



# APPG Thames Estuary

**Lower Thames Crossing – Skills, Jobs and SME Opportunities**  
**Meeting Summary | Tuesday, 9 September 2025 | House of Commons**

This APPG is kindly sponsored by: **Port of London Authority, Thames Freeport**

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## Driving Growth and Skills in the Thames Estuary

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on the Thames Estuary, chaired by Jim Dickson MP, met in Parliament to focus on the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) and its potential to create jobs, strengthen skills, and support small businesses across Kent, Essex and beyond.

Parliamentarians were joined by the Lower Thames Crossing contractors Balfour Beatty, Skanska, and Bouygues Murphy Joint Venture (BMJV), alongside local college leaders, to explore how the UK's biggest road project in a generation can deliver long-term economic benefits for the Estuary.

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## Attendees

### Parliamentarians

Jim Dickson MP (Chair) • Bayo Alaba MP • James Asser MP • David Burton-Sampson MP • Lauren Edwards MP • Daniel Francis MP • Sojan Joseph MP • Tris Osborne MP • Lauren Sullivan MP

### Other Attendees

Kate Willard OBE (Thames Estuary Growth Board) • David Godfrey (Thames Estuary Growth Board & Kent County Council) • Natalie Bonnick, Hannah Ewins, Mark Gitsham & Mia Airoll (Lower Thames Crossing) • Charlotte Condon (Balfour Beatty) • Jessica Power (Skanska) • Megan Prigmore (Bouygues Murphy JV) • Paul King (Kent County Council) • Cllr Daniel Cowan (Southend City Council) • Mark Andrews (North Kent College) • Sian Foster & Poppy Windsor (Port of London Authority) • Parliamentary staff and APPG Secretariat

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## **HS1 Sub-Committee Update**

- Sojan Joseph MP updated members on the new APPG Sub-Committee campaigning for the reinstatement of international services at Ashford and Ebbsfleet.
- A recent report shows new Kent stops could deliver a £2.3m boost to the local economy.
- Office of Rail and Road (ORR) decisions are expected on new operating entrants in October 2025.
- MPs agreed to step up lobbying and follow up with government once the decision is made.
- Next meeting of the sub-committee will be post-ORR decision — probably in November 2026.

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## **Growth Board – Investment & Strategy**

Kate Willard OBE, Thames Estuary Envoy, set out the Growth Board's refreshed plans:

- A financially stable Growth Board is now driving investment and skills programmes across the Estuary.
- Work is underway on a new south east investment zone proposition with international links, and to the rest of the UK.
- Strategic projects including HS1 and the Lower Thames Crossing are central to the Estuary's growth agenda.
- The Growth Board will also lead a follow-up meeting on spatial analysis reports to map out wider impacts of the LTC.

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## **Lower Thames Crossing – Skills and Employment**

Natalie Bonnick (Lower Thames Crossing) outlined the scale and ambition of the project:

- 14.5 miles of new road and 2.6 miles of tunnels.
- Delivered by Balfour Beatty (north works), Skanska (south works), and BMJV (tunnels).
- Aims to create thousands of local jobs and embed a “local first” approach to procurement.

### **Key Commitments:**

- 20% of workforce from local boroughs.
- 45% of workforce living within 20 miles.
- £800m in SME contracts (1 in every 3 pounds spent).
- 5,000+ businesses already in the supplier directory.
- Two new Skills Hubs, with the first opening in Gravesham in 2025.

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## Contractor Contributions

- **Skanska – Jessica Power:** early success with apprenticeships and graduate hires, plus school outreach and curriculum integration. GIS and environmental teams already active.
- **Bouygues Murphy Joint Venture – Megan Prigmore:** strong school engagement in Gravesham and Thurrock; outreach projects such as naming the tunnelling machines; apprentices and graduates recruited into tunnelling roles.
- **Balfour Beatty – Charlotte Condon:** STEM promotion (with focus on women), T-Level student engagement, six new business apprentices in place. Collaboration with DWP, prisons, and veteran organisations to widen the workforce pipeline.

**Education partners** — Mark Andrews (North Kent College) stressed the importance of early careers engagement, long-term collaboration, and tackling shortages of teaching staff in construction disciplines.

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## Roundtable Highlights

- MPs welcomed strong commitments to local skills and SMEs but pressed for wider engagement across the Estuary, including Southend.
- Questions were raised about traffic pinch points in Kent and potential business opportunities linked to the project.
- Kate Willard confirmed the Growth Board will lead a review of spatial analysis reports to map out wider impacts of the LTC.
- MPs emphasised the need to promote the opportunities of LTC across their constituencies.

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## Looking Ahead

Chair Jim Dickson MP closed the meeting and invited Parliamentarians to bring forward matters that they wish to discuss at future meetings.

### Next APPG Meeting:

 Wednesday, 10 December 2025 | 15:00–16:30 | House of Commons

**Topic:** Unlocking the River Thames as a growth corridor, including transport and economic opportunities.

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