

# [News story: One year countdown begins to Severn tolls' abolition](#)

There is just a year to go until drivers will benefit from free travel into Wales across the Severn Crossings, thanks to the UK Government's promise to abolish the tolls by 31 December 2018.

The decision will strengthen the economic links and prospects of the natural corridor of South Wales and the South West of England, boosting the Welsh economy by an estimated £100m a year, and generating annual savings for regular motorists of thousands of pounds.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns has invited local partners and businesses from South East Wales and the South West of England to attend the first cross-border business summit in Newport on 22 January, in a bid to explore how links between the two economies can be strengthened ahead of removing the tolls.

## **Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:**

The major level of tolls on the Severn Crossings have represented a drag and barrier to Wales' economic growth for over half a century, in less than a year we will see the biggest economic stimulus for South Wales and the Valleys for decades.

My decision to abolish the tolls with the support of my UK Government cabinet colleagues is a boost to commuters, tourists and business owners alike who will be see extra money in their pockets as they make their way to and from Wales.

The tolls' removal will cement the ties between the economies and communities of South Wales and South West England, creating a growth corridor spanning from Cardiff through Newport to Bristol.

I have spoken to several business owners who are encouraged by this decision, and I look forward to discussing further cross-border business opportunities at January's summit.

Following the return of the Severn Crossings to public ownership on 8 January 2018, the tolls will be reduced for all drivers in line with the commitment made by the UK Government in Budget 2015.

This will be the first time the tolls have decreased since their introduction in 1966. The normal annual inflation increase (due 1 January 2018) will also not be applied.

## From 8 Jan 2018:

- Cars will pay £5.60 instead of £6.70.
- Small buses or vans will pay £11.20 down from £13.40
- Lorries and coaches will pay £16.70 instead of £20

## Notes to editors:

1. The abolition is set to benefit the Welsh economy by around £100m a year, according to Welsh Government: The Impact of the Severn Tolls on the Welsh Economy, 30 May 2012
2. Regular motorists are set to save over £1,400 per year based on a monthly tag charge of £117.92 over 12 months.
3. The Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns has announced that he will host the first cross-border, Severn Growth business summit on 22 January 2018 at the Celtic Manor Resort. Businesses can sign up to attend the summit via [Eventbrite](#).
4. On 13 January, the Government launched a consultation, setting out a series of proposals designed to deliver improvements at the Crossings. This consultation ran for eight weeks until 10 March. The consultation response can be found [here](#)
5. The Severn Bridge was built in 1966 and a second crossing was completed 30 years later.
6. When the bridges come under public ownership, they will be run by Highways England. Previously it has been run by Severn River Crossing plc.
7. The first Severn Bridge was opened in September 1966, providing a direct link from the M4 motorway into Wales, with a toll in place for use of the bridge to pay for the cost of construction. It continually operated above capacity and in 1986 the then Government stated that a second bridge would be constructed.
8. In 1988 it was announced that tenders would be invited from private consortia to fund, build and operate the second bridge and take over the operation of the first bridge. In 1990 the concession was awarded to Severn River Crossing PLC ("SRC"). Construction work also started in April 1992 and the second bridge was opened in June 1996.