

Appendix 2 – Summary of Consultation Feedback and Officer Response

Ref	Issue	Response
1	<p>General objections to the increase in costs. Often with reference to recent increases in the cost of living having reduced the ability of many to pay additional charges.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>“With the cost of living crisis and the fuel already too much for most too afford , you now want to hike up the bridge cost too ? People won’t be able to afford to get to and from work and what with first bus pulling out of Southampton. And the blue star buses often running late or not enough route , some people need to use cars so they can take their kids to school then go to work.”</i></p> <p><i>“Current charges have only recently increased, to increase further by such a high percentage is unfair to those who use the bridge regularly for work. There is no clear rationale to justify such a high % increase.”</i></p>	<p>The increase is to ensure that the toll is effective at managing the number of crossings made by non-local traffic in Class 2 vehicles, and to ensure that the toll remains effective at managing the number of crossings.</p> <p>At 20p (peak) and 10p (off-peak), the increases are considered a relatively minor proportion of the overall cost of car ownership and there are alternative routes available for those who do not wish to pay the toll.</p> <p>The proposed toll increase is broadly in line with inflation since 2019, with items/services costing £0.80 in that year increasing to £0.97 in 2023 and items/services costing £0.70 increasing to £0.85.</p> <p>Local residents within the concession zone for whom the alternative routes are less viable, are eligible for the reduce concessionary toll via the SmartCities card.</p>
2	<p>Objections by residents in non-Southampton City Council areas east of the city (e.g. Netley) who believe they should be eligible for the reduced concessionary toll.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>“We live in netley and it's the easiest way into town through Newtown road and why we do not qualify for reduced rate like we did when we lived in sholing and as the crow flies further away than we live now. And because we come under hampshire we can't even get a cheap bus to town literally been cut off and now cheaper for us to go and spend our money in Portsmouth”</i></p> <p><i>“As a resident in Netley Abbey and works in Southampton, how can it be justified that I have to pay over double than someone who resides less than half a mile from myself but in Southampton Council jurisdiction.”</i></p>	<p>It is not considered appropriate to expand the concessionary zone, as it is intended to provide a reduced toll to those for whom the alternative routes are less viable.</p>

3	<p>Concerns that increasing the toll will force more vehicles to undertake lengthy detours to other bridges causing unnecessary air pollution and congestion.</p> <p>Examples comments:</p> <p><i>“It may cause people to take unnecessary detours to the other bridges to get from one side of Southampton to the other, which would cause more air pollution and congestion elsewhere”</i></p> <p><i>“When you have to pay to check on a person that lives that side of the water i now cannot afford to use the bridge so i now take the long way round adding fumes to your area”</i></p>	<p>The toll is intended to manage the number of vehicles using the bridge and therefore congestion in the local area. It is accepted and intended that some vehicles will use other routes. While there would be impact on air pollution through longer journeys, this would likely be offset by the associated reduction in congestion and not be an overriding consideration.</p>
4	<p>The tolls were originally intended to pay for the construction of the bridge. Now this has been paid for the toll should be removed.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>“The bridge is already paid for and should no longer be a charge. However if a charge is due it should be minimal such as 10 or 20p. If you want to promote people coming to town don't make it difficult to come in!”</i></p> <p><i>“Residents of Southampton have been paying to cross this bridge since 1977. Surely it is now time to get rid of these tolls. An increase is an insult to Residents who already pay a huge amount in council tax.”</i></p>	<p>While there is a frequently repeated claim that the Council had stated that the tolls would be removed once the original construction costs of the bridge had been repaid, there is no record of this statement having been made by the Council</p> <p>The legal power to collect the tolls is provided by the Hampshire Act 1983 and it is made clear that when determining the charge, the Council must have regard to the financial position and future prospects of the bridge and the need to control the composition and flow of traffic over the bridge so as to avoid causing traffic congestion in areas adjacent to the bridge and so as to preserve the character and amenities of those areas.</p> <p>Removing the toll would cause significant congestion issues in the vicinity of the bridge and is not considered appropriate.</p>

5	<p>The electric vehicle concessionary toll should be retained.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>"I think you should continue to allow electric cars free passage over the bridge until 2025 to encourage electric vehicle adoption in Southampton."</i></p> <p><i>"Electric vehicles are far from main stream and never will be if all the incentives are taken away. We've 3 electric cars in household all circa 1 year old and believe it or not free toll bridge was a factor in buying Disgraceful if you enforce payment same as diesel guzzlers"</i></p>	<p>The provision of an electric vehicle concessionary toll was provided as a temporary incentive to encourage the take-up of electric vehicles. As the toll is intended to manage the number of vehicles using the bridge and therefore congestion in the local area, which electric vehicles are part of, it was always intended for this to be removed as the number of electric vehicles increased.</p>
6	<p>Taxi drivers should be exempt from paying the toll as they provide a public service.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>"The taxi and private hire vehicle's should get a discounted rate, as we use the bridge alot, we cannot afford any more price increases ."</i></p> <p><i>"Taxi drivers with a Southampton badge should get same discount on toll bridge ,whether they live in Southampton or Scotland or Bournemouth as in my case"</i></p>	<p>There are no current plans to provide a specific concessionary toll for taxi drivers. It is however, noted they are able to utilise any of the existing concessionary tolls for which they are eligible.</p>
7	<p>Queries whether an increases to cover operating costs are warranted following automation of the Toll Plaza.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>"The operating costs were supposedly reduced when automation of the bridge barriers was done."</i></p> <p><i>"I fail to understand how costs can have increased when there are no people being provided with a job physically collecting money anymore."</i></p>	<p>The lanes are still monitored by a team of employees based in the Toll Plaza office who respond to any customer calls via the intercoms and address any faults with the lanes.</p> <p>There are around 18,000 to 21,000 movements through the Toll Plaza per day. Therefore, while automated, the toll equipment needs regular maintenance which is carried out by the Parking Maintenance team and via a maintenance contract with equipment supplier.</p>