

Minutes of the Meeting of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force scheduled for 18 October 2021, and held on 13 December 2021 at 6.49 pm

- Present:** Councillors Fraser Massey (Chair), Gary Byrne, Daniel Chukwu and Sara Muldowney
- Apologies:** Councillors John Kent (Vice-Chair), Adam Carter, and Sue Sammons
Laura Blake, Thames Crossing Action Group Representative
Peter Ward, Business Representative
- In attendance:** Colin Black, Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery
Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer
- Chris Stratford, Senior Consultant Stantec, engaged by Thurrock Council
Darren Wisher, Global Director Urban Solutions at Hatch
- Robert Quick, Resident Representative
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, with the recording to be made available on the Council's website.

27. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Sue Sammons, Adam Carter and John Kent. Apologies were also received from Laura Blake, Thames Crossing Action Group Representative, and Peter Ward, Business Representative.

28. Minutes

The minutes from the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force held on 20 September 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

29. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

30. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

31. Employment and Skills Strategy

The Senior Consultant introduced the report and stated that since it had been published, there were some minor amendments that needed to be made. He

explained that the table on page four suggested there would be nine new support posts required within Thurrock, but this should have been six posts. He added that the cost outlined on page four was listed as £450,000 but the following wording should be included 'the costs includes both salaries and compensation, as well as an events and training programme'.

The Senior Consultant explained that the Skills, Education and Employment (SEE) Strategy overlapped with elements of the Hatch report and National Highways (NH) had been advised of Thurrock's comments on the SEE Strategy through discussions regarding the Hatch report. He stated that the SEE Strategy had first been developed by NH approximately fifteen months ago, and Thurrock had provided their comments on that version. He stated that an update on the SEE Strategy had then been received from NH in May, and comments on this update had been provided in August. He stated that the table in section three of the report outlined the main comments that Thurrock had made, and the team had felt that there were no ambitious job targets included, for example the scheme would include 22,000 new jobs, but only 437 apprenticeships and not all of these would be based in Thurrock. He clarified that NH were currently working with some Thurrock-based businesses that would be involved in the supply chain. He added that Thurrock Council had also asked NH for additional resources within the Council to ensure work could be completed, but so far NH had only agreed to five additional posts, with only one of these being based in the northern area which included Thurrock.

The Senior Consultant stated that Thurrock had been developing a proposal for a grant scheme for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which would help NH meet its target of £1 in every £3 spent on SMEs, but this had not been agreed or explained by NH yet. He added that the team had also asked for more ambitious jobs targets, legal targets, and an increased Community Grant sum. He stated that the NH had only just now accepted in principal using Section 106 agreements, but Thurrock Council were pushing for the SEE Strategy to be a control document. He summarised and stated that NH had not agreed to the SEE Strategy becoming a control document as they only wanted the measures to be included in the S106 Agreement. The Global Director for Urban Solutions at Hatch added that the SEE Strategy in its current form was not specific to Thurrock and did not show any local employment benefits. He stated that the team would be pushing for more ambitious and legal targets as Thurrock were the main local authority that the scheme would pass through.

The Chair questioned when the SEE Strategy would be agreed upon, whether it would be before or after Development Consent Order (DCO) submission. The Senior Consultant explained that the SEE Strategy may form part of the DCO submission, but if it was included in an S106 Agreement, then this would only be agreed just prior to or during the Examination Phase. Councillor Muldowney questioned why it was significant that the SEE Strategy should be a control document. The Senior Consultant replied that contractors who worked on the scheme were only obligated to follow control documents and it would set an overall tone for positive targets and actions, even though

compliance with S106 would also be necessary. He stated that the team would continue to push for the SEE Strategy as a control document and would report any updates back to the Task Force when appropriate. Councillor Muldowney questioned the jobs targets outlined by NH and queried whether the actual numbers would be different to the targets, and if any jobs would be specific to Thurrock. The Senior Consultant replied that NH had not yet disclosed the specific jobs that would be targeted at Thurrock, but the team were expecting approximately 20-20% of the workforce to be local, some of which would be from Thurrock. He explained that although this figure seemed quite low, some jobs were specialised and could only be completed elsewhere, such as the tunnel boring machine build, which may happen in Germany. He explained that NH were proposing 22,000 jobs would be developed from the scheme, but stated that Thurrock had not seen the calculations behind these figures. He stated that NH had announced that there would be approximately 2,500 construction workers on site during the peak of the construction phase, with most additional jobs probably being from within the supply chain.

The Resident Representative stated that he had recently attended a NH meeting regarding recruitment and the supply chain, during which they had provided a brief explanation on their supply chain plans. He stated that NH had explained that although there would be 22,000 jobs overall, there would only be 10,000 jobs during the peak of construction as the majority of jobs would be occurring at different times and in different locations. He stated that NH had highlighted the SME Directory that 550 businesses had signed up to, but clarified that only 54 of these businesses were based in Thurrock. He explained that during the meeting he had also questioned worker accommodation plans, and NH had explained that the majority of workers would commute to their jobs or find houses in the local rental market. He summarised and stated that during the meeting only two businesses had requested more information regarding the supply chain. The Senior Consultant stated that Thurrock Council officers had been working with businesses and had tried to encourage them to take part in NH recruitment and supply chain meetings. He explained that as construction was due to start in 2024, if the DCO was granted, this was still a long way away for businesses and many were not willing to engage this early in the process. He stated that Thurrock had also provided comments on NH worker accommodation strategy, as the Council had felt that 480 on-site units would not be enough to accommodate all workers. He clarified that Thurrock had not received an updated strategy which answered their comments and concerns.

The Chair stated that Thurrock currently had an unemployment rate of 5%, which equated to approximately 4000 people. He asked how local unemployed residents would be able to take up the opportunities presented by NH during the LTC scheme. The Senior Consultant replied that Thurrock's aim was to increase skills and training opportunities for local residents, particularly those that were currently unemployed, and the team would be working closely with NH in the coming years to ensure local people would be able to be upskilled through the scheme. He explained that until DCO was

submitted, NH could not contract with the main works contractors, so companies may be unable to employ or upskill people until then.

32. Health Impact Assessment: Verbal Update

The Senior Consultant introduced the report and stated that there had currently been no progress on the HIA. He stated that an independent audit had been commissioned with other local authorities affected by the scheme, and NH had agreed to incorporate between 60-70% of the ideas from the audit, but so far Thurrock had not received any proof that this was taking place or a timeline for delivery. The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery added that Thurrock had been meeting regularly with NH through CIPHAG meetings, but were waiting on greater clarity to be provided on the health impacts of the scheme. He added that the LTC website had recently been updated which stated that air quality across the region would be improved by the scheme, but so far no data had been provided to prove this claim. He stated that NH would be going out to consultation next year due to significant scheme changes and amendments, as this was a planning requirement, but felt that NH would struggle with this consultation if air quality information was not provided before the consultation begun.

33. Development Consent Order (DCO) Submission: Verbal Update

The Senior Consultant introduced the report and stated that NH were planning to submit their DCO next year, but still had to go out to consultation first. He stated that the reason for consultation was due to approximately 50% of the Tilbury Fields area being released to the new Thames Freeport. He stated that NH were planning for the consultation to begin in February, but the team were doubtful the consultation could start before Spring 2022, as NH also needed to consult on changes to the A13 junction and needed to provide comments on the 3-4,000 responses to the previous consultation, including significant key stakeholder comments. The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery replied that NH were under pressure from the Department for Transport to submit their DCO and so the consultation would probably be streamlined. He stated that NH were currently in the middle of lots of major work, including the configuration of the Orsett Cock junction, so he could not see how the consultation would be ready by February. He added that Thurrock were still also waiting on air quality, health and noise impact data, so he felt that DCO would not be submitted until the Summer or Autumn of 2022. He stated that this also depended on the government's carbon emissions approach and decarbonisation strategy, and how this could impact upon the scheme.

The Chair asked if Thurrock Council would have a chance to influence the consultation before it went live. The Senior Consultant answered that NH had always asked Thurrock Council for their thoughts on the LTC consultation approach before it went live in previous years, and hoped that they would continue to do so before this upcoming consultation. He stated that the Task Force had previously also made comments regarding consultations, so

hopefully NH now knew what would be expected of them, for example in-person consultation events needed to be held in Corringham/Stanford-le-Hope.

The Resident Representative asked if there was any update on the East facing access on the A13 at Lakeside, or the bridge over the Tilbury loop line in East Tilbury. The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery replied that NH were currently determining how to best deliver the East facing slips using the best approach. He added that Thurrock Council were also consulting with NH on the potential provision of a permanent bridge over the Tilbury loop, but there was still some way to go on this issue and any NH contributions that would be made. He stated once NH had clarified its offer any decision would then need to be taken through the appropriate democratic processes and Heads of Terms would need to be agreed. Councillor Muldowney queried how much the current delays were costing NH, and if there was an approximate figure. The Senior Consultant replied that many people were employed by NH on the LTC scheme, so the current delay of one year may be costing several million. Councillor Muldowney questioned the effect on the LTC of funding being pushed into RIS3 rather than RIS2. The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery replied that it was likely the budget for RIS2 had not all been spent, so some of this money would be rolled over into RIS3. He stated that this would not likely affect the LTC scheme as it was more likely to reflect accounting practices.

34. Work Programme

The Chair asked if a report on the Orsett Cock junction could be presented to the Task Force. This was agreed by officers and the Task Force.

The meeting finished at 7.31 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**