

MEDIA RELEASE

Disappointment at bridge toll rise

The MP for Whitchurch on Thames, John Howell, has expressed his disappointment that the toll for motor cars crossing Whitchurch Bridge will now be doubled to 40p.

The decision follows a public inquiry into proposals for the increase put forward by the company which owns the bridge (The Company of Proprietors of Whitchurch Bridge) which represents a doubling of the charge since its last increase in 2005.

Local residents in parishes on both sides of the bridge had objected to the increase and the impact this would have on those using the bridge on a regular basis. The campaign to stop the increase had been backed both by John Howell and Martin Salter MP, the MP on the Berkshire side of the bridge.

Both MPs had lobbied ministers and had submitted joint representations to the inquiry.

John Howell said:

“The inquiry inspector praised the way local residents had approached this increase and I would echo that. It has been a hard and professional campaign which has been well fought.

“I was heartened to see that the inspector agreed that the current legal situation of the bridge is illogical but that has not helped those regular users who will now have to face a doubling of the charge.

“This is an issue to which we will need to return. It may be possible to seek a change in the law and there will undoubtedly be more calls for the bridge to be part of the county council network.

“The priority now is to get the work on the bridge completed as quickly as possible so that we can take the issue forward.”

END