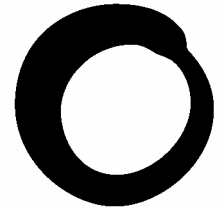


May 2003



**Friends of
the Earth**

Briefing

Thames Gateway : A bridge too far

Friends of the Earth London is running a campaign in the Thames Gateway London region – to steer the planned development there towards sustainable regeneration. However big business has already been pushing for a Thames Gateway Bridge (6-lane road bridge) to be built. Friends of the Earth London say that any new transport infrastructure, including any new Thames river crossings, should be that which is evaluated to best deliver benefits to the local people who should be given real choices.

Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems, which make life better for people.

Friends of the Earth is:

- the UK's most influential national environmental campaigning organisation**
- the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost one million supporters across five continents and over 60 national organisations worldwide**
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in over 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.**

To join or make a donation call us on 0800 581 051

**Friends of the Earth, 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ
Tel: 020 7490 1555 Fax: 020 7490 0881 Email: info@foe.co.uk Website: www.foe.co.uk**

Friends of the Earth Limited company number 1012357

♻️ Printed on paper made from 100 per cent post-consumer waste

Thames Gateway : A bridge too far

The Thames Gateway London area is in the spotlight at the moment. As well as being the area where the Olympics would be concentrated, as part of the wider Thames Gateway area, it is one of four growth areas earmarked in John Prescott's Community Plan that will see massive development and investment. The Communities Plan aims to create sustainable communities in the south and to rebalance prosperity with the north of the country, but is likely to fail in both.

There is every chance for regeneration in the Thames Gateway London area to go spectacularly wrong with schemes being pushed through e.g. via Urban Development Corporations, with lasting ill-effects for people of the area. This is also a chance for those leading regeneration to steer the area (which includes some of the most deprived and polluted neighborhoods in the country) towards sustainable regeneration – that which brings economic development and improved quality of life for all.

Certain big business interests and the Thames Gateway London Partnership of local boroughs have already been pushing for a massive 6-lane road crossing (the Thames Gateway Bridge/TGB) calling it a local crossing despite its strategic position (completing dual carriageways to the North Circular and the M11 in the north and to the M25 in the south), and its likely role in encouraging more longer-distance commuting.

Claims are made that regeneration requires the “barrier effect” of the Thames to be reduced, and that improved access will result in job creation. However even the promoters own figures show that only 13% of expected new jobs would be due to the bridge and that jobs would work out at a cost about twice the normal. However the Mayor has fallen into line, despite saying before his election that they'd have to put him in the first block of concrete to build the bridge! A public consultation is coming up without alternatives having been worked up, and before an environmental statement giving details of pollution and traffic problems is ready.

There has also been much criticism of the scheme. Half the Transport for London Board voted against the scheme, including David Begg, chair of the Government's Commission for Integrated Transport. Two top independent regeneration and transport academics have produced reports saying there are cheaper ways to regenerate and better ways to spend the money using public transport, and that this would help the poorer and often non-car-owning the best.

The reports: “Thames Gateway River Crossing: a social, economic and environmental assessment” by Professor John Whitelegg for the Simon Woolf Charitable Foundation, January 2002 and “A Solution looking for a Problem - a review of Transport for London's proposals for river crossings in East London and their traffic impact” by John Elliot for Transport 2000, March 2003. Between them the reports found that:

- the main claims for economic benefit of the scheme are based on savings to the motorist, and that claims for improved access to employment by car are based on flawed congestion analysis;
- even though 2 lanes on the bridge are proposed for use by buses, access to employment by public transport would be barely improved;
- the scheme would do little or nothing to relieve unemployment in local boroughs and would make it easier for other people from outside the area to access employment

opportunities that are created, also encouraging longer-distance commuting by car;

- there are better and cheaper ways to regenerate the area and to improve local transport;
- spending should be directed to public transport because car ownership is low in the immediately affected boroughs (Greenwich 40.8%; Newham 48.9%)
- already over-polluted areas are most likely to suffer the effects of extra road traffic and pollution;
- the scheme's backers have greatly underestimated the increase in traffic flows – Transport for London's 2-way figure of 4,400 vehicles in the morning peak hour is in fact likely to be 6,000 to 8,000 vehicles. This could be up to 12,000 vehicles if proposed bus lanes were scrapped.
- therefore there has also been an underestimation of the extra traffic chaos and pollution caused by the bridge (for instance as traffic tried to cut through to the A2 to the south).
- the promotion and public consultation on the scheme to date has been 'fraudulent' (John Whitelegg report) offering no public transport alternatives. The money could be spent on public transport north and south of the river and dedicated public transport crossings could be explored instead.

This bridge is an old scheme of Steve Norris's Department of Transport from 1996, but is being pushed through without re-evaluation despite the fact that since then we have had new legislation (e.g. on air quality and traffic reduction), and that there have been several new crossings which create access to employment without adding to the area's traffic chaos:

- The Jubilee Line Extension crosses the river 3 times;
- The DLR crosses the river from the Isle of Dogs to Greenwich and Lewisham.

There are proposals also for:

- The DLR to cross also to cross to Woolwich;
- two separate Transit schemes for East London and the Greenwich Waterfront;
- Crossrail to cross the river just upstream from where the bridge is proposed, linking Woolwich with the Royal Docks – the area certainly does not need both Crossrail and the Thames Gateway Bridge.

Other schemes which could be progressed if the money went instead into these, include a further extension of the Woolwich DLR link to Thamesmead, and an improved Woolwich ferry. Continued Dartford crossing tolls have been promised for transport in East London.

Friends of the Earth London want to see proper consultation with real choices offered (not just "what colour do you want their bridge painted!"), so that the people north and south of the river can have a real say in what will best help them regenerate and create jobs.