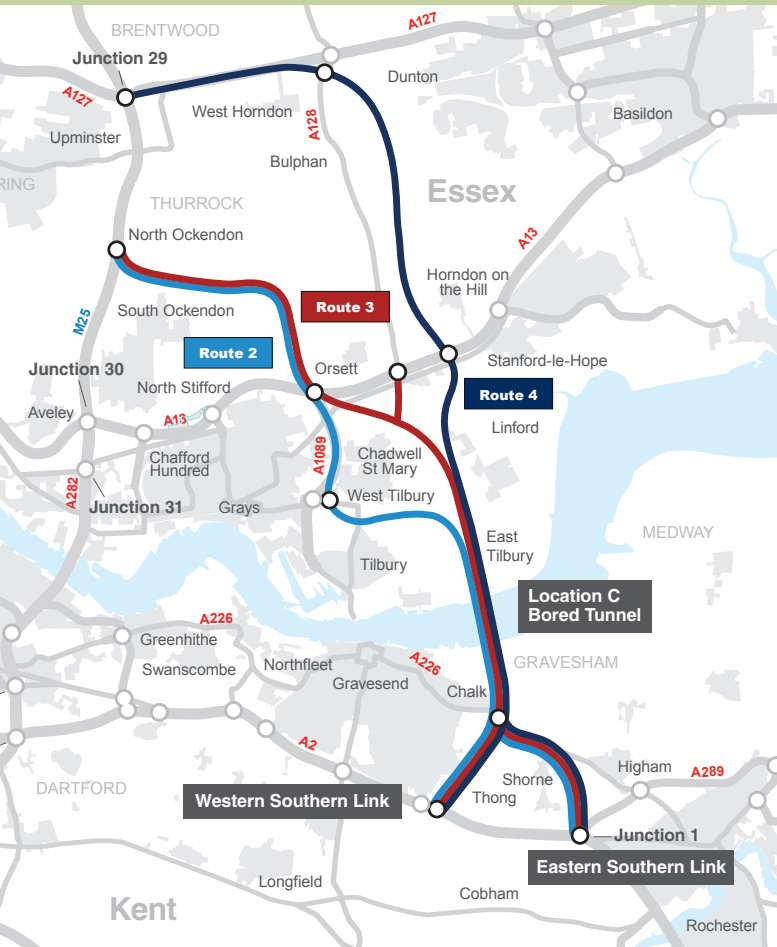


Lower Thames Crossing Fact sheet

Biodiversity, cultural heritage and landscape



We have sought to minimise the impact of our proposed scheme on the biodiversity, cultural heritage and landscape as we developed and assessed the route options. We have also worked with statutory environmental bodies including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Marine Management Organisation and Historic England to gain a thorough understanding of environmental constraints.

Biodiversity

There are a number of biodiversity sites with international, European, national and local designations that could be affected. The most significant of these are the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar site and Special Protection Area. These stretch from the edge of Gravesend eastwards along the banks of the river. These valuable wetland habitats are designated internationally and are protected by law.

All route options would potentially affect areas of ancient woodland and protected species such as water voles, great crested newts and birds.

Following a decision on the preferred route, we would carry out a range of seasonal surveys to understand in detail the plant and animal species that could be affected by that route. These would allow us to make decisions about the detailed design and how we could reduce or avoid impacts to biodiversity.

We would use our experience learned from other projects where we have successfully mitigated against effects on habitats and continue to protect important plant and animal species.

Highways England is consulting on proposals for a new road crossing of the River Thames connecting Kent and Essex. There are three route options north of the river in Essex and two south of the river in Kent. Your views will help us to inform the Government prior to its decision, expected later this year, on the preferred route and crossing.

Cultural heritage

The Thames Estuary area is rich in heritage assets that include Scheduled Monuments: the New Tavern Fort and Cliffe Fort on the southern bank of the River Thames, and Tilbury Fort, Coalhouse Fort and Battery and artillery defences on the northern bank. The area also features Registered Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

Routes 2, 3 and 4 would all directly affect Listed Buildings, and Routes 2 and 3 would also directly affect Scheduled Monuments. There may also be temporary and permanent effects on Conservation Areas. Route 4 would directly affect the Thorndon Park Registered Park and Garden. Potentially undiscovered archaeological remains may exist that could be affected by the proposals.

Following a decision on the preferred route, we would investigate the effect that route could have on heritage assets and their setting, and how to reduce or mitigate the effects. We would also carry out further archaeological surveys to understand the potential for undiscovered archaeological remains and how we could protect these.

Landscape

The Thames Estuary has a diverse and varied landscape that could be affected by the Lower Thames Crossing scheme. The landscape around the routes south of the river include the nationally important Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well as a number of areas of ancient woodland and smaller settlements and villages. North of the river the landscape comprises open agricultural fields interspersed with pylons and existing roads.

We considered three types of crossing structure: a bridge, a bored tunnel and an immersed tunnel. Although these are technically feasible at the proposed crossing location, we have proposed a bored tunnel because this would:

- have the least impact on protected habitats and species and on cultural heritage on the banks of the river
- avoid the potential for disturbing any unknown marine archaeological assets which may exist at the proposed new crossing location
- reduce the visual impact on the landscape

Further consultation

As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, a new Lower Thames Crossing is subject to a statutory Development Consent Order process. This means there will be further opportunities for you to have your say on more detailed aspects of the scheme.

For more information

Visit our website

www.lower-thames-crossing.co.uk

Access consultation materials and provide your views on our proposals.

Join us at one of our events

Members of our team will be on hand to answer your questions.

Phone us

If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call 0300 123 5000.

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