

[Behold the Dartford Olympics](#) [1]

Written by [Jan Boucek](#) [2] | Monday 30 July 2012



Hopefully, David Cameron's summer vacation takes him over the Dartford Crossing over the Thames River downstream from London. With luck, the toll queue on the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge will let the Prime Minister take in the stunning views in all directions - the panorama will instil more pride in the nation and inspiration for new policies than the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games.

That ceremony might have encouraged Mr Cameron to return us to a rural idyll that never was, to imprison all wealth-generating industrialists, to beatify the NHS as the country's official religion and to ban all culture except pop. The Dartford Crossing, though, is the real-world antidote to that view of Britain and suggests some good ideas to restore the economic growth needed to pay for the flights of fancy on show at the Olympic Stadium.

Start with the sheer volume of traffic that is utterly breath-taking - thousands upon thousands of cars, vans and trucks streaming across in both directions heading to all points of the compass. Mr Cameron should take pride in the fact that the majority of the world's major carmakers - Ford, General Motors, Toyota, Honda, Nissan, BMW, Tata - continue to make their cars in this land and that those cars are good enough to export anywhere. And he should be proud that so many of the lorries are registered in lands as far away as Turkey, hauling goods to and from every nook and cranny of the nation.

However, Mr Cameron should also recognize that Britain's roads are far more critical to the economy's health than any prestige rail projects like the high speed link from London to Birmingham and Manchester. A crowded Britain will live or die by an efficient road network where the vast majority of economic traffic isn't between the centres of big cities. Road infrastructure offers many opportunities for creative thinking - privatisation of major trunk routes, tolls and road pricing where the money stays within the industry for consistent upkeep, modernisation, expansion and even dismantling as required by a dynamically changing economy. Handle this right and little taxpayer funding will be required.

Mr Cameron should also recognize that Britain's historic economic success is so clearly underscored by those foreign-registered lorries - foreign trade. At every summit, at every meeting with every foreign dignitary, at every trade show on every continent, Mr Cameron must shout out the virtues of trade, starting with the EU's own reluctance to implement the directive on free trade in services. Conveniently, such evangelism doesn't need any additional taxpayer funding.

Just upstream from the Dartford Crossing is the sprawling Littlebrook Power Station and another testament to Britain's strengths and weaknesses. The nation has a proud history of energy innovation and development with its skills in the field exported around the world. Littlebrook is oil-fired, though, and incessant dithering about long-term energy supply is bordering on the criminal. So let's cut through the crap and dash for gas to exploit the nation's skills, significantly reduce if not eliminate carbon emissions and secure energy supplies for the foreseeable future. It's another opportunity to enhance growth prospects without hitting up taxpayers.

Downstream from the Dartford Crossing is the Thames Estuary, the proposed dream site of a new futuristic airport for London and there's no escaping the need for more airport capacity in the southeast if Britain has any intention of sustaining economic growth in the decades ahead. An airport in the Estuary would be a huge challenge but Britain's engineering industry is second to none in the world. The country's problem isn't building things ? it's being unable to decide to build anything. So, Mr Cameron, push the button for this airport if you want a real legacy, especially if you can finally get Whitehall to negotiate proper public-private financing initiatives.

Let's hope the Olympics opening ceremony was the last hurrah of New Labour's delusions and that Mr Cameron can recognise it as such. For a sense of the real world, he should spend £1.50 for the adrenalin rush of the Dartford Crossing.

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