

Minutes of the Meeting of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force held on 15 February 2021 at 6.00 pm

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

Apologies: Councillors Andrew Jefferies; Peter Ward, Business Representative; and Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director LTC.

In attendance: Steve Plumb, Ecology and Biodiversity Officer
Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Laura Blake, Thames Crossing Action Group Representative
Westley Mercer, Thurrock Business Board Representative
Robert Quick, Resident Representative

Chris Stratford, Senior Consultant

Highways England Representatives:
Gary Hodge – Technical Lead
Claire Donnelly – Lead Architect
Steve Roberts – Technical Director
Poulomee Basu – Stakeholder Engagement (Local Authorities)
Phil Stanier – Stakeholder Engagement (LTC)
Andrew Kay – Landscape Architect
Ben Craggs – Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Lead

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.

41. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew Jefferies; Peter Ward, Thurrock Business Representative; and Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director LTC.

42. Minutes

The minutes of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Task Force meeting held on 18 January 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

43. Items of Urgent Business

The Chair stated that he had agreed to one item of urgent business, and explained that Highways England (HE) would be giving a presentation on landscape design, green infrastructure, and walkers; cyclists; and horse-riders (WCH). The HE Lead Architect began the presentation and explained that it would cover the summary principles of the project; the landscape integration of the proposals; and the walking, cycling and equestrian proposals in Ockendon, the A13 junction, and the Chadwell Link. She stated that the proposals outlined in the presentation were those that had been submitted at the last iteration of the Development Consent Order (DCO) submission, and covered 2300 hectares both north and south of the river, including ancient woodland such as Rainbow Shaw in Chadwell St Mary. She explained that due to the current proposals part of Low Street Pit would be lost, including some invertebrates, but described how this would be mitigated against.

The HE Lead Architect then explained that habitats associated with arable land, and grassland could be impacted by the scheme, such as through direct loss, habitat degradation, and fragmentation. She stated that HE would create habitats to replace those which would be lost and the replacements would often be better than the current habitat. She stated that HE would be replacing arable land with species-rich grassland and woodland, which would strengthen the existing links and create new habitats. She added that HE would be following the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) guidance when moving flora and fauna to new habitats, and would create green corridors where necessary. The HE Lead Architect commented that there were approximately 100 species in Thurrock, including some bats, badgers and great crested newts, which were protected species whose habitats would need offsetting with specific mitigation. She explained that Thurrock would see a net overall gain of 15% in habitat, and double the woodland lost through the scheme would be newly created. She explained that approximately 400 hectares would be converted from arable farmland to natural habitats and hedgerows, as well as increasing the number of watercourses and wildlife ponds. The HE Lead Architect added that a new Benefits Steering Group had been created covering legacy, which included Thurrock Council and other local authorities, to discuss developing wildlife projects and habitat enforcement. She stated that HE and the LTC team were committed to developing £1 million of project funding for wildlife, including £250,000 to the Essex Wildlife Trust to increase the water vole population through control of the mink population.

The HE Lead Architect then discussed tree planting and outlined that the tree palette would mostly be native, broad-leaf woodland in Thurrock, including beech, hornbeam and nurse species, which were faster growing to increase screening, whilst oak and other trees grew more slowly. She stated that the tree palette needed to be submitted at DCO within the Design Principles and provided a selection of potential trees and woodland that would be planted. She explained that the final mix and density would be decided after DCO grant and would be modified based on ground conditions and existing stock. She also explained that at certain important sites, such as Rainbow Shaw, soil salvage would be undertaken to translocate species such as rhizomes, fungi,

and the seed bank, and help to establish the eco-system. She stated that to the north of the river up to approximately 385,000 trees would be planted, although some of these would not survive into adulthood.

The HE Lead Architect then explained that principles of landscape integration, such as through false cutting and earth bunds on both sides of the road to provide a visual and acoustic screen. She explained that these measures were being used across the route, including when the route was in an actual cutting or on an embankment. She explained that one of the main principles of integrating landscape structures was to ensure there were no linear features, such as fences on top of earth bunds, which would draw the eye. She explained that architects worked with the local geology and planting to ensure landscape integration, including by slackening the earth bund slope and planting where appropriate to disguise the route alignment. She explained that some parts of the route, for example the Mardyke Viaduct, would not be able to have earth bunds as this would reduce flood storage on the fen, but the team could use tree planting or fences as an alternative. She commented that earth bund slopes could be covered in meadowland or species-rich grassland where appropriate to reduce linear features and follow existing topography.

The HE Lead Architect then explained the elements that influenced the landscape integration proposals. She began by describing the engineering requirements and constraints on landscape integration, such as existing utilities, infrastructure, bridges, access roads and attenuation ponds. She described the next influence element, which was proposed environmental mitigation, such as noise barriers, ecology, and flood plains which also had an impact on the level of landscape integration that could take place. She explained that the existing landscape also had an influence, as any landscape integration had to be appropriate to the local context and tailored to the route. She stated that HE had undertaken a Green Infrastructure Study with local stakeholders, which helped to identify current routes used by WCHs and identified any potential new routes. She stated that the objective of the study had been to understand existing Public Rights of Way, areas of heritage, and woodland, and as part of this had spoken to sixteen stakeholder groups and local authorities to discuss upcoming projects. She described that the third stage of the study would be to incorporate WCH proposals into the route, including any proposals which would be directly affected by the LTC. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that Thurrock had been consulted on the Green Infrastructure Study in 2018 and had helped HE to identify existing ecology and WCH projects. He added that the LTC team had liaised with stakeholders such as the Essex Wildlife Trust and the RSPB as part of this study. He felt that the main issue with the study had been that it had been ecologically led, and did not focus on the wider aspects of green infrastructure, such as public health and increasing exercise levels across Thurrock. He felt that the Green Infrastructure Study needed to be updated with more relevant projects added, and he and the Senior Consultant were working with HE on this deficiency.

The HE Lead Architect then moved on and explained that a WCH Assessment had been carried out, which had looked at the process,

objectives and current capabilities from current census data of WCH across Thurrock. She described how the LTC team had looked at current WCH routes that would potentially be severed by the scheme, which would be combined with public consultation responses and assessed. She stated that there were currently sixty WCH projects in Thurrock that needed to be analysed. She commented that the key conclusions of this assessment had been that north of the A13, WCH users were often covering large, inter-urban distances as part of their leisure routines, but were not often commuting to work in this way. She stated that therefore the LTC team had focussed on WCH routes that allowed residents to access the countryside and improve leisure facilities. She then explained that south of the A13, WCH users were often commuting east to west from East Tilbury and Linford into Chadwell St Mary and Grays, and were therefore more focussed on the commuter WCH routes. She explained that further detail on the WCH routes, such as surfacing and access control would be captured at DCO submission. She stated that 22km of WCH routes would be upgraded or entirely new in Thurrock, for example footpaths would be upgraded to bridleways and 9km of new commuter roadside tracks would be installed to create a more coherent route network. She summarised and stated that key documents would be reviewing and assessing the existing character of WCH routes, and a tailored approach to mitigation would be undertaken.

The HE Lead Architect then moved onto the Ockendon Link and described how the current character was a rolling landscape of low ridges, the railway line and the M25, as well as arable farmland, hedgerows and small woodland. She added that there were also small dispersed settlements and the landfill site. She explained that the HE team had undertaken a survey of bat roosts in this area, and had found a large bat roost in Benton Farm, which would be need to be mitigated and offset to ensure that the bats migratory routes were not severed. She added that the Thurrock green infrastructure project, the Green Grid, was also already underway to connect Belhus Park, Little Belhus Park and Thames Chase Forest Centre, which would include a new green route and a forest circle route. She stated that the route alignment had identified that the LTC could potentially sever the forest circle and green route, which would need to be mitigated against. She added that the environments of the current forest circle and green routes were not of the best quality, for example there were no footpaths along North Road, which led to increased numbers of collisions between cars and WCH users. She added that there was also not a north-south cycle route, for example Dennises Road went under the M25, but did not include a WCH route. She explained that the LTC team had identified these gaps in WCH routes and were working to link the routes in the future. She added that the team were currently working out how much benefit the new, proposed WCH routes would have for residents, such as decreased journey times and improved accessibility to areas such as the station, doctor's surgery and areas of employment. She felt that the LTC could improve WCH links across the borough, which would have a benefit to WCH users and a broader cross-section of residents.

The HE Lead Architect then explained that these proposals had been included in the last iteration of the DCO submission, including a WCH track along

Dennis Road to link North Ockendon with Thames Chase Forest Centre. She added that the LTC team were also in discussions regarding upgrading the current level crossing with an overbridge to improve the safety for residents wishing to access the Thames Chase Forest Centre. She felt that with these improvements residents would be able to complete the forest circle route, and improve access to services and the countryside. She then described the importance of North Road, for WCH users, green infrastructure links, and the local bat population, and the LTC team were therefore proposing a green bridge for North Road. She stated that the road would be maintained and a segregated route to the east of North Road would be added for WCH users, as well as planting on either side to increase the habitat for bats and badgers, who would move across North Road. She described how the proposal was based on the Weymouth Relief Green Bridge, which had set a precedent.

The HE Lead Architect then described the landscape design that would be used at the Ockendon Link, which would include planting to the north at Thames Chase. She felt that this would improve the habitat for wildlife as this area was currently blocks of woodland along field boundaries. She added that no cut and cover would be included in this area to ensure there was not too many trees lost, but a retaining wall would be used instead and forest would be replanted at the edge of the route. She explained that false cutting would be used where appropriate, for example at the North Road Green Bridge, which would be approximately 4/5m above the LTC to screen nearby residents and the Public Right of Way. She added that new footpath would also be introduced across the LTC at North Road and Dennises Road to link these areas with Little Belhus Park and Thames Chase.

The HE Lead Architect then described the landscape surrounding the A13 junction, which would be an extensive structure. She described how the landscape was rolling and included areas of clay and gravel soil, as well as marshland, arable fields and the edge of urban areas. She stated that the A13 was currently running through these areas, and currently included sparse ridge planting. She added that the A13 junction was also close to the windmill along Baker Street and the Gammonfields Travellers Site. She explained that the LTC team planned to plant as much as possible around the junction for screening, but the trees would grow over the course of ten to fifteen years, but faster growing trees, such as willows would be included to increase screening as quickly as possible. The HE Lead Architect stated that the traveller's site would be relocated and shielded by planting. She added that Blackshots Nature Reserve would need to decrease in size to accommodate the route, but the LTC team were working to ensure the amount of open space in the area increased and new ponds were added for the great crested newt species. She explained that the team were currently in discussion with Thurrock Council regarding Blackshots Nature Reserve and the types of habitat and design they wished to see. She then explained that the route came close to residents in Baker Street, and screening measures would be put in place, such as acoustic barriers, false cutting 2m above the LTC and tree planting. She explained that she had spoken to landowners near the Baker Street Windmill, who had wished for no earthworks on their property. She mentioned that on the other side of the route in Chadwell St Mary, a 4m

false cutting above the slip road would be included, as well as an acoustic barrier. She summarised and stated that there would also be sizable woodland pockets to the east of the A13 junction, would be accessible from Baker Street under the A13 and LTC for maintenance access.

The HE Lead Architect then described the WCH approach in this area, and stated that the priority around the A13 junction was WCH commuters, particularly along Stifford Clays Road, who used the WCH route for school and access into Grays. She explained that a new cycle lane would be added which would run parallel along Stifford Clays Road. She then described the existing WCH provision along the A1013 and at Orsett Cock Roundabout, and described how a new segregated WCH route was being proposed near Baker Street running east to west, which would improve links to Green Lane and the Mardyke Valley. She summarised and stated a new bridge would also be included over the Orsett Showground which she felt would be good for equestrian riders.

The HE Lead Architect then moved on and discussed the landscape surrounding the Chadwell St Mary Link, running from the A13 to East Tilbury, Linford and Chadwell St Mary. She stated that the majority of this land would be returned to agriculture once the construction of the route was completed, but would also include new grass areas and woodland. She explained that the current landscape character was rolling farmland, edge of urban areas, dry valley, ancient woodland at Rainbow Shaw and important roads such as Hoford Road and Muckingford Road. She commented that new planting would be included in the scheme as compensation for the loss of Rainbow Shaw, and this would be introduced near to Orsett Golf Course, which would help link up green infrastructure and create new habitats. She then explained the B-Lines Project, which had been undertaken by Buglife and had studied insect pathways across the borough. She stated that some of these insect pathways intersected with the Chadwell St Mary Link and stepping stones would need to be included in this area to ensure species could continue to move east to west. She described how Thurrock provided a good habitat for numerous invertebrates, and included areas of species-rich grassland. She described how Hoford Road and Muckingford Road would become Green Bridges to ensure that insects, bats and badgers could cross the LTC. She stated that Muckingford Road was also important for WCH users to access Chadwell St Mary, Grays and East Tilbury, but explained that although it was good for cars, there was no footpath for WCH users. She stated that areas around East Tilbury had increased cycling and walking capacity due to a younger population, as well as a low level of car ownership, but a low level of actual cyclists and walkers. She felt that this could be a key WCH commuter route for local residents. She added that Hoford Road was a protected laneway and was important for WCH leisure, but not for commuters as 4x4s could access the route, which was a sunken lane. She explained that although they would both be green bridges, they would have very different characters, as Muckingford Road would contain a segregated WCH route, and Hoford Road would be a natural track with raised beds on either side. She added that the WCH route along Muckingford Road would be extended for 120m into East Tilbury.

The HE Lead Architect then described how a new attenuation pond for the route would be included in the scheme, as well as 4m false cutting, acoustic barriers, and woodland planting throughout the Chadwell St Mary Link. She explained that the planting would follow the path of the valley and not the route alignment. She stated that the team were currently discussing a number of projects and proposals, such as additional green links, the Hatch report recommendations, increased mitigation for example around Tilbury Fields, and projects, such as the Tilbury-Stanford-le-Hope Riverside Project and Blackshots Nature Reserve. She summarised and stated that the maintenance and management of the ecology would be outlined in the Outline Ecology and Landscape Management Plan (OLEMP).

Councillor Spillman began questions and asked if HE could quantify the amount of wildlife, trees and invertebrates would be potentially destroyed by the scheme. The HE Lead Architect replied that ancient woodland would be decreased by 4.35 hectares, but would be replaced by 18.3 hectares of new planting in the area. She stated that she did not know the exact number of trees and insects that would be destroyed. Councillor Spillman then asked how many new trees would reach maturity, and who would maintain these trees. The HE Lead Architect replied that the team had to decide if they would plant densely in the understanding that not all trees would reach full growth, or plant sparsely and allow all trees to mature. She stated that the HE team would be providing whips, which although would be small when introduced, stood more chance of survival compared to older trees, which often died when moved. She stated that trees required a lot of maintenance, and the OLEMP would outline who would maintain. She added that if the tree planting fell into the category of essential mitigation, it was HE responsibility to maintain, but Thurrock Council might have areas which they wished to have control over. Councillor Spillman then asked how insects would be moved, as they would be difficult to catch, or if they would be destroyed. He also asked how confident the HE team felt regarding the repopulation of new habitat areas, as the new route could increase insect mortality, and affect biodiversity. The HE Lead Architect responded that the route would mostly be going through arable farmland, which was not good for biodiversity. She stated that DEFRA had recently introduced guidelines to increase the number of hedgerows, and sustainable farming methods to increase biodiversity. She added that where areas of biodiversity were lost, such as at Low Street Pit, HE would replace these with larger habitat areas, so she felt confident that biodiversity would increase in the area. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that numerous insects and invertebrates were killed when crossing roads, so Thurrock and HE were working with Natural England to ensure that offsite mitigation took place, particularly for key invertebrate species that needed open mosaic landscape and brownfield sites. He stated that these areas could be created near the north portal, which would be of a suitable level.

Councillor Spillman, the Chair, and the Thames Crossing Action Group (TCAG) Representative agreed that they wished to see the evidence base regarding biodiversity and tree planting levels. The HE Lead Architect stated that the team were using best practice and were engaging with Natural

England regarding biodiversity. She added that the team were also looking at the success of previous similar projects and were sharing these with Thurrock's officer team. The TCAG Representative questioned if the Wilderness was being considered as ancient woodland. The HE Lead Architect responded that the Wilderness had not been designated as ancient woodland, so was not considered as such. She added that the only woodland designated as ancient which would be impacted by the route, was Rainbow Shaw, but would look into the suggestion of Wilderness as ancient woodland. The TCAG Representative then questioned if the North Road Green Bridge would be made of concrete, and if it would be bigger or wider than the Weymouth Relief Green Bridge. The HE Lead Architect replied that she did not know the measurements for the Weymouth Relief Green Bridge, but stated that the North Road Green Bridge would have a 9.3m carriageway, 3.5m wide WCH route and 7m of green planting on each side, with hedgerows but not trees. She stated that it would be a multifunctional bridge, but would not be the same as Muckingford Road.

The Chair then stated that residents would be disturbed during the construction phase of the route, and questioned if the 22km of proposed upgraded WCH routes could be opened before the route. The HE Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Lead responded that the HE team were currently considering this as an option, but the plans and proposals were not yet detailed enough to make a decision. He stated that the team would try and open WCH routes as soon as it was reasonable, but there were no specific figures or dates available yet. The HE Lead Architect added that this had been challenged in the Hatch Report, and HE were currently discussing with Thurrock officers. The Chair then questioned if the trees would be planted during the construction phase, to ensure they had time to mature before the route was opened. The HE Lead Architect replied that the worst-case scenario would be the trees were planted post-construction, but the team would be working to avoid this outcome.

Councillor Muldowney then questioned the Chadwell St Mary Link and asked if the new WCH routes would benefit local residents, particularly those who regularly undertook local historical walks. The HE Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Lead replied that footpath 97, which went through Chadwell St Mary and up to Rectory Road would be upgraded to bridleway standard to Rectory Road Bridge, and an equestrian zone would be included at Orsett Showground. He added that the WCH route from Muckingford Road to Linford and East Tilbury would also be upgraded for recreation and commuters. He stated that this would connect to Coal Road and further connect to Public Right of Way 58, and Coalhouse Fort. Councillor Muldowney then questioned what cutting would be included where the route came close to Chadwell St Mary houses. The HE Lead Architect explained that 4m of false cutting including earthworks would be included, so residents should be screened. She stated that she would look into what acoustic barriers would be included in this area, and reply via email after the meeting. She added that current WCH links in Thurrock focussed on east to west, rather than north to south, but a good WCH connection would be added from Chadwell St Mary to Orsett fenland, and any Public Rights of Way disturbed during construction would be

reinstated.

Councillor Allen stated that Thurrock had lots of invertebrates, as well as the great crested newt, which was a protected species. He questioned if any great crested newts that were found during construction would be caught and moved to a safer place. The HE Lead Architect replied that the team would be providing new habitats for the great crested newt population, such as a new pond in Blackshots Nature Reserve. The HE Landscape Architect added that in Chadwell St Mary there was currently poor provision for the great crested newt, such as open mosaic fields, but these would be replaced with ponds and new habitats created. He stated that any newly created habitats would be constructed outside the development boundary before route construction to ensure that species could be safely translocated. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that there were standard ecology processes for collection and movement, as well as for construction workers who found great crested newts during their work. He explained that great crested newts were well understood in Thurrock, but some specialist invertebrates were less well understood, and needed additional work to understand their habitats and needs. Councillor Allen questioned if any insects or invertebrates found in Thurrock were a protected species. He added that Thurrock also had protected snakes such as adders, and sought reassurance that these would be protected throughout the process. Councillor Allen also questioned the number of juvenile trees and saplings that would be planted, and how they would be cared for. The HE Landscape Architect replied that the majority of trees would be whips and bare root trees, which would be better situated in the landscape. He stated that the team would look at the average failure rate of the trees, and would plant densely in the expectation that some may not grow or some of the trees would need thinning out. He added that bare root trees also had a much more successful rate of survival compared to standard tree, and would form a woodland canopy quicker. He stated that this quick development of canopy would decrease the amount of invasive weeds on the forest floor, as well as providing shelter for animals in the woodland understorey. He added that in all woodland some tree loss was expected, but hopefully the majority of saplings planted in this scheme would survive. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that denser tree-planting often needed thinning, which meant that whichever option was decided, roughly the same of number of trees would be there at the end of the process.

The Senior Consultant stated that if any Members wished particular WCH routes be opened earlier than others, to let officers know so these could be prioritised in the discussion with HE. He also added that if Members had particular additional WCH links that they wished to be discussed, to also let officers know. He also explained that a survey had to be conducted regarding birds, mammals, and invertebrates, and EIA regulations meant that this has to be carried out within two years of DCO submission, so might need updating, but that Thurrock Council were aware of where all protected bats and great crested newts lived. The Chair stated that a detailed discussion regarding the phased opening of Public Rights of Way might be good at a later Task Force Meeting.

Councillor Rice questioned what false cutting would be situated near Chadwell St Mary, and if any tree planting would be involved. He also asked for a copy of the slide regarding false cutting at Chadwell St Mary so he could share with residents. The HE Lead Architect replied that this slide had been shared at a previous meeting on 21 September, but would be sent over. She explained that there would be lots of woodland and hedge planting in this area. The HE Technical Lead added that the precise location of false cuttings was also included in map book 3, which also contained detailed engineering plans. Councillor Shinnick asked if any wildflower planting would take place in Thurrock. The HE Lead Architect commented that wildflower planting was a principle included in the scheme, and was described as species-rich grassland. She explained that the species-rich grassland could improve the soil, the natural seedbank, improve biodiversity, and pollination.

The TCAG Representative sought clarification regarding the Public Right of Way (PRoW) moving east to west on the A1013, as she understood that a connection already existed in this area. The HE Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Lead confirmed that a PRoW did already exist in this area, but that it was currently a pavement with some signage, and would be improved as part of the scheme to an offset WCH track, 3.5m wide and 2m from the road. The TCAG Representative questioned if the surface of this WCH track would improve. The HE Lead Architect replied that the surfacing would be consistent with current standards.

The TCAG Representative then questioned how space could be gained at Blackshots Nature Reserve. The HE Lead Architect replied that more publically accessible open space would be included as part of the scheme. She described how currently the fields surrounding the nature reserve could not be accessed by the public, but HE were in discussion to change the planning designation of the land, so it could be categorised as open space. The TCAG Representative queried the impact the scheme could have on Grade 1 agricultural land. The HE Lead Architect replied that a conversation was ongoing between agricultural landowners and HE, particularly regarding areas for species-rich grassland in Chadwell St Mary. She explained that if landowners had certain requests regarding their best output fields, HE would listen and could take these suggestions on-board.

Councillor Spillman felt that although lots of woodland planting would be taking place, the majority of this would be near the route, and he felt the scheme did not include any large scale green infrastructure developments. He felt that this should be discussed with Thurrock officers, including the potential for a new nature reserve in Ockendon to increase social value for residents. The HE Lead Architect replied that HE were currently discussing some green infrastructure developments with Thurrock officers.

The Resident Representative queried which stakeholders had been approached for the Green Infrastructure Survey, and questioned if the Task Force would be able to see their inputs. The HE Lead Architect replied that numerous DEFRA bodies, as well as the RSPB, Kent and Essex Wildlife Trusts, Bug Life, Natural England, Land of the Feanns, and other smaller

groups in Kent had been consulted. She added that Thurrock officers had seen the output of the Green Infrastructure Survey, which included comments from stakeholders and areas of further discussion. She added that the HE Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Lead had also spoken to local cycling and equestrian groups for their input. The Ecology and Biodiversity Officer added that the survey was approximately 300 pages long, and the team had not yet completed detailed analysis on this document. He mentioned that lots of stakeholder groups had been approached for their comments by HE and local people had also been given the chance to make comment.

Councillor Allen drew the Task Force's attention to a recent article in The Guardian which outlined the Transport Secretary's proposed review of the environmental impacts regarding new infrastructure projects, including the LTC. He stated that air pollution in the form of particulates was still emitted from electric vehicles, and felt this was important to note.

44. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

45. Summary of Energy White Paper, December 2020

The Senior Consultant introduced the report and stated that it summarised a government white paper, which was a tool for discussing future potential legislation, and was released on 14 December 2020. He explained that it outlined the Prime Minister's plan for a green COVID-19 recovery, and was split into four parts: transforming energy supply; reforming energy supply; fairer deals for energy consumers; and a green pandemic recovery. He explained that the government wished to decrease carbon emissions by 230million tonnes, as well as increasing the number of green jobs available by 220,000. The Senior Consultant highlighted page two of the report which outlined what support would be available for the roll out of electric vehicle charging, including a £2.8billion government funding package, which could be used on the LTC. He stated that this was the only proposal which might directly affected the LTC, but other proposals could affect the development of Thurrock's Local Plan. He gave the examples of all new homes built not using gas power by 2025; new homes having zero carbon emissions; and increasing the clean energy supply across the country.

The Chair highlighted that this White Paper did not directly affect the LTC, but questioned if new homes could be connected to hydrogen gas and if the LTC could affect future hydrogen grid connections. The Senior Consultant replied that the government was mainly focusing on nuclear and off-shore wind for the majority of its future clean energy supply, but hydrogen power was emission free and the government did want to develop approximately 5 gigawatts of hydrogen power by 2030. He stated that this was more likely to be used for housing infrastructure than for cars.

Councillor Spillman felt it was good to see the pace of change regarding

environmental concerns, including the proposed removal of all gas boilers. The TCAG Representative questioned if the consultation which had been undertaken regarding the power plant in East Tilbury would have a conflict with the LTC. She added that electric vehicles still emitted PM2.5 from brakes and tyres, which she felt was dangerous for local residents as it could enter people's bloodstreams. She added that the electricity needed to power electric vehicles was still largely produced from fossil fuels and asked the Task Force to advocate for the government adoption of WHO guidelines regarding PM2.5. Councillor Allen echoed the TCAG Representatives comments regarding PM2.5 and electric vehicles, as he agreed that they still had a carbon footprint. He felt that the government should focus on hydrogen energy, which had no emissions. The TCAG Representative added that she felt concerned regarding the Environmental Statement, which HE would submit and the air quality data which could be contained within the report. She highlighted the work of the Transport Action Network, who were currently undertaking a legal challenge regarding RIS2 and the National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN), so that it was reviewed and updated. Councillor Muldowney questioned if the Transport Action Network could present to the Task Force. The Chair replied that March's meeting would be busy, but would consider it for later in the year.

46. Mitigation/Legacy Benefits Prioritisation (Verbal Update)

The Senior Consultant began the verbal update and informed Members that this had been discussed at January's Task Force meeting, and since then Thurrock officers had met with HE to discuss the 57 recommendations made in the Hatch report. He stated that officers had been challenging HE regarding mitigation which could be accepted, but felt that HE had been accommodating to some of the proposed mitigation. He highlighted that not all of the mitigation fell under HE's remit, and Thurrock would be discussing these areas, such as with the Department for Transport, who might be responsible for some measures. The Senior Consultant gave the example of the hypothecation of toll money for use by Thurrock Council, which fell under the Department for Transport remit. He stated that a more detailed report would be brought before the Task Force in March, which would highlight which items had been agreed and how, and would seek Members guidance regarding the prioritisation of items that were still up for discussion. He stated that the list of accepted items from the Hatch report was still being finalised with officers and HE, but would be shared before the Task Force in March. He summarised and highlighted that written answers to questions to HE from the previous Task Force meeting, would be shared with Members next week.

Councillor Muldowney questioned what mitigation would be included at the Asda roundabout. The Senior Consultant stated that the Tilbury 2 development had proposed mitigation, as well as the London Resort, whose DCO had recently been accepted. He explained that the LTC would need to account for both of those schemes when proposing mitigation, and as it was a critical roundabout for HGV use during construction, and that any potential additional mitigation would hopefully happen in advance of any construction.

The Resident Representative highlighted that air quality data had been promised to the Task Force at January's meeting. He questioned whether this had been received yet, or if HE had updated their route visualisations. The Senior Consultant stated that the air quality data had been shared with Thurrock officers, who had not yet had time to analyse it in detail. He added that air quality data was also included in the Environmental Statement, which was part of the DCO documentation and was approximately 50,000 pages long. He then highlighted that visualisations, as seen in today's presentation, would be necessary to be included for the next proposed public consultation covering design, structures, landscape, GI, and PRoW. He stated that he would make the point strongly to HE that Task Force Members had requested additional visualisations, including an updated fly-through. The Chair echoed this point and felt that the visualisations in the recent presentations had been much improved and needed to continue as they helped residents understand the size and look of the route. He welcomed the potential for more visualisations of a similar quality in the future.

The TCAG Representative stated that it was now public knowledge that the Assistant Director of LTC would be leaving Thurrock and thanked her for her hard work and invaluable experience during Task Force meetings and behind the scenes. She again thanked the Assistant Director and hoped any replacement would continue the hard work and keep up the high standard of the Task Force. The Chair echoed her statement and thanked the Assistant Director for her work.

Councillor Muldowney questioned whether or not the Task Force meeting would go ahead due to the purdah period. The Senior Democratic Services Officer replied that there was currently a meeting scheduled for April, but this would be last meeting of the municipal year.

47. Work Programme

The Senior Consultant highlighted that March would be a busy meeting, with reports on CO2 emissions; an update on the Health and Equalities Impact Assessment and the Environmental Impact Assessment; and an update on the economic mitigation list.

Members did not wish to add any other items to the Work Programme.

The meeting finished at 8.34 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**