



WARRINGTON

Borough Council

Addressee:

Councillor R Bowden
Leader of the Council

warburtontollbridge@peelports.com

Leader's office
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Town Hall
Warrington
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20 August 2021

Dear Peel Ports

Rixton & Warburton Toll Bridge Consultation Response

I refer to your recently published 'Sustainable Investment Plan' for Rixton and Warburton toll bridge and invite for written feedback and comments in respect to your plans as outlined in your consultation brochure.

In summary Warrington Borough Council welcomes the proposed upgrade of the bridge and its approach roads as well as the introduction of an automated tolling system that will reduce queues and delays, however we are **strongly opposed** to your proposed significant increase in tolls of potentially up to £1 for a single trip and £2 for a daily ticket.

The Council supports your proposals to invest in the bridge, including the approach roads as well as the tolling system as this will future proof the bridge for many years to come. The automated tolling system will greatly reduce delays and congestion, particularly at peak times. The Council also welcomes your plans to investigate strengthening the bridge as part of the refurbishment work in order to allow buses to use the bridge more frequently.

Whilst Warrington Borough Council acknowledges that a significant upgrade to the bridge is much needed and welcomes these plans and the benefits this investment will bring to all users, it is strongly against the cost of this investment being passed onto local motorists through your proposed significant increase in tolls.

Under your plans, you are proposing to fund these improvements through increasing tolls from 12p per crossing to up to £1 per crossing. The Council finds it completely unacceptable that motorists should bear the brunt of this investment and we are extremely concerned by the scale of the proposed increases which could find motorists paying up to eight times more per trip than the current charge.

This is a substantial increase which could have a significant financial impact on motorists, particularly those who need to use the bridge regularly to get to work or visit family and as such, Warrington Borough Council would like to see the tolls removed completely or at worst, kept at the current levels.

The council acknowledges and welcomes your plans to provide a discount of 50% for residents living in a defined geographical area along with further discounts for high frequency users and the possible introduction of annual passes that would allow unlimited crossings of the bridge. However the discount rate of 50% is not acceptable in context of the revised toll being proposed.

The Council is of the opinion that as a result of poor planning and lack of investment in the bridge by Peel Ports, that a considerable backlog of maintenance issues have been left to build up which sees the bridge in the neglected state it can be found in today. As barely any maintenance work of any significance has been carried out on the bridge over the years I would have thought that Peel Ports would have managed to build up a significant fund from the existing toll charges and the operation of the Canal and would therefore urge them to invest in this upgrade from their own resources. It is understood this could be done without an order.

Although Warrington Borough Council welcomes the proposed investment it **absolutely cannot support and strongly opposes** the significant increases in toll charges and would urge you to reconsider this.

Should the proposal proceed to an application for a Transport and Works Act order without significant amendment satisfactorily dealing with the Council's concerns then on the current information before us we would have to exercise our power as a statutory objector to make an objection to the application in accordance with the Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 and consider the other options available to us.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Bowden', written in a cursive style.

Councillor R Bowden
Leader of the Council