversations with HE regarding public rights of way improvements. He stated that they were currently discussing how to get sections of road improved, where public rights of way intersected, to ensure cyclists and equestrians could remain safe. He commented that the proposals currently showed a reasonable route from Thames Chase to Coalhouse Fort.

Councillor Allen questioned why the Tilbury Link Road had not been included in the proposed route. He felt that it would alleviate traffic on local roads such as the Dock Approach Road and the Asda roundabout, which currently saw 19,000 vehicle movements in 24 hours. The HE Technical Lead responded that the Link Road had only been included in a scoping report in October 2017 that had been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. He explained that when more work had been completed on the proposed Link Road it had found that it would have increased the complexity of the A13 junction at the Orsett Cock roundabout, and would have meant that a large flyover would have been needed. He added that the Link Road would also have led to inappropriate traffic on inappropriate roads. He commented that the proposals would be looked at during RIS2 and RIS3 funding. The HE Executive Director added that the team were currently looking at other road schemes to alleviate traffic on the Asda roundabout and other local networks. He mentioned that the Link Road was currently under development by another project team, which could be funded through RIS3.

Councillor Rice questioned if the team had considered the route going underneath the railway line at West Tilbury, rather than using a viaduct. He stated that as the route rose out of the tunnel it would continue to rise over the viaduct and trucks could struggle with the incline and slow down traffic. He felt that the Tilbury Viaduct would need to be on a steep incline to rise over the railway line, and could also reduce landscape views, which could be alleviated if the route was in a tunnel. The HE Executive Director responded and stated that this had been the first question he had asked when visiting the site. He explained that it would be better for the route to be in a viaduct though, as otherwise the tunnel would double in length and be unfeasibly long. He described how the route would meet industry standards that would ensure lorries could make the incline, and this had been proven in other schemes.

The Chair thanked Highways England for their attendance at the meeting, and the good level of design they had presented. He then invited them to a future Task Force meeting to discuss public rights of way, green infrastructure, and the Health Impact Assessment. The HE Executive Director thanked Members for their questions, and stated that it would be good if HE could return to the Task Force to present on a series of topics over time.

38. A303 Legal Challenge Update

The Chair and Task Force agreed to suspend standing orders, due to the lateness of the meeting and items still left to cover.

The Assistant Director LTC stated that she had no update since December regarding the A303 legal challenge, but would continue to update the Task Force when new information emerged. The TCAG Representative questioned if an update would be provided regarding the work of the Transport Action Network. The Assistant Director LTC responded that she had spoken with the Head of Democratic Services, who had determined that the work of the Transport Action Network did not fall under the remit of the Task Force. She stated that it did warrant separate discussion, which she would liaise with the Chair about offline.

39. Economic Mitigation List

The Assistant Director LTC stated that the Council were due to publish the non-technical summary in two weeks' time. She highlighted that the next steps would be to find out which of the 57 items of mitigation HE were prepared to include, as she had not yet received a formal written response. She stated that once this list had been sent through, the team would analyse these and would be added to the Work Programme.

Councillor Muldowney asked if L15 could be updated to include Orsett Fens and other green spaces which had previously been mentioned. The Stantec Senior Consultant responded that L15 had been updated, but the updated

document had not been included in the agenda. He explained that once the technical summary had been published, the updated report could be circulated.

The Chair asked what work had been undertaken regarding biodiversity mitigation. The Assistant Director LTC replied that as the DCO process was iterative, the final layer of biodiversity mitigation would not be seen until after the DCO had been submitted and just before the construction phase was due to start. She explained that as the DCO was not a planning application, HE only needed to submit a limited level of detail. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer replied that he was working with HE architects on the landscape and ecology to ensure a mix of mitigation, including legacy benefits.

40. Work Programme

The Assistant Director LTC highlighted that the Health Impact Assessment would be included under the DCO review for March's meeting.

The meeting finished at 8.45 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

Summary of Energy White Paper, December 2020

On 14 December 2020, the Government released the new Energy White Paper ([Energy White Paper \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92222/energy-white-paper-december-2020.pdf)) setting out, over 170pp, its four overall aims:

1. Transform energy supply to build a cleaner, greener future
2. Reform the energy system such that it is fit for future purpose
3. Create a 'fair deal' for energy consumers by increasing price transparency, providing more opportunities for consumers to save money on bills and by protecting the fuel poor
4. Support a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by growing the economy in a sustainable way and supporting industry thousands of new 'green jobs' nationwide

It seeks to clean up the nation's energy systems and ensure the journey to net zero by 2050 is achievable and affordable. It reinforces/expands on the Prime Minister's recently announced Ten Point Plan to support a green recovery from Covid-19 (covering nuclear power; green public transport, cycling and walking; offshore wind; hydrogen; jet zero and green ships; greener buildings; protecting our natural environment; zero emission vehicles; carbon capture, usage and storage; and, green finance and innovation) for a Green Industrial Revolution and sets out the steps needed to cut emissions from industry, transport and buildings by 230 million metric tonnes. It commits to supporting up to 220,000 jobs in the new, greener economy over the next decade, with positions ranging from employment in major power generation, carbon capture storage and hydrogen projects, in addition to a nationwide programme to retrofit homes and buildings with energy efficiency and clean heat technologies.

Summaries of the headline pledges for each of these aims are set out below and those few that could have a direct relevance to Thurrock's Local Plan, but with limited relevance for the LTC DCO, are set out in bold text.

(1) Transforming Energy Supply

The Government:

- Has set a target of 40GW of offshore wind by 2030, of which 1GW will be floating wind. The Government will continue to hold Contracts for Difference (CfD) auctions every two years and onshore wind, solar and offshore wind will continue to be the cornerstone of sustainable energy for the UK's future. The Government will issue a Call for Evidence shortly to seek views on how the CfD scheme could evolve beyond the 2021 auction. The Government will also establish a Ministerial Delivery Group to bring together relevant government departments to oversee and streamline the expansion of renewable power.
- Will finalise plans for at least 1 large nuclear project before the end of Parliament. The Government notes that Hinckley Point C is due to commission in the mid-2020s, but as the remaining nuclear fleet will retire over the next 10 years, the Government suggests that an additional nuclear power site will be required.
- Will provide up to £385m in an Advanced Nuclear Fund for the next generation of nuclear technology, by the early 2030s. The Government aims to develop a Small

Modular Reactor (SMR) design and to build an Advanced Modular Reactor (AMR) demonstrator. An additional £40m will be invested in developing the requisite regulatory framework and supply chains associated with these technologies. The Government also intends to build a commercially viable fusion power plant by 2040.

- Will consult on steps to ensure that new thermal plants can convert to low carbon alternatives. The Government intends to consult in early 2021 on removing the 300MW minimum threshold on building thermal plants. This restriction was put in place to ensure that planning consents were only granted to thermal plants on which it was technically feasible to retrofit carbon capture technology. But, it has dis-incentivised the deployment of gas plants larger than 300MW, which tend to be more efficient.
- Consult on the role which bio-energy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) can play in reducing carbon emissions across the economy. BECCS will play a vital part in the Government's wider biomass strategy (a new report is due in 2022, with a preliminary paper by summer 2021).
- Develop 5GW of low-carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030. The Government will support industry to begin a 'Hydrogen Neighbourhood' trial by 2023, and a large 'Hydrogen Village' trial by 2025. They hope that the experience gained in delivering trials in communities will enable a strategic decision in the mid-2020s around the long-term role of hydrogen for heating. Additionally, the Government is developing a prototype hydrogen-ready boiler, cooker and fire through the Hy4Heat programme which will conclude in summer 2021.

(2) Energy System Reform

The Government will:

- Publish a new 'Smart Systems Plan' in spring 2021. The Government will continue to implement policies suggested by Ofgem in their 2017 'Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan'. The Government says it is on track to deliver the plan in full by 2022. However, it has set out a desire to go beyond that in the new Smart Systems Plan.
- Launch a competition in spring 2021 to address energy storage and flexibility challenges. This was announced as part of the Government's 10 Point Plan and is seen as one of key priority areas in the £1bn Net Zero Innovation Portfolio. Technologies of interest include lithium-ion and pumped hydro storage.
- Legislate to ensure competitive tendering in the building, ownership and operation of the onshore electricity network. The Government intends to open up competitive tendering at the distribution as well as transmission network level, with the Secretary of State to appoint a party to run the tender process. The Government also intends to open network innovation funding to third parties to encourage more whole-system funding.
- **Support the roll-out of charging and associated grid infrastructure to support driver to make the switch to Electric Vehicles (EVs). As part of £2.8bn package announced in the Ten Point Plan, the Government will provide £1.3bn to accelerate the roll-out of charge points in homes, workplaces,**

street and motorways. The Government will also invest a further £950m to 'futureproof' grid capacity along the strategic road network.

- Implement a more efficient approach to connecting offshore generation to the mainland grid. The Government has launched the Offshore Transmission Network Review to improve the delivery of transmission connections for offshore wind generation in a move away from the current model of single point-to-point connections. The review will consider the potential of hybrid, multi-purpose interconnectors. The hybrid projects could allow connection to neighbouring markets and sell of excess green power.
- **Consult on prohibiting gas grid connections to new homes built from 2025 – gas supply to be replaced by renewable or clean alternatives. Subject to the outcome of the ongoing consultation, the Government expects the Green Gas Support Scheme to launch in autumn 2021 and run for four years. The scheme will support continued deployment of anaerobic digestion biomethane plants in order to increase the proportion of green gas on the grid.**
- Build world-leading digital infrastructure for our energy system. The independent Energy Data Taskforce is set to publish the UK's first Energy Data Strategy in partnership with Ofgem in spring 2021.

(3) Consumer Fairness & Transparency

The Government will:

- Consult on creating an opt-in switching framework by March 2021, with the intention of setting out how such a framework should be designed, tested and scaled up. Since 2017 Ofgem (the electricity market regulator) has run consumer engagement tests and has found that customers who had not switched for many years can be prompted to do so by well-designed emails/letters. The most successful trials were 'opt-in' switching trials which removed as many steps as possible from the switching process.
- Consult on reforming auto-renewal and roll-over tariff arrangements by March 2021 and map out how opt-out switching could be tested as part of any future reforms. The Government does not believe that energy suppliers should be expected to roll over or continue contracts indefinitely. The Government has pledged to engage closely with stakeholders to test moving customers to new contracts with the option to 'opt-out', which could move consumers on default tariffs to cheaper contracts.
- Establish a market framework covering changes which may be required to facilitate the development and uptake of innovative tariffs and products. The Government intends to engage with industry and consumer groups throughout 2021 before a formal consultation. The market framework will need to enable innovation and competition, whilst protecting consumers. The Government has also promised to continue to review the current supply licence framework.
- Review retail market regulation and consult by spring 2021 on regulating third parties such as energy brokers and price comparison websites. The Government has acknowledged that the market has changed rapidly over recent years and more consumers are now using price comparison sites. As these sites are not currently

regulated by Ofgem, the Government wants to ensure that customers are protected from malpractice when receiving a service through these third parties.

- Ensure consumers are provided with more transparent and accurate information on carbon content when they are choosing their energy services and products. In addition to continuing the roll-out of smart meters and other digital technology, the Government has committed to assessing how effectively the market provides consumers with clear information on costs and clean energy choice. The Government will be consulting on reforms in early 2021.
- Consult on how the energy supplier thresholds of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Warm Home Discount (WHD). ECO and WHD are obligations on suppliers to tackle fuel poverty by providing targeted energy efficiency measures and bill discounts. When these schemes were created, supplier thresholds were introduced to avoid creating barriers to entry for newer suppliers. However, the introduction of these thresholds may have created distortions as smaller suppliers have been able to undercut their larger competitors who have to pay the costs. The Government now wants to remove the thresholds and has pledged to extend ECO until 2026 and WHD to £475m per year from 2022 to 2025/26. The Government will consult on how to protect smaller suppliers upon removal of the thresholds.
- Take powers to regulate smart appliances based on principles including interoperability, data privacy and cyber security. The Government want ensure that any 'smart devices' can sync with any service provider's systems, such that consumers cannot be locked into one provider indefinitely. The Government also want to ensure that consumer data is protected and private. Industry standards for interoperability, data privacy and cyber security are to be published by summer 2021.

(4) Supporting a Green Recovery from COVID-19

(i) Building Reform and Transformation

The Government will:

- **Establish the Future Homes Standard to ensure all new-build homes are zero carbon ready. The Future Homes Standard will require new-build homes to be fitted with low-carbon heating and high level of energy efficiency.**
- **Ensure that as many existing home as possible meet EPC Band C by 2035. The Ten Point Plan confirmed that the Green Homes Grant Voucher and Local Authority Delivery schemes will be extended for another year to support homeowners and landlords to cover the cost of upgrading the energy performance of their buildings.**
- Consult on the regulatory measures required for energy performance of homes and on how mortgage lenders can support homeowners in making such improvements. The Government have said that growing the market for green finance products to leverage investment from businesses, homeowner and landlords will be essential. The Government has anticipated that changes will need to be made to the Energy

Performance of Buildings (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 in 2021 to strengthen regulatory compliance and support policies.

- **Require all non-domestic buildings to be EPC Band B by 2030. The Government intends to deliver this through a performance-based rating scheme, improving information and access to the upfront capital required to cover the costs of installation and by strengthening the existing Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme. Consultations on these three processes will take place in 2021.**
- Commit £122m in funding towards a Heat Network Transformation Programme. The Government are committed to developing additional low-carbon heat networks and will seek new powers to require heat networks to switch to low-carbon fuel sources and to support Local Authorities in designating new heat network zones no later than 2025.
- Expand the installation to electric heat pumps from 30,000 per year to 600,000 per year by 2028.

The Government also want to continue their roll-out of smart meters, including second generation smart meters (which are interoperable from the point of install). The Government has introduced a new smart meter obligation on energy suppliers, which will start in July 2021, to improve installation and operational performance rates.

(ii) Industry

The Government will:

- Publish an Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy in spring 2021. The Government intends to establish how the transition to clean energy will support the competitiveness of UK industry and a green economic recovery.
- Support the delivery of four low-carbon clusters by 2030 and at least one fully net zero cluster by 2040. The Government intends to invest £1bn up to 2025 to deploy carbon capture usage and storage (CCUS) in centres where related industries have congregated and could benefit from using shared clean energy.
- Implement the world's first net zero carbon cap and trade market, the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS). To replace the current EU ETS. A cap is set on the greenhouse emissions from businesses (via the total number of allowances in circulation) which decreases over time. Businesses are permitted to buy and sell emissions allowances through government auctions or secondary markets. The UK ETS will initially apply to energy-intensive industries, electricity generation and aviation.
- Bring forward details of a revenue mechanism in 2021 to enable private sector investment into industrial carbon capture and hydrogen projects. The Government will also create a Net Zero Hydrogen Fund to support low-carbon hydrogen production, providing £240 million of capital co-investment out to 2024/25.

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**Lower Thames Crossing Task Force
Work Programme 2020/21**

Dates of Meetings: 15 June 2020, 20 July 2020, 17 August 2020, 21 September 2020, 12 October 2020, 16 November 2020, 14 December 2020, 18 January 2021, 15 February 2021, 15 March 2021, 19 April 2021

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
15 June 2020 - Cancelled		
20 July 2020		
Nomination of Chair	Democratic Services	Officers
Nomination of Vice-Chair	Democratic Services	Officers
LTC Consultation Presentation	Anna Eastgate	Members
Task Force Priorities List	Anna Eastgate	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Officers
17 August 2020 - Cancelled		
21 September 2020		
Highways England Attendance	Anna Eastgate	Members
Task Force Priorities List	Anna Eastgate	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Officers
12 October 2020		
Economic Mitigation List	Anna Eastgate	Members
Health Impact Assessment Update	Anna Eastgate	Members

Work Programme	Democratic Services	Officers
16 November 2020 - CANCELLED		
14 December 2020		
DCO Withdrawal & Next Steps	Anna Eastgate	Officers
A303: Questions and Comments	Anna Eastgate	Officers
Economic Mitigation List	Anna Eastgate	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Officers
18 January 2021		
Highways England Attendance – Matt Palmer Introduction and Design Presentation	Anna Eastgate	Members
A303: Legal Challenge Update	Anna Eastgate	Members
Economic Mitigation List	Anna Eastgate	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Officers
15 February 2021		
Energy White Paper	Anna Eastgate	Members
Mitigation/Legacy Benefits Prioritisation – Verbal Update	Anna Eastgate	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Officers
15 March 2021		
DCO – EIA & HIA Review, and CO2 Emissions	Anna Eastgate	Members
Economic Mitigation List	Anna Eastgate	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Officers
19 April 2021		

Economic Mitigation List	Anna Eastgate	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Officers

Clerk: Lucy Tricker
Last updated: 7th January 2021

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