



Response to the Lower Thames Crossing DCO consent – April 2025

We are deeply disappointed by the Government's decision to grant consent for the Lower Thames Crossing. It is our view that this poorly considered scheme will result in profoundly harmful impacts on nature and increase CO₂ emissions, further contributing to climate and ecological breakdown.

We have objected to this project from its inception, due to our concerns that the new road will have serious detrimental impacts on nature and the climate without resolving the issues of over-development and congestion in the south-east of England. It will result in the destruction of important wildlife habitats and fragmentation of the landscape that remains, with accompanying impacts on protected and priority species which are already in decline.

The cumulative impacts of biodiversity loss, habitat damage, noise, road lighting and the visual intrusion of 'man-made' infrastructure will combine to reduce the remoteness and wildness of the south Essex landscape and its relative lack of disturbance to wildlife, in a part of the county where there would be considerable potential for nature recovery and greater access to nature for people.

The scheme continues a long process of developments that are combining to increase car dependency, generate induced traffic, and hence fail to achieve the stated aim of relieving congestion. There will undoubtedly be new developments encouraged by and infilling around this new highway infrastructure, which will only add further pressure and congestion in an area of the country which is already dealing with significant challenges.

This contradicts the Government's own target set in the Environment Act 2021 to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030, and the commitment to reach net zero by 2050, including a pathway that requires 78% reduction in emissions by 2035.

This decision sets a dangerous precedent; we would remind the Government that nature must itself be valued as critical infrastructure which underlies and supports all other human endeavours, and is the foundation of a sustainable economy. Nature should sit at the heart of genuinely sustainable, thoughtfully considered infrastructure, not be viewed as an obstacle to it. The importance of the Thames Estuary for wildlife brings with it an international conservation responsibility and, therefore, the matter of precedent-setting is not only a UK concern.

Essex Wildlife Trust remains committed to advocating for better and stronger protections for nature, and for more robust policy commitments from Government to kick-start nature's

recovery and begin the process of reversing climate and ecological breakdown. And we will continue to engage in the decision-making process to ensure the Government abides by its legislative and policy obligations to safeguard the environment, its wildlife and habitats. In the meantime, in the face of this decision, the Trust will play its part in ensuring that this particular scheme's implementation now achieves the best possible mitigation for impacted species and that the development is held fully accountable for its 'in perpetuity' environmental commitments.