

Cllr Paul Bettison OBE, Bracknell Forest
Council
Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Oxfordshire County Council
Cllrs Jason Brock & Tony Page, Reading
Borough Council
Cllr John Halsall, Wokingham Borough Council

**Councillor Sue Cooper
Leader of the Council**

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Sent via email

7 December 2020

Dear Councillor,

Joint Statement – Cross Thames Travel Group

I refer to the draft 'Joint statement from all members of the Cross Thames Travel Group' circulated at our meeting on 30 November 2020, which is proposed to send on behalf of the councils to the Department for Transport.

You will recall I wrote to you and our MPs, 14 October 2019, regarding a motion agreed by South Oxfordshire District Council on 10 October 2019 that stated:

- a) *In the context of the Climate Emergency a car-based solution to a car-based problem that would pour thousands of cars and HGVs into Oxfordshire is totally inappropriate and should a new bridge be built it should be restricted to public transport, cyclists and pedestrians;*
- b) *Notwithstanding the above, if a car-based solution is pursued, the proposed bridge and necessary mitigation measures (i.e. improvements to the Oxfordshire road network) are not considered as two separate projects, but as one single project in order that the benefits, disadvantages and costs of the complete scheme can be holistically assessed.*

While the council recognises that there are congestion issues within and around Reading which are causing environmental concerns, my council currently do not believe that a third crossing of the Thames for vehicles is the right solution.

South Oxfordshire District Council declared a Climate Emergency last year and we have stated our ambition to become a net-zero carbon emissions district by 2030. At this stage I don't believe the approach set out in the draft joint statement and suggested agreement to a Strategic Outline Business case submission to the Department of Transport for road options accords with my council's decision. We cannot be part of a programme that is focused on a car-based bridge.

I also note the proposals for governance arrangements for this project work, but until we are clear about the purpose of this Group and the project work, I am unable to commit to these.

I therefore will not be supporting the draft Joint Statement but continue to offer our working together to mitigate current issues in and around Reading to improve connectivity for South Oxfordshire residents.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Sue Cooper
Leader of the Council

Cc: Bill Hicks, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Cathy Champion, Oxfordshire County Council
Chris Maddocks, Reading Borough Council
Robert Curtis, Wokingham Borough Council
Emma Baker, South Oxfordshire District Council