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Date: 14 June 2005

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COU539/26



Scottish Executive
Roads Policy & Group Finance Division
FAO Rebecca Daddow
2-DD Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Dear Sir/ Madam

TOLLED BRIDGES REVIEW - PHASE TWO CONSULTATION

I response to the consultation on Tolled Bridges Review please find attached my response for your consideration.

Should you require any additional information or to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact Elaine Barrie at the number above.

Yours faithfully



BP
Bob Darracott
Director of Planning & Transport

Renfrewshire Council

To: HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY POLICY BOARD

On: 7TH JUNE 2005

**Report by
Director of Planning & Transport**

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE - TOLLED BRIDGE REVIEW - PHASE 2 CONSULTATION, APRIL 2005

1. Summary

1.1 This report outlines the key elements of the Scottish Executive publication "Tolled Bridge Review - Phase 2 Consultation, April 2005" and sets out this Council's response.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Board is asked to:-

1. Approve this report as the Council's response to the Scottish Executive consultation titled "Tolled Bridge Review - Phase 2 Consultation April 2005";
2. Note that this Council remains opposed to tolls remaining on the Erskine Bridge; and
3. Authorise the Leader of the Council to write directly to the Transport Minister, expressing the strength of this Council's opposition to the continuance of tolls and to continue to lobby for the abolition of tolls through the Clyde Valley Community Planning Partnership

3. Background

3.1 In 2004, the Scottish Executive undertook a first phase of consultation on Scotland's tolled bridges. This was mostly concerned with the potential of using tolls on the Forth, Tay and Erskine Bridges to manage traffic distribution and growth. In this respect Council officers attended two presentations on the Erskine Bridge and the extent to which traffic would re-route in the circumstances where the bridge was free, or subjected to different levels of tolls. Analysis indicated that making the Erskine Bridge free provided an element of traffic relief to the Clyde tunnel.

3.2 The current element of the consultation seeks to look at the broader issues associated with tolled bridges, including the management, operation and maintenance of the tolled bridges and how tolled bridges may relate to the

proposed new Regional and National Transport arrangements. The document highlights the Scottish Executive desire 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.

3.3 With respect to Erskine Bridge, a key issue is the expiry of the current Tolling Order on 1st July 2006. A new Order will be required to continue tolling beyond this date.

3.4 Consultation responses are requested by 8th July 2005 in the form of answers to 20 specific questions asked in the consultation paper. The questions are generally applicable to all 3 tolled bridges (ie. Forth, Tay and Erskine) and appear to assume that charging will continue.

4. Discussion and Council response

4.1 Consultation on the three tolled bridges (Forth, Tay and Erskine) is unusual because the circumstances at each bridge are radically different. In the case of the Tay and Forth Bridges, there is no opportunity for traffic to divert due to tolls except by making long diversions. The application of tolls and the level of pricing at Tay and Forth Bridges can therefore serve to manage traffic growth and influence lifestyle decisions such as transport mode and even preferred locations for living in relation to work.

4.2 In the west, the Erskine Bridge is one of a number of river crossings including the Clyde tunnel and surface level bridges in Glasgow. For a significant proportion of traffic that uses the Erskine Bridge, there are realistic alternatives. The potential to use tolling on the bridge as an instrument of traffic management is therefore unrealistic. Indeed analysis shows that removal of tolls would assist traffic volumes in the Clyde tunnel which experiences capacity problems at peak periods. We believe therefore that the Erskine Bridge is a special case and should not be considered in the same context as the Forth and Tay Bridges.

4.3 The Council continues to hold the view that the bridge should be free in the same manner as the remainder of the strategic road network in this area. Removal of tolls would enhance the linkage between jobs and residential areas north and south of the river. The strong social, economic and environmental arguments for abolishing tolls on the Erskine Bridge were forcibly made to the Executive, at the time of the initial consultation, in a letter jointly signed by the 9 Council Leaders associated with the Clyde Valley Community Planning Partnership. This grouping will continue to lobby for the removal of tolls from the Bridge.

4.4 An argument the Scottish Executive may raise against this approach is the need for a revenue stream to fund ongoing maintenance of the bridge. This Council considers however that maintenance of the Erskine Bridge should be no different to the maintenance of the Kingston Bridge in Glasgow or the White Cart Viaduct in Renfrewshire ie. directly from Scottish Executive funds. Indeed there are a number of large bridges in Scotland which do not rely on tolls for ongoing maintenance. Whilst in the longer term universal road

pricing may deliver a combination of traffic management objectives combined with increased revenue, there is no logic in applying road pricing to Erskine Bridge in isolation. The current situation at the Erskine Bridge could be considered to be an historical anomaly in this respect.

- 4.5 Erskine Bridge is an important element of the strategic road network, the only realistic management arrangement is therefore to leave the bridge in the control of the authority which looks after the trunk road network. At present that is the Scottish Executive.
- 4.6 Given the strength of this Council's views on these issues, there is no merit in answering the 20 detailed questions (most of which relate to ways of amending existing tolling methods) which form the Executive's current consultation. In addition, given the different administrative and operational issues relating to the Forth and Tay Road Bridges, this Council does not offer any particular view about their future.

Implications of this Report

1 **Financial Implications** - none

2 **Personnel Implications** - none

3 **Community Plan Implications**

Social inclusion - none

Modernising government - none

Sustainable development - The outcome of this consultation on bridge tolls will have a significant effect on economic activity north and south of the Clyde and impact directly on our sustainable development strategy.

4 **Legal Implications** - none

5 **Property Implications** - none

6 **Information Technology Implications** - none

7 **Race Equality Implications** - none