



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Transport Infrastructure Planning
Department for Transport
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Via email: transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk

9 May 2022

Statement of Case - Rixton & Warburton Toll Bridge Transport & Works Order

I am writing to share my views, and the views of the 450 Constituents who have written to me about the Rixton & Warburton Toll Bridge Transport & Works Order, recently submitted to your department by The Manchester Ship Canal Company (MSCC), for an Order under section 3 of the Transport and Works Act 1992. This Order proposes new procedures for the operation of the Bridge, including new tolls, concessions, byelaws and collection arrangements.

Located very close to the boundary of my Warrington South Constituency, the Rixton and Warburton Bridge provides an important local highway across the Manchester Ship Canal, connecting South Warrington villages with North Warrington. It is the only road crossing of the Manchester Ship Canal between the M6 Thelwall Viaduct and the M60 Barton Bridge, which are some distance apart and so it is a vital bridge connecting communities located either side of it. Whilst the number of vehicles crossing will be relatively low in comparison to the motorways, this is a very important local road linking communities.

Having met with representatives from MSCC recently and residents, I am in broad agreement with the proposed improvements to the bridge and surrounding roads. Indeed, as someone who lives in this community and who uses the bridge frequently, I know how poor the road surface has become. Whilst I would much prefer there are no tolls, I accept that in the event that tolls continue to be levied on motorists, I would much welcome a free flow tolling system, which would improve congestion in the area and ultimately improve local air quality. I would also be supportive of strengthening the bridge to allow buses to travel over it and improvements be made for pedestrians and cyclists.

However, I strongly oppose the suggested increase in tolling from the current 12p to £1. For a regular user, crossing the bridge to and from work, this would add around £500 to the annual cost of travel, well beyond any acceptable level. The proposed increases could find motorists paying up to eight times more per trip than the current charge.

I've heard from many constituents who travel over this bridge many times each day, taking children to school, getting to and from work or visiting family. Universally, they are currently able to purchase a discounted ticket which limits daily crossings to 25p.



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The proposed toll of £1 per crossing is a substantial increase which would have a significant financial impact on local residents, particularly those who need to use the bridge regularly to get to work or visit family.

Furthermore, I do not believe the improvements to the bridge should be financed from an increase in tolls, Manchester Ship Canal Company have repeatedly failed to undertake regular repairs, the last being in 1998 and the level of investment now required should not be placed on local residents. As very little maintenance work has been undertaken, you would assume that Manchester Ship Canal Company have managed to build up a significant fund from the existing toll charges, and therefore upgrade the bridge using existing resources.

The draft Order allows for the ability to increase tolls charged annually, at a rate 1% lower than the consumer price index. I do not agree with this proposal (and any other indexation related increase). Increasing the toll on this basis, without a cap, will lead to significant increases.

Despite indicating that discounts would be available for regular users, the draft Order does not make any provision for toll charge discounts for residents. Warrington residents, particularly those within Lymm North and Thelwall and Lymm South wards, use the bridge on a daily basis, as it is the primary crossing point across the Manchester Ship Canal in the wider area. Reflecting this, the Rixton & Warburton Toll Bridge Sustainable Investment Plan (July 2021) stated that a local customer discount set at around 50% for the residents of postcodes WA3 6 and WA13 9 could be considered.

I am concerned that these discounts are not included in the draft Order and requests that Manchester Ship Canal Company clearly sets out a concession (of at least 50% for all toll charges) for residents within postcodes WA3 6 and WA 13. I am concerned that a substantial part of Lymm and Broomedge area not included in the original proposed discount area and I would therefore want to see an increase to the size of this discount area to the entire WA13 postcode.

I do not support the proposed change to enable MSCC to make and enforce byelaws. This would enable them greater control over the use and operation of the bridge and approach road. They could regulate matters such as stoppages / obstructions, repairs and passage of dangerous goods etc. This ability is questioned, as the use of Traffic Orders is considered to be the way the use of the road and bridge should be regulated. It would also enable the charging and collection of specified liabilities for unpaid tolls (set at £30 when paid in full with 14 days, rising to £60 when paid between 14- 28 days and £100.00 when paid after 28 days).

This bridge has a strategic role in the local highway network, given the limited crossings over the Manchester Ship Canal and the frequent closures of the M6 Motorway Thelwall Viaduct due to high winds. I would therefore also request that the Order contains provisions included within the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Peel Ports and Warrington Borough Council in 2014 which includes provision for removing toll charges during periods of heavy congestion and / or road closures affecting the M6 motorway. The order should also refer to the fact that no toll is to be charged for public service vehicles, emergency vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.



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To conclude, whilst I welcome long overdue investment that the Manchester Ship Canal Company plan to make, I strongly oppose the increases in the toll to pay for it. I am unhappy that the discounts suggested in informal consultations have not been included in the Order and I would wish to see a recognition of the importance of this route with tolls being lifted during periods of heavy traffic.

Taking steps to help residents with the increasing cost of living is of vital importance, the proposed increase will have a significant economic impact on my constituents, it will harm productivity with vehicles taking long detours to avoid the toll and it should not be levied to pay for repairs which should already be in hand.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy".

Andy Carter MP
Member of Parliament for Warrington South