



Welsh Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [the future of the Severn River crossings](#), HC 171

Monday 13 June 2016

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 13 June 2016.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Freight Transport Association](#)

Members present: David T. C. Davies (Chair); Byron Davies; Chris Davies; Gerald Jones; Craig Williams

Questions 66 – 99

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Ian Jarman**, Vice Chair, Freight Council in Wales, and **Ian Gallagher**, Head of Policy (Southwest & Wales), Freight Transport Association, gave evidence.

Q66 Chair: Can I welcome everyone to the Drill Hall in Chepstow? I think this is the first time in a number of years that the Welsh Affairs Select Committee has been down to Monmouthshire. Normally we meet in Parliament in one of the Select Committee rooms and some people may have seen this on the television, although I won't pretend that it is compulsive viewing.

It is great to get out and about. We do come down to Wales a lot but generally to the Welsh Assembly at Cardiff, so it is nice to be able to get out and about in the community a little bit and particularly to my own constituency of Monmouth. I would like to welcome everyone here and to thank all those who have turned up.

As I explained earlier on, the process and protocol around this is fairly strictly governed, in that in the first 45 minutes we will be taking evidence, as we do in Parliament, from the Freight Transport Association. Following that, from around 10.45 am, although we could let it go on for a few minutes longer if necessary, we will be taking questions and points of view from any members of the public who are here, if you can bear with us for 45 minutes.

Let me start by welcoming Mr Jarman and Mr Gallagher from the Freight Transport Association. We have met many times before. You will be giving us evidence for the next 45 minutes in connection with the future of the Severn Bridge, which as we all know is going to go back to public ownership—we do not know exactly when, but at some point either towards the end of 2017 or, more likely perhaps, in early 2018.

Can I begin by asking you gentlemen how the current cost of tolls compares with tolling in other parts of the UK on similar bits of infrastructure?

Ian Jarman: The Severn Bridge is the most expensive toll bridge to cross in an HGV in the UK. There are no discounts whatsoever given to any haulage company to use the Severn Bridge, unlike the Humber, the Mersey, the Tamar and the Dartford Crossing. The Dartford Crossing offers a 50% discount for using a TAG. The company that I work for, Owens Group, spends £350,000 a year on crossing the Severn Bridge, and we are calling for a big reduction in tolls when it comes back to public ownership. Crossing the Humber Bridge costs £12 for an HGV of 7.5 tonnes or more. With a TAG it is £10.80, giving a discount of £1.20. For the Dartford Crossing it is £6. If you have a commercial account it is £5.19. The Tamar Bridge is £16.40 to cross but if you have a TAG system, you get a 50% discount to £8.20. The Mersey Tunnels are £6.18 and with the fast TAGs that they use up there, it is £4.18.

Q67 Chair: For the purpose of clarification, all those other bridges and tunnels you listed charge in each direction, don't they? You could say the comparison would be that you have to double the figures you have just quoted. Is that correct?

Ian Jarman: They do, apart from the Tamar. The Tamar is one way.

Q68 Chair: What was the Tamar again? How much is the Tamar? I do not have that one.

Ian Jarman: The Tamar cost is £16.40; £8.20 with the TAG.

Ian Gallagher: If I could add to that, one of the main points that needs to be raised is the discount for local residents. I know we are concentrating on our members, who are primarily movers of goods—goods vehicles above 3.5 tonnes—but the Dartford Crossing, for example, gives quite a generous discount for the local residents, which is £10 paid annually for 50 crossings or £20 paid annually for unlimited crossings for that year. There are initiatives and benefits out there for local residents, and I think that could be explored as we move forward. Certainly we could look at other incentives for essential road users such as goods vehicles and buses.

Q69 Chair: To conclude this point, you would be absolutely confident that the Severn Bridge users pay the highest tolls anywhere in the United Kingdom for any comparable piece of infrastructure?

Ian Gallagher: Absolutely. The Humber Bridge does have a very high toll for the heaviest vehicles, but the reality is that there are six bands on the Humber Bridge as far as tolls are concerned, so right across the fleet, with the three-tier system that they have on the Severn Bridge, it makes the Severn Bridge far more expensive. Vans, for example, goods vehicles below 3.5 tonnes, are paying £13.

Q70 Chair: That will end, though, won't it, when the concession ends? I think they are going to scrap the class 2.

Ian Gallagher: The Chancellor announced in the 2015 Budget that they are going to remove that and incorporate that into tier 1, although it was not mentioned in the last Budget.

Chair: That might be something to chase up. Thanks for that. Can I then go to Byron Davies, who is the MP for Gower?

Q71 Byron Davies: I know that in your submission you have set out certain issues regarding the bridge and maintenance and so on. What do you think should be included in the toll? What should the toll consist of?

Ian Gallagher: Ultimately, what I believe the toll post-2018 should consist of, if it is not scrapped altogether, which would be absolutely lovely, is the operating and maintenance costs of the bridge only. That is estimated to be anywhere between £13 million to £15 million. Last year the bridges took in something like £97 million, and Severn River Crossing recorded a net profit of £17 million. There is certainly room to come down further than the 50% the Chancellor announced in the 2016 Budget, but I do believe the maintenance costs should include the operating costs of the bridge. What that looks like is still quite—

Q72 Byron Davies: Can you clarify what operating costs means?

Ian Gallagher: Staff costs, the administration of any charging regime—that sort of thing. In my view, the road infrastructure should be taken back by Highways England. If the Government are talking about administering the bridges, then I believe the road infrastructure itself should be taken back by Highways England and maintained by them.

Q73 Byron Davies: Let us be clear on that: you mean the surface?

Ian Gallagher: The surface, yes.

Q74 Byron Davies: The structure itself would be quite separate to that?

Ian Gallagher: Absolutely. You have only to come across the first bridge. It is quite a patchwork of a road at the moment and I think it could do with a general overhaul.

Byron Davies: I know.

Ian Jarman: Everything that my colleague has said is absolutely spot on. The administration and maintenance costs really are what the toll should be covering post-2017 or 2018.

Chair: Thank you very much. Could I next call Craig Williams, who is the MP for Cardiff North?

Q75 Craig Williams: In your submissions you have talked about the delays of the toll. I would like to draw out the experience of your members about the delays with the tolls on the bridge and the impact of that on businesses.

Ian Jarman: A 44 tonne articulated lorry costs approximately £1 a minute in congestion. We see delays with the TAGs at the booths at busy and peak periods of 20 or 25 minutes quite regularly. Not only are we being charged the £19.80 to cross the bridge but we have to take in the additional cost of the delay, so it is doubling our costs for members.

Q76 Craig Williams: The delays are costing you more than the toll?

Ian Jarman: Yes, and this is why we always try to schedule movements when it is not at peak flow, trying to miss the rush hour. We cannot do it always but we do try to schedule things. We do not want vehicles tied up in congestion any longer than they need to be.

Q77 Craig Williams: How would you want this alleviated, apart from abolishing the toll?

Ian Jarman: Abolishing the toll would be fantastic, but we need to look at other incentives. The Dartford Crossing between the hours of 10.00 pm and 6.00 am is free passage. Something like that would make operators think, “We need to send the vehicles out to get them back before 6 o’clock,” and the cost is going to be positive for any organisation then. You get your vehicle back into Wales before 6 o’clock. As we said, if we abolish the tolls that would not even be a concern, but we have been told by local operators on the Dartford Crossing that they use the bridge between 10.00 pm and 6.00 am, and that works for them.

Ian Gallagher: One of the ways of mitigating or alleviating the congestion is to introduce a free-flow toll. The technology is available and it has been proven now on the Dartford Crossing. They need to sort their own administration out a little bit better for the collection of those tolls behind the scenes, but it is keeping traffic moving. If we had a very similar system or a hybrid system on the Severn Bridge where it was free-flow TAG, a bit like the Humber Bridge, that would keep the vehicles moving and reduce congestion. A TAG lane is all well and good, but if you can’t get to the TAG lane because you are caught in congestion, this is where the largest vehicle and the £1 per minute operating cost kicks in. For any minute you are stuck in that traffic, you are in effect doubling the amount of the toll to cross that bridge.

Craig Williams: I am very interested in the concept of on-peak and off-peak periods, where we can ease the congestion on the M4 by making it free to use the tolls.

Chair: We were going to come back to free-flow afterwards, but we will see whether we need to explore that further. Can I go to Byron Davies next, please?

Q78 Byron Davies: One of the interesting impacts possibly on the Severn Bridge would be this M4 relief road. Do you think it would be adverse or to the benefit of the crossing?

Ian Gallagher: From my point of view, I think it is going to be of benefit, but it needs to be built first and we need to have some agreement that it is likely to be built. I have a feeling there is going to be an announcement on the news today.

Q79 Byron Davies: We have heard today. I heard from Ken Skates, the Assembly Member responsible for it in the Government, that there might be a consultation on it, which is going to probably extend the period of talks.

Ian Gallagher: Another public consultation.

Byron Davies: What is your view on that?

Ian Gallagher: Frankly, if I had to put something in very quickly, it would be to make your mind up and get it built, or make your mind up and do something else if you are not going to build it, but make your mind up. At the moment it is just costing millions and

millions of pounds of taxpayer money, which is purely and simply going to consultants. Do something or don't do something, but whatever it is, make your mind up.

Q80 Byron Davies: How do you see it affecting the Severn Bridge?

Ian Gallagher: The ARUP report in 2012 highlighted situations where they carried out a model and they tried a number of different scenarios. One of them was to reduce the toll by 50% and one of them was to get rid of tolls altogether. Apart from the fact that scrubbing the toll altogether would benefit the Welsh economy by £107 million, or the Welsh GDP by £107 million, it did indicate that there would be an increase in traffic. If you look at the Humber Bridge as an example, in 2012 they reduced the tolls and the traffic peak levels on the Humber Bridge went up by 30%. I think we can assume that if you are going to reduce the toll or scrap the tolls altogether on the Severn Bridge then we will encourage greater use of that bridge.

On the impact on the M4, obviously there is going to be greater traffic at peak times and it is likely to be a disbenefit because of the bigger queues as everybody tries to get through.

Q81 Chair: The experts came out with an estimate on the increase in traffic flows if the tolls come down by 50% and it was quite a small increase. I think from memory, and I can't quite see it here, it was 5% and 12%. I thought that was very much on the low side, but I am not an expert.

Ian Gallagher: To be honest, the modelling was carried out at a time when we were in a rather depressed economy. I think they are low as well, by the way, because they were talking about an increase of about 11,000 vehicles for scrapping the tolls altogether.

Q82 Chair: I think so. My gut instinct tells me so anyway. Can I ask another question that we put to SRC last week? What is your assessment of the condition of the bridges and how do we make sure that maintenance is done in a way that reduces congestion and disruption?

Ian Gallagher: All I can say on the maintenance of the bridges is that from what I can see there is nothing out there in the public domain, apart from the work that has been carried out on the cableway, that indicates that the bridges are in bad repair.

Q83 Chair: We did put it to SRC, so I will ask this more perhaps for the audience here. There has been a rumour that has occasionally floated around that there are secret plans to shut down the old bridge or that it is in a bad state of repair. SRC said that is absolutely not the case. I take it that the FTA are happy with the current state of affairs and have not heard anything to the contrary?

Ian Gallagher: I have not. I remember a conversation about two years ago when they were talking about knocking it down, believe it or not, and the cost of doing that. I think the figure of £100 million or something was being bandied around as the cost for taking it down altogether, but that was never spoken of again. I am not sure whether it has been kicked into the long grass or whatever but I have certainly not heard of any plans at all.

Chair: I am keen to dispel that rumour and SRC certainly say that there is no evidence for it. Can I go to Craig Williams next on methods of payment?

Q84 Craig Williams: We have touched a bit on the variety of payments at the Severn Bridge but can we draw some more out on it? You now have contactless, and you had a hybrid of that before. How does that compare to others and how would you like to see that progressing?

Ian Jarman: Free-flow technology, ANPR, is not new. It has been around for many years. It is now very accurate. If we go into London congestion charging we get fined, so the technology is there. You can have a database with residents and companies where they register their vehicles and it can be debited straight out of a bank account. That would increase the free flow across both bridges extremely fast. I drive over the bridge and I do not have a TAG for my personal car. I am there and I am searching for money, and it slows things down. You just pass a barrier and the camera will pick it up. If you have not paid or you have not registered your vehicle then you will get a fine. That should be the way it works in the future.

Ian Gallagher: If I can add to that, contactless, for example, is a very new addition to the bridge. In my view, the present payment structures on the Severn Bridge are antiquated. They have been antiquated for many years. They have certainly not kept up with the payment structures of other bridges. I think that is probably down to the administration of the bridge, the concessionaire. I heard the evidence last week from Severn River Crossing and I think their comment was, “We would rather pay the bridges off quicker than invest in that sort of technology”. I have never heard of a company making £17 million profit talking about trying to get rid of this great burden with a generous £17 million profit. I am not sure if that is quite right. I think it is a case where the concession is coming to an end. A more realistic situation is that they are not looking to invest now and they are keen to hand the bridges over, and I think they have been looking to do that for a number of years.

The change regarding credit cards was almost forced on Severn River Crossing because of the Ryder Cup, so they have been very slow.

Q85 Craig Williams: It sounds like a “Gavin & Stacey” episode. The TAG arrangements were criticised quite openly in the written evidence we have had today. On the improvements we are going to see, is that access in terms of the congestion with the TAG or is the TAG more broadly an old system?

Ian Jarman: The TAG is very old technology. I have worked for three companies and I have had drivers who have used the TAG, taken them out of their vehicle, and used them on the weekend for their own cars. It is open to fraud. The company I work for now has tracking data. We can follow when vehicles have passed over. We can then go back to Severn River Crossing and say, “That TAG didn’t go across in our vehicle. Can you let us know which vehicle went over?”, and they have in the past given us the registration of a car going across paying £19.16 when it should have been £5 for a car. We know that is fraud and we take it up with the police.

Ian Gallagher: The Humber Bridge has just introduced a new system that incorporates the use of the TAG but is more sophisticated than the TAG we have today. It is free-flow, ANPR, and it does allow you, if you are a TAG holder, to use the TAG lane and drive straight through now, but you have to do something with the payment methods at the other booths. If you cannot get to the TAG lane in the first place then it is a complete waste of time.

As far as the TAG itself, if that is the way they want to do it, then, yes. The TAG deposit is £30, one of the highest deposits on any bridge. If we are going to go with the TAG we should look at that deposit and bring it down. I am not sure what percentage Severn River Crossing are holding for deposits.

Q86 Chair: It is an interesting point. We should have asked that last week. I think we have really covered the TAG free-flow stuff. Can I skip to one that interests me, and I suspect everyone behind you, and this is on two-way tolling? Would you be for or against two-way tolling, or have any strong views, and do you think it would be possible to bring in free-flow in both directions?

Ian Gallagher: I think it could be possible and I would not argue against two-way tolling, but the toll itself or the charge that is levied on those bridges must come down accordingly. If you are going to halve it, you are going to have to halve it again or there would be no benefit there at all.

Q87 Chair: I have seen two arguments for it. One is that it is wrong to charge for coming into Wales as a matter of principle, and I am not quite sure about that, but also that a lot of vehicles are trying to take a different route to come in towards the south Wales area, Chepstow, for example, and are coming down through the Forest of Dean. Is that something that you have noticed within the haulage industry? Mr Jarman, as you are still working in the industry at the moment, would some hauliers consider sending vehicles down?

Ian Jarman: We would not come down through the Forest of Dean. Coming from the Midlands we have two routes, M5, M4 or it is the M50, A449. We do not have them coming off route. Until recently, the roads really were not built for 44 tonne articulated lorries.

Q88 Chair: Could you save a bit of money by doing that, if you so wished?

Ian Jarman: I looked at this in a previous role, bringing vehicles down from Manchester through the routes I have previously mentioned. We had one customer who said, "You must bring your vehicle down the M5, M4 and we will make sure that you are covered with the cost of the tolls," and we had another customer who would say, "You are going to get down there. That is the way we are paying you for that job." The tolls were definitely something where we would have to say we would come down the M50, A449. If the tolls are reduced to such a level or they are abolished completely there is an argument then that you have to start looking at your cost-time benefit coming down the M5, M4 rather than coming down through Ross-on-Wye with roundabouts, stop-starts, carbon emissions. It is something that we would consider looking at when the tolls are reduced: which is the most cost effective for our business?

Chair: I am going to turn now to Gerald Jones, who is the MP for Merthyr Tydfil. We have covered a few of the issues here, but we are about number 10 on your list, if you want to raise anything at all, Gerald.

Q89 Gerald Jones: Apologies for being late to the start of the meeting. Do you think that flexible pricing is an option to be considered at this point in time?

Ian Jarman: You certainly could be looking at flexible pricing. Emissions is a good one. We are now running Euro 6, which are the cleanest vehicles on the road in HGVs. You

could give a discount for use of a green vehicle coming across the Severn Bridges, so there is definitely scope for that.

Ian Gallagher: As far as flexible pricing is concerned, I would also look at the weight and number of axles and increasing the number of payment tiers. If we are, according to the Chancellor, removing tier 2, we will have two tiers only, which is basically up to 3.5 tonnes and vehicles over that. In effect I think that is too limited. It does not fully represent the size of vehicle coming across the bridge, so I think there need to be different tiers. There are examples from other bridge schemes across the country and the payments should reflect the size of the vehicle going across.

Q90 Gerald Jones: Have you been involved in any consultation or has anybody asked your views on this?

Ian Gallagher: No, not at all. In fact, interestingly, we had an FTA summit at Portcullis House last week where we had the Minister for Transport along to answer questions and it was quite clear that there is no information out there. There seems to be no engagement with stakeholders or road users that I am aware of. The Minister's go-to was they are in consultation that we can expect some time in the autumn.

Chair: Thank you very much for that. Byron Davies, I think we have basically covered the TAG and the flexible charges. I am thinking about the local economy.

Q91 Byron Davies: I know that the ARUP study showed that scrapping the toll altogether would boost Welsh GDP by £107 million and I know that in your submissions the Owens Group said that a 50% reduction in toll prices would provide an economic boost to GDP of £53 million and open up the job markets along the English side of the M4 corridor. What impact do you think halving toll prices might have on the local economy?

Ian Jarman: I think it will be a good thing for the local economy, especially tourism. I have friends who live on the English side of the Severn Crossing who say to me, "We are not coming to you. It costs too much," but it would be good for the Welsh economy and tourism would benefit. There should be less of a charge for bringing goods into Wales, which should be a reduction, albeit fairly small, across the cost to the Welsh economy.

Ian Gallagher: The reality with the tolls at the moment is that if the toll was scrapped it would be beneficial for companies to consider Wales as a place to invest or to relocate to or to establish a new business. As Ian has already indicated, as a business they are paying £350,000. There is also another business in Newport that is paying £500,000 a year to cross the bridge, and because of that they have opened a site in Avonmouth.

Q92 Chair: Is that Shedix, by any chance?

Ian Gallagher: It is not Shedix, no. It is XPO Logistics. They were paying £500,000 a year and that is straight off the bottom line. The other disadvantage is the fact that if you have a business in Wales and you are looking to tender for work on the other side of the bridge you have to build in the cost of the bridge. It really is a disadvantage and almost like a tax on doing business with the rest of the UK. Get rid of it and it would probably have an impact on housing, people commuting to and from the south-west of England and into Wales, businesses where people may decide to come across the bridge to do their shopping in Newport, Cardiff and so on. That is not just speculation. There are good

examples with the Humber Bridge. The Buchanan report in 2009 clearly indicated that when they lowered the tolls there was a definite increase and it showed that if they lowered the toll there would be an increase in the number of businesses or investment on that side.

Q93 Chair: May I throw in a supplementary here? I am playing devil's advocate a bit, and I have to say my instincts are with you on this and I make that clear to everyone behind you. There is a concern in towns like Chepstow, which are already finding a decrease in the footfall in local shops, that if the tolls went completely or there was no toll at all a lot of people might decide to go over to Cribbs Causeway to do their shopping, or more than they are doing at the moment, instead of staying local. Is that also something we should bear in mind?

Ian Gallagher: Yes, but you would need evidence. I think you would need substantial evidence for that. I think there is a reality that there could be traffic coming the other way as well.

Chair: Yes, that is true.

Ian Gallagher: We do not know whether that would be the case. It depends on the price of fuel as well. If fuel remains at this particular level there is probably more of a case for people looking to make that journey, but if fuel prices rise then the number of people crossing the bridge may fall.

Q94 Craig Williams: Can I ask a supplementary to that before I move on? How much evidence can you put your hand to of how many businesses have moved to England because of the toll?

Ian Jarman: We opened up a depot in Droitwich five years ago purely and simply because we had movements that we were bringing down to Newport that we now put into Droitwich that will go down to Swindon. It is first-hand experience that we have opened up something on the English side of the border. Jobs have moved over there. A number of vehicles that we were operating have moved over there. There is another haulage firm in Bridgend that I know has a depot in the Swindon area purely and simply to service London, so it is happening.

Ian Gallagher: In the Freight Transport Association's study I have asked members to supply evidence of that. Unfortunately I have not had anything back that is meaningful. It does not mean that they haven't, it just means they have not told us.

Craig Williams: I know with the Government consultation if you can redouble your efforts to get that, it would be very powerful.

Chair: We have less than 10 minutes left, if we are going to stick to time, so I am going to move towards the handover issues and perhaps go to Chris Davies, who I should have introduced as the Member of Parliament for Brecon and Radnorshire.

Q95 Chris Davies: Thank you, Chairman, and apologies for being late. We have not heard a great deal about what happens at handover and thereafter. What do you think about where we are going and how worried are you about the handover? Do you have any information about the arrangements for the handover of the bridge?

Ian Gallagher: I am as much in the dark as everybody else, I am afraid. I feel sorry for the staff working on the Severn Crossing because they have no idea what is going to happen, whether the transition is going to be in 2017 or spring 2018. They do not know what the administration of the bridge is going to look like; if there are tolls for example; are they going to carry on the administration or are Government going to set up their own administration with a consultant? There does not appear to be any news out there at all, and we are as much in the dark as everybody else about what is going to happen. That is not from want of trying to get answers. In fact, we asked the question again last week at the Severn Crossing summit at Westminster and the Minister replied that he was calling for consultation.

Chair: I think we feel the same.

Ian Jarman: I am afraid there is no information out there that I am aware of.

Q96 Chris Davies: You do not have information so can I turn that round: from the industry's perspective, what would you like to see happen?

Ian Jarman: Something that is not focused on ourselves. Currently the TAGs do break down and there are great administration costs to a business if you have the little pink receipts and you then have to go to pay cash. Something that revolves around free-flow technology, being able to put your vehicle on to a database linked to a bank account and as soon as that vehicle has passed the camera the money will be taken straight out of your account. To me it does not seem in this day and age to be rocket science. Simplify things, make things easy for residents and businesses. It has to be simplified.

Chair: Excellent, thank you.

Q97 Gerald Jones: We have been informed that when the bridge transfers to public ownership there will be a deficit and also any costs associated with the free-flow technology. Given that and in that context, do you think it is feasible that there will be any further reductions in the toll prices?

Ian Gallagher: From what has already been announced, do you mean?

Gerald Jones: Yes.

Ian Gallagher: I think the French gentleman, the expert in tolls, was very interesting last week. The cost of the free-flow technology of £1.6 million or £1.7 million, I think he mentioned, could be incorporated in the £15 million that is collected, so I think there is plenty of scope. It depends whether you are going to toll both ways and there is an additional cost if you are going to do that but I think that could be incorporated in the £15 million. I do believe there is scope for it to come down further.

Ian Jarman: I would like to add that in 2011 the Government wrote off a debt on the Humber Bridge of £150 million, so what is good for one region should really be good for the economics of another region.

Chair: A very good point. May I move on to the last question from a former Member of the Welsh Assembly?

Q98 Craig Williams: You have given the secret away now. The UK Government's response to the Silk commission stated that when the Severn Crossings return to public ownership the Westminster Government would work with the Welsh Government to have a long-term view for the future of the Severn Crossings. Do you have any view on this?

Ian Gallagher: I think we have to be careful with this. As far as our members are concerned they are not bothered who administers the bridges, the central Government or the Welsh Government. The reality is if the Welsh Government want to administer the bridge, are they looking at that as revenue raising? The last thing we want on bridges that have already been paid for by the users of the bridges, not the taxpayer but by the users of the bridges, is that whoever administers them sees them as a cash cow. That is not something that we want to see happen.

As far as our members are concerned, we basically say we do not care who administers them but they have to introduce realistic tolls or best case scenario would be to scrap them altogether. If the view was to scrap them altogether, I am not sure that the Welsh Government would then look at wanting to administer it anyway. They might as well stay where they are. There would be no benefit in that.

Q99 Craig Williams: A cynic might say that if it was in the hands of the Welsh Government it could pay for a relief road.

Ian Gallagher: They could but I would like to say that the bridges should not be seen as a cash cow. The bridges have already been paid for by the road users. It should not be used to raise revenue. I think it would be unfair to those people who have already paid for it and business in Wales.

Ian Jarman: What I would like to add there is how could the Welsh Government administer the bridges when there are three legs of the bridge in England? Being a Welshman, great, but from an English perspective I do not see how that could work.

Chair: That is a great pub trivia question: where does the old bridge start and end? We have just about finished on time, which is great because I would like to welcome members of the public here. I am not sure if I need to formally shut down this part of the meeting. My clerk says no, and he knows the answer. Thank you all very much indeed. If you would like to make your way out, or back to the audience, gentlemen, and thank you for your evidence. In a minute I will start taking some questions.