

**Press Release.**

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For immediate release.**

**Business says; Tolls should be invested in infrastructure.**

**The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and South Wales Chamber of Commerce have met to agree a joint position on the future of the Severn Bridge Tolls.**

Toll charges on the Severn Bridge have been long subject to debate. They are increased annually and collected from motorists travelling in one direction only, from east to west into Wales.

The Federation of Small Businesses commissioned research by Aberystwyth University to add the business perspective to this debate, and with concessions period due to end around 2016/17, now is the time to establish exactly what will happen when the concession agreement ends.

The research by Aberystwyth University concluded that the economic impact of the tolls on business was felt on the Welsh side of the bridge to a greater extent than on the English side. On the whole, the economic impact of the tolls was smaller than one would expect. Certain sectors, such as Welsh haulage was put under a great disadvantage due to the tolls. In other sectors, the impact was negligible.

As Wales suffers significantly more than the south west of England, the University also suggested that revenue from the tolls should be shared between the UK and Wales Governments to lower the impact on Welsh business.

As a result, the University suggested that the business would be best served by re-investing the profit from the tolls into infrastructure, rather than scrapping the tolls.

The FSB and South Wales Chamber therefore feel that revenue should be re-invested specifically into infrastructure to benefit the economy more widely, with concessions for the worst hit sectors, such as off-peak times to help hauliers and tourism businesses. However if this were not the case then it would be better for business if the tolls were scrapped.

**Ends**

**Notes to Editors**

Research by Aberystwyth University, commissioned by the Federation of Small Businesses, investigating economic impacts of the Severn Bridge tolls, 'The Severn Bridge: Taking its Toll on the Economy', October 2010 can be found at <http://www.fsb.org.uk/wales>