

Sheryll Murray MP
The Parade
Liskeard
PL14 6AF

Your ref: ZA30739
My ref: KK/st
Date: 10 August 2017

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Dear Sheryll

Thank you for your letter of 25 July regarding the Tamar Bridge Tolls.

I can confirm that the end to tolls on the Severn Crossings in 2018 was announced by the Secretary of State for Wales on 21 July 2017. This prompted a question from Councillor Armand Toms to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Councillor Geoff Brown at the full Cornwall Council meeting on 25 July 2017.

Councillor Toms asked whether the Portfolio Holder would take up the challenge of getting the tolls removed from the Tamar Bridge and getting support from the Government for the ferries because the toll impacts on the people going to work each day across the river Tamar.

The Portfolio Holder noted that the situation at the Severn River Crossings is very different from that at the Tamar Bridge and whilst happy to push for the removal of the tolls he recommended that Councillor Toms contact you direct as you are in a better position to influence the Government.

As you are aware the Tamar Bridge and the Torpoint Ferry are jointly owned by Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council and operated as a joint undertaking under powers derived from the Tamar Bridge Acts. The spirit of the Tamar Bridge Acts and the underpinning tolling legislation is that the operation, maintenance and improvement of the Bridge and Ferry should be self-financed from toll revenue on a user-pays principle. Tolls at Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry are set by Statutory Instruments authorised by the Secretary of State for Transport following submission of a sound business case based on forecast expenditure and income. The debt incurred in building the Tamar Bridge was repaid many years ago, and the costs of ongoing operation, maintenance and improvement of the two crossings are borne by toll payers and not by the parent authorities. Any proposal to seek the end to tolls for the crossings of the Tamar would first need to be debated and supported by the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee and thereafter by Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council. I am not aware of any item yet being submitted to either the Joint Committee or to the respective Councils.

In answer to your specific questions:

1. This is not a formal application from Cornwall Council that it wishes Central Government to take over the running of the Tamar Crossings.
2. No formal agreement has been sought from the Portfolio Holder for Transport from Plymouth City Council.
3. No request has been made and therefore the remainder of this question cannot be answered although, I would anticipate, if any application were forthcoming it would relate to the joint operation of the bridge and ferry crossings.
4. If an application were made for the removal of tolls, a business case would need to be made which included the economic impacts of which the impact on employment would be a significant consideration.

I hope this helpfully summarises the Council's position for you.

Yours sincerely
Dhywgh hwi yn hwir



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