

Press release

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Foster + Partners, Halcrow and Volterra launch Thames Hub vision

Lord Foster, chairman and founder of Foster + Partners, has launched proposals for the Thames Hub – An Integrated Vision for Britain.

Foster + Partners, Halcrow and Volterra have worked together on a self-funded study to produce a detailed vision for the Thames Hub. The study is unique for its scale and strategic cross-sector thinking and the outcome is a holistic vision for future infrastructure development in Britain.

Britain can no longer trade on an inadequate and aged infrastructure. A fast-growing population and an evolving global economy demand that the quality of the UK's infrastructure be improved and its capacity increased dramatically. The study describes proposals for a Spine which combines rail, energy, communications and data running the length of the UK. The Spine is fed by a Thames Hub, which brings together a new river barrier and crossing, an international airport, and a shipping and rail complex. Recognising the synergies between rail, freight logistics, aviation, energy and its transmission, flood protection and regional development, it reaps the benefits of their integration.

The Thames Hub will lay the foundations for the future prosperity of Britain. It will put in place the transport connections Britain needs in order to maximise its trade links with the rest of the world. It will create jobs across the UK, balance the economy between North and South, and boost the economies of the Midlands and the North by providing them with direct connections to the cities and markets of Europe.

The Halcrow and Foster + Partners Thames Hub vision is supported by renowned economist Bridget Rosewell, chairman of Volterra Consulting and founder member of The Thames Estuary Research and Development Company (TESTRAD).

"If we are to establish a modern transport and energy infrastructure in Britain for this century and beyond, we need to recapture the foresight and political courage of our 19th century forebears and draw on our traditions of engineering, design and landscape. If we don't then we are denying future generations to come. We are rolling over and saying we are no longer competitive – and this is a competitive world. So I do not believe we have a choice."

Norman Foster, Founder and Executive Chairman

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"As infrastructure specialists, our role is to support society by taking on the big issues that affect us all – water, transportation, energy, and creating places to live and work. Great challenges require bold solutions, which is why I believe our Thames Hub vision is critical to society and to the country's economic prosperity. If we don't sustain and invest in infrastructure, then it's at our peril. If the UK is to remain globally competitive, these proposals need to be seriously considered."

David Kerr, Halcrow Group Board Director

Notes to editors:

The main components of the Thames Hub are as follows:

- A new barrier crossing that extends the flood protection to London and the Thames Gateway into the 22nd century. The barrier harnesses tidal power to generate carbon-free energy
- A four-track, high-speed passenger and freight Orbital Rail route around London, which links London's radial lines, a future high-speed rail line to the Midlands and the North, the Thames Estuary ports, High Speed 1 (Channel Tunnel to London), and European networks
- An Estuary Airport, capable of handling 150 million passengers per annum, thus enabling the UK to retain its global aviation hub status. The airport is integrated within a logistics matrix that connects by rail the Thames Estuary Ports and the ports of Liverpool, Southampton and Felixstowe. Associated with the Hub is a major renewable energy source in the Estuary
- A new utilities and data spine in the Thames Barrier, Orbital Rail line and high-speed networks, with applicability across the UK
- A comprehensive environmental management strategy that minimises the impact of development and provides opportunities to create significant new wildlife habitats to more than offset losses elsewhere. The project can also be the catalyst to reduce pressure on foreshore habitats from rising sea levels and storm activity.

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