



Department
for Transport

Kelly Tolhurst MP
Parliamentary
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Councillor Geoff Brown
Cornwall Council

Councillor Mark Coker
Plymouth City Council

c/o Nigel Blackler
Director – Infrastructure
Economic Growth and Development
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9 June 2020

Dear Councillors Brown and Coker,

Thank you for your letter of 29 April to the Secretary of State, regarding the impacts of Covid-19 on the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry.

As outlined in my previous letter to you dated 20 April, the Covid-19 outbreak is among the biggest challenges our transport industry has ever confronted. You should be assured that the Government is continuing to take measures to keep the transport network flowing smoothly. We recently announced a £1.7billion investment to improve roads, repair bridges and fill millions of potholes, including £300million for the South West, while hundreds of millions of pounds worth of upgrades have also been made to the nation's road and rail networks.

Whilst the position regarding funding to support crossings like the Tamar has not changed, I do recognise the challenges that exist. Following further representations made to me on the issue, I am prepared to support a move to an annual inflationary toll increase for the Tamar. This will hopefully provide additional certainty and enable the joint enterprise to continue to invest in the crossing through the tolls that it collects, including the installation of a contactless charging system. However, this will not be an immediate or quick process and will be dependent, once the current challenges pass, on finding an appropriate legislative vehicle to make the required change.

In addition to this, I have asked my officials to discuss with Highways England in further detail the suggestion of a contribution to maintenance of the Tamar bridge. However, given that such a contribution is not included in the current Road Investment Strategy (2020-25) and would require a detailed study, this does not commit in any way that funding will be forthcoming in future.

I would once again like to reiterate my sincere thanks to the local authorities for their continued efforts in helping to keep our transport networks running during this challenging time.

I am copying this letter to Sheryll Murray MP (South East Cornwall) who I have met previously to discuss this issue.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelly Tolhurst". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and a long, sweeping tail on the 't'.

KELLY TOLHURST MP

MINISTER FOR AVIATION, MARITIME AND SECURITY