

Lower Thames Crossing



Overview

The Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) is a proposed new road crossing connecting Kent and Essex, designed to relieve congestion at the existing Dartford Crossing, improve resilience of the road network and unlock economic growth for the region.

Key Services

Stakeholder engagement and consultation

CJ Associates provided, and project managed, a dedicated team of stakeholder engagement, communications, and consultation specialists to deliver a seamless, integrated, well informed stakeholder engagement service. This is a core element of project functionality, integrated with all key work streams, and is vital to planning, obtaining consents, and to the successful delivery of the LTC scheme. We have worked closely with our client and stakeholders on this major infrastructure scheme since June 2014, including:

- Developing an intensive and comprehensive stakeholder engagement and consultation programme with technical and strategic stakeholders across the project, including political, industry, local government, environment, Highways England, and broader community interests.
- Planning and delivery of a major public consultation on route options held between January and March 2016, resulting in over 47,000 responses – the largest ever public consultation for a UK road project.
- Providing expert strategic stakeholder engagement advice throughout the options development and consultation phase of the project, and supporting the delivery of the preferred route announcement.

Following a successful route consultation in 2016 and the government announcement of the preferred route, CJ Associates has been retained to assist on the further development of the project. This entails continued stakeholder engagement, further statutory consultation in support of the submission of the Development Consent Order (DCO) in 2019, including:

- Relationship management with stakeholders who may be affected either directly or indirectly by the decisions on LTC or can influence the implementation of scheme decisions, including the local authorities, local communities, environmental bodies, and industry.
- Managing communication between stakeholders and LTC technical teams to keep stakeholders informed of key milestones and to discuss and address concerns with the route design.

Value Added

Working with Highways England we put stakeholders at the heart of developing options for the Lower Thames Crossing project and taking the preferred route forward through to a successful DCO.

- We conducted comprehensive stakeholder mapping and carried out early and intense engagement with stakeholders and the community to create good relationships and foster trust in the lead-up to consultation on the route options.
- We engaged local authorities and other stakeholders for suggestions and recommendations on how best to reach their communities. We encouraged councils, MPs, business representative groups, chambers of commerce, and major employers to help promote the consultation. Emails were sent out, advertisements posted on websites and social media, and posters displayed to encourage large-scale participation and response to the consultation.

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- We worked with local community representatives, local authorities, environmental bodies, and business and industry groups to ensure that the route options developed took into consideration local knowledge, priorities, and impacts and to seek endorsement of the environmental appraisal approach. Our approach achieved positive written feedback from the statutory environmental bodies who have stated that the engagement on LTC was exemplary and demonstrated Highways England's commitment to the environment and engagement with statutory partners.
- We engaged over 150 stakeholders and held more than 265 meetings over two years to obtain technical information, seek feedback and input, and provide regular updates to stakeholders.
- We held 24 public information events and attended 23 public and business forums during the consultation. Consultation material was placed at points within the community and 250,000 letters were dispatched. We recommended that Highways England write to over 100,000 potentially affected land owners, to ensure they were aware of the proposals and encourage them to respond.
- We ensured technical and project specialists attended each public event to speak directly to the public, answer questions and address concerns. There were regularly 10-25 traffic, environment, geotechnical, structural, and other engineers, project managers and stakeholder team members attending the events.
- We developed good relationships with local authorities to ensure Local Plan reviews reflected LTC proposals so that both future development and LTC are delivered with maximum benefits in terms of economic prosperity in the region.
- We recommended that Highways England conduct a business survey to gauge opinion on the existing crossing and what a new crossing would mean to future growth. With over 800 responses, business and industry stakeholders widely promoted the survey report. This process, and the survey results, demonstrated to local businesses that we were listening and understood their views and opinions.
- We developed and implemented a database to ensure that all stakeholder records and evidence was recorded throughout the options development phase.
- We produced an Engagement Status Report at the end of the options development phase which documented all the stakeholders engaged and outlined their position and issues in order to inform the next phase.
- Our objectives were to raise project awareness and build consensus, first on the need for a new crossing, and then on the crossing location. Major businesses in the South East, local chambers of commerce, local enterprise partnerships and major employers are all now advocating strongly for a new crossing. Industry representatives held a roundtable with the Transport Minister and wrote to the Chancellor calling on the government to prioritise LTC for investment. Following consultation, more than 15 major businesses in the South East wrote to the government calling for a swift preferred route announcement.
- A key success was delivering an innovative consultation and introducing digital consultation both to LTC and Highways England to ensure maximum participation and facilitate optimal coding, collating and analysis on the responses. To engender further trust, we arranged for a third party to analyse the consultation responses and provide an independent report. This innovation is now being rolled out across Highways England. The consultation strategy ensured that the non-statutory consultation was developed in line with DCO statutory requirements.