



Department
for Transport

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Ann O'Driscoll

Dear Ann O'Driscoll

Thank you for your email of 19 April to the Secretary of State regarding the abolishing of the tolls at the Severn Crossings. I have been asked to reply to your query.

Prior to the Severn Crossings consultation in 2017 the Government undertook modelling to assess the effect of the policy to continue tolling at a reduced rate and on the possible option of free-flow tolling. The consultation found that interested local parties, including MPs, Assembly Members, businesses and commuters have long called for the abolition of the tolls. In view of that and based on the findings of modelling already produced we decided not to press ahead with halving the tolls but instead committed to abolishing the tolls entirely by the end of 2018.

As mentioned in your letter, the forecasts do indicate that traffic across the Severn Crossings is due to increase regardless of any policy changes and that the reduction and abolishing of tolls will lead to additional crossings. However these increases relate specifically to the crossings and not the rest of the road network. This is not simply new trips but drivers changing routes to take advantage of the removal of tolls.

In terms of dealing with additional demand across the Severn Crossings, initial modelling indicates that the removal of the toll accelerates the year by which capacity is exceeded on some sections of the wider strategic road network, particularly during peak times. Government is looking at the investment required on the Strategic Road Network in the South West as it develops the next Roads Investment Strategy (RIS).

Removal of the tolls will mean more people will be able to afford to cross the border in both directions to seek job and trade opportunities. This will support motorists, residents and businesses across Wales and the south-west, helping rebalance the economy as part of the Industrial Strategy. These

benefits are expected to be associated with an increase in traffic around the Severn and Bristol area.

Highways England will use operational resources such as Traffic Officers and VMS messages to minimise the impacts of the additional traffic while further investment in the south-west network is delivered.

Yours sincerely,

Shumuna Rahman

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