

ERSKINE BRIDGE TOLLS ACT 2001

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND

3. The Erskine Bridge was first opened to traffic on 2 July 1971. The power to levy tolls at the Bridge is set out in section 1 of the Erskine Bridge Tolls Act 1968 (hereafter referred to as “the 1968 Act”). Under section 4(1) of the 1968 Act tolling was to cease 20 years after the Bridge opened. However, section 4(3) enabled the Secretary of State, and now the Scottish Ministers, to extend by order the tolling period by 5 years. Further extension orders could be made consecutively. The original 20-year period was extended in 1991 and 1996.
4. During early 2000 the Scottish Executive reviewed the position with regard to tolling at the Erskine Bridge, and in August 2000 the Scottish Ministers concluded that the tolling period should be extended for a further 5 years from 2 July 2001. Due to an administrative error the instrument necessary to achieve this was not laid before the Parliament prior to that date. The Act therefore restores the position on tolling to the point it would have been at 1 July 2001 had this error not been made.
5. Section 4(2) of the 1968 Act provides that tolls cannot be set at a level that would, in aggregate, exceed the amount needed to cover the relevant costs attributable to the Bridge set out in Schedule 2 to the 1968 Act. This includes the capital costs of constructing the Bridge, along with interest on those costs, and expenses associated with operating, maintaining, repairing, improving and renewing the Bridge.
6. Some 8.7 million crossings were made in the year 2000-01, of which 325,000 were exempt from paying tolls. Assuming tolls remain at the same level, income is likely to increase in future years in line with increases in traffic levels, which are currently projected at around 4.5-5% per annum. Toll income from the Bridge was £5 million in the financial year 2000-01. This is part of the retained income on the motorway and trunk roads programme. It supplements provision from the Assigned Budget.