

## **Our policy on the East London River Crossings Issue**

We, the Greenwich Borough Liberal Democrats (GBLD), believe that:

1. Our borough has the potential for significant increases in population and employment growth over the next 20 years.
2. The economic development of the riverside should be focused in a balanced way on both industrial regeneration as well as residential development.
3. Good transport links with the rest of the city and the rest of the country help facilitate this growth.

GBLD also affirms:

4. Our priority to see our country move to a low carbon economy over time and wish to promote environmentally friendly modes of transport.
5. Our emphasis on a balanced approach to road use, making sure there is space for all users.
6. Our belief in, and support for, local communities and our wish to protect them from an over-dominant state and an over-powerful private sector.
7. Our belief that protecting the health of its citizens is one of the key roles of the state.

Additionally GBLD notes that:

8. The current level of air pollution in our borough already exceeds EU legal limits.
9. Any new road river crossing this far downstream is bound to be a large, high usage structure given the cost, complexity and size of the project.
10. There have been some welcome public transport eastern crossings built and planned in recent years.
11. Our main road crossing in this borough, the Blackwall Tunnel, suffers heavy congestion during rush hour and when there is an accident.
12. The evidence available from TfL in support of these projects is inadequate as a basis for decision taking.

## **The New River Crossings Proposals in General**

With regard to the new road river crossings proposals by TfL for east London, GBLD believe that:

13. These proposals are part of the same thinking that has dominated this subject since the war and that many of the proposals are re-visiting solutions that have already been rejected as unworkable or unacceptable
14. Research from across the world, as well as the UK, shows that new roads create new traffic.

15. There are other means already in use across the UK motorway network, such as variable speed limits, to manage traffic on existing routes.

16. No up to date evidence has been produced to show that the new road river crossings would solve the congestion and pollution problems which are already evident in our borough.

17. The data that are available shows that much of the traffic using our existing crossings is orbital or long-distance and thus new crossings would potentially benefit those living outside Greenwich, more than those resident within the Borough who will be suffering the increased noise and pollution.

Thus with regard to the overall concept of a new road crossing east of Tower Bridge GBLD:

**18. Subject to evidence that economic growth in the UK as a whole is being held back by a lack of new eastern road river crossings, would support the proposal for an extra road river crossing east of Tower Bridge in principle, but,**

**19. Believe that Greenwich Borough already has enough large road infrastructure and that any major crossing should be built further east on a suitable site.**

## **The Silvertown Tunnel**

Looking further at the specific proposal for a new tunnel at Silvertown and the evidence available it has been claimed that more capacity at Blackwall/Silvertown will reduce congestion and create freer flowing traffic.

GBLD notes that:

20. Research from the building of the M25 and the second Blackwall bore, point to immediate massive increases in traffic post construction.

21. Detailed monitoring of air quality by Greenwich Council and local groups indicates that the European limit of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for NO<sub>2</sub> is already being breached at numerous points along the existing Blackwall approach routes.

22. Research shows that emissions reduce effectively only between 40mph and 60 mph. Given the likely huge increases in traffic using the new tunnel any departure from this speed range would increase pollution whether traffic was moving or stationary.

23. Without huge investment in the approach roads, bottlenecks, especially in the Kidbrooke/North Eltham area, could be much more severe than at present with implications for both pollution and traffic speed.

24. Little thought seems to have been given to other cheaper solutions or issues such as tree planting to soak up pollution, traffic management further "up-stream" and tolling.

25. The case for the new Silvertown tunnel has not been made and the evidence against is compelling.

**As such GBLD:**

**Opposes the new Silvertown Tunnel proposal.**

## The Gallions Reach Proposals

Looking at the proposals for a Gallions Reach crossing GBLD notes that:

26. The original proposal for a ferry crossing at Gallions Reach has now moved on to discussing the feasibility of a fixed link alternative as well. This would be a tolled crossing.

27. A fixed link at Gallions Reach is planned to be a "local" crossing which would include facilities for public transport. Despite this, there are many similarities with the previously rejected Thames Gateway Bridge scheme.

28. A crossing of any kind here would necessitate significant road building on our side of the river with the potential to eventually link this crossing with the A2 at Falconwood.

29. The Gallions Reach proposals are being seen as a package with the Silvertown crossing, with a standalone option being seen as very problematic.

GBLD believes that:

30. Any support for a ferry at Gallions Reach would mean implicit support for Silvertown. Additionally we would see construction of the ferry crossing and associated roads as a precursor to the building of a fixed link crossing.

31. A fixed link crossing would generate interest in reviving the road link between Thamesmead and the A2 as highlighted by TfL in their Assessment of Options Paper. Space is still largely available for this link from previous attempts to build a crossing in this area.

32. Shooters Hill and Plumstead, including Oxleas Wood, would all come under threat from the approach roads.

**As such GBLD:**

**33. Would oppose all crossings at Gallions Reach and press for ferry crossings further east along the river.**

## Tolling

In order to prevent large scale transference of traffic from Dartford, and to pay for the project, it is likely that tolling will have to be part of the picture should the Silvertown Tunnel be built. It will be difficult to avoid tolling the Blackwall tunnel as well should this happen and in addition a fixed crossing at Gallions would also be tolled. However tolling could be used at the present time, as part of the solution to existing traffic pressures.

GBLD believes that:

**34. We would support tolling at rush hours only, at Blackwall, with smart tolling to dissuade orbital traffic alongside discounts for local users.**

## Woolwich Ferry Proposals

Looking at the Woolwich Ferry proposals GBLD note that:

35. TfL is obliged by law to provide a free ferry at Woolwich under the Metropolitan Board of Works (Various Powers) Act 1885. Closure would need an Act of Parliament and could only happen if an alternative site (probably Gallions Reach) replaced it. Any new ferries are unlikely to be free.

36. The current ferry boats have been running for about 50 years and are estimated to not have a realistic life beyond 2024.

37. Queuing traffic onto the Woolwich roundabout is a regular problem and a new ferry may not solve this particular problem.

38. Replacement Woolwich ferry boats are estimated to be cheaper to run than the current boats.

As such GBLD:

**39. Would support the building of a replacement Woolwich Ferry to replace the existing service.**

## Support for alternatives

In addition GBLD would propose:

40. Further work on public transport options such as the DLR extension to Falconwood, the Jubilee line spur to Greenwich, more bus links to North Greenwich tube and more ferries crossing the river between Woolwich and Dartford.

41. That the upgrade of the Greenwich and the Woolwich foot tunnels is an urgent "must do".

42. A more joined-up approach to the issue of eastern road river crossings, combining all eastern river crossings proposals together.

43. A more effective management of existing traffic flows, especially on the A2, A102, A206 and the South Circular.

44. More work should be done on public health issues as they are affected by transport. Work on how to protect Greenwich residents' health from traffic emissions, the use of trees and vegetation, the encouragement of cycling and walking, better and more comprehensive monitoring of air quality and a more environmentally friendly bus fleet in our borough are all things that we would support.

The Executive Committee  
Greenwich Borough Liberal Democrats  
3rd November 2013