



PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT STAGE 1 REPORT ON FORTH CROSSING BILL

Briefing from The ForthRight Alliance, Wednesday 26th May 2010:

"Fix the Forth Road Bridge - and save Scotland £2,000 million"

1. INTRODUCTION

*"The Forth Replacement Crossing project is expected to be the biggest single investment project by the Scottish Government since devolution. The outturn cost of the project is expected to be in the range of £1.72 billion to £2.34 billion (median estimate £2.044 billion). To give an idea of scale, the median estimate is more than the cost of the M74, Edinburgh Trams, Borders Railway and Scottish Parliament Building projects put together in today's prices (£1.915 billion)."*¹

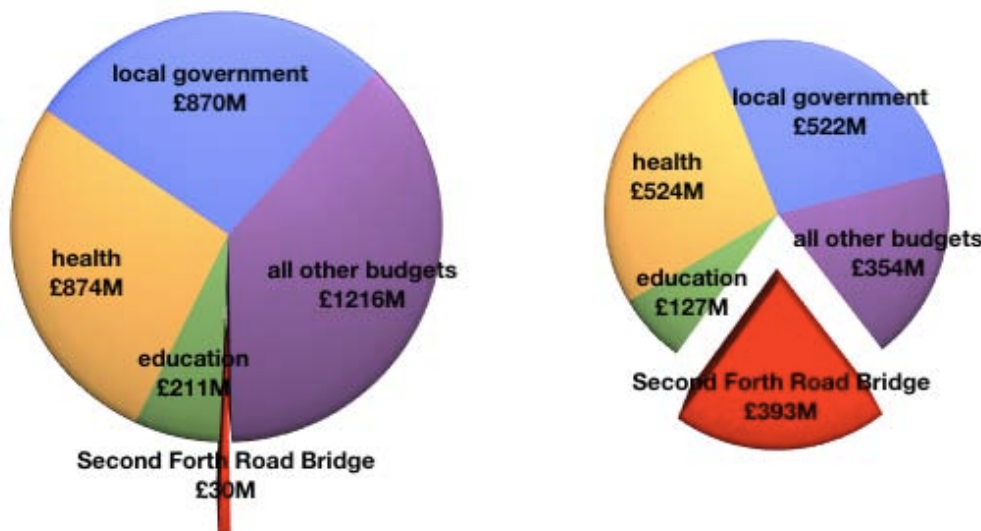
This Wednesday (26th May), MSPs are set to debate and vote on the Forth Crossing Bill Committee Stage 1 Report.² If the General Principles of this Bill are approved it will have serious consequences for the funding available to the Scottish Government for other capital projects over the lifetime of the next Scottish Parliament.

2. THE REAL COST TO SCOTLAND OF THIS PROJECT

With an estimated total cost of £2,044 billion, the expenditure profile published by the Scottish Parliament shows that some £1,369 billion will be spent on the Second Forth Road Bridge between 2011-12 and 2014-15 - with some further £589 million thereafter.³

In dealing with the current economic crisis affecting the country, reductions in public expenditure are all but inevitable. Predictions from the 2009 HM Treasury Pre-Budget Report⁴ point towards a cumulative 12% reduction per annum in capital expenditure being implemented over the next four financial years.

Given this scenario, the chart below show the impact the Second Forth Road Bridge project will have on capital spending throughout Scotland over this period (full details available on request). By the final financial year (2014-15), spending on the new bridge will represent around 20% of the total capital budget available. It will, at that time, also amount to more than three times the capital expenditure on education, and will be equivalent to 75% of the capital sums available for spending on health or on local government.⁵



Scottish Government capital budget is projected to decline from £3201.5m in 2010-11 to £1920m in 2014-15.

The education, health, and local government spending lines are assumed to fall by 12% each year during this period.

Even these figures are based on the assumption that the construction of the bridge will remain on budget - something that seems unlikely given the scale of the project and the propensity for large infrastructure projects to require additional funding. Should the cost of the new bridge increase significantly, this will obviously represent an even greater threat to capital spending in those other important areas detailed above.

3. ... AND BEARING THIS COST HAS ALL THESE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

Not only does this project threaten the capital budgets of education, health and local government - amongst others - but it will moreover result in the undermining of the Scottish Government's commitment to reducing climate change emissions since it will lead to increased traffic, increased congestion and a significantly reduced proportion of journeys being made across the Forth by sustainable public transport.⁶

Friends of the Earth Scotland have further estimated that between 450-750 hectares of land (including greenfield sites) in the Fife bridgehead area will be covered by housing as a result of this project - not to mention other negative environmental impacts to surrounding landscapes and wildlife.⁷

4. DON'T PANIC! LET'S SEE IF THE CABLE-DRYING WORKS

Given the massive economic, social and environmental impacts of the Second Forth Road Bridge and given that the Forth Estuary Transport Authority is confident that the current programme of cable drying will succeed in arresting the corrosion found on the current bridge,⁸ the ForthRight Alliance calls upon MSPs to vote to postpone a final decision on the construction of the Second Forth Road Bridge until the results of the cable drying programme are better known in a year or two's time.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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Or see <<http://www.forthrightalliance.org>>

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- ¹ SPICe Financial Scrutiny Unit Briefing: The Forth Replacement Crossing Analysis of Costs, 18 February 2010, p1 - <http://www.scottish-parliament.eu/business/research/briefings-10/SB10-14.pdf>
 - ² <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/forthXbill/reports-10/fcbr10-01-01.htm>
 - ³ SPICe Briefing: Forth Crossing Bill, 25 January 2010. p11
www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-10/SB10-05.pdf
 - ⁴ November 2009 Pre-Budget Report, HM Treasury http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/prebud_pbr09_index.htm quoted in the Independent Budget Review Call for Contributions March 2010, p5 - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/IndependentBudgetReview/Resources/Contributions>
 - ⁵ Figures for capital expenditure taken from column: 2 table: 2 Scottish Budget, Draft Budget 2010-11, Scottish Government p12
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/09/17093831/15>
 - ⁶ Stage 1 Report on the Forth Crossing Bill, Scottish Parliament, paragraphs 135-148 are of relevance here - <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/forthXbill/reports-10/fcbr10-01-01.htm>
 - ⁷ Stage 1 Report on the Forth Crossing Bill, Scottish Parliament, paragraph 141, evidence from Duncan McLaren of FoES
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/forthXbill/reports-10/fcbr10-01-01.htm>
 - ⁸ Email from Chris Waite, FETA Communications Manager, to Bruce Whitehead, then chair of FRA, 30 July 2008.