

4th February 2012

Dear Councillor,

At your Budget meeting next Thursday (9th) you will be considering the level of Tunnel tolls from April. On this occasion the report recommends that there is no increase in the tolls payable, but it is still open to you to increase them. The Tunnel Users ask that you oppose any motion to increase the tolls payable.

Those members who were on the Authority early last year should have received from us messages about the tolls issue on the 1st February, 6th February and 11th April (if any member wants copies then please let me know). I do not wish to waste your time by going over all the old ground in detail, but on behalf of Tunnels Users I wish to mention a few points. If you have any questions, then please let me know

Yours sincerely,

Dave Loudon
Chairman
Mersey Tunnels Users Association

1. It is usually claimed that the Authority has no choice but to increase tolls in line with the RPI unless matters of an “economic or social” nature in Merseyside would indicate otherwise. In fact the various authorities, including Merseytravel, that have run the Tunnels have always had the power to reduce tolls below the legally permissible or “authorised” level or even to remove them completely for any or all categories of vehicles for any reason at any time. That power is now in section 92C(1) of the 2004 Act. If anyone suggests to you that this is not so, then we suggest that you ask them under what power for instance – a) there is a lower toll for “tag” users, b) there are some concessions for disabled drivers, c) certain drivers at certain times apparently are not expected to pay, d) class 2 vehicles only had to pay class 1 tolls between April 2005 and March 2008, e) class 4 vehicles only had to pay class 3 tolls between April 2005 and March 2006.
2. In previous messages we have referred to the English Indices of Deprivation. The last edition was published 10 months ago. It divides England into over 32,000 “Lower Layer Super Output” areas. On the Index for Employment, 26 LLSO areas in Liverpool and the Wirral are amongst the worst 100 in England, even though the two authorities make up only 1.4 % of England’s total population. The 26 include the 4th, 5th, 6th and 10th worst LSOAs for employment in England. Several billion pounds of European and Government money have presumably made the employment position less bad than it would otherwise have been, but it is difficult to see that real new industry is ever going to locate in an area that not only has tolls but has escalating tolls .
3. As usual the Tunnels budget has been presented in a way which gives the impression that the Tunnels will only just break even. In fact for the coming year (2012/13) - even if there is no toll increase - there will be just under £6.8 million transferred from the Tunnels to finance other Merseytravel activities.

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