



Procedural Governance

Whitney-on-Wye Toll Bridge

or

‘How does it work?’

Updated August 2017



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Background

The UK has a tradition of privately financed toll roads and bridges of at least 200 years. Many bridges were built by local people, to benefit their community, and long distance roads or turnpikes were run by trusts. They were non-profit making, and tolls were charged to finance construction and maintenance. In the early 20th Century most roads ceased to be tolled; except for a handful of historic bridges – Whitney-on-Wye Toll Bridge being one of the eight remaining in private ownership. All of the toll fees have been granted as being tax free in order to maintain and sustain Whitney Bridge in perpetuity for the benefit of the wider community. This means the entire toll fee of £1 for motor vehicles is used to maintain and manage Whitney Bridge with none going into the main or local Government however nor does Whitney Bridge receive any help financially from Hereford Council or main government.

Act of Parliament

In 1774 an Act of Parliament was passed in order for Whitney Bridge at Whitney-on-Wye to be built. The main features of the Act are the tax status and the toll charges plus it also provides the guidance of how and why Whitney Bridge and Toll House were to be built. In 1780 and 1797 further Acts were passed with amendments to the 1774 which included guidance over design of build, toll charge frequency and Toll House variance. The final 1797 Act did not supersede the 1774 Act; it merely provided additional features.

Toll charges

All toll charge fee levels are set by Parliament and the Department of Transport – they cannot be changed by anyone else other than Parliament. They were last reviewed in June 2015 and these are the current agreed rates:

Category	Class of Traffic	Previous Toll Levy	New Agreed Toll Levy
1	Cycle which is not a motor vehicle	10p	Nil
2	Motor Cycle, with or without a sidecar	20p	Nil
3	Goods vehicle with a max. gross weight not exceeding 7.5 tonnes	80p	£1.00
4	Goods vehicle not within category 3 above	£1.40	£1.00



5	A car or other passenger vehicle not constructed or adapted to carry more than 16 passengers	80p	£1.00
6	Passenger vehicle constructed or adapted to carry more than 16 passengers, when not carrying any passengers	£1.40	£1.00
7	Passenger vehicle constructed or adapted to carry more than 16 passengers, when carrying one or more passengers	£1.80	£1.00
8	Daily tokens purchased in advance (in packs of 5) for category vehicles 3 – 7 above		70p
9	Annual Season ticket for unlimited daily crossing 24/7 365 days per year category vehicles 3 – 7 above		£120.00

We do not have a rate specified for blue badge holders by the Parliamentary review but we operate a 50% discount when asked. Unfortunately due to the nature of the automated system this is difficult to operate unless we can personally adjust it when crossing; however this is something we will be looking to address going forward.

The Act of 1797 makes provision for how the tolls are to be operated:

Tolls to be taken but Once a Day. VII. Provided always, and be it further enacted, That none of the Tolls herein-before granted shall be demanded or taken by any Person or Persons more than Once on the same Day, to be computed from Twelve of the Clock at Night to Twelve of the Clock in the succeeding Night, such Person or Persons producing a Ticket denoting Payment of the same (which Ticket the Collector or Collectors of the said Tolls is and are hereby required to deliver on Demand, gratis, on Receipt of the said Tolls).

The above paragraph states that each vehicle crossing is to pay just once a day and can cross as many times between midnight to midnight. The current automated system provides the driver with a code for them to personally use to pass through the barrier as many times as they personally wish up to midnight on that day.

Whitney Bridge allows free crossings for liveried fire appliances, police vehicles and ambulances. Free crossings are also allowed for NHS District staff



attending local households when on duty and for pick-up of local people to attend hospital appointments etc. – please call for further advice on this.

Whitney Bridge allows free crossings for all Military personnel and vehicles when on duty – please call at Toll Booth for advice on this during working hours or book ahead by telephone if out of normal working hours.

Due to the nature of the current automated system the machines do not give change for £2 coins tendered for the toll charge. However for regular users we do have tokens for sale at the Toll Booth which can be bought in advance at the following rates: 5 tokens - £3.50, 10 tokens - £6.00, 25 tokens - £15.00

Each token is equivalent to one £1 daily ticket with a saving of up to 40p on each one. This saves regular users money as well as not having to carry change also.

For ease some people tender £2 instead of £1 for their payment so in order to manage these overpayments we run four or five Charity Days per year where a local charity runs Whitney Bridge for the day and collects the Toll fees for their cause. They can also use the land and facilities to maximise their fundraising on these days – examples have been cake stalls, car washing, local area quiz, bacon rolls & coffee etc.

Between 2012 and 2017 there has been over £10 000 collected across fifteen different local community Charities.

Season tickets

There were no provisions for season tickets made under the Parliamentary review of toll charges; however, as a benefit to local people and businesses that need to use Whitney Bridge on a daily basis we can issue money saving value season tickets. The current rates are as follows:

3 month - £33.00
6 month - £65.00
1 year - £120.00

There is no deposit payable for the pass card but a £5 charge is payable for lost card replacement.



We can also arrange a monthly standing order option for the annual pass at £10 a month. For households with two cars we will issue two pass cards on one annual season ticket – we trust that the passes are being used for one family and would not wish this to be abused and passed around businesses etc. as this will only jeopardise the financial security for the future of Whitney Bridge.

Fines

All toll fees are used to maintain, insure and operate the function of Whitney Bridge – if fees are avoided and not paid the sustainability of Whitney Bridge is in jeopardy and could possibly lead to the closure of Whitney Bridge. This would then cause the local people and business community a serious problem in their day to day functions.

Under the Act of Parliament 1797 a fine of 20 shillings is payable for avoidance of payment of toll charges.

Preventing Persons counterfeit- ing, &c. the Tickets.

VIII. And be it further enacted, That if any Person shall give to or receive from any Person, other than the Collector of the said Tolls, any such Ticket as aforesaid, or shall forge or counterfeit any such Ticket, or make use of any forged or counterfeited Ticket, knowing the same to be forged or counterfeited, whereby the Payment of any of the said Tolls shall be avoided, every Person so offending shall, for every such Offence, forfeit and pay any Sum not exceeding Twenty Shillings, to and for the Use of the said Undertakers, their Heirs and Assigns, to be levied and recovered in the same Manner as any other Penalty for evading Payment of the Tolls granted by the said recited Act is thereby authorized to be levied and recovered.

In today's money this equates to excess of £100.00. The present level of fine has been set at £50 for any offence related to toll fee avoidance – this includes tail gating, code sharing and pass card sharing. The fine will be issued to both the people passing on and those receiving the code or pass cards.

If the automatic barrier is broken to avoid payment of toll charge the fine will be in addition to barrier repair costs which at present are approximately £250. We do have CCTV in operation and since 2012 we have only had two incidences of an intentional broken barrier. This has then been pursued by the police with the CCTV evidence and the fine implemented.

Whitney Bridge has a 7.5 tonnes weight limit and a 5mph speed limit. There are fines for crossing Whitney Bridge in a vehicle over the weight limit and for speeding.

Over weight limit fine:

For an empty coach (over 21 seats but under 54 seats) the fine is set at £100

For a coach (over 21 seats) with passengers the fine is set at £1,000

For a coach over 54 seats with or without passengers the fine is set at £1000

For an HGV the fine is set at £1,000

Fines are payable immediately on presentation of invoice – there is interest charged at £10 per day for late payment and will be added per day from day 5 after invoice date.

The fine fees from coaches and HGVs fund regular surveys of Whitney Bridge in order to manage the maintenance schedule and to pre-empt any long-term damage caused by overweight limit vehicles crossing. Each survey currently costs £3,000 + vat. And the last survey was carried out in September 2013. The fine is set at a level to be a deterrent in addition to cover survey and potential damage costs.

As the main Whitney Bridge structure is made of Green Oak, the top boards, when wet, can be slippery so speeding is very dangerous and can cause a driver to lose control of the vehicle. The fine for driving over the 5mph speed limit is £50.

Unfortunately there are occasions when drivers cross Whitney Bridge from Hay-on-Wye without the means of payment. There are warning signs 4 miles, 1.5 miles and directly at the entrance to Whitney Bridge informing the cost of the Toll crossing. We can now accept credit and debit card. If the driver has no means of payment we will agree for payment to be made at a later date in order to avoid delays for other Bridge users.



Camping, canoe land/launch, fishing and parking

Camping is encouraged at Whitney Bridge and is charged at £8 per adult per night (pppn) and £5 per child (under 12 years) which includes canoe land/launch, parking and use of facilities. The site can hold approx. 35 people max dependant on tent numbers. Facilities include: two (fully stocked) toilet facilities with hot water hand washing facilities, two fully equipped hot water showers, an outside cold shower head and drinking water tap. There are two hairdryers available for a small token charge plus free Wifi and charging points on site. There are fire pits where all camp fires can be lit on the site – wood can be provided. Canoe launch/land is charged at £1 per canoe when not camping. Parking is charged at £2 per 24 hours when not camping. There is a permit to issue for the car and this contains the parking disclaimer information.

Fishing day tickets are available at £10 per session (half, full, evening or night times) – please ensure you have your own rod licence.

Maintenance and marketing

There is an on-going maintenance schedule and an annual provision of approximately £15,000 is allocated. The most recent bridge structural survey was carried out in September 2013 which highlighted some pointing and general aesthetic issues with the stonework but no major structural concerns.

We are aware that toll fees alone will not sustain Whitney Bridge into the future and that the business needs to diversify in order to be financially stable and independent – therefore we have developed an aggressive maintenance and marketing plan over the last two years to balance this.

Since January 2012 the following maintenance and marketing work has been carried out:

1. Full painting of bridge white structure
2. Replacement of Green Oak curbs along the whole length of the bridge structure
3. Full landscaping and ground maintenance to provide additional camping spaces



4. Removal of wood debris from piers many times to keep river passage clear for canoeists
5. Fencing and wooden handrails replaced
6. Renovation of toilet facilities and including installation of lights and hot water
7. Removal of Welsh Water pipe from the Left Hand side of bridge structure
8. Structural pinning of wing wall near Toll Cottage to ensure safety of wall structures
9. Renovation of toll booth shed/lodge plus equipping it with facilities to provide hot drinks, breakfast, BBQ service to campers, canoeists and visitors
10. Purchase of picnic tables, umbrellas and bins onsite
11. Development of e-commerce marketing website and two 3-minute videos for the ongoing development of business
www.whitneybridge.co.uk
12. The creation and development of our bridge character Walter the troll with publication of the first book It's Walter under the Bridge in December 2013
13. Pot hole repairs
14. Refurbishment of traffic lights
15. Upgrade of coin machines to accept the new tokens (as previously explained)
16. Production of historical guide book and postcards for visitors to purchase
17. Installation and management of Geocache to attract more visitors
18. Negotiation with insurance companies to provide insurance on Whitney Bridge at an affordable rate and to include new facilities – we achieved a



reduction in costs from £14,100 in 2012 to £3,500 from November 2013 with an increased policy cover by working with NFU to achieve the correct policy

19. New signage development
20. Improved local support through engaging with good customer service, more facilities available, environment (clean tidy paintwork with hanging baskets and flower beds etc), better pricing structure for regular users and local charity days
21. Successful application for an Alcohol Premises Licence to provide drinks on site for camping groups
22. Purchase of a traditional ice-cream bike to provide ice-cream service to visitors
23. Repair, fix and paint metal debris shields on bridge piers
24. White paint outside of cottage
25. Removal of old conservatory, repair walls and repaint
26. Reclaim of an acre of land for camping and canoeing facilities
27. Provision of canoe facilities on-site
28. Refurbishment Jan 2016 of loo block to provide two showers
29. Replacement and repair of top oak boards on bridge deck August 2015
30. Further tree care with pruning and general maintenance
31. Building of a fishing platform for less able body fishing anglers
32. Purchase of a piece of land opposite bridge for overspill of camping/parking
33. Development of new website to enable community involvement
34. In July 2017 we have been selected as a finalist for Best Visitor Attraction in Herefordshire



Going forward

We are working with a parking system company to build a new modern automated payment/barrier system at present and will hopefully be ready to install in October 2017 – the cost is estimated at a minimum of £40,000 but will ensure the on-going sustainability of toll income to supplement maintenance. We are ensuring the new system will minimise all irregularities reported to us of the current system.

During 2012- 2017 and into the future our main aim for Whitney Bridge has been to build its reputation as a place of historic interest and for tourists to come to view the structure and review the Acts of Parliament etc – this will generate extra income for Whitney Bridge to become self-financing.

During 2013/2017 we have been developing a Master Plan of development which have been approved by the Planning Department to provide three Eco fishing lodges, a visitor's centre, renovation of Toll Booth Cottage for a café restaurant facilities plus the new rebuild of the toll house for a permanent toll manager.

Our acquisition of Whitney Bridge generated a great deal of national TV coverage at the time as well as local and national press and that continues. We have recently been featured on Secret Britain BBC 1 with Countryfile team and Antique Map of Great Britain with Tim Wonnacott, Ray Mears' Water Survival and most recently Bargain Hunt with Natasha Raskin – all of these programmes have generated traffic and tourism increase.

We are actively using all social networking avenues, i.e. Facebook and Twitter, in order to build the reputation of Whitney Bridge and engage with people locally as well as all over the world – all photos and stories of the above activities can be tracked on our Facebook site under photos

<https://www.facebook.com/WhitneyonWyeTollBridge?fref=ts>

