

# Queensferry Crossing – delays due to the weather continue

At this morning's meeting of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee at Holyrood, Keith Brown MSP had to inform the members that the Queensferry Crossing faces further delays.

His mantra when he was Transport Minister had always been 'on time and under budget' when it came to talking about the £1 billion project, but he has now been forced again to hit reverse.



The contractor said that it needs more time as there have been fewer clear weather windows than they expected. The high winds of recent weeks have not been favourable to them and their programme of 'weather dependent activities' (broadly speaking the dismantling of the cranes) has been delayed. The fact that all of these activities now need to be done at the one time means that the project cannot catch itself up very easily.

200 new people have been brought onto the site to ensure that as much work does get done as is possible in the better weather now expected. All plant equipment and workers have been kept on standby at the contractor's own cost so that no weather window is missed.

Michael Martin, Project Director for Forth Road Crossing Bridge Constructors (FCBC) said that the planning of the project is reviewed three times a week and that takes into account the variable weather in the Forth. He commented : "I always take safety as the number one priority. I cannot bring people onto the site who do not have the skills to do the work that has to be done."

Economy Secretary Keith Brown said: "Today there are only nine weeks remaining to the end of May and the review has concluded that even with the best weather this date is not now safely achievable.

"I fully recognise the effort of the workforce in building this amazing new bridge. Over 13 million hours have gone into building the Queensferry Crossing over the past six years.

"There is no additional cost to the public purse and the Forth Road Bridge continues to carry traffic over the Forth during these final weeks of construction. While its clearly very disappointing the new bridge won't be ready ahead of the contractual completion date, I believe it is important to take the time to make sure the bridge is built in the safest possible circumstances to the highest possible standards."

Sally Cox, chair of the Board for FCBC said: "FCBC acknowledge that the uniqueness of this project and the onerous weather conditions it has experienced, particularly working at height crossing the Forth have created more challenges than we anticipated.

"FCBC have always been and remain ambitious about completing this challenging project at the earliest possible date and share Transport Scotland and the public's frustration over this delay. We have assured Transport Scotland that every endeavour is and will continue to be made, to safely complete the project at the earliest opportunity."

**Scottish Conservative transport & infrastructure spokesman Liam Kerr said:** "This delay will come as a huge blow to the many commuters who travel across the Forth every single day.

"They have already had to deal with massive disruption over the past two months due to closures on the current Forth Road Bridge, and now we learn that the Queensferry Crossing is months behind schedule.

“The SNP assured us that this project would be delivered on time, but these promises have proven to be worthless as, once again, we see the completion date slipping.

“It is simply unacceptable, and the economy secretary needs to explain why this delay has occurred and what the Scottish Government are going to do to ensure the new timescale is kept to.

“There are also underlying questions about how long Keith Brown has known about this issues. Many contractors had been hinting at delays in the previous few weeks, so if they knew it was going to be delayed, why didn't the minister?

“It points to someone who is either hopelessly out of touch with this project, or someone who was waiting for a busy news day in order to bury bad news.”

Scottish Liberal Democrat transport spokesperson Mike Rumbles MSP today said it was obvious that the new Queensferry Crossing would be delayed again, after it was confirmed it will not now open by the contractual completion date.

Mr Rumbles said: “Workers made it clear to me in October that this project was not going to be delivered on time and that the SNP Government had not built in enough contingency time. Did the Economy Secretary seriously not suspect anything until Monday?

“It is now eight months behind the timetable heralded just last May. For a project that was supposed to showcase the competence of this Scottish Government, there has been an awful lot of rescheduling and there is still a lot of work to be done before the crossing is finished.”

*UPDATED WITH SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVE and Liberal Democrat COMMENT 29 March 2017 at 13.15pm*