

The Queensferry Crossing – almost ready for traffic!

Early this morning Keith Brown MSP Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work joined The Edinburgh Reporter on the approach road to the Queensferry Crossing which by this time tomorrow will be busy with traffic flowing north and south.

Initially the speed limit will be 40 mph but the approach roads and the bridge itself are designated as motorway and this alone should help cut journey time across the Forth.



We asked about the length of time it has taken to build the bridge which ought to have opened a couple of months ago. The Minister replied : “I think in the scheme of these kind of projects this is a pretty good time. From conception to construction to completion within 10 years is pretty remarkable.

“I am delighted that we will shortly see traffic coming over the bridge.”

When we have spoken with Mr Brown in the past his mantra was always on time and on budget. Since it is no longer on time we asked about the cost of the bridge. Mr Brown explained that the Queensferry Crossing is being delivered under budget. He said : “It is not on budget. It is about a quarter of a billion pounds less than the budget which is pretty remarkable for a project like this. Even on timing we are talking about 10 weeks after the contract completion date and there is no penalty to the taxpayer for that. In terms of both timing and budget this has been a remarkable success.”

We quizzed Mr Brown about the access for those who won tickets

in a ballot to enjoy the Queensferry Crossing Experience. Only 50,000 out of 226,000 who applied will be able to walk across the bridge this weekend, and there is no access to cyclists at all. On the matter of cyclists the Minister confirmed they had looked into that.

He continued : “We did look into that quite substantially, but it wasn’t possible to have it for safety and other reasons. We have ensured that up to 50,000 people this weekend will get the chance to walk over the bridge. After it’s officially opened by The Queen on Monday we will then see another community day when many other people from the local communities can come and walk over this bridge. It’s not a bridge that you will be able to walk over in future so this is a genuine once in a lifetime opportunity.”

As to what happens from 7 September it is clear that this bridge which started out as the Forth Replacement Crossing, can be exactly that. Keith Brown explained that the bridge will carry all traffic. He said : “We will try and keep the existing bridge open to public transport so buses of course, taxis and so on. They will have the right as all traffic does to travel on this bridge as well.

“They will have the benefit of being the only traffic along with pedestrians and cyclists on the existing bridge whereas on this bridge, which will be part of the motorway network, any traffic that is entitled to be on a motorway will be entitled to be on this bridge as well.



While he is looking forward to Her Majesty the Queen visiting on Monday to declare the bridge open, Mr Brown who has kept an interest in the project all the way through said : “I am also very excited by the prospect of general traffic going across this bridge. Like many people in this area I grew up with the existing bridge. In fact I used to travel across before the

bridge was there on the ferry. To see it now this new bridge here is really exciting and will culminate as you have said with the official opening – on the 4th of September which is the same date that the original bridge opened in 1964 – so it should be a fantastic day.”



Asked if this bridge will mean there will be no queues for traffic crossing the Forth, the Minister sounded a caution. He said : “No Transport Minister or Minister will ever say that! I think it will be the case that traffic can travel faster up to 70mph on this bridge, at least in a few weeks time and that is bound to be an advantage in terms of journey times.

WEATHER PROOFING

The bridge is designed to be weather proof and so will be largely unaffected by high winds which regularly shut the Forth Road Bridge to high sided vehicles. Mr Brown explained : “There is wind protection built into the design of this bridge. Obviously engineering has moved on substantially in the last 50 years. It is not possible to fit wind protection on the existing bridge. As we have often seen in the past, that the Forth Road Bridge is closed to high sided vehicles because of high winds, you will very rarely if ever see that on this bridge, which again is good for the efficiency of the economy and the safety of road users.”



As to the future of the Forth Road Bridge which was in the past thought to have a limited future, the Minister was emphatic. He concluded : “The Forth Road Bridge has a long future. When we had the recent issues with the bridge there was a full health check done on that bridge and there is a full maintenance programme and that bridge will be there for many years to come.”

TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS

Stein Connelly, Traffic Scotland Operator Manager for Transport Scotland, was also out having a last look at the bridge before it opens to traffic and then closes again for the opening celebrations. He explained the plans for 30 August onwards for all traffic in the area.



He said : “We are actually getting excited for tomorrow morning when we are going to see tens of thousands of cars coming across the Queensferry Crossing. What will happen during the night (and it will be ready for the peak tomorrow) is that they are going to close the Forth Road Bridge to all traffic with the exception of pedestrians and cyclists, and all the traffic that uses the Forth Road Bridge just now is allowed to cross the Queensferry Crossing. That will be in place for the peak tomorrow morning.

“On Friday 1 September the traffic transfers back again. So all the traffic that is using the Queensferry Crossing on 30 & 31 August goes back to use the Forth Road Bridge again and that will remain in place until Thursday 7 September where at that point we open The Queensferry Crossing. There are obviously a lot of things happening, events to celebrate the QC opening. There will be an awful lot of traffic in the area.

“We do have advice. We ask people during these event days when we are asking people to come and walk across the bridge, it will be really really busy. Plan your journey. If you can then avoid the area if you can look at an alternative route. Look at the [Traffic Scotland website](#). All information on the bridges, and the openings and closings are on the Traffic Scotland website and the new [Forth Bridges website](#).”

We met Stein Connelly today. He is [@trafficscotland](#) Operator Manager for [@TransportScot](#) and wants you to plan your journey

[@TheForthBridges](#) [pic.twitter.com/sPi4Pk6sld](#)

– *Edinburgh Reporter* (@EdinReporter) [August 29, 2017](#)