

## INFRASTRUCTURE SUMMIT

# MPs told we need better roads and rail routes

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Transport chiefs lobbied MPs to build a new Lower Thames Crossing and redesign stretches of Kent's motorway at a summit on infrastructure investment.

A panel of five MPs from the county sat in front of more than 75 business people and council leaders at the event organised by the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership.

They heard from Port of Dover chief executive Tim Waggott and rail consultant Vince Lucas, who spoke about measures they felt could avoid gridlock and overcrowding on roads and rail routes.

This included a new Lower Thames Crossing, redesigning Junction 7 of the M2, known as Brenley Corner, and dualling the A2 from Lydden to Dover.

The panel was chaired by Dover and Deal MP Charlie Elphicke and featured Ashford MP and Work and Pensions Secretary Damian Green, North Thanet MP Sir Roger Gale, South Thanet MP Craig Mackinlay and Rochester



Attendees at Kent and Medway Economic Partnership's infrastructure investment summit at The Maidstone Studios

and Strood MP Kelly Tolhurst.

There was agreement from the panel, businesses and councils that extending Crossrail to Ebbsfleet, and ideally Gravesend, would help grow the economy and regenerate north Kent.

Mr Waggott argued increasing road capacity was needed because of the Port of Dover's crucial role in the nation's economy, handling 17% of the UK's trade in goods.

If it were a separate country, it would have the 55th biggest economy in the world, he said, handling over 10,000 trucks every day.

Together with Eurotunnel, the cross-Channel corridor handles £220 billion of UK trade in goods.

Mr Lucas, director of VA Rail Consulting, suggested extending the length of high speed trains to 12 carriages to avoid overcrowding and providing a shuttle service between Ebbsfleet and London to support the development of the garden city.

The summit, held at The Maidstone Studios on Friday, also heard from representatives from MidKent College, Canterbury Christ Church University and the Kent and Medway Skills Commission, who discussed the skills needed to support the proposals.

Panel chairman Mr Elphicke said: "It's clear we need investment in Kent's roads and railways. The A2 must be dualled

and we need to get on with building the Lower Thames Crossing.

"We must act now to prevent gridlock and delays, which would affect the whole country – not just Kent.

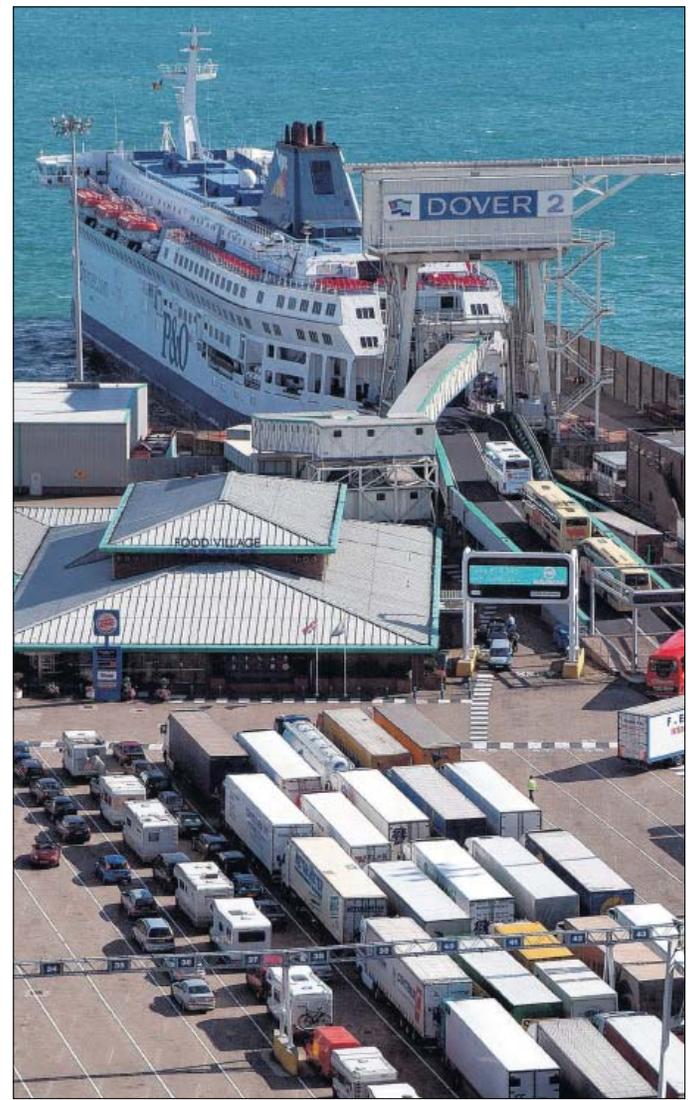
"Meanwhile, we simply have to increase capacity on our train services to meet demand."

Panel member Miss Tolhurst added: "Kent as a whole is home to some of our nation's most important pieces of infrastructure.

"We have major ports, key road and rail routes linking us with the Continent, growing business and technology parks, energy production and excellent academic centres.

"While we can be proud of this, it is important we build momentum and increase investment or risk falling behind other parts of the country."

Geoff Miles, chairman of Kent and Medway Economic Partnership, and co-owner of The Maidstone Studios, said: "We are delighted Kent and Medway MPs have been so receptive to our request to lobby government for this infrastructure, which will maximise our global competitiveness as a nation."



The Port of Dover's crucial role in the nation's economy was discussed as well as the need to increase road capacity

**Darren swears to his wife his wedding suit still fits.**

*(He swears a lot more when he tries to do it up)*



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