

Reform and Growth for Rail in Great Britain?

Railfuture East Anglia

Bury St Edmunds

22 February 2025

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[updated post-event]

Agenda

- Introducing your speaker
- Previously – the Conservatives’ rail reforms
- The Labour Government’s:
 - Missions
 - Rail and transport pledges
 - Rail legislation
- The Chancellor’s measures affecting rail
- New consultation on rail reform and GBR
- The Lower Thames Crossing and rail alternatives
- What’s still to be decided?

Biographical sketch



Notable events of 1977 – the year I joined BR



My family lived near Kings Cross in London, many working at St Pancras station or Somers Town goods depot



This was Bedford Midland Road station, where I started work – it was replaced in 1978

The next 48 years.....

- British Railways, 1977-1980
- National Union of Railwaymen/RMT, 1980-1998
- Commercial political consultancy, 1998-2006
- Cogitamus Limited, 2007-
- ‘Calling All Stations – the transport podcast with Christian Wolmar’, 2022-
- Campaign for Better Transport Trustee. 2002-

Previously – the Conservatives’ Rail Reforms

- Establish ‘Great British Railways’ as guiding mind
- GBR to let passenger service contracts instead of franchises
- Rail freight promoted by GBR with 75% growth by 2050
- Network Rail to form the core of GBR
- HS2 massively reduced to just West London – Birmingham
- ‘Network North’ promised for use of former HS2 cash

Labour's Mission 1

Kickstart economic growth to secure the highest sustained growth in the G7 – with good jobs and productivity growth in every part of the country making everyone, not just a few, better off

Ensuring reliable, affordable and accessible transport, which works for passengers and efficiently moves goods around the country, is important to economic growth and productivity.

Labour's Mission 2

Make Britain a clean energy superpower to cut bills, create jobs and deliver security with cheaper, zero-carbon electricity by 2030, accelerating to net zero

Accelerating the move to greener transport will reduce our dependence on expensive and volatile fossil fuels, and support the transition to cheap, clean, homegrown power, which will lower costs, boost our energy security, and help deliver the emissions savings needed to accelerate to net zero.

‘Move fast and fix things’

- Improving performance on the railways and driving forward rail reform
- Improving bus services and growing usage across the country
- Transforming infrastructure to work for the whole country, promoting social mobility and tackling regional inequality
- Delivering greener transport
- Better integrating transport networks

Bills announced in the King's Speech

- Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill – became law on 28 November
- Railways Bill - consultation underway, Shadow Great British Railways established
- High Speed Rail (Crewe to Manchester) Bill – but not reinstatement of HS2 itself
- Planning and Infrastructure Bill
- English Devolution Bill – White Paper published

Chancellor's measures affecting rail

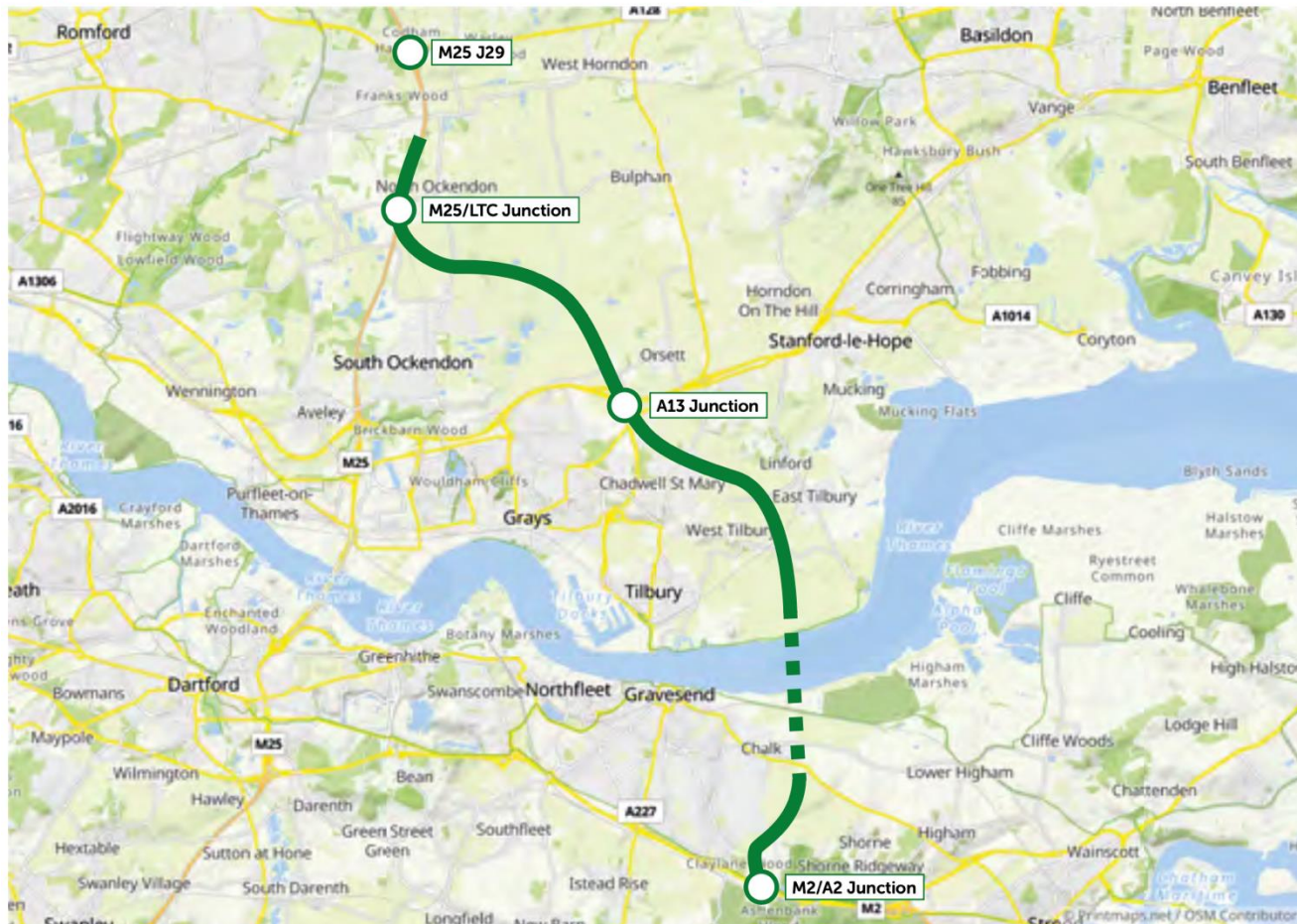
- A303 Stonehenge and A27 Arundel Bypass cancelled on 29 July
- Capital Spend Review launched by Transport Secretary on 30 July
- Lower Thames Crossing approval deadline extended to 23 May 2025
- Budget, 31 October:
 - Funding HS2 tunnels Old Oak Common - London Euston
 - Trans-Pennine route upgrade and development for East West Railway
 - Cancelled three trunk road schemes but approved several others
 - No change in road fuel duty, 4.6% rail fares increase
- Speech, 29 January:
 - Oxford-Cambridge Arc and East West Railway confirmed
 - Support for third runway at Heathrow Airport and Lower Thames Crossing
- Further Budget in March 2025
- Full Spending Review and Capital Programme announcement, June 2025

‘A railway fit for Britain’s future’
















- Consultation launched on 18 February for 8 weeks
- GBR to be ‘directing mind’ and built out from Network Rail by 2027
- Former franchised operations in England part of GBR
- GBR controls access regime for open access and freight
- Statutory duty for GBR to promote freight
- Diminished role for ORR in access rights and finances
- Strengthened consumer watchdog still based on Transport Focus
- Commitment to devolution for Scotland, Wales and city regions
- GBR ticketing platform but space for competitors
- Little on innovation, technology or investment

Lower Thames Crossing

Approximate Route of Lower Thames Crossing



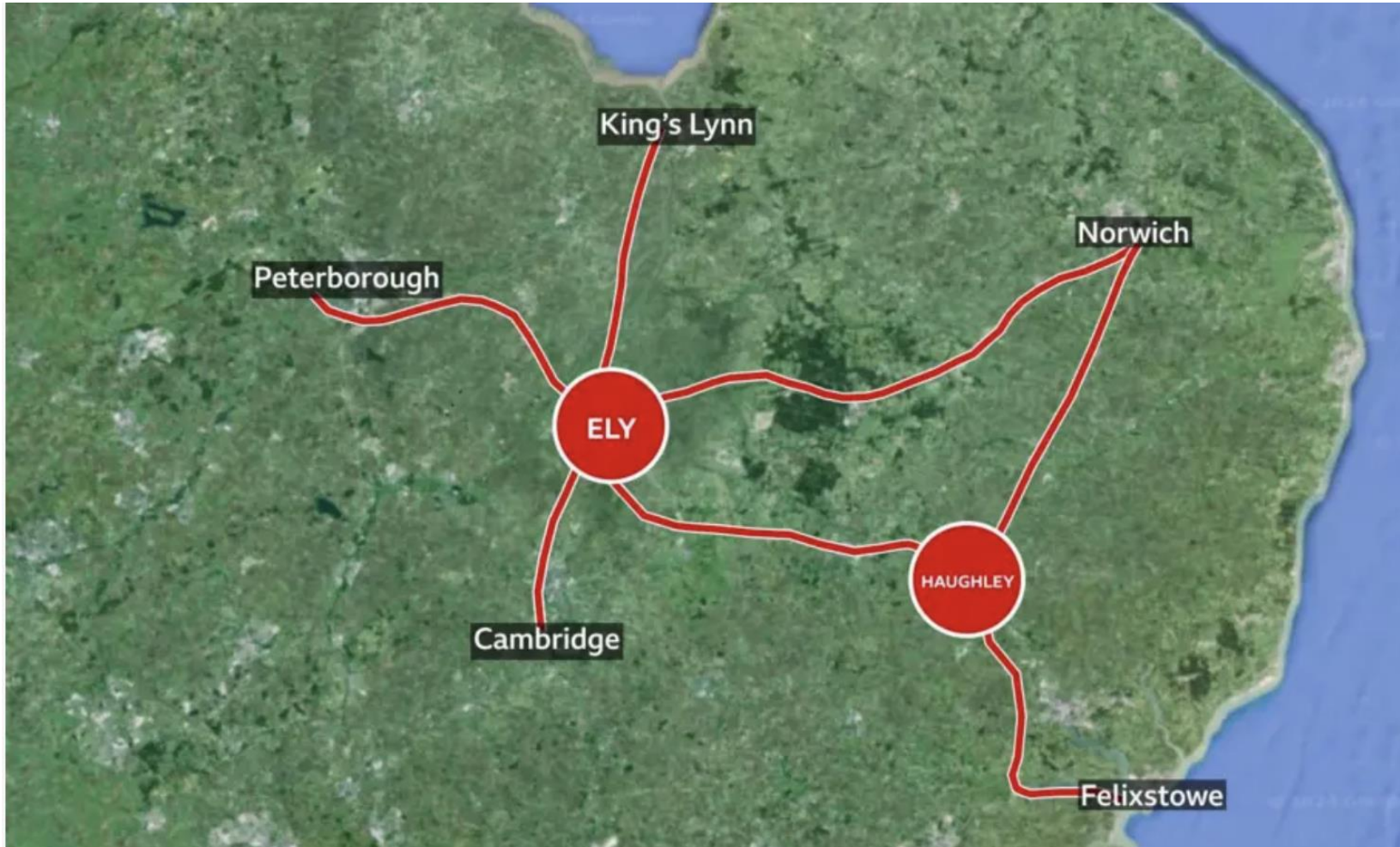
Lower Thames Crossing

 	Relieve Congestion Dartford Crossing - back to existing conditions in only five years Journey time savings only c1min per vehicle Additional local queuing and delays	
 	Minimise Environmental Impact +6.6million tonnes of CO ₂ Biodiversity net gain target not met	
 	Affordable and Value for Money Costs £8bn-£9bn & costs going up Latest analysis: costs > benefits More expensive per km than HS2	
 	Improve Safety +26 fatalities (8 in Thurrock) +182 seriously injured Only major highway scheme to increase fatalities and serious injuries	
 	Improve Network Resilience Local road network resilience eliminated No modelling tests undertaken to provide evidence for resilience	

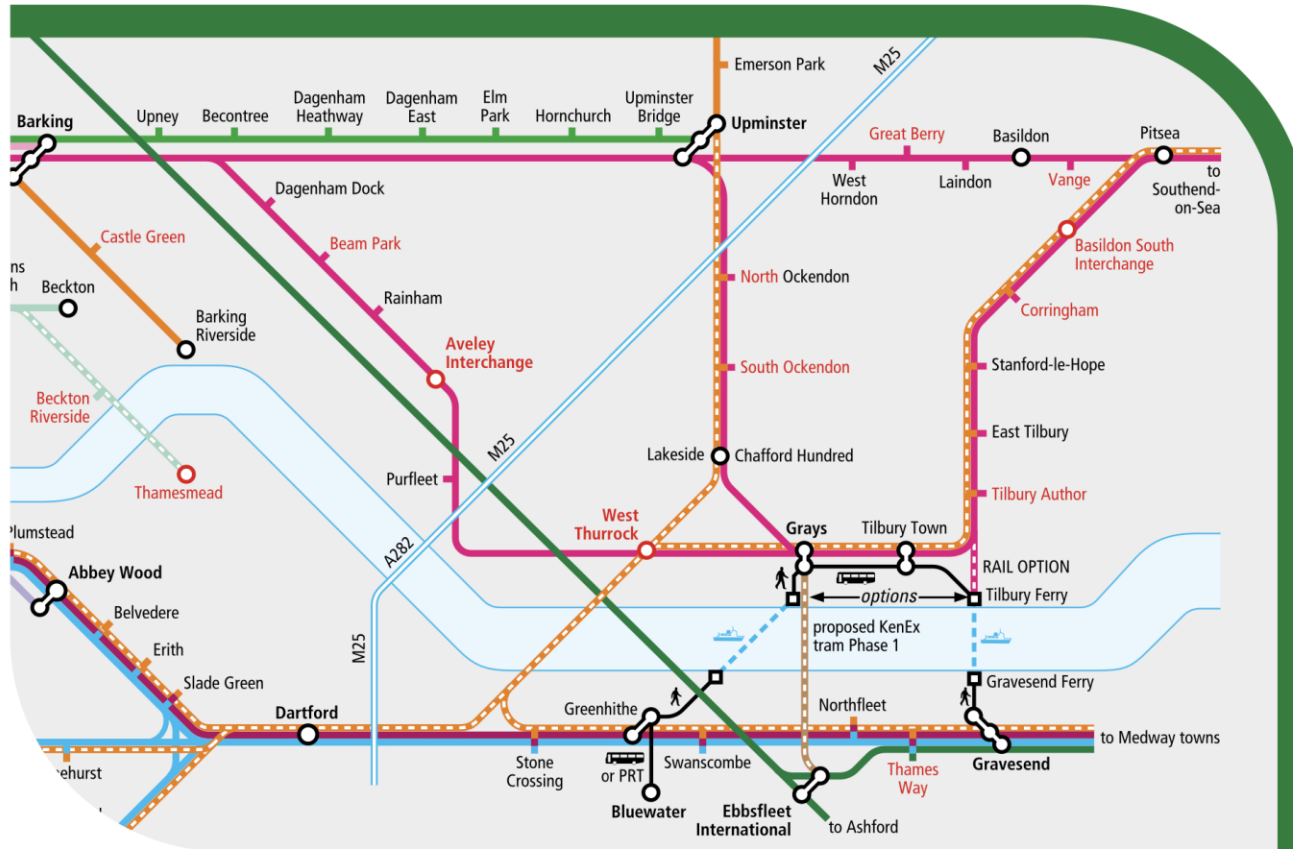
Lower Thames Crossing – Rail Freight Alternatives

- Dollands Moor to Wembley gauge clearance for Channel Tunnel - £60m?
- Electrification to London Gateway - £20m?
- Ripple Lane yard - £20m?
- West Coast Main Line alternatives to HS2 - £?bn
- Ely and Haughley Junctions - £520m?
- Transport Action Network report on alternatives being launched with ASLEF support

Lower Thames Crossing – Rail Freight Alternatives



Lower Thames Crossing – Passenger Rail Alternatives



See Transport Action Network's LTC alternatives here:

<https://transportactionnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/TAN-Essex-Kent-Superlinks-web.pdf>

Labour Government – to be decided?

- Are Heidi Alexander’s priorities the same as Louise Haigh’s?
- Will Labour’s GBR end up looking more like the Tories’ version?
- How fast will the full GBR be established?
- How will freight be protected and promoted within GBR?
- Does Labour believe all construction is good for growth?
- How does the growth Mission reconcile with the net zero Mission?
- If money is tight, does rail or road prevail?
- Will the playing field between rail and road be levelled?
 - Taxation (including fares)
 - Investment (including HS2, Ely, electrification)

Thank you!

- <https://cogitamus.co.uk> company website
- <https://transportinfo.org.uk> transport news daily
 - <https://markwalkerg.podbean.com>
‘Calling All Stations’ –
the transport podcast with Christian Wolmar
 - <https://transportactionnetwork.org.uk>
stopping the LTC and other trunk roads

Discussion