



Leader of the Council

Councillor Ian Clement
13 December 2006

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Ruth Kelly
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Minister	YC
subject	THAMES GATEWAY BRIDGE
Official	BEN STONEHAM

Dear Secretary of State

THAMES GATEWAY BRIDGE PUBLIC INQUIRY

You have announced that the toll for the Dartford crossings is to be increased from £1 to £1.50 for cars using the crossings during the day subject to formal consultation on the Toll Order.

The level of tolls to cross the river was a major factor at the public inquiry into the Thames Gateway Bridge proposal held earlier this year and this significant change was not included in the assessment.

The differential toll on the Thames Gateway Bridge proposal was the most significant mechanism proposed for the control of traffic using the bridge and to achieve the schemes objectives. A discount was proposed for local residents combined with a relatively high toll to ensure that the bridge will not be used by large volumes of non-local traffic. The effect of tolls was so influential on the viability of the scheme that during the inquiry Transport for London (TfL) drastically reduced the size of the discount area to reduce traffic levels to an amount that, in their view, the local road network in Bexley could accommodate. Relative toll levels therefore have a very significant effect on the environmental impact of the bridge.

TfL's analysis did not take into account a 50% increase in the toll at the Dartford crossings or the proposals for tolls at the Blackwall Tunnel that are now being promoted. The effect of these proposals could significantly affect the traffic levels on the Thames Gateway Bridge and hence its environmental impact, particularly in Bexley which will have to accommodate the majority of the traffic south of the river.

I therefore consider that it is essential that the transport modelling is recalculated to reflect these changed circumstances, the impact re-assessed and the opportunity provided for people who will be affected to resubmit their evidence to the inspectors. This work needs to be carried out before you and the Secretary of State for Transport are in a position to make the final decision on the Thames Gateway Bridge proposal.

Yours sincerely

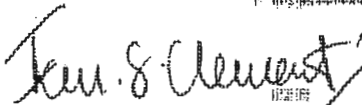
Councillor Ian Clement
Leader of Bexley Council

As a result the additional traffic through Bexley will increase even further. Therefore estimates of use of the bridge, toll levels and impacts are rendered out of date by the removal of a traffic lane at the Blackwall Tunnel and need to be recalculated.

Since the Inquiry, the Mayor of London has also identified Climate Change as a key policy driver and TfL has assessed the likely impacts of transport in 2025. The building of a new strategic highway is now even more inconsistent with the Mayor's stated objectives than it was at the time of the Inquiry

I understand from recent press articles (Surveyor, 19 April 2007) that you will shortly be announcing your decision on the Thames Gateway Bridge and that there is a suggestion the bridge may be open in early 2012. I consider that without a review of the issues I have identified your decision would be flawed and premature. In these circumstances, I will need to consider seeking a review unless you reopen the Inquiry and allow the evidence to be reassessed in the light of all the changes in the transport regime in East London.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Ian Clement
Leader of the Council

cc: Rt. Hon. Douglas Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Transport



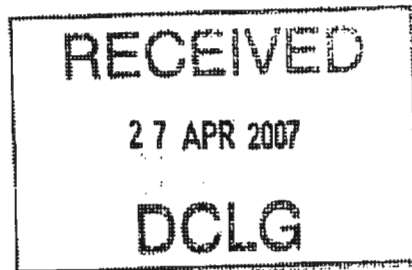
Leader of the Council

Councillor Ian Clement
25 April 2007

Ruth Kelly MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
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Minister	MM	Bexley COUNCIL Bexley Civic Offices Broadway Bexleyheath Kent DA6 7LB 020 8294 6250 Direct Fax 020 8308 4874 councillor.ianclement@bexley.gov.uk
Subject	THAMES GATEWAY BRIDGE	
Official	EDZARATH SENEY	



Dear Secretary of State

Thames Gateway Bridge – Blackwall Tunnel Tidal Flow

I wrote to you last year and also earlier this year expressing concern that significant changes have taken place regarding transport in East London since the Public Inquiry was held to consider the proposal for a Thames Gateway Bridge. I asked you to reconvene the public inquiry in order to re-examine the evidence in the light of these changes. I have yet to receive a response to this request from either your department or the Department for Transport. I do not consider this to be appropriate behaviour for the department responsible for local government.

I have already indicated that the calculation of the impact of the bridge will be flawed because of changes to tolls at the Dartford crossing and road user charging proposals in Greenwich. There has now been another very major change that is probably even more significant than these changes.

Transport for London has decided, without prior consultation, to close the tidal flow system at the Blackwall Tunnel. This system has been in operation for nearly 30 years and all of the calculations for the Thames Gateway Bridge were based on it being in operation. The removal of the tidal flow system will fundamentally alter the modelling assumptions and patterns of use for all river crossings in East London. It will affect all of the assessments for the bridge including the cost/benefit analysis, the business case, the health and environmental impacts, and the optimum toll levels.

It was clear from evidence presented at the Thames Gateway Bridge Inquiry that traffic levels on the bridge will be dependent on journey times on existing crossings. There is now extensive congestion every morning as a result of the removal of the tidal system and therefore the new bridge would be even more attractive than forecast and the toll levels proposed will need to be much higher

A £2 charge on the Blackwall Tunnel would fundamentally change all of the traffic forecasts, the economic appraisal, the environmental assessment and the business case for the bridge.

It was a very important part of TfL's case at the Inquiry that strategic traffic would continue to use the Blackwall and Dartford crossings and the TGB would only be used by local traffic. The TfL witness at the Inquiry (Mr R Smith) admitted that a toll at Blackwall would "have to be taken into account" and that it would transfer the problem from the main road system in Greenwich onto Bexley's residential streets. (Day 61 page 135)

It is absolutely essential that the effect of a toll on Blackwall Tunnel is reassessed before any decision is taken on the Thames Gateway Bridge scheme. This would require all of the models to be re-run and all of the appraisals recalculated. This evidence would then need to be re-examined by the Inspectors.

At my recent meeting with the Transport for London Commissioner, Peter Hendy assured me that no decision would be taken that adversely affected Bexley's position in relation to the bridge before the Inquiry decision is known. In order to comply with this undertaking the effect of the toll proposal at Blackwall would need to be fully evaluated before making the final decision on the Inquiry.

Introducing tolls at Blackwall Tunnel would change traffic movements throughout East London and would increase substantially the traffic using the Thames Gateway Bridge and the extent of its catchment area. These would have a devastating effect on Bexley and fundamentally change the nature and function of the Thames Gateway Bridge from a local to a strategic bridge. It is even more essential now that the Inquiry is reconvened and this new evidence properly evaluated.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Ian Clement
Leader of the Council

cc: Douglas Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Transport
Planning Central Caseworks Division, Zone 3/J/1, Eland House

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Our ref:

Date:

19 MAR 2007

Dear Councillor ~~Clement~~ *Ian*

I refer to your letter of 13 February 2007 addressed to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in which you request a re-opening of the Inquiry into the Thames Gateway Bridge. This request is on the basis that there is a proposal to introduce tolling at Blackwall Tunnel.

As I have stated recently (see enclosed Mayor Question Time response), I have no proposals for further charging schemes. However, I am on record as saying I will support any London Borough seeking to address congestion or environmental issues through local schemes. This is precisely the situation with the London Borough of Greenwich.

A number of surveys are being carried out in and around Greenwich in order to understand current traffic conditions and travel behaviour, as well as exploring the potential future travel patterns and public attitudes in response to a range of available traffic reduction measures.

Transport for London have formally responded to the Secretary of State on this matter, a copy of which is enclosed for your reference.

Yours sincerely

Ken
Ken Livingstone
Mayor of London

Encs

P.S. In case this is not clear enough - read my lips - no tolls at Blackwall Tunnel!

Direct telephone: 020 7983 4100 Fax: 020 7983 4057 Email: mayor@london.gov.uk

Please can you provide the Assembly with a) details of the proposed Blackwall tunnel charging scheme, including all the options that are currently being considered, and b) whether this is a joint TfL/Greenwich scheme or a Greenwich led?

Roger Evans

TfL is working with the London Borough of Greenwich at their initiative to explore the feasibility of a range of options to cut traffic growth and deter unnecessary journeys in the borough.

A number of surveys are being carried out in and around the area in order to understand current traffic conditions and travel behaviour, as well as exploring the potential future travel patterns and public attitudes in response to a range of available traffic reduction measures.

There are no charging proposals at this time. When the surveys are complete, Greenwich council and TfL will be in a position to understand what options to consider for this area.

Greater London Assembly

Mayors Question Time – Answer to question (and supplementary remarks by Assembly Members) starts at 1.32.40.

http://www.london.gov.uk/webcast/feb07/mqt_210207.aspx