

Good news for Wirral

TUNNEL TOLLS: WE'LL REVIEW THEM, SAY CONSERVATIVES



Looking back on the recent history of the tolls: page 2

Toll profits - after all costs - have hit £10 million.

Tell Esther if you support the tolls review: page 2

Years of lobbying by tunnel users and Esther McVey has finally led to action from the Government on the tolls to use the Mersey Tunnels.

The tunnels are owned and operated by Merseytravel which is financed by taxpayers, Government grants and, of course, the tolls.

Merseytravel is run by a small group of councillors drawn from each of the five councils in Merseyside. Since Labour agreed to the creation of a 'Super

Council' covering all five councils, including Wirral, Merseytravel has come under its control. Both Merseytravel and the 'Super Council' are run by Labour Councillors.

There has been mounting anger from tunnel users in Wirral ever since MPs in 2004 gave Merseytravel the legal right to raise the tolls each year if they wanted.

Esther McVey, who opposed the change in the law, back in 2004, has now won the agreement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to carry out a full review of the tolls, including their impact on the Wirral economy.

Esther said: "Working with residents and tunnel users, we have kept up the pressure on Merseytravel and, this year, they were forced to U-turn on plans to raise the tolls yet again.

"However, this game of 'cat and mouse' is not a long-term solution for Wirral. That's why I believe it is time we introduced a discount for residents, along the lines of the scheme planned for the crossings at Runcorn."

The Chancellor has agreed to Esther's call for a review and has confirmed it will be carried out by the end of this year. What do you think? [Tell Esther using the details on Page 2.](#)

Promoted by Sophie Dean on behalf of Esther McVey, both at 24 Meols Drive, Hoylake CH47 4AN and printed by ilovedesignandprint.com, 8 New Road, London N22 5ET

Last year, accounts revealed the surplus raised after all costs are taken into consideration. They were projected to rise 26% this year from £7.7m to £9.7m

The Liverpool Echo reported last year how Merseytravel came under fire after accounts revealed an expected £10million "profit" from Mersey tunnel tolls'.

For the first time income from the tolls will smash through the £40m barrier, rising from £38,995,000 to £41,390,000.

The revelation came days before the controversial decision by Merseytravel to increase tolls for car drivers from £1.60 to £1.70 came into effect.

Esther said: "This is why we need the review. The tolls are not about the upkeep of the tunnels. They are being used for a completely different purpose nowadays.

"This is money that is coming from the pockets of drivers - many of whom have no choice but to use the tunnels for work, hospital appointments or visiting family. I believe the tolls - the £41 million now collected - are acting as a drag on Wirral's economy."

Tunnel Tolls: story so far

The tolls were introduced when the tunnels were built in order to repay the costs of their construction. However, the tolls now are being used to raise extra cash for Labour-run Merseytravel to fund transport schemes elsewhere.

1992: The Mersey Tunnel Tolls start making profit for Merseytravel.

1999: Labour councillors start lobbying for a change in the law to give them the power to increase tolls, never reduce them and use the profits elsewhere.

2000: Labour MP for Crosby sponsored the Bill, but it fails at the first hurdle when she sits in the wrong part of the Commons. A three-hour debate is cancelled.

2003: Labour and Merseytravel try a second time to get the Tunnel Tolls Bill through Parliament and reintroduces the Bill. Lord David Hunt of Wirral leads the fight against the Bill. Residents join together and form the Mersey Tunnel Users Association.

2004: Esther McVey, candidate for Wirral West, teams up with Lord Hunt as the petition against the Bill goes to committee. The Third Reading is in June 2004 with David Hunt leading the opposition but Labour and Lib Dems votes outnumber the Conservatives and the Bill is passed, giving Merseytravel the power to increase tolls.

2005: Merseytravel increases the car toll from £1.20 to £1.30.

2008: Merseytravel increases the car toll to £1.40.

2010: Esther McVey is elected as MP for Wirral West and begins working for local residents opposing the tolls.

2011: Merseytravel increases the car toll to £1.50.

2013: Merseytravel increases the car toll to £1.60. After Esther McVey requested information from Merseytravel they admitted they had 'destroyed' the information relating to the preparation, sponsorship and implementation of the Tunnels Act 2004. Esther McVey argues for a repeal of the Tunnels Act.

2014: Merseytravel increases the car toll to £1.70. Esther McVey lobbies the Chancellor for funding for a reduction in or free crossings for Wirral residents.

2015: Following sustained pressure by Esther McVey, the Chancellor announces a review into whether Wirral residents could be exempt from tolls if the Conservatives win the General Election. Labour condemns the decision.

The review will conclude by the end of 2015.

Tunnel Tolls: have your say

1. Do you agree or disagree with calls by Esther McVey for the introduction of a discount for Wirral residents who use the tunnels?

Agree Disagree Not sure

2. Do you or members of your family use the tunnels for:

Work Pleasure Neither

Any other comments?

Your name and address:

Return this slip to: Esther McVey 24 Meols Drive, Hoylake CH47 4AN or email esther@esthermcvey.com