

718/SW/08

19 December 2008

## SEVERN BRIDGES TOLLS

On 1 January 2009, new toll prices will be introduced on the M48 Severn Bridge and M4 Second Severn Crossing, as stipulated in the Severn Bridges Act 1992.

To reflect the recent reduction in the rate of VAT, the revised toll levels for 2009 have been set below the level of annual inflation. The new rates will be:

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u> <u>(current)</u>
Category I Cars and Motor Caravans	£5.40	£5.30
Category II Small Goods Vehicles & Small Buses	£10.90	£10.60
Category III Heavy Goods Vehicles & Buses	£16.30	£15.90

The new rates have been agreed by the Concessionaire, Severn River Crossing Plc (SRC), who amend the tolls at the start of the year.

Transport Minister, Paul Clark said:

"We are pleased that, with the Concessionaire's consent, we are able to pass on the VAT reduction to allow motorists to benefit from this change"

## Notes to Editors

1. The Highways Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Transport. We manage, maintain and improve England's motorways and major A roads on behalf of the Secretary of State.
2. The Severn Bridges Act 1992 sets out the tolling arrangements and the basis for the yearly increases in the toll rates. The annual increases are calculated on the basis of the change in the Retail Price Index since 1989.
3. In September 2000, the European Court of Justice ruled that Value Added Tax (VAT) should be applied to tolls levied by private operators, including the Severn Crossings Concession. The Government gave a commitment to protect the motorist from the impact of the ruling by including the VAT within the existing toll. This was achieved by extending the SRC Concession through refinancing. VAT was applied to the Severn Bridges tolls on 1 February 2003 at 17.5%.
4. The M48 Severn Bridge was replaced as the main route for traffic travelling to and from South Wales in 1996 when the M4 Second Severn Crossing opened. The M48 Severn Bridge was opened by HM The Queen on 8 September 1966, and replaced the ferry service between Aust Cliff and Beachley. The bridge cost £8m to build, and is estimated to have carried over 300,000,000 vehicles since opening in 1966. The River Severn is 1 mile wide at high tide at this point. The main bridge span is 3,240 feet. The towers are 445 feet high.
5. Real-time traffic information for England's motorways and major A roads is available:
  - From the web at [www.highways.gov.uk/trafficinfo](http://www.highways.gov.uk/trafficinfo)
  - By phone from the Highways Agency 24-hour voice activated phone service on 08700 660 115. (Calls from BT landlines to 0870 numbers will cost no more than 8p per minute; mobile calls usually cost more).
  - Before using a mobile, find a safe place to park. Never stop on the hard shoulder of a motorway except in an emergency. Make sure it's safe and legal before you call.
6. For more general information about the Highways Agency and its work, visit the Highways Agency website [www.highways.gov.uk](http://www.highways.gov.uk), or telephone the Highways Agency Information Line on 08457 50 40 30 at any time. (Calls to 0845 numbers cost no more than **3p/min from** BT residential landlines. Call charges from other landlines and mobile networks may vary).

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