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CC: Anna Gelderd, MP for South-east Cornwall; Ben Maguire, MP for North Cornwall.

3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2024

**Ref: Tamar Crossings Toll Revision Order Application, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024**

Dear Ms Zamenzadeh

Thank you for your email dated 23 July 2024, which contained details of the public inquiry and the option to submit further evidence to the inquiry prior to 6 September 2024. Thank you also for your follow-up correspondence to my concerns around the timing and location of the venue – the latter putting additional cost obligations on the already much beleaguered people of south-east Cornwall, should they wish to attend.

I copy my new MP for south-east Cornwall, Anna Gelderd, on my reply to you, which contains additional evidence for the Inspector. I ask Anna that in parallel to reviewing my original objection (that was copied to Sheryll Murray, ex MP south-east Cornwall and I attach again here for her benefit) and additional evidence here presented, she also considers standing with her constituents in opposition to this toll rise, just as her predecessor was doing before the election.

I also copy Ben Maguire, the new MP for north Cornwall, who has recently expressed an interest in our campaign on behalf of his constituents. Ben, please may I draw your attention to attached Annex C that highlights the high number of your constituents who are referred to, and therefore required to travel to, Devon PCN for treatment. This is near 19,000 from Launceston Medical Centre and, likely, many from the Tamar Valley Health Centre, given that the North Cornwall Constituency Boundary borders the Callington area.

I would like to draw the Inquiry Inspector's attention to the attached documents below, which provide substantiated evidence to support our case and refute many of the claims made by the TB&TF Joint Committee and Tamar crossings in regard to their application for a toll increase in 2024:

- Annex A - 2019 Public inquiry Inspector's Report.

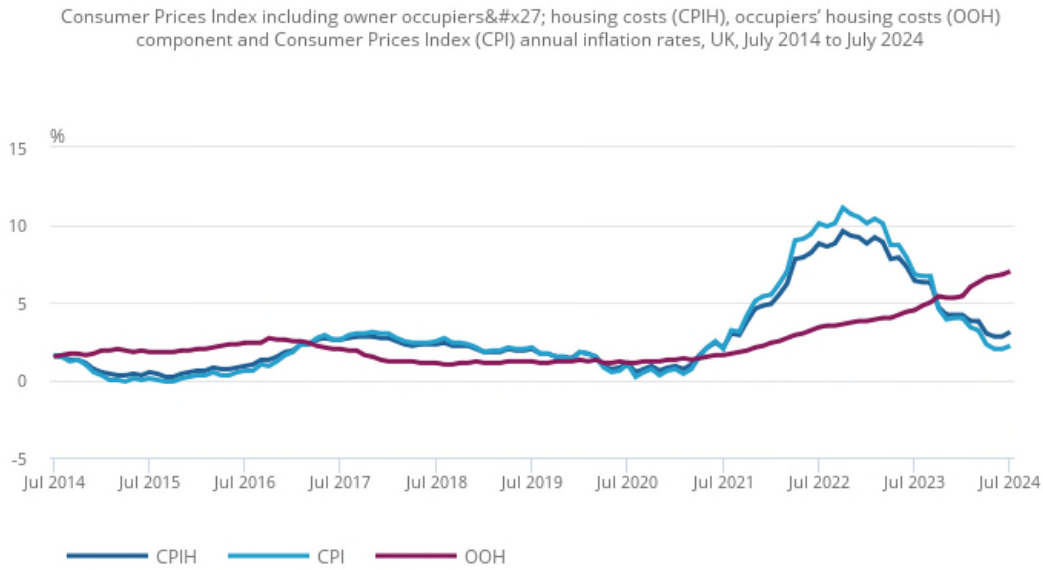
- Annex B – Correspondence from CBL Plant Hire.
- Annex C – Cornwall Integrated Care Board FOI response.
- Annexes D1 & D2 – Correspondence from Saltash Health Centre.
- Annex E– Other Tolloed and formerly tolled Bridges in the UK
- Annexes F1 & F2 – Public Questions to TB&TF Joint Committee.
- Annex G - A38 Case for Action
- Annexes H1 - 3 – Correspondence related to Business Case requirement
- Annex I – Correspondence from Liskeard Town Council Clerk
- Annex J - Final report October 2018 - Demand assessment Liskeard (related to Annex I).
- Annex K – Correspondence from Deputy Head Saltash Community School.
- Annex L – TAG account data and costs
- Annex M – TTAG Deprivation data
- Annex N - Minutes of Cornwall Council meeting Feb 2024
- Annex O - China Fleet Country Club, Tamar Toll Objection Letter

### **Response to 2019 Inquiry Inspector’s report (Annex A).**

The current arguments presented by the Tamar Crossings for a toll increase are similar in structure to those presented in 2019. Although the objections raised by the public in 2019 were not well supported by evidence, we are now in a position to provide documentation which strongly supports the objectors’ points and contradicts the arguments accepted by the Inspector in 2019.

1. At paragraphs 28 & 47, the Inspector concludes that the 2019 proposed toll increase was in line with inflation since the previous increase in 2010. The toll in 2010 was £1.50 which, if adjusted for inflation using the [Bank of England’s inflation calculator](#) between 2010 and 2019, would have increased the toll from £1.50 to £1.81 rather than the £2.00 to which it was actually increased. **This statement in the 2019 inquiry is therefore demonstrably incorrect.**
2. Today we face similar with the most recent toll increase to £2.60 happening in January 2023. Increased by inflation using the same inflation calculator shows that £2.60 from January 2023 to July 2024 equates to £2.63 today. This is an increase of just over 1.15%, yet the 2024 toll revision application citing inflation as cause (inflation is mentioned no less than 12 times in the 2024 toll revision application) means that users of the crossings are facing an increase of 15.38%. Combined with the increases in 2020 and 2023, this latest revision, if approved, will equate to a 100% uplift since as recently as early 2020. The increase proposed is therefore substantially above the rate of inflation today. Figure 1 below is extracted from the ONS data [here](#). At most, inflation reached 10.5% for a brief period in 2022.

Figure 1: Annual CPIH and CPI inflation rates higher in July 2024 than in June 2024



Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

- Paragraph 28 of Annex A references regular commuters crossing five times per week. The same assessment is made in the Tamar Crossings' 2024 [Toll Revision application](#) on page 10 where they state the below:

*“Both the Bridge and the Ferry charge in one direction only, so a daily commuter using a TamarTag account to pay for a private car for five return crossings per week at either crossing would incur additional weekly expenditure of £1.00 as a result of the proposed toll revision.”*

This statement is flawed and makes no allowance for the regularity of need for the people and businesses of south-east Cornwall and Plymouth to cross the Tamar, particularly in the case of those based in south-east Cornwall. Further evidence demonstrates that people and businesses are critically reliant on the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry not just for employment, but also for **health care, leisure, retail, worship, education and commerce.**

- The impact of the Tamar Crossings is far wider-reaching than simply the cost of the toll at the booth to individual vehicles, they also impact the costs that businesses must charge to their customers to account not just for the toll, but also the non-profitable time that businesses lose to toll collection related delays. Customers and businesses in south-east Cornwall are also often being denied deliveries by other local businesses based east of the Tamar due to their previous experiences of cost and time delays from using the Bridge or Ferries. This is unacceptable.

**The case for business, employment and the impact on healthcare services (Annexes B, C, D, I, J, K & O).**

1. Annex B includes the Tag account records of one south-east Cornwall business, CBL. CBL have provided details of the same month across 4 years, 2021, 2022, 2023 & 2024. As Mr Goodyear's covering letter explains, their average crossing frequency has remained relatively stable at an average of between 6.3 and 7.7 crossings per day, yet their cost has increased substantially. A cost, Mr Goodyear states, they cannot pass on to customers. This cost and frequency of one small company is just a sample – other businesses who attended our recent meeting reported similar impact and, in some cases, far greater costs.
2. The level of reliance of the public in south-east Cornwall on NHS services commissioned in Devon is indicated by the FOI request response I received from the NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Board (Annex C). The data provided **shows that over 108,000 people from east Cornwall and Launceston & Tamar Valley Primary Care Networks are obligated to cross the Tamar to receive primary care from the NHS in Devon.** It is largely no longer possible for residents of Saltash (and others in the region) who are registered at south-east Cornwall doctors' surgeries to have simple practices carried out locally, much less more complex ones. For example, Saltash Health Centre has 12,299 people registered as patients (Annex C), but to even have blood samples taken, patients are now referred to the [phlebotomy services at Derriford Hospital](#) in Plymouth. I have recent experience of this personally – a change from less than 12 months ago when my bloods were taken at my own, local, GP surgery. This is now standard practice across the east of the region. This is further detailed in the attached letter from Saltash Health Centre (Annex D1) where the extent of the services that patients are referred to facilities across the Tamar in Devon for are detailed.
3. Annex D2 shows the difficulties the costs and delays cause to the GP practices themselves as demonstrated in this short letter from the practice manager at Saltash Health Centre. Mr Goodyear from CBL makes similar observations in the third bullet point in his covering letter at Annex B.
4. Annex I is email correspondence from the Clerk of Liskeard Town Council where he advises on businesses moving out of Liskeard (in favour of Plymouth) citing transport link difficulties from the cost and congestion issues on the Tamar Crossings as a barrier to trade for them in Liskeard. Note the same observation and consideration given to this – the relocating east of the crossings to Plymouth – in Mr Goodyear's letter (Annex B).
5. Annex J is a report commissioned by Liskeard Town Council in 2018 and includes the below paragraph on page 6 of the report:

Figure 2: extract from Liskeard Town Council Report 2018

The City of Plymouth is within commuter distance of Liskeard with easy road access via the Tamar Bridge or with regular services from Liskeard railway station. Data shows that 16% of people in Liskeard travel between 20 km and 30 km to work compared to 5.2% in the rest of Cornwall and 5.3% in England<sup>5</sup>. This reflects the number of people commuting from Liskeard to Plymouth for employment.

This indicates the level of reliance on Plymouth for employment that exists in many small towns in south-east Cornwall, 16% being significantly higher than the national average. This reliance reduces as you travel further west but does exist to some degree as far afield as Camborne, Redruth and St Ives. The petition against the toll increase submitted as evidence by our former MP, Sheryll Murray, includes signatures collected from people in all three of these towns. All signatories to the petition cited reasons and desire to access Plymouth via the Tamar Bridge.

6. Note also the paragraph below at Figure 3 extracted from page 8 of Annex J. South-east Cornwall's economy does not need an increased barrier to trade in its path; the Tamar Crossings are a key piece of the infrastructure upon which south-east Cornwall's economy is reliant.

Figure 3: extract from Liskeard Town Council Report 2018:

Cornwall has historically had a weak economy resulting in relatively low property values and this has been particularly evident in East Cornwall. This combined with often high site abnormal costs (linked to the County's mining heritage, poor infrastructure and flooding issues) has resulted in high quality commercial property development usually being unviable without public funding.

7. Annex K provides a short explanation from the Deputy Head of Saltash Community School of the impact of the crossings on the School, Staff and pupils alike. This is very similar to the evidence presented by CBL and Saltash Health Centre at Annexes B & D.
8. Annex O details concerns expressed by the Managing Director of the China Fleet Country club regarding the impact of yet another toll increase on his customers and his staff. These concerns are similar nature as expressed elsewhere in this evidence letter and its annexes by CBL (Annex B) and Saltash Health Centre (Annex D2). The same, or similar, observations have been made by many other companies and have likely been expressed in their own objection letters.

### **Locations and Costs**

1. Annex L provides evidence of the locations of Tag Account holders and amounts paid in 2023 by postal district and by political constituency. The cost figures and information supplied here is accurate data supplied by the Tamar Crossings for January 2023. That data has been extrapolated across the year to give an estimated annual cost based on that figure. Accurate cost data for the full year has been requested from the TB & TF Joint Committee many times, but to date has not been provided. This data shows:

- i. The imbalance in costs across the region with the far lower population of south-east Cornwall paying substantially more than the entire city of Plymouth. The postal district of PL12 (Saltash) alone, pays more than its adjacent much larger neighbouring city of Plymouth (circa £2 million annually vs £1.5 million). These differences are illustrated graphically at Tables 1, 2 & 3 below. Together they demonstrate that the financial impact of a further toll uplift will impact the local economies of small rural towns and villages disproportionately across the region.
- ii. The reliance on the crossings and more frequent use of them by rural districts on the Cornish side of the crossings.

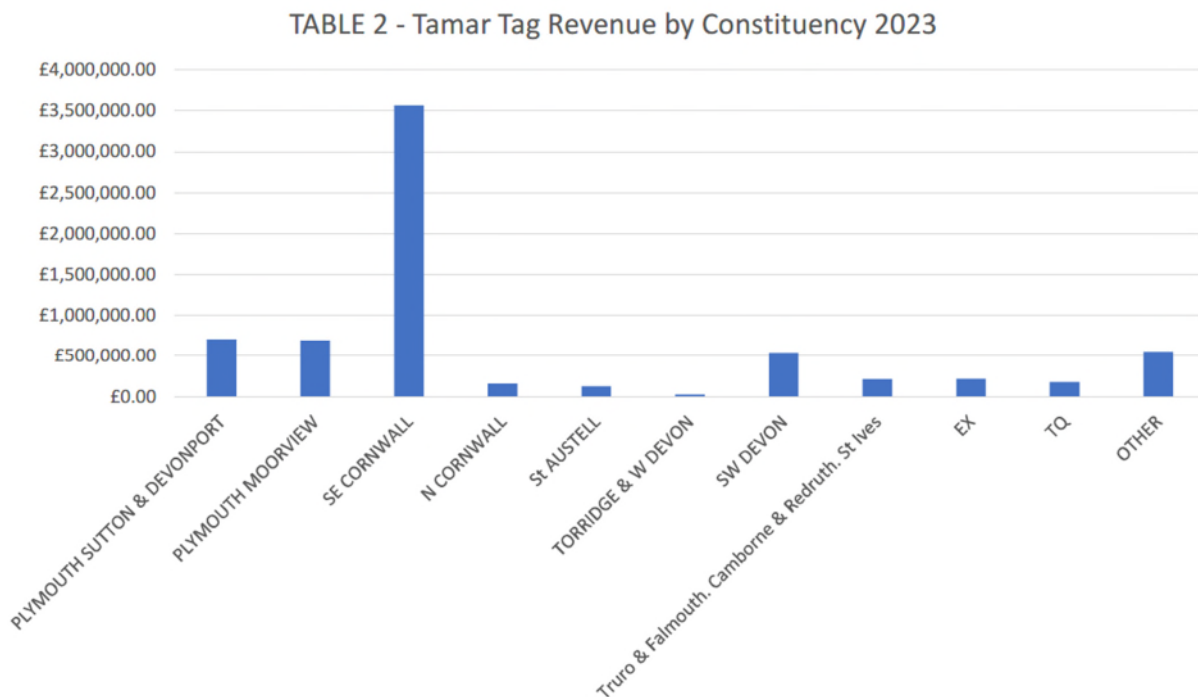
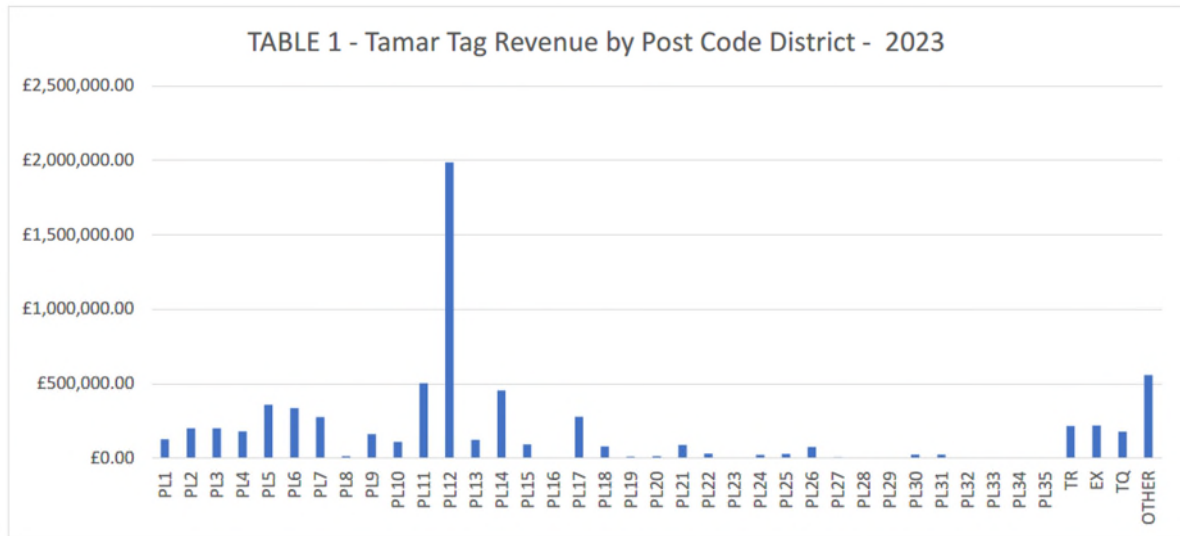
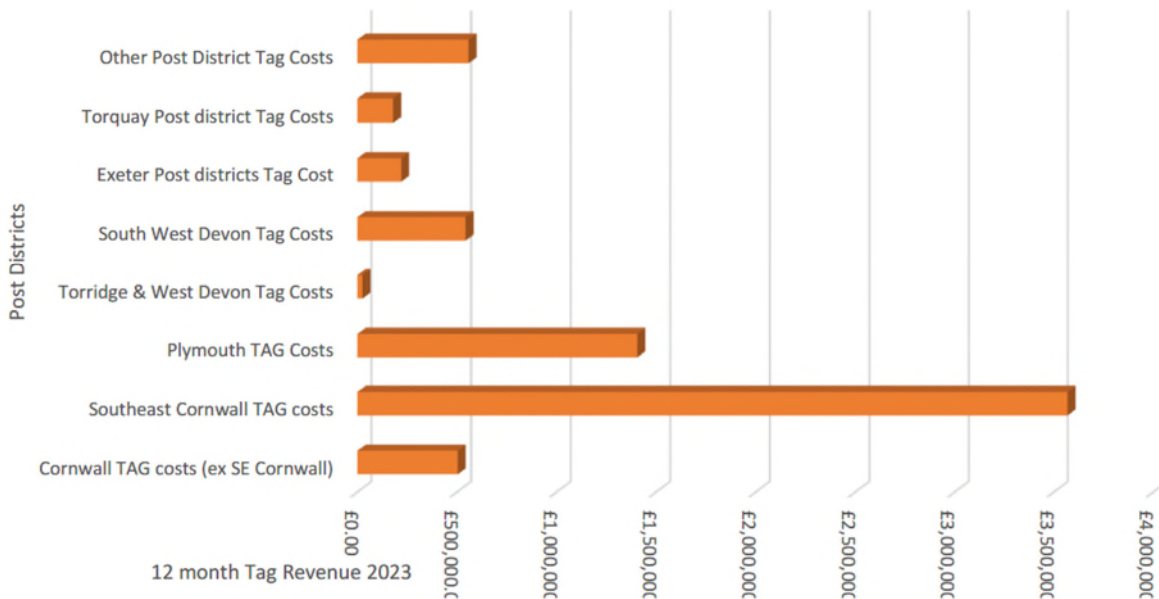


TABLE 3 - Regional Tamar TAG Revenue Comparisons



**Comparison of toll schemes across the country.**

1. Stated in the Toll Revision Application on page 10 is the below with respect to the discount scheme:

*“In absolute terms, even with the proposed increase, toll levels are still considered to be relatively low, and a 50% discount scheme using electronic tolling (TamarTag) is accessible to all users willing to pre-pay for crossings with a modest initial pre-payment cost (£30 for an account for a single private vehicle), a monthly account fee of £0.80 and a low minimum threshold of only £10 of maintenance “top up” on the account if paid online (£15 by other methods). TBTFJC believes that this discount level provides an appropriate balance between cash and pre-paid tolling taking into account the demographics of the crossings and the reliance on local facilities and employment for local people. This scheme is widely used with approximately 60% of crossings paid through this means.”*

2. The Tag discount scheme has been portrayed by some local politicians as a ‘local discount scheme’. This is incorrect. As highlighted above, the TamarTag is available to ‘all users’. Were the Tamar Crossings to restrict this scheme to only those who are genuinely local to the crossings, their finances may be improved. Instead, by dropping the old ticket book discount scheme they have allowed ownership of a TamarTag to proliferate without restriction. This is unlike the local discount schemes on the Mersey Flow and Dartford crossings where residents within a fixed area benefit from a much more generous scheme that allows them to pay a low fixed price for unlimited use of the crossings. Further, the second statement highlighted is also inaccurate. The top up is linked to the numbers of vehicles on the account – those in a multi-car household such

as mine, have a minimum of, for example, £55 – and some businesses with fleets of vehicles face minimum top ups of hundreds of pounds.

3. Paragraph 31 of the 2019 Inspector’s report is similarly flawed as it is comparing apples with pears. The bridges used as like-for-like comparisons to the Tamar Bridge bear very little similarity in size, and in some cases, they are differing designs. On a £ per mile basis, the Tamar Bridge is demonstrably the most expensive major toll bridge in England to use: the Humber, Dart and Mersey crossings (all tolled) are all significantly larger. The Dartford crossing involves not only a bridge and elevated approach roads (that combined are 5 times the length of the Tamar Bridge) but also a major tunnel. Please refer to Annex E for the Tamar Toll Action Group’s comparison.
4. Further, none of these alternative crossings are comparable to the Tamar Crossings in terms of ‘usage need’, as in none of these other cases is one side of the crossing so reliant on the other for so many critical services. The Humber, Dartford and Mersey Crossings all have major hospitals (see Annex M) and large sources of employment, leisure and retail on both sides, all within easily commutable distances from their bridges. Similar comparisons are made by the Tamar Crossings in their 2024 application where Appendix 18 compares bridge cash tolls and Appendix 19 compares ferry cash tolls. However:
  - i. None of the bridges quoted are comparable in size, most are not comparable in type and design. There can also be no worthwhile comparison between costs to operate and maintain tolled tunnels and motorways with those of a relatively small suspension bridge.
  - ii. The ferries compared in Appendix 19 are all privately owned single vessel ferries serving routes with much lower traffic flows. Additionally, some are of differing propulsion design. This, again, is comparing apples with pears. Notable by their absence in Appendix 19 is mention of the two large vehicle ferries crossing the Thames at Woolwich. These are broadly comparable in size to the Torpoint ferries and are **free** to all vehicle sizes. They have been free to users for over 125 years.

#### **Flawed assertions in the Inspector’s report and the current toll application.**

1. The 2024 application also states the below, which is (at best) disingenuous:

*“With regard to users and other stakeholders, one of the key elements of the Tamar 2050 programme is improved engagement. We have recently met with TTAG - Tamar Toll Action Group – as part of that improved engagement, and a wider catchment forum is being established in the coming months”*

2. We (the Tamar Toll Action Group) have met with the Tamar Crossings management once only. We were promised a follow-up meeting that has not occurred. None of the comments and observations we made during that meeting appear to have been taken seriously, with even basic suggestions not having been implemented. One such suggestion to reduce congestion delays would be by making simple changes to the



disorganised way that low-balance warnings are given to drivers, frequently causing them to attempt to cross via the Tag-only lane with zero balance on their account.

3. The Chair of the TB&TF JC confirms the continuing validity of section 28 of the Tamar Bridge Act 1979 (Annex F2). This is an option that the Joint Committee has not taken the opportunity to explore with respect to passing responsibility to National Highways for Bridge Maintenance.
4. The Inspector concludes (paragraph 47, Annex A) that the rise would not deter people from using the crossings. I believe this is misguided and, again, indicates an absence of even basic research. Many residents of Saltash and south-east Cornwall, are already seeking to minimise use of the crossings and the figures in the General Manager’s reports from pre and post-pandemic show this as fact. These reports seek to frame the traffic volume drop as being due to the pandemic, with both these reports and the toll revision application stating that ‘traffic has only recovered to 90% of pre-pandemic levels’. In fact, the traffic was already reducing some time before the pandemic. Tables 4 & 5 below, which are extracted from the General manager’s report for the 12-month periods, show:
  - i. a reduction in crossings of nearly 119,000 in 2017/18 from the previous year (figure 2)
  - ii. that in year 2018/19, traffic had not recovered to 2016/17 levels either (figure 3).

Table 4: Combined Undertaking traffic flow 2016/17 vs 2017/18

<b>Combined Undertaking</b>						
	<b>Traffic</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Revenue per Vehicle</b>	<b>Cash Payments</b>	<b>Tag Payments</b>	<b>Tag Usage (%age of Total Payments)</b>
2018/2017	9,098,874	£10,108,092	£1.11	3,602,370	5,219,106	59%
2017/2016	9,217,787	£10,253,251	£1.11	3,665,210	5,235,631	59%
Change	-118,913 (-1.3%)	-£145,160 (-1.4%)	0	-62,840 (-1.7%)	-16,525 (-0.3%)	0%

Table 5: Combined undertaking Traffic Flow 2017/18 vs 2018/19

<b>Combined Undertaking</b>						
	<b>Traffic</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Revenue per Vehicle</b>	<b>Cash Payments</b>	<b>Tag Payments</b>	<b>Tag Usage (%age of Total Payments)</b>
2018/2019	9,102,352	10,128,582	£1.11	3,625,770	5,219,287	59%
2017/2018	9,080,935	10,105,289	£1.11	3,604,523	5,217,773	59%
Change	+21,417 (+0.2%)	+23,292 (+0.2%)	0	+21,247 (+0.6%)	+1,514 (0%)	0%

The evidence suggests that it is more likely than not, that the reduced traffic flow that is claimed as post-pandemic in fact began pre-pandemic and was **exacerbated by the three toll uplifts experienced since 2020.**

5. The 2019 Inspector concludes that businesses are unlikely to be affected (para.48, Annex A). This conclusion is without merit and completely contrary to our evidence-based information at attached annexes B, D, K & O from CBL, Saltash Health Centre, Saltash Community School and the China Fleet Country Club respectively.

**Business Case Study requirement:**

1. At paragraph 38 of Annex A, the Inspector mentions the objectors' observations of the effect on the local economy. I ask the Inspector for the 2024 inquiry to note that **there has been no formal study of this** and that, consequently, there were no grounds for this objection to be dismissed in 2019. **There was no impact assessment of the financial impact of the toll, or the congestion caused by the outdated method of its collection.** We recently requested that such a study be commissioned by the Joint Committee (submitted as a public question to their meeting in July 2024 – see Annex F1). Their response (Annex F1) was to avoid the question, effectively declining the request.
2. To assess the lack of an impact study or business case against a comparable local cause, in 2018 Cornwall and Plymouth City Councils did see fit to commission a report titled, [A38 Case for Action - The Wider Economic Case for investment in the A38 from Bodmin to Exeter](#) (Annex G). This is submitted as evidence that the two authorities are capable of commissioning appropriate study when it suits their need. Notable is that despite many mentions of the Tamar Bridge in this report, none of them are with respect to the financial impact it causes, nor the congestion that is a regular feature of its use (despite congestion featuring in many other areas of the report). This was an opportunity missed and despite requests from both the previous MP for south-east Cornwall and the Tamar Toll Action Group (see attached letters at Annex H1, H2 and H3 where in H1, Mrs Murray references having asked the Joint Committee for a business case to take to government for funding. H2 where Minister Tolhurst references a study being required and H3 where the Chief Executive acknowledges the need for the Council to develop a business case). To date, no business case or financial study has been commissioned by either of the two authorities on this issue. I ask that the Inspector request that a report be commissioned by Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council to fully study the economic impact of the crossings before considering the application for a further toll rise. This impact assessment should be carried out by an independent not in the employ of the authorities and seek to objectively assess the impact of the toll and the congestion caused by its outdated collection method, as well as the impact across the economy of the region from yet another toll increase.

## Deprivation in south-east Cornwall

1. Annex M details the Tamar Toll Action Group’s investigation into deprivation levels in south-east Cornwall. As can be seen in the figures supplied in Annex M, combined with the cost outgoings shown in Annex L, the funding absorbed by the Tamar Crossings from the small towns, villages and rural communities in south-east Cornwall is directly related to the levels of deprivation experienced locally.
2. The cost per capita is very significantly higher in the rural parliamentary constituency of south-east Cornwall as compared to Plymouth. Table 6 below shows the electoral registration numbers and cost per capita for the three parliamentary constituencies. The combined figures from the two Plymouth based constituencies are more than double that of south-east Cornwall (numbers from the [Office of National Statistics](#)) yet despite this, as shown at Annex L, south-east Cornwall Tag account holders bear 51% of the cost as compared to a combined figure of 20% from Plymouth. **When assessed per capita, the Tamar crossings cost the people of south-east Cornwall more than 5 times per head than they do for residents of Plymouth.** A further 15% toll uplift will therefore be felt much more negatively having far greater impact in south-east Cornwall as it is the area that is most reliant on the crossings and has no choice but to use them for the reasons stated previously in this evidence. Annex C alone demonstrating the health care reliance on the crossings for 108,000 people across the impacted NHS primary care networks.

Table 6: Parliamentary Constituency figures for south-east Cornwall & Plymouth.

Parliamentary constituency	Electoral registrations December 2023	Annual Cost per Capita of 2023 Tag Revenue (from Annex L)
Plymouth, Moor View	69,752	£9.98
Plymouth, Sutton & Devonport	76,496	£8.93
South-East Cornwall	71,510	£49.90

## **Cost economies and efficiency efforts**

1. Annex N details the minutes from Cornwall Council’s meeting of full council on 20 February 2024. Relevant sections are highlighted in these minutes. I draw the Inspector’s attention to public question CC/462 and CC/464 on pages 5 – 8 inclusive.
  - i. Question CC462 concerns the toll payer funding the visitor centre. Whilst it is argued in Councillor Williams-Pears’ response that it brings a social value of £3 per £1 spent, social value does not equate to funding and the toll payer should not be obliged to continue to fund the salaries and benefits (see table 7 below) plus other running costs whilst the Tamar Crossings are not able to manage the costs that are genuinely associated with the operation and maintenance of the

bridge and ferries within their allocated budget. If it is essential this underused service is maintained, then grant funding should be allocated to it.

Table 7: Visitor Centre salaries and benefits

Job Title	Salary Band	Additional Benefit
Visitor Experience Manager (Part Time)	£31772 to £35206	Local Government Pension Scheme, Cycle to Work salary Sacrifice scheme, Usage of pool of TBTF E.Bike, Free Crossings for staff member, Free Parking , Electric Vehicle charging (Limited Availability) , Employee Assistance Programme, £100 on retirement if served over 25 years.
Heritage Officer	£26421 to £29777	Local Government Pension Scheme, Cycle to Work salary Sacrifice scheme, Usage of pool of TBTF E.Bike, Free Crossings for staff member, Free Parking , Electric Vehicle charging (Limited Availability) , Employee Assistance Programme, £100 on retirement if served over 25 years

- ii. Question CC/464 asks Cornwall Council to confirm the consequences of no toll rise if they were to reduce their spending plans. The response from Councillor Williams-Pears does not answer the question posed and instead seeks to actively avoid having to pursue the Tamar Crossings for savings or cost efficiencies leaving it up to the Joint Committee (who we have also not seen conduct any scrutiny of potential cost savings). A privately owned business would not have the luxury of reaching deeper into the public’s purse without resistance from them and before they could consider raising prices that may make them uncompetitive, would need to seek other efficiencies to maintain their balance sheets in the black. The crossings should be managed with a similar outlook and I ask that the Inspector study in detail the financial reports for possible efficiencies and unnecessary expenditure.
2. At meeting agenda item 8.2 within Annex N are Points (i) to (vii) (inclusive) on page 12. These are concerns raised by Cornwall’s own Councillors on the impact of the toll rise on those people reliant on the crossings. Yet at para 3 (v) on page 13, a Councillor expressed the view that the priority at the vote should be aligning with the likely outcome of a vote in Plymouth. This letter outlines why Plymouth and Cornwall have differing needs and priorities on this issue, also the challenge presented by managing differing cost impacts on people from the two areas. It is an example of why agreement is hard to reach on critical issues in the Joint Committee when the priorities of the Councillors on it are aligned to protecting their respective differing budgets and priorities rather than the needs of the people whose interests they are elected to represent.
3. Consideration of cost savings is also referenced at annex N point (iii) on page 14. Points (i) and (ii) on the same page also being pertinent. Cornwall Council subsidises Newquay airport to the tune of around £5 million annually but offers no support to the people of

south-east Cornwall with their costs to use the Tamar Crossings. Savings that could be considered to realise circa £8 million in savings over the next 4 years are:

- i. Toll Booth replacement - £400k 2023/2024
  - ii. The Learning Centre – £0.94 million across 2023 - 2028
  - iii. Ferry Decarbonisation study - £3 million across 2024 - 2026
  - iv. Bridge Fire Protection - £3.5 million 2024 - 2025
4. Finally, I highlight that though successful, the vote to increase the toll only passed by two votes and had certain Councillors who were not able to attend that day been present, it would have been defeated. Alongside many other aspects of this evidence, this demonstrates the strong levels of desire for change on the way the crossings are funded from both the people of Cornwall and the Councillors elected to represent them in local government. It was very evident to those members of the public watching this meeting remotely (of which I was one) that the monitoring officer was intervening repeatedly in Councillors desired courses of action and the driving agenda was agreeing the budget rather than delivering improvements and change for the people of Cornwall.

### **Conclusion:**

In summary, we have provided evidence for the Inspector's attention in this response that:

1. shows decisions made at the 2019 inquiry were based on inaccurate or incomplete information,
2. discredits evidence put forward in support of the toll revision application presented by the Tamar crossings in 2024 (cause and date of reduction of frequency of use, inflation data and frequency of use by residents and businesses),
3. demonstrates the critical reliance on the crossings by local people and businesses in south-east Cornwall,
4. proves the business impact with businesses suffering recruitment problems, congestion related issues and seeking to relocate,
5. gives an alternative option: pressing for National Highways funding for the bridge by discontinuing tolls,
6. calls into question the cost comparisons assertions made in the application with other tolled crossings,
7. highlights failure or refusal to assess the economic impact of the toll by the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee and the two parent authorities,
8. demonstrates failure or refusal by the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee to work with the MP of the region most affected by the crossings by developing a business plan for taking to government,
9. evidences the link between the Tamar Crossings and trade in south-east Cornwall and the impact that the cost and congestion have on that trade,
10. shows that there has been no serious attempt to reduce costs by the Tamar Crossings, instead resorting to further capital borrowing and increasing the toll to support additional spending,

11. demonstrates the imbalance in where the lion's share of funding is raised from, i.e. the local economies of small rural towns and villages in south-east Cornwall and the higher cost loading per capita on small rural communities,
12. Shows strong opposition from the people of Cornwall (and their councillors) to the toll increase.

We ask that the Inquiry Inspector recommends that:

1. the Secretary of State for Transport decline the toll revision order and instructs the Tamar Crossings to make budget savings, just as people, businesses and government bodies (both local and national) have had to in recent years,
2. the Authorities (Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council) are jointly instructed to commission a cost impact study covering the regions affected by the toll, and
3. the Secretary of State commission a working group (as was planned with the previous government prior to the election) to discuss with affected user groups the way forward for funding support from National Highways for the crossings.

I ask the Inspector to permit me to speak at the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Scott Slavin.

Note: I include hyperlinks to document sources for the Inspector's verification of their source.

Enclosures

- Annex A - 2019 Public inquiry Inspector's Report.
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Tamar Toll Action Group assessment of Toll Increases to cross the Tamar since 1992.



## Analysis of Toll Increases on the Bridge and Ferry since 1992

Date of toll uplift	Ferry Tolls		Bridge Tolls		% uplift since 1992 (cash rate)		% uplift since 1992 (Concession rate)		Tolls if 1992 toll rates had been increased by inflation since then (rounded to 2 decimal places)				Comments / notes	
	Cash	Concession	Cash	Concession	Ferry	Bridge	Ferry	Bridge	Cash		Concession			
									Ferry	Bridge	Ferry	Bridge		
	Ferry	Bridge	Ferry	Bridge										
Feb 92	£0.40	£0.40	£0.40	£0.20	0		0			0			No concession on ferry	
May 94	£1.00	£0.50	£1.00	£0.25	150%		25%			£0.42	£0.42	£0.42	£0.21	50% concession on ferry 75% on bridge
Jan 97	£1.00	£0.50	£1.00	£0.50	150%		25%	150%		£0.45	£0.45	£0.45	£0.23	50% concession parity between Bridge & Ferry
Mar 10	£1.50	£0.75	£1.50	£0.75	275%		87.5%	275%		£0.57	£0.57	£0.57	£0.29	
May 20	£2.00	£1.00	£2.00	£1.00	400%		150%	400%		£0.70	£0.70	£0.70	£0.35	
May 22	£2.00	£1.30	£2.00	£1.30	400%		225%	550%		£0.78	£0.78	£0.78	£0.39	
Jan 23	£2.60	£1.30	£2.60	£1.30	550%		225%	550%		£0.81	£0.81	£0.81	£0.40	
Nov 24	£3.00	£1.50	£3.00	£1.50	650%		275%	650%						Proposed 2024 toll uplift

The average annual salary in 1992 was around £13,500 per annum.

- This increased by 550% (based on percentage toll increase to date since then) would equate to £87,750 today.
- This increased by 650% (based on the proposed 2024 toll increase) would equate to £101,250 today.
- The mean average salary for workers in the UK in 2023 was £33,402 (up from £31,447 in 2021).
- Average Salaries in Southeast Cornwall are typically below the national average.
- Cornwall has an above average number of seasonal workers and unpaid carers who can't, or don't, work full time.