

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry's response to Port of London Authority's Thames Vision 2050 consultation

INTRODUCTION

1. London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) is the capital's largest independent business advocacy organisation. We represent the interests of firms of all sizes, from micro-businesses and sole traders through to large, multi-national corporates, across all 33 London local authority areas – genuinely reflecting the broad spectrum of London business opinion.
2. As the voice of London business, we seek to promote and enhance the interests of the capital's business community through representations to central government, the Mayor and London Assembly, Parliament and media, as well as international audiences. Through business surveys and commissioned research, LCCI seeks to inform and shape debate on key business issues.

TRADING THAMES – What actions are needed for the success of Trading Thames, and what would you see as your role, or the role of your organisation in those actions?

3. The congestion on London's roads is costing the city everyday, estimated to be around £5.1 billion over the course of the year.¹ Many businesses require a vehicle in order to operate, from logistics to cleaning companies, taxi drivers to tradespeople – the road network in London is vital infrastructure which is overcapacity. Efforts are being made to avoid a car-led recovery in London, with car journey use remaining high in 2020 and public transport seeing a 14% drop compared to 2019. The hope is that for those persons who have decided to return to using their vehicle inside London for leisure journeys, there will be a shift back towards public transport.
4. The Mayor of London has also overseen an expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone to the North and South Circular roads, with intentions of a further widening to cover all of Greater London. While not a scheme with a strict intention of reducing congestion, there will be a hope that Londoners will reconsider their car journeys in some capacity. The main aim of the ULEZ is to lower pollution in the city, and encourage people to swap out their more polluting vehicles for lower-emission alternatives. The Government too is backing the transition to electric vehicles. Nevertheless, there are concerns that this will not reduce congestion on roads.
5. Therefore, a consideration must be given to policies and initiatives that take steps to remove vehicles from London's roads – even if they are low or zero-emission. The road network in the capital is vital for business growth and survival, not least for the freight and logistics sector. Freight transport in London is critical to the city's economy, and has grown enormously particularly since the start of the pandemic. Logistics companies in membership of LCCI often report a struggle with negotiating the road network and fulfilling customers' orders on time, due to high levels of traffic and congestion. Steps taken to encourage people onto other means of transport are having some impact, but that sizeable modal shift has yet to materialise.
6. The Thames represents an underutilised resource for logistics in the city. The ambition of Trading Thames, to take advantage of the river as an asset for transporting goods, is welcome to see from London Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Using the Thames for light freight purposes can offer a solution to more than one issue: it can help to relieve the pressure on

¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/cost-of-congestion-in-capital-revealed>

London's roads, and, provided the boats used are low / zero emission, can offer a green method of transportation in the capital. Greater utilisation of the Thames as part of Destination Thames can also unlock economic benefits throughout the city, particularly in East London.

7. Given there are several parties who have ownership of different assets in this piece, collaboration will be essential in order to maximise the benefits of greater use of the Thames for freight transport. Connection hubs for transferring goods into vehicles for delivery on the road network are likely to be important for success, and it is vital that safeguarded wharves continue to be activated, to provide these hubs for logistics and freight firms. Joint work on identifying the best locations for these hubs should be undertaken, between the PLA and other key partners.
8. Considering that there are close links between Trading Thames and London's net zero efforts, the PLA should work closely with the Greater London Authority and local authorities to explore an increase in freight traffic on the Thames. This is to ensure that there is sufficient buy-in from policymakers, who understand the potential benefits from an environmental point of view. Increased river traffic may help to reduce emissions and congestions on London's road network, but could also see emissions rise from the Thames as a result.
9. The PLA should also look to take advantage of the new Thames Freeport, which encompasses Dagenham, London Gateway and Tilbury. The freeport represents an opportunity to boost trade significantly in the area, and can support the future growth of trade on Thames through the city centre. Working with Thames Freeport, the PLA can bring together stakeholders to meet its climate objectives as well.
10. LCCI has working relationships with many of the stakeholders who could work together to ensure the success of the Trading Thames initiative. If needed, LCCI could help support the PLA in its efforts to work with other stakeholders such as TfL or logistics and freight companies.

DESTINATION THAMES – What actions do you think are needed for the success of the Destination Thames, and what would you see as your role, or the role of your organisation in those actions?

11. The Thames is a landmark of London. The success of the TfL service along the river, alongside the numerous leisure companies who offer sightseeing trips, shows there is appetite for travelling through the city on the Thames. Offering spectacular views of the city from a unique perspective, the river has an obvious draw.
12. In order to meet the bold aims of Destination Thames and make the river a key connection to London's cultural offer, the PLA should again look to work with the GLA and local authorities, to develop the passenger network. This conversation should also include Transport for London, and any other partners (such as, for example with regards to the Clipper, Uber). Ensuring that there is a reliable, affordable service on the River will help to strengthen the offer to potential residents and visitors.
13. With regards to attracting people to live by the river, the PLA should look to work with developers on potential transport connections, so that developers can incorporate these into their plans – not just access to on-land transport options (such as rail or the Tube). The PLA can bring together all parties to deliver housing that has access to the river transport system, in addition to Tube or the bus.
14. In its conversations with Transport for London, the PLA should also be mindful of how river services connect with other public transport options. Trying to find solutions that offer connections for passengers will again help with making the service attractive. There is already

integration with the contactless payment / Oyster system on the Clipper service, although the price of a trip on a boat is not included in a Travelcard. The Clipper service may become more attractive if the service was more integrated into TfL's charging network. A commute on the River offers a unique experience, but commuters will want a reliable and regular service. The PLA should work with partners to ensure this offer is there.

15. As mentioned in the Thames Vision 2050 document, the Thames River attracts people to explore hobbies and pastimes. With any rise in passenger services and freight traffic on the river, due care must be given to making sure the Thames is still a safe place to enjoy leisure activities. When considering expanded traffic on the Thames, the PLA should work with community groups in order to protect any leisure activities that occur along the Thames – it would be a detriment to the Destination Thames programme.
16. Again, LCCI can work with the PLA to bring together stakeholders who would be interested in developing the Destination Thames offer. This could include property developers, TfL, and local government representatives.

NET ZERO – Do you agree that the Net Zero transition should be a cross cutting priority and what innovations or actions would you like to see in this area?

17. LCCI absolutely agrees that the net zero transition should be a cross cutting priority for the Thames Vision 2050 project. Using the river as strategic infrastructure in London represents an opportunity to meet the city's climate targets and challenges, including congestion and air pollution.
18. Any plans to boost river traffic must always consider the net zero implications. There cannot be a straight swap of polluters from road to river – every effort should be made to ensure transport is as green as possible. As one example, this could be through the use of low / zero carbon boats. The offset of carbon emissions as a result of increased river traffic would also be vital to ensuring Thames Vision 2050 both supports London's move to net zero and future proofs the vision itself for the future.
19. If considering hub approaches for freight, perhaps with a mind to last mile deliveries, the infrastructure must be in place. This includes EV charging stations for logistics firms, and appropriate, secure cycle storage.
20. When considering the investment case for hydrogen, the PLA should engage with the Government to secure support and backing. If investors see that there is government support for hydrogen generation and storage in the area, they may see it as a more attractive opportunity.

CONCLUSION

21. In conclusion, LCCI strongly supports the Port of London Authority's goals as part of the Thames Vision 2050 project. There is a real opportunity to rethink how the Thames is used and its potential role in helping the city to meet its net zero targets. As an iconic landmark for the city, Thames Vision 2050 represents a chance to utilise the river as part of London's economic recovery from Covid-19.

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