

TOLLED BRIDGES REVIEW –
PHASE TWO CONSULTATION

April 2005

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Contents

Ministerial Foreword	Page 1
Part 1 – Introduction and Background	Paragraphs:
Purpose of this consultation exercise and background	1 - 8
Tolled Bridges Review – Phase One Report	9 - 12
The Current Setting and Future Context for Tolled Bridges	13 - 16
Changing Transport Landscape in Scotland	17 - 22
Consultation Timetable and Key Dates	23 - 28
Part 2 – Towards a Strategy for Tolled Bridges	
Introduction	29 - 30
Areas Where a Common National Approach Might be Appropriate	31 - 32
▪ Exemptions	33 - 42
▪ Discount Schemes	43 - 48
▪ Classification of Vehicles	49 - 52
Reducing Traffic and Congestion on Tolled Bridges	53 - 57
Should Toll Levels Reflect the Cost of Wear and Tear by Different Types of Vehicle?	58
Procedure for Changing Tolls or Charges	59
Other Common Issues or Principles	60

Part 3 – Management Options for the Scottish Tolled Bridges

Introduction	61 - 64
Summary of Current Management Arrangements	65 - 73
Future Management Issues and Options:	74
▪ Executive / National Transport Agency	75 - 79
▪ Regional Transport Partnerships	80 – 83
▪ Joint Board with Local Transport Responsibilities (Forth/FETA model)	84 - 87
▪ Joint Board with No Local Transport Responsibilities (Tay/TRBJB Model)	88 – 89
▪ Single Tolled Bridges Authority	90

Part 4

Conclusion	91 - 92
Consultation Responses - Process and Timescales	93 - 98

Pages:

Full List of Questions	23 - 24
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Annex(1)

Tolled Bridges Review – Phase Two – Terms of Reference	25 - 26
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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

Our Partnership Agreement made a commitment to carry out a review of all the tolled bridges in Scotland. The first phase of that review was completed in November of last year. The second phase will now look in more detail at the options for the future management and operation of the Forth Road Bridge, the Tay Road Bridge and the Erskine Bridge.

I am keen to receive your opinion on two major issues. The first is considering a tolling strategy – what objectives can we achieve or support through tolling? What factors should be considered when setting toll levels?

The other is the means by which those objectives can be achieved – what arrangements for managing our tolled bridges are appropriate?

I look forward to hearing your views on how Scotland's tolled bridges can be most effectively managed, and help make a real difference to the delivery of better transport in Scotland.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicol Stephen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nicol Stephen MSP
Minister for Transport

Part 1

Introduction and Background

Purpose of this Consultation Exercise

1. The first phase of the review¹ examined the existing tolling structures, including the impact of tolls and the way in which potential changes to tolls could help achieve the Scottish Executive's environmental and economic objectives of reducing pollution and congestion.
2. We are now taking forward the second phase which will examine broader issues, relating to the management, operation and maintenance of the tolled bridges, including how tolled bridges may relate to the proposed new regional and national transport arrangements. The terms of reference for Phase Two are set out in Annex (1).
3. Our aim for tolled bridges is to strike an effective balance between addressing access, managing demand (if this is required), ensuring efficient use of the associated road and public transport network, and funding the ongoing maintenance requirements of the bridge.
4. Some of the issues to be covered in the terms of reference will be taken forward internally or in consultation with relevant experts and professionals in the area concerned.
5. However, there are a number of broad issues which are of wider concern and interest and the purpose of this consultation is to set out these issues and seek views on the options for future management arrangements in relation to tolled bridges in Scotland.
6. We look forward to receiving your views on these issues.

Background

7. The Executive's Partnership Agreement includes the following commitment:

"We will improve access for our rural communities by reviewing existing bridge tolls in Scotland and entering into negotiations with a view to ending the discredited toll regime for the Skye Bridge²."

¹ Tolled Bridges Review : Phase One Report (29 October 2004)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/enterprise/tobr-00.asp>

² A Partnership for a Better Scotland, Scottish Executive, May 2003

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/government/pfbs-00.asp>

8. The Scottish Executive's Transport White Paper published on 16 June 2004 outlined the approach for the review of existing bridge tolls in Scotland:

“There will be a two-Phase review of tolled bridges. The first Phase will deal with existing tolls. It will assess all existing tolls, including the way in which potential changes to tolls could help achieve our environmental and economic objectives of reducing pollution and congestion. The second Phase will include an examination of the broader issues relating to the management, operation and maintenance of the tolled bridges. This will also include an assessment of how the tolled bridges relate to the new regional and national transport arrangements.”³

Tolled Bridges Review - Phase One Report

9. Following the announcement in the White Paper, Scottish Executive officials took forward the first phase of the Review, consulting and drawing on the expertise and experience of those people and organisations closely associated with the tolled bridges. This included the bridge authorities, chief transport officers of relevant local authorities, Mobility Access Committee Scotland (MACS), interested parties and MSPs.
10. Phase One considered existing tolls and the way in which potential changes to tolls could help achieve our environmental and economic objectives of reducing pollution and congestion. The information gathered from Phase One was considered by Ministers in November 2004 and helped to identify a range of issues to be taken forward during Phase Two.
11. The headline findings of the report were:
- Each tolled bridge is unique in terms of its usage, traffic levels, tolling regimes, environmental issues, management arrangements and maintenance requirements.
 - A common approach to tolling (i.e., setting the tolls at the same level or removing all of them) is not appropriate.
 - Analysis indicated that there would be no adverse economic, environmental or traffic effects from removing the tolls on the Skye Bridge and this was significant in paving the way for an early decision to be made on removal of the toll regime on the Skye Bridge.
 - Phase One identified that further work needs to be done to refine the information from the strategic modelling work carried out during Phase One in order to help inform any decisions that may be taken on the other bridges. This work will help to quantify options which would balance revenue needs against access, demand management, public transport availability and traffic flows and routes.
 - Phase One has indicated a number of specific issues, such as policies on exemptions from tolls, which require more consideration in Phase Two.

³ Scotland's Transport Future, Scottish Executive, June 2004
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/transport/stfwp-00.asp>

12. Building on the foundation provided by Phase One, Phase Two of the Review will examine these issues in more detail.

The Current Setting and Future Context for Tolloed Bridges

13. Tolls on each bridge were originally set up to pay for construction, ongoing and future maintenance and operational functions at each bridge. Over the years each tolloed bridge has developed differently in terms of its usage, traffic levels, tolling regimes, environmental issues, management arrangements and maintenance requirements.
14. Phase One of the review highlighted that Erskine, Forth, and Tay all have significant commitments that must be funded to meet current and future maintenance and upgrading work. It is important that long term arrangements are in place to ensure that adequate funding is available to meet essential commitments and responsibilities.
15. This Review is being undertaken during a time of public concern about the implications of traffic growth and congestion on the economy and the environment. Given the traffic conditions we now experience in some parts of Scotland, it is important to consider bridge tolls in the context of the wider debate about congestion charging and road pricing.
16. We are striving to stabilise road traffic volumes at 2001 levels by 2021. If traffic levels continue to rise then congestion, increased journey times and reduced reliability will continue to act as constraints on the economy. To achieve a reduction in dependence on the car and the associated impacts on the economy and the environment we have shifted the balance of spending in favour of public transport. The current Scottish Executive Draft Budget for 2005-06, published in October 2004, outlines the new transport target – “70% of the Scottish Executive transport spending to go on public transport over the period of the long-term investment plan”.

Changing Transport Landscape in Scotland

17. In 2004, the White Paper *Scotland's transport future*⁴ set out the Executive's proposals for improving Scotland's future transport, creating safer, higher quality, better integrated services that respect our environment. The White Paper also set out proposals for stronger national and local government transport delivery structures in Scotland, and for a more strategic approach to the planning and delivery of transport at all levels.

⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/transport/stfwp-00.asp>

18. **National Transport Agency** - We will establish a national transport agency by the end of 2005. As an executive agency, it will be directly accountable to Scottish Ministers and discharge a range of the Scottish Ministers' transport functions. It will be responsible for the major delivery tasks of road, rail and public transport infrastructure, and work jointly with the Scottish Executive's Transport Group to deliver a National Transport Strategy as a framework of key strategic objectives for Scotland. An effective working relationship between the agency and the regional transport partnerships will be crucial to the success of both.
19. **Regional Transport Partnerships** - The Executive has presented proposals for legislation⁵ to the Scottish Parliament that will include provision for the creation of Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs). We issued a consultation paper *Scotland's Transport Future: Proposals for Statutory Regional Transport Partnerships*⁶ in October 2004. That consultation focussed on what regional transport partnerships will look like, and the detail of how they will operate and what boundaries, constitution, functions and funding arrangements are likely to be necessary.
20. Building on the success of Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) and the current voluntary regional partnerships, the new statutory bodies will be able to take a strategic view of the transport needs of, and offer a consistent service to, the people and businesses in their region.
21. RTPs will, through agreed regional transport strategies, identify and focus effort and investment on key improvements that might be beyond the reach of individual councils. The partnerships will be able to draw on the perspectives and expertise of external members and should be able to wield more influence in discussions with government at Scottish, UK and EU levels and with the providers of transport infrastructure and services. The proposed legislation will require that local authorities act consistently with the regional strategies and focus on the strategic transport needs of people and businesses within the region. The current voluntary partnerships have proved that this can be achieved to an extent and our proposals for legislation are intended to take this co-operation to the next level.
22. We are interested in your views on the future relationship of these bodies to the present authorities responsible for the management of our tolled bridges in Scotland and we expand on this in Part 3 of the paper.

⁵ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/bills/pdfs/b28s2.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/transport/rtpc-00.asp>

23. Consultation Timetable

1.	Issue consultation paper on Phase Two of Tolled Bridges Review	15 April 2005
2.	Closing date for consultation (12 weeks)	8 July 2005
3.	Analysis of consultation responses, co-ordination and assimilation of Phase Two areas of investigation (8 weeks)	2 September 2005
4.	Preparation of Phase Two Report	Late Summer 2005

Other Key Dates in Relation to Tolled Bridges:

24. **Erskine** – The current tolling order at Erskine Bridge expires on 1 July 2006 and a new order will be required to continue tolling beyond this date. The contract for the collection of tolls on the bridge was due to expire on 31 March 2005, but has now been extended for 6 months to 30 September 2005, in the first instance.
25. **Forth** – the FETA Order extended the tolling period to 31st March 2006. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 enables FETA to replace existing tolls with a road user charging scheme. FETA is able to do this because the Forth Road Bridge is not part of the trunk road network and the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 only allows road user charging schemes to be levied on *local roads* for which the local traffic authority is the responsible body.
26. **Tay** – there is no set date for the expiry of the current tolling powers at the Tay Road Bridge. Tolls may continue until loans have been repaid and Scottish Ministers are satisfied that adequate provision has been made for the continued administration, management, operation, maintenance and repair of the bridge. Existing loans must be repaid by 2016/17.
27. **National Transport Agency** - the agency will be established during 2005.
28. **Regional Transport Partnerships** - it is intended, subject to Parliamentary approval, to bring statutory regional transport partnerships into being by the spring of 2006. The new RTPs, once formally constituted, would then have up to 12 months to prepare their first regional transport strategies. These documents will enable each RTP and its constituent councils to identify the powers that the partnership will need in order to deliver their strategy. The orders conferring powers on RTPs will then be laid before Parliament for approval.

Part 2

Towards a Strategy for Tolled Bridges

Introduction

29. Tolls on each bridge were originally set up to pay for the construction and/or ongoing and future maintenance and operation of each bridge. However, each tolled bridge is unique in terms of its usage, traffic levels, tolling regimes, environmental issues, management arrangements and maintenance requirements. A common approach has not developed in the past and may not be appropriate in future.
30. While each bridge is different, and toll levels should not necessarily be set at the same price, the first phase of the review has flagged up a number of issues where a more cohesive approach could be taken. This could amount to a set of principles or common guidelines being applied to Scotland's tolled bridges, which could in turn have the advantage of providing more certainty for bridge users, and better reflect the environmental and economic issues associated with bridge management. It could also bring bridge tolls more into line with road user charging policy, where this is appropriate.

Areas Where a Common National Approach Might be Appropriate

31. Phase One of the Bridges Review identified the following areas where a common approach might be appropriate:
- Exemptions for disabled drivers, emergency and breakdown services
 - Discount Schemes
 - Classification of Vehicles
 - Tolling arrangements or schemes to encourage use of Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) and Multiple Occupancy Vehicles (MOVs).
32. These issues are set out in more detail below.

Exemptions - General

33. Exemptions for bridge tolls and road tolls are given for a number of reasons. They may be used to maximise the efficiency of the route by ensuring that it is not blocked by accidents, they may be used in recognition that the vehicle occupier has no viable alternative, they can encourage the use of sustainable transport modes in order to reduce congestion and pollution, or they may be used to reduce delays for emergency vehicles. However, a balance has to be struck between the provision of exemptions, revenue requirements and managing demand for road space. In addition, the use of exemptions has administrative implications for toll managers, who must find ways of verifying eligibility that are efficient and effective.

Exemptions for Blue Badge Holders and Vehicles Exempt from Vehicle Excise Duty

34. Exemptions currently apply on all bridges to vehicles exempt from Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and to vehicles displaying a Blue Badge, which must be confirmed by the Blue Badge Holder.
35. During our consultation in Phase One, Mobility Access Committee Scotland (MACS) strongly expressed support for continuing and improving procedures to allow Blue Badge holders to benefit from exemptions from tolls. Public transport is frequently not a viable option for people with disabilities.
36. Blue Badge holders who are regular bridge users may pre-register and receive a book of vouchers which must be handed in at the toll in a similar manner to discount vouchers. This has been designed to ensure that exemptions are only given to genuine Blue Badge holders and that any vehicle displaying a Blue Badge is occupied by the Blue Badge holder entitled to the exemption.
37. While this works adequately for regular travellers it does not work well for occasional travellers or others who have not pre-registered. People who have not pre-registered are asked to complete a form at the toll booth to verify that an exemption may be given by the toll operator. This requirement can disrupt the smooth passage of vehicles through the toll booths and can prolong the overall journey time for the disabled traveller and following traffic. We are aware that people entitled to a Blue Badge exemption are often inhibited from claiming an exemption in order to avoid the embarrassment of causing a delay.
38. On the Erskine Bridge a form must be completed at the administration office and verification of entitlement must be seen by the person issuing the books of 50 disabled vouchers. Forth Road Bridge users must complete a form, but may also download the relevant form from the FETA website to apply for books of exemption vouchers to minimise the transaction process at the toll booths. On the Tay Bridge, Blue Badge holders may apply for exemption vouchers either in person or by post. Verification of entitlement must be provided.

Exemptions for Emergency Service Vehicles

39. All tolled bridges operate exemptions for emergency service vehicles (excluding the Coastguard Service) and at Erskine Bridge exemptions are allowed for vehicles belonging to the Princess Louise Scottish Hospital for Limbless Sailors and Soldiers. All bridges allow exemptions for vehicles used in connection with the maintenance or operation of each bridge. Exemptions are not granted to the AA, RAC or other breakdown services.
40. The current provisions on the tolled bridges may be compared with The Road User Charging (Exemption from Charges) (Scotland) Regulations which were made on 1 December 2004. These set a statutory minimum level of exemption from road user charging schemes made under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001. The regulations provide that the following must be exempt from such schemes: emergency service vehicles which we have taken to mean fire service vehicles, police force vehicles, ambulances and coastguard vehicles; any vehicle displaying a blue badge; and public

service vehicles which in this case is generally taken to be buses of varying sizes. In addition, the regulations allow charging authorities to set exemptions over and above these to reflect local circumstances.

41. To ensure the effectiveness of the regulations, they also provide for the registration of any vehicle exempted from charges by virtue of the regulations. This means, in practice, that an exempt vehicle needs to be registered with the relevant charging authority to ensure that the exemption is received. While bridge tolls are not covered by these regulations (as they are for road user charging schemes), there may be a case for applying the same exemptions to the bridges.

QUESTION 1 – Do you think that the system for verifying Blue Badge exemptions should be changed? If so, can you suggest what these changes should be?

QUESTION 2 – Do you consider that the exemptions for emergency service vehicles should remain limited to the Ambulance, Fire and Police Services, or should we consider extending this to cover other key services?

QUESTION 3 – Vehicles used by bridge authorities to respond to breakdowns on each bridge are exempt. Do you see a case for extending exemptions to the AA, RAC or other commercial breakdown services responding to breakdowns on the road network other than where this is the responsibility of the bridge authorities?

QUESTION 4 – Should public transport vehicles and multiple occupancy vehicles be considered for exemption from bridge tolls?

42. If you wish to suggest other exemptions it would be helpful if you would briefly set out your reasons and justification for them, and what the implications would be for traffic levels and congestion.

Discount Schemes

43. The Executive has clear targets on traffic stabilisation⁷ and we need to consider whether discount arrangements are compatible with these targets or whether they may add to the volume of traffic at peak times with consequent congestion and environmental impacts.
44. Erskine and Forth operate discount schemes allowing books of toll vouchers to be purchased in advance at a discounted price. While the discount schemes offer savings to users and administrative benefits for the bridge operator, they could be considered to offer an incentive for increasing the number of journeys.

⁷ See paragraph 16

45. On the Forth Road Bridge, HGVs (vehicles over 3.5 tonnes) obtain a 35% discount (equivalent to 70p per trip), despite the significantly greater cost of wear and tear. Around two-thirds of HGV trips benefit from this scheme so, while the full tolling tariff reflects, to a limited extent, the relative cost of damage to the fabric of the Bridge caused by heavy vehicles, the availability of a 35% discount significantly reduces the tolling differential for almost two-thirds of heavy vehicles (see also section on wear and tear below).
46. On the Erskine Road Bridge drivers of any class of vehicle may purchase a book of 50 vouchers at a discount of 10% (equivalent to 6p per trip). Over 1 million vouchers are presented at Erskine Bridge each year equivalent to 12.1% of all paid crossings.
47. Tay Road Bridge does not have a discount scheme, but does allow books of vouchers to be purchased in advance without a discount. The benefit of an undiscounted voucher scheme is that it reduces cash handling and helps reduce the time taken to pass through the toll booth. On 15 July 2004, the TRBJB applied to introduce a 10% discount voucher scheme for those users purchasing 50 vouchers in advance. The Executive has advised TRBJB that decisions on any future changes to tolls will be taken in the light of the Tolled Bridges Review.
48. We wish to consider options which have potential to help reduce peak time congestion on affected bridges. This would include consideration of ways to achieve a decrease in the number of crossings by single occupancy vehicles (SOVs) and increase the number of people in multiple occupancy vehicles by promoting greater use of public transport and car sharing. No bridge currently offers a discount scheme for buses or other public service vehicles which runs counter to efforts to promote modal shift and greater use of multiple occupancy vehicles.

QUESTION 5 – Should tolled bridges offer multiple crossing discount vouchers to all bridge users, or particular classes of users such as buses or multiple occupancy vehicles? If so, why should this be?

Classification of Vehicles

49. The general position where tolls are levied on bridges or roads is to classify vehicles into broad groups such as cars, buses, heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and to set tolls for each group. Traditionally cars have benefited from having a lower toll than HGVs.
50. However there are significant variations in the way vehicles are classified. This has varied from Erskine which has a single fixed toll payable by all vehicles (unless they are exempt) to seven categories of vehicle on the Tay Bridge. (The former Skye Bridge toll classification had eight vehicle categories, high and low season variations and additional discount schemes.)
51. The picture across the UK is one of widely varying vehicle classification systems which can both be confusing for travellers and make comparative analysis of traffic flows and traffic mix on the bridges difficult for transport planners.

52. The position on automatic vehicle classification through unmanned electronic tolls presents a number of challenges. This includes, for instance, the impracticability of classification by automatic weighing equipment as some vehicles may be empty. Account also has to be taken of the fact vehicles can have quite different body types on a standard chassis. Systems which classify by axle numbers, wheel numbers and height which can be measured automatically are an option for consideration.

QUESTION 6 – What are your views on a common vehicle classification system for levying tolls at all Scotland’s tolled bridges?

Reducing Traffic and Congestion on Tolled Bridges

53. The Executive has set a target of stabilising road traffic at 2001 levels by 2021, to limit road traffic’s impact on the environment and to help reduce congestion. To work towards this objective, the Executive supports modal shift from private car to walking, cycling and public transport. The Executive is also committed to helping local transport authorities reduce traffic levels and has commissioned work to evaluate and review guidance to local authorities on achieving road traffic reduction (report due this year). Both the Forth Bridge, and to a lesser extent the Tay Bridge, suffer congestion problems exacerbated by the high volume of single occupancy vehicles (SOVs).

54. Phase One of the Review identified the following issues for further consideration:

- Introduction of a discount scheme for PSVs / buses to support efforts to achieve modal shift, and promotion of multiple occupancy vehicle crossings⁸.
- Introduction of electronic tolling with variable peak time tolling and the possibility of implementing tolling systems which would favour less polluting vehicles, MOVs and PSVs, which could, over time, act to reduce the number of SOV crossings.

55. The Forth Road Bridge is a good example of why we need to consider these issues. There is serious congestion on the Bridge during morning and afternoon peak periods. Consultants have considered the possibility of MOV lanes or differential SOV tolling because of the potential they offer in reducing the volume of SOVs crossing the bridge, which currently exceeds 70% of all traffic. There are practical difficulties which need to be addressed, such as the difficulty of dedicating one lane of a dual carriageway solely for MOVs, because the single remaining all purpose lane is likely to suffer greater congestion as SOVs are displaced. We intend commissioning consultants to review options during this phase of the Review.

56. FETA’s draft Local Transport Strategy (LTS) highlights support for the Park and Ride facility at Ferrytoll and proposes supporting new public transport infrastructure such as bus priority and Park and Choose schemes in order to optimise the number of public transport person trips across the Forth.

⁸ This is discussed later in Part 2.

57. By comparison with the Forth Road Bridge there is little congestion on the Erskine Bridge. On the Tay Road Bridge there is peak hour congestion largely associated with the close proximity of the northern access ramps and the tolling plaza to Dundee's city centre. Tay Road Bridge Joint Board is considering options for the replacement of the existing tolling plaza with the aim of reducing peak hour congestion and enhancing the flow of traffic across the bridge and through the City centre in a way which will be compatible with the Dundee Waterfront redevelopment plan. Options under consideration will include the possibility of moving the tolling plaza to the south side of the bridge where there are better opportunities to develop park and ride facilities and dedicated bus or multiple occupancy vehicle lanes.

QUESTION 7 – Should we encourage modal shift from single occupancy cars to public transport and multiple occupancy vehicles on all tolled bridges? If so, how might this be achieved?

QUESTION 8 – Do you think that raising tolls at peak times would result in less congestion at those times?

Should Toll Levels Reflect the Cost of Wear and Tear by Different Types of Vehicle?

58. Heavy goods vehicles can create a greater level of wear and tear on bridges than lighter vehicles such as cars, both in terms of loading on the bridge structure and on the road surface. Tolls are set at a level that reflects, to a limited extent, the relative cost of damage to the fabric of the bridge caused by heavy vehicles. However this relationship between wear and tear and toll levels is eroded by the availability of multiple crossing discounts (e.g. on Erskine and Forth) which reduce the tolling differential for a significant proportion of heavy vehicles. This raises the question of how and whether different classes of vehicles should contribute to an equitable share of the cost.

QUESTION 9 - Should tolls reflect the impacts of different vehicle types on the need for maintenance, repair and strengthening programmes? If so, do you have suggestions for how this might be done?

Procedure for Changing Tolls or Charges

59. Currently the procedure for changing tolls or charges is set out in the relevant legislation for each bridge. Tolls are ultimately subject to the approval of Scottish Ministers, but the process requires details of the proposed toll to be published in official journals inviting comment and objection to the proposed changes. To reduce the time and cost of changing toll levels there may be a case for looking at the possibility of tolling schemes which incorporate inflation linked increases.

QUESTION 10 – Do you think the current process involving Public Local Inquiries (PLIs) is appropriate for making changes to tolls or charges to meet the costs of managing, maintaining and operating a bridge?

QUESTION 11 – Do you consider that final approval by Scottish Ministers is an essential safeguard for toll/charge payers or do you think the final decision is a matter for the management authority for the bridge?

QUESTION 12 – Do you consider all tolls should be subject to increases linked to an inflation index?

Other Common Issues or Principles

60. If there are any other issues or principles about having a consistent or common approach to the operation and management of Scottish tolled bridges that you would like to raise, we would welcome your views.

Part 3

Management Options for the Scottish Tolled Bridges

Introduction

61. The White Paper⁹ set out the broad terms of reference for Phase Two as including ***“an examination of the broader issues, relating to the management, operation and maintenance of the tolled bridges. This will also include an assessment of how tolled bridges relate to the new regional and national transport arrangements.”***

62. The terms of reference for Phase Two have been developed from issues emerging from Phase One, as well as the requirements set out in the White Paper, including the following:

Review existing management structures to ensure that arrangements complement the development of regional transport partnerships and the national transport agency, and are responsive to the requirements of future transport priorities.

Consider whether the powers of the management body for each tolled bridge should cover investment in local transport infrastructure, including support for public transport and encouragement of modal shift from private cars.

63. Our aim is to ensure that we have management structures in place which are fit for the challenges which lie ahead. We need to ensure that the bodies responsible for our tolled bridges are integrated into the new framework of regional and national transport arrangements so that they are able to make an effective contribution in meeting strategic objectives whilst delivering an efficient and effective service at local level.

64. We are not, however, embarking on an exercise of change for change's sake. Your comments and ideas are important in providing feedback on whether you think existing bodies are delivering effective and efficient management now and should continue to do so in the future. You may also wish to comment on whether there is any case for change in responsibilities or powers in order to enhance management effectiveness, provide funding flexibility and ensure a meaningful level of integration with the new regional and national structures.

⁹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/transport/stfwp-00.asp>

Summary of Current Management Arrangements:

65. The table below sets out current powers, responsibilities and functions for the Erskine, Forth and Tay road bridges.

FUNCTION	ERSKINE	FORTH	TAY
Ownership of Structure	Scottish Executive (SE)	Forth Estuary Transport Authority (FETA) Joint Board	Tay Road Bridge Joint Board (TRBJB) Joint Board
Management Authority	SE	FETA	TRBJB
Maintenance Responsibility	SE ¹	FETA	TRBJB
Toll Collection	SE ²	FETA	TRBJB
Key Legislation	Erskine Bridge Tolls Act 1968	Transport (Scotland) Act 2001	Tay Road Bridge Order Confirmation Act 1991
Part of Trunk Road Network?	Yes	No	No
¹ But contracted to AMEY Infrastructure Services Ltd			
² But contracted to APCOA Parking (UK) Ltd			

Erskine Bridge – Operation and Management

66. The Erskine Bridge crosses the River Clyde some nine miles west of the centre of Glasgow and was opened on 2 July 1971, having cost £10.7m to build. As a trunk road, the Erskine Bridge is the responsibility of the Scottish Executive and is the only tolled bridge run directly by the Executive. Bridge operation and maintenance is presently contracted out to AMEY Infrastructure Services Ltd, as part of its term management and maintenance contract for trunk roads in South West Scotland. Toll collection is presently contracted to APCOA Parking (UK) Ltd which employs over 30 staff.

Forth Bridge – Operation and Management

67. The Forth Road Bridge was opened on 4 September 1964 and forms an important link for commuters between Fife and Edinburgh, as well as providing a major strategic connection linking routes on the trunk road network in Scotland. Since 1 April 2002 its management, maintenance and operation has been the responsibility of the Forth Estuary Transport Authority (FETA). FETA is a joint board comprising the constituent local authorities of City of Edinburgh (4 members), Fife (4 members), Perth and Kinross (1 member) and West Lothian (1 member) Councils. Approximately 100 permanent and temporary staff are employed by FETA. In addition to the management, maintenance and operation of the bridge, FETA has a wider remit to develop, support and fund schemes and measures which it considers appropriate to reduce traffic congestion.

68. As part of its wider remit, FETA has, amongst other things, agreed to fund an off-line dual carriageway upgrading of the M9 Spur/A8000 as its priority congestion reducing transport scheme, and to contribute £0.5m to extend the Ferrytoll Park and Ride site and £0.8m to replace a railway bridge deck at Ferrytoll on the Rosyth Link Road. It has also funded the installation of traffic signals at Echline Roundabout as a short term measure to alleviate traffic congestion.

Tay Bridge – Operation and Management

69. The Tay Road Bridge spans the estuary of the River Tay between Dundee City and Newport on Tay in Fife. Its northern exit leads traffic directly into the centre of Dundee. It was opened to traffic on 18th August 1966. The administration, management, maintenance and operation of the Tay Road Bridge is the responsibility of the Tay Road Bridge Joint Board (TRBJB) as confirmed in the Tay Road Bridge Confirmation Act 1991. TRBJB comprises Dundee City (6 members), Fife (5 members), and Angus (1 member) Councils. Approximately 50 staff are employed by TRBJB. Unlike FETA, TRBJB does not presently have a wider remit for improving local transport or contributing to other schemes to reduce congestion across the Bridge.

The Road Network in Scotland

70. The Scottish Executive is responsible for 3,500 km of trunk roads in Scotland which represents under 7% of the total Scottish public road network. It carries well over a third of the total traffic volume and over 60% of the heavy goods vehicle mileage. Trunk roads connect Scotland's cities and also provide vital connections to many rural communities and ferry ports.

71. Councils are responsible for local roads (all non-trunk roads), which total 51,100 km. The Scottish Executive provides part of the funding for the management, maintenance and improvement of the local road network through the annual local government financing settlement.

72. Erskine Bridge is part of the trunk road network, but Forth and Tay Road Bridges are not trunk roads and are the responsibility of local authority joint boards. Each bridge is unique, but they all provide important links in crossing some of Scotland's major estuaries and provide vital connections to the adjacent local and trunk road transport networks which is essential to local communities for access to work, leisure and for the transport of goods and services.

73. As these bridges provide nationally important links and vital connections, the management itself must be well connected and able to operate effectively within the emerging framework of regional and national transport structures.

Future Management Options

Future Management Issues and Options

74. We explore some of the potential management options below, but we are not ruling in or out any specific option. The historical and current legislation and powers may suggest a particular form of management (e.g. Erskine Bridge is part of the trunk road network which is managed by the Executive), but we are interested in other approaches which may offer a better fit with emerging transport needs in the 21st century.

Executive/National Transport Agency

75. We are establishing a national transport agency in 2005 which will be responsible for the major delivery tasks of trunk road, rail and public transport infrastructure. The question arises of whether any or all of the tolled bridges should be managed by the Executive/Agency.
76. The Erskine Bridge is currently designated as a trunk road. Forth and Tay Road Bridges are not trunk roads and are the responsibility of a transport authority (Forth Estuary Transport Authority – FETA - for the Forth Road Bridge) and a local authority joint board (Tay Road Bridge Joint Board for the Tay Road Bridge). Because all the tolled bridges connect strategically important routes, future options could include making Forth and Tay Bridges (currently not trunk roads) part of the trunk road network. If the Forth and Tay bridges were redesignated as part of the trunk road network, tolls could continue to be levied, in a similar way to Erskine, provided the necessary powers were contained in the enabling legislation.
77. Any proposal to manage them as part of the trunk road network would involve significant legal and statutory changes in order to transfer their assets and powers from the existing bodies to the Executive with the possibility of management responsibility being discharged by the national transport agency. Because primary legislation may be required to effect such change it is unlikely that this could be achieved in the short term as space would need to be found within the Executive's already heavy legislative programme.
78. However, it is important to take account of the fact that FETA is proposing to replace existing tolls with a road user charging scheme. FETA is able to do this because the Forth Road Bridge is not part of the trunk road network and the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 only allows road user charging schemes to be levied on *local roads* for which the local traffic authority is the responsible body.
79. If a road user charging scheme under the Act is considered to offer a more effective and flexible approach to reducing congestion and raising revenue to operate and maintain a particular bridge, this would currently rule out management by trunk road transport authorities without a change in the legislation.

QUESTION 13 – What advantages and disadvantages do you see if any or all of the tolled bridges were to be managed by the Scottish Executive or the national transport agency?

Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs)

80. In recognition of the need to rationalise and streamline the delivery of transport services in Scotland, the Partnership Agreement commits to the development of "effective regional delivery partnerships". The question arises of what role the partnership should take in the management of tolled bridges.
81. The specific functions and responsibilities of individual RTPs have still to emerge in detail and will be driven largely by the views of the constituent councils forming each RTP. One consideration will be whether an RTP would be directly responsible for the delivery of services and infrastructure projects or act more as a regional strategic policy making partnership, but leaving operational implementation to relevant local transport authorities or other bodies. However, we expect over time that RTPs will take on a more operational role in the delivery of projects and services in their region. This could mean taking on functions currently exercised by local authorities or by the Scottish Executive.
82. In relation to the tolled bridges a possible option would be to transfer management responsibility of the bridges to the relevant RTPs. Initially this would probably need to be on the basis of the current management bodies' existing powers to levy tolls and operate the bridge. Any significant changes to existing powers would be likely to require new legislation. As the bridges are, in part, major local transport assets, transferring responsibilities to RTPs may have the benefit of facilitating development of integrated transport proposals at the local/regional level.
83. On the other hand we need to take account of the fact that these bridges also provide connections to the national strategic system of routes for through traffic in Scotland. RTPs may not be ready yet to consider taking on responsibility for such significant national transport assets and it may be appropriate to defer such consideration until RTPs have become established as stable and effective bodies with experience of managing major transport assets.

QUESTION 14 – Should we consider transferring some or all of the powers and functions of current bridge authorities to Regional Transport Partnerships in future?

QUESTION 15 – As the Erskine Bridge functions as a key national and strategic link for the West of Scotland as well as an important local link for communities north and south of the River Clyde, do you see any argument for de-trunking it so that it could become the responsibility of the RTP for the West of Scotland?

Joint Board with Local Transport Responsibilities (Forth/FETA model)

84. The administration, management, maintenance and operation of the Forth Road Bridge is the responsibility of the Forth Estuary Transport Authority (FETA).

85. FETA's Key Functions:

- The Authority is responsible for the management, maintenance and operation of the Forth Road Bridge and the funding of these activities.
- The Authority may develop, support and fund such schemes and measures including roadworks, traffic management and public transport services, which it considers appropriate to reduce road traffic congestion on the bridge or to encourage an increase in the use of public transport across the Firth of Forth.
- In order to implement any schemes or measures to which the above paragraph applies the Authority may enter into an agreement with any local transport authority, organisation, company or person they consider appropriate.

FETA Membership:

Membership	City of Edinburgh Council	Fife Council	Perth & Kinross Council	West Lothian Council
No. of Councillors	4	4	1	1
Chairman and Chief Executive are drawn on a rotating basis from the constituent local authorities				

86. This model provides a high level of local representation and could articulate readily with RTPs to take account of wider regional transport priorities. As it is also a local roads authority it has the relevant powers under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 to introduce a road user charging scheme.

87. This model has enabled FETA to make effective provision for funding the operation and maintenance of the Forth Road Bridge and associated local transport projects and it may be a model that is worth considering for the Erskine and Tay Bridges.

QUESTION 16 – Do you have any views on the advantages or disadvantages of the FETA model, for any or all of the bridges?

Joint Board with No Local Transport Responsibilities (Tay/TRBJB model)

88. The Tay Road Bridge Joint Board (TRBJB) is responsible for the administration, management, maintenance and operation of the Tay Road Bridge. Unlike FETA, TRBJB does not presently have a wider remit for improving local transport or contributing to other schemes to reduce congestion across the Bridge, although there are enabling powers for doing so in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001.

89. TRBJB Membership:

Membership	Angus Council	Dundee City Council	Fife Council
No. of Councillors	1	6	5
Chairman and Vice-Chairman are elected by the members of the Joint Board and hold office for a three year period.			

QUESTION 17 – Do you have any views on the advantages or disadvantages of the TRBJB model, for any or all of the bridges?

Single Tolled Bridges Authority

90. We have considered the possibility of the Scottish Executive/National Transport Agency being responsible for one or all bridges earlier in the paper. Another option could be to create a body (e.g. The Scottish Tolled Bridge Authority) which would be separate from both the RTPs and the NTA. It could be created specifically to take responsibility for the management of these major transport infrastructure assets. While it might lose some local identity with individual bridges it might gain from having a wider range of expertise drawing on all three tolled bridges and could aspire to developing best practice in the operation and running of all tolled bridges.

QUESTION 18 – Do you think there would be any merit in having a single body responsible for operating and managing all tolled bridges in Scotland?

QUESTION 19 – If you think all bridges should be run by one body what form, powers and functions should this body have?

QUESTION 20 – Are there any other management options that you would like to suggest?

Part 4

Conclusion

91. The full list of questions posed in this consultation paper is set out below. We look forward to receiving your comments and responses in relation to these.
92. You are also welcome to offer comment on any other aspects of the operation and management of the Scottish tolled bridges that have not been raised in this paper.

Consultation Responses - Process and Timescales

93. This consultation document is available on the Scottish Executive website at:

www.scotland.gov.uk/publications

94. Responses to this document are invited by Friday 8 July 2005.
95. In order to inform the debate on the issues covered by this consultation, the Scottish Executive intends to follow its normal practice of making copies of responses received available to the public on request. We will therefore assume that your response may be made publicly available unless you indicate in writing that you wish your comments to remain confidential.
96. However, *all respondents are asked to note that the Scottish Executive is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise, regardless of whether, or not, respondents have asked for responses to be treated as confidential.*
97. Responses to the consultation and requests for further copies of this document should be sent to:

Rebecca Daddow
Scottish Executive
Roads Policy & Group Finance Division
2-DD, Victoria Quay
EDINBURGH
EH6 6QQ
Tel. 0131 244 5095
98. If you prefer to e-mail your response please send this to:

tolledbridgesreview@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

List of Questions

Exemptions for Disabled Drivers/Blue Badge Holders/Emergency Vehicles

QUESTION 1 – Do you think that the system for verifying Blue Badge exemptions should be changed? If so, can you suggest what these changes should be?

QUESTION 2 – Do you consider that the exemptions for emergency service vehicles should remain limited to the Ambulance, Fire and Police Services, or should we consider extending this to cover other key services?

QUESTION 3 – Vehicles used by bridge authorities to respond to breakdowns on each bridge are exempt. Do you see a case for extending exemptions to the AA, RAC or other commercial breakdown services responding to breakdowns on the road network other than where this is the responsibility of the bridge authorities?

QUESTION 4 - Should public transport vehicles and multiple occupancy vehicles be considered for exemption from bridge tolls?

Discount Schemes

QUESTION 5 – Should tolled bridges offer multiple crossing discount vouchers to all bridge users, or particular classes of users such as buses or multiple occupancy vehicles? If so, why should this be?

Classification of Vehicles

QUESTION 6 – What are your views on a common vehicle classification system for levying tolls at all Scotland's tolled bridges?

Reducing Traffic and Congestion on Tolled Bridges

QUESTION 7 – Should we encourage modal shift from single occupancy cars to public transport and multiple occupancy vehicles on all tolled bridges? If so, how might this be achieved?

QUESTION 8 – Do you think that raising tolls at peak times would result in less congestion at those times?

Tolls Reflecting Cost of Wear and Tear

QUESTION 9 - Should tolls reflect the impacts of different vehicle types on the need for maintenance, repair and strengthening programmes? If so, do you have suggestions for how this might be done?

Procedure for Changing Tolls or Charges

QUESTION 10 – Do you think the current process involving Public Local Inquiries (PLIs) is appropriate for making changes to tolls or charges to meet the costs of managing, maintaining and operating a bridge?

QUESTION 11 – Do you consider that final approval by Scottish Ministers is an essential safeguard for toll/charge payers or do you think the final decision is a matter for the management authority for the bridge?

QUESTION 12 – Do you consider all tolls should be subject to increases linked to an inflation index?

Executive/Transport Agency

QUESTION 13 – What advantages and disadvantages do you see if any or all of the tolled bridges were to be managed by the Scottish Executive or the national transport agency?

Regional Transport Partnerships

QUESTION 14 – Should we consider transferring some or all of the powers and functions of current bridge authorities to Regional Transport Partnerships in future?

QUESTION 15 – As the Erskine Bridge functions both as a key national and strategic link for the West of Scotland as well as an important local link for communities north and south of the River Clyde, do you see any argument for de-trunking it so that it could become the responsibility of the RTP for the West of Scotland?

Joint Board (FETA Model)

QUESTION 16 – Do you have any views on the advantages or disadvantages of the FETA model, for any or all of the bridges?

Joint Board (TRBJB)

QUESTION 17 – Do you have any views on the advantages or disadvantages of the TRBJB model, for any or all of the bridges?

Single Tolled Bridges Authority

QUESTION 18 – Do you think there would be any merit in having a single body responsible for operating and managing all tolled bridges in Scotland?

QUESTION 19 – If you think all bridges should be run by one body what form, powers and functions should this body have?

QUESTION 20 – Are there any other management options that you would like to suggest?

Tolled Bridges Review : Phase Two Terms of Reference

The White Paper set out the broad terms of reference for Phase Two as including “*an examination of the broader issues, relating to the management, operation and maintenance of the tolled bridges. This will also include an assessment of how tolled bridges relate to the new regional and national transport arrangements.*”

The terms of reference for Phase Two have been developed from issues emerging from Phase One, as well as the requirements set out in the White Paper. Phase Two will include the following:

Management Structures and Objectives

Review existing management structures to ensure that arrangements complement the development of regional transport partnerships and the national transport agency, and are responsive to the requirements of future transport priorities.

Consider whether the powers of the management body for each tolled bridge should cover investment in local transport infrastructure, including support for public transport and encouragement of modal shift from private cars.

Statement of Scottish Tolling/Charging Principles and Objectives

Consider whether there is a case for applying a consistent set of principles on every tolled bridge in Scotland, and if so, what these principles might be. Issues to be considered will include:

- Vehicle classification types.
- Exemptions for disabled drivers, emergency services vehicles and breakdown vehicles.
- Exemptions or reduced tolls for public transport/high occupancy vehicles
- Whether toll levels should have a direct relationship to the level of wear and tear caused by different vehicle types.
- The use or otherwise of discount schemes.

Procedures for adjusting Tolls or Charges

Consider whether there is a need to amend the legislative and procedural arrangements for changing tolling or charging levels and periods, in a way that is transparent, flexible, justifiable, and responsive to changing circumstances.

Maintenance Provision

Review operational and funding arrangements to ensure that adequate provision is made for future maintenance and upgrading requirements.

Technological Developments

Review developments in modernising tolling operations on Scottish tolled bridges and the need to progress towards compatibility and interoperability with local and national road pricing schemes. This will take account of policy and legislative developments in the EU, in particular the draft European Directives on interoperability of infrastructure charging.

Bridge Specific Issues to be considered in Phase Two

Erskine Bridge - consider future arrangements including the need for legislative changes that may be necessary for future funding, operation and management of the bridge. Consideration should include an assessment of the impact on congestion elsewhere in Glasgow in a way that achieves an optimum outcome without having a detrimental impact elsewhere in the city. In addition, consider the need for upgrading and refurbishment of the existing toll plaza, tolling systems and administration building.

Tay Road Bridge - consider how future tolling arrangements could help tackle congestion and air quality issues affecting Dundee city centre, including a review of proposals by Tay Road Bridge Joint Board (TRBJB) to re-locate the toll booths at the southern end of the bridge.

Forth Road Bridge - consider proposals to achieve a significant shift from single occupancy vehicles (SOVs) to multiple occupancy vehicles (MOVs) through such tolling structures and arrangements as differential tolling and discount schemes designed to benefit MOVs.

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