

Appendix 5 – Summary of Consultation Feedback and Officer Response

Ref	Issue	Response
1	<p>Increase in Costs / Costs of Living Crisis</p> <p>General objections to the increase in costs. Often with reference to increases in the cost of living having reduced the ability of many to pay additional charges.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>“I use the Itchen Bridge twice a day and avoid peak times so the increase in price would cost me a LOT.”</i></p> <p><i>“Costing working class families a lot more a year. You say this is a minor increase but when this is added up it is adding hundreds of pounds a year to already struggling families especially during a cost of living crisis. It will put more strain on traffic and other bridges.”</i></p>	<p>The change is to ensure that the toll remains effective at managing the number of crossings made by Class 2 vehicles and to address congestion in areas around the bridge while supporting ongoing maintenance.</p> <p>Drivers of Class 2 vehicles already travelling in the period currently defined as peak will not experience a toll increase.</p> <p>Southampton residents using the Smart Cities card who are drivers of Class 2 vehicles and are travelling in the off peak period will pay an increase of only £0.10.</p> <p>Other drivers of Class 2 vehicles travelling in the off peak period will pay an increase of only £0.20.</p> <p>The cost of the crossing is either equal or cheaper than similar toll routes across the UK.</p>
2	<p>Drivers will be more likely to travel during peak times</p> <p>The proposals will mean that drivers will be less likely to travel in the off peak period and will travel in peak periods</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>“Objecting the removal of off peak discount. This encourages people to change their journeys to be at times when there is less traffic. Removing off peak discount will mean more traffic at peak times.”</i></p> <p><i>“I am concerned that removal of the off-peak charge will encourage more motorists to use the Itchen Bridge during the peak rush hours only adding to the congestion seen at those times. It might raise more money but at the expense of more traffic congestion ... and hence more pollution.”</i></p>	<p>The difference between the current peak and off peak charges are not significant, being £0.20 for standard users and £0.10 for Southampton residents with a Smart Cities Card.</p> <p>Most other UK Toll routes do not make a distinction between peak and off peak travel, while other key routes within Southampton do not have a comparable means of managing peak traffic.</p>

3	<p>Concession not available for non-Southampton residents</p> <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>“As a Netley Abbey resident the bridge really is the only option to get into town without spending a lot more time and emitting more emissions going via Bitterne. We are not offered any resident discount and the cost is already quite eye watering for the 2 minute drive across.”</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>
4	<p>The change will prompt drivers to use alternative routes or deter visits to the City Centre</p> <p>Concerns that increasing the toll will force more vehicles to undertake lengthy detours to other bridges causing unnecessary air pollution and congestion or that people will choose not to visit the City Centre which will damage the local economy</p> <p>Examples comments:</p> <p><i>“I live a 1 minute drive from bridge and therefore would use more petrol to go over a non charging bridge, if I have to I would not go into the city and businesses would suffer.”</i></p> <p><i>“It’s going to cause even more mayhem to what is already a congested route to the city on bitterne road and will cause even more pollution to these areas as people would rather drive a bit further to get into the city for free!”</i></p> <p><i>“The increase in the price of the toll will have an impact on the high street economy. The council appears to want to deter all cars going into the city, but then wonder why the high street economy is dying.”</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. This would be offset by the associated reduction in congestion on the A3025 which is not suited to carrying large volumes of traffic.</p> <p>The toll would still constitute a relatively minor cost compared to the expenditure for retail or leisure trips to the City Centre.</p>

<p>5</p>	<p>Tolls were to be removed once the Bridge was paid for. Tolls have been removed on other UK bridges.</p> <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>“My view is that tolls should be scrapped completely on this bridge. Surely 40 years on there is no need to still be paying for the bridge.”</i></p> <p><i>“The bridge should be free for cars, as the promise made to the people of Southampton was that it would be free once the build cost was paid for.”</i></p> <p><i>“The 2 bridges over the Severn also said that tolls would be removed once the new build cost has been recouped, which they have now, & the tolls have been removed. You say the Itchen bridge is not a strategic route, but I would disagree there, it is a very important route for people in Woolston/Weston/Sholing into the city & the docks. I am sure national government would help with the maintenance of the bridge just as they have on the 2 Severn Bridges”</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 should 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 likely lead to significant congestion issues in the vicinity of the bridge and is not considered appropriate.</p> <p>In the case of the Severn Bridge, maintenance is now paid for by Highways England which in turn receives grant funding by the UK government. The Council is unlikely to receive similar grant funding as the bridge does not serve a route of key strategic importance.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Automation / No Staff at the Toll Plaza</p> <p>Queries whether tolls to cover operating costs are warranted following automation of the Toll Plaza.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>“The fees are already enough for people struggling, they have continually been raised again and again, despite the cost savings that must have come with automating the machines and removing staff.”</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>

7	<p>Maintenance to the Itchen Bridge</p> <p>Queries over what maintenance is carried out to the Itchen Bridge structure and what it costs</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>“This bridge is nothing but a cash machine, no improvements are made and no notice is ever taken.”</i></p> <p><i>“You claim this increase is for maintenance costs, by I have used this bridge 5 days a week for 7 years and I have not seen one person work on it, so how can you claim this is for maintenance??”</i></p>	<p>Maintenance to the bridge is carried out, but these works are generally done at nighttime to minimise disruption. Examples of maintenance work include the replacement of bearings in 2011 while the expansion joints are replaced every 7 to 10 years depending on need.</p> <p>A significant of programme of maintenance for the Itchen Bridge is scheduled for 2024/25 which will include resurfacing and drainage improvements</p>
8	<p>Lack and unsuitability of public transport</p> <p>Public transport options to the city centre are not suitable or available for many people as such there is a requirement to drive across the bridge.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>“Public transport has never been reliable enough and as for the hire scooters/bikes around the city, they’re just overpriced and would cost me more hiring these per week as opposed to taking my car to work.”</i></p> <p><i>“If you use public transport which currently a shambles, you’re stuck in traffic. It makes no difference to the time of your journey on the bus or driving by car. And now the increase will just make it even worse!”</i></p>	<p>There are a range of frequent Bus Services that serve the Woolston and Sholing areas.</p> <p>Registered public transport services are able to make use of the bus gate access onto the bridge which reduces journey times.</p> <p>The Council will continue to work with bus operators on fare offers, including;</p> <p>£1 Evening Fare continuing to March 2025 for £1 evening fares in Southampton after 1800</p> <p>Group Fare Offer (£5 for 5) for Summer 2023 & 2024 (six week school holiday period only) and Christmas 2023 and 2024 (six-seven week period prior to New Year’s Day).</p>

9	<p>The proposals are an attack on motorists.</p> <p>Views that the proposals are related to green measures to discourage people from driving.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>“Strongly object. I pay council tax and it’s an essential route for me. Absolutely disgusting even proposing this change. Make it free for all and stop attacking motorists.”</i></p> <p><i>“Yet again S.C.C. Are penalising motorists. You seem hell bent on supporting cyclists who pay no contribution for using public roads.”</i></p>	<p>The Itchen Bridge crossing is funded solely by Southampton City Council. All users (with the exception of registered bus services and emergency services) are required to pay a contribution towards the upkeep of the bridge.</p> <p>The underlying principle of any toll is to prompt drivers to make a meaningful decision over whether they use the route and this can include encouraging them to consider alternative forms of travel e.g. public transport</p>
10	<p>The proposals are aimed at raising revenue</p> <p>The Council has proposed the change to raise revenue to cover financial shortfalls elsewhere.</p> <p>Example comments:</p> <p><i>“It’s a poor way of boosting the council coffers by fleecing motorists once again.”</i></p> <p><i>“Although the Bridge continues to require investment the burden of this should not fall to local tax payers. It is well know that Southampton City Council is struggling financially and this is clearly an attempt to fill some of that void at the expense of the public.”</i></p>	<p>The Itchen Bridge requires maintenance to ensure its continued operation while the Toll Plaza also requires regular upkeep. As such there are regular annual costs and these will be affected by inflation.</p> <p>While the Council may not have cause to spend surplus revenue on maintenance in any given year, there are related costs (highway maintenance, street lighting) which financed from the general fund.</p> <p>The Council is also due to undertake a programme of maintenance works to the Bridge in 2024/25 that are projected to cost up to £5M.</p>

<p>11.</p>	<p>Objections to the increase in the Toll for HGVs</p> <p>Increases in the toll for HGVs or large vehicles will be damaging for businesses and/or force them to use routes that will make journeys uneconomical</p> <p>Example comments</p> <p><i>“Increasing HGV charges will place an undue financial burden on local businesses in the area. Local businesses already face numerous challenges, especially with the economic impacts of the ongoing pandemic. The additional cost of higher HGV charges will be passed on to consumers, which could lead to increased prices for goods and services. This can ultimately deter customers and hinder economic growth in the region.”</i></p> <p><i>“£40 for an HGV is ludicrous £25 is too much - be reasonable. The more you put up costs the more businesses put up costs the less people have to spend in Southampton.”</i></p>	<p>The HGV toll (or Class 4 toll) has always been set at a level to deter HGVs from using the crossing. The increase is reflective of inflation since the toll for Class 4 vehicles was last changed.</p> <p>There remains a concessionary rate for vehicles serving a business with a business address within the Local Concession Zone.</p>
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