

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992

THE TRANSPORT AND WORKS (APPLICATIONS AND OBJECTIONS PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND AND WALES) RULES 2006

RULE 10 (2) (d)

THE RIVER TYNE (TUNNELS) ORDER 2005

DRAFT RIVER TYNE (TUNNELS) (MODIFICATION) ORDER 2022

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland Combined Authority (NECA) c/o Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 1HH is applying to the Secretary of State for Transport under section 6 of the Transport and Works Act 1992 for an Order under section 3 and 5 of that Act.
- 1.2. The proposed Order makes provision for consequential amendments to The River Tyne (Tunnels) Order 2005 reflecting a change in the handling of toll payments. Payments are no longer accepted at toll barriers (which have been removed) but collected either by way of electronic payment or by cash at a PayPoint retailer. This change in toll collection was introduced by TT2 Ltd, who are responsible for the day to day management and operation of the Tyne Tunnels, to allow a free-flow traffic system through the Tyne Tunnels to facilitate reduced journey times through the tunnels, known as the Tyne Pass Scheme. The proposed Order also restructures the scheme for exemption from tolls for disabled persons so as to determine exempt status by reference to a system of registration of vehicles by disabled persons; it also introduces a toll exemption for coastguard vehicles.
- 1.3. This report is a summary of the consultation and engagement undertaken in respect of the proposals which NECA is seeking to authorise under the proposed Order. It is submitted as part of the Transport and Works Act Order application (the TWAO application) in accordance with rule 10(2)(d) of the Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedures) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 (the **Rules**) which requires submission of:

“a report summarising the consultations that have been undertaken, including confirmation that the applicant has consulted all those named in column (2) of the tables in Schedules 5 and 6 to these Rules where authority is sought for works or other matters described in column (1) of those tables, or if not, an explanation of why not.”

2. Approach to Consultation

Statutory Consultation

- 2.1. Schedules 5 and 6 of the Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedures) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 specify the persons with whom an applicant for an order under section 6 of the 1992 must consult and the circumstances in which Consultation must take place. In relation to the Proposed Order, there are no relevant Schedule 5 or Schedule 6 consultees. That is because the Proposed Order does not relate to any works nor does it seek authority for any of the other matters listed in the schedules (such as the stopping up or diversion of highways, footpaths, or bridleways, or the carrying out of operations involving hazardous substances). Accordingly, no relevant Schedule 5 or 6 statutory consultees were identified, and no statutory consultation was carried out.
- 2.2. Notwithstanding the absence of a requirement for statutory consultation under Schedules 5 and 6 of the Rules, NECA elected to send voluntary consultation letters to the following 10 stakeholders in July 2021.
 - 2.2.1. North Tyneside Council
 - 2.2.2. South Tyneside Council
 - 2.2.3. Natural England
 - 2.2.4. Environment Agency
 - 2.2.5. Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
 - 2.2.6. Northumberland County Council
 - 2.2.7. Newcastle City Council
 - 2.2.8. Gateshead Council
 - 2.2.9. Durham County Council
 - 2.2.10. Sunderland City Council

Non-Statutory Consultation

- 2.3. In relation to the broader project of changing the handling of toll payments at the Tunnels, known as the 'Tyne Pass Scheme', NECA has engaged directly with key stakeholders and with the wider public. The changes to the payment system have been made known to the public in reports to NECA's Joint Transport Committee and Tyne and Wear Sub-Committee since 2019 which are published online and presented in public meetings. The proposals making the changes that this Order reflects were included in the following public reports:
 - 2.3.1. North East Joint Transport Tyne and Wear Subcommittee Report 'Tyne Tunnels Update' dated 8 July 2019
 - 2.3.2. North East Joint Transport Tyne and Wear Subcommittee Report 'Tyne Tunnels Update' dated 21 November 2019
 - 2.3.3. North East Joint Transport Tyne and Wear Subcommittee Report 'Tyne Tunnels Byelaws' dated 21 November 2019

- 2.3.4. North East Joint Transport Tyne and Wear Subcommittee Report 'Tyne Pass Free Flow Scheme at the Tyne Tunnels' dated 20 September 2020
 - 2.3.5. North East Joint Transport Tyne and Wear Subcommittee Report 'Tyne Tunnels Update' dated 4 January 2021
 - 2.3.6. North East Joint Transport Tyne and Wear Subcommittee Report 'Tyne Tunnels Update' dated 8 April 2021
 - 2.3.7. North East Joint Transport Tyne and Wear Subcommittee Report 'Tyne Tunnels Update' dated 8 July 2021
 - 2.3.8. North East Joint Transport Tyne and Wear Subcommittee Report 'Legislation changes for the Tyne Pass Scheme at the Tyne Tunnels' dated 8 July 2021
 - 2.3.9. North East Joint Transport Tyne and Wear Subcommittee Report 'Tyne Tunnels Update' dated 9 September 2021
 - 2.3.10. North East Joint Transport Tyne and Wear Subcommittee Report 'Tyne Tunnels Update' dated 4 November 2021
- 2.4. The reports referred to in paragraphs 2.4.1 to 2.4.10 above were publicised [Forward Plan - North East Combined Authority \(northeastca.gov.uk\)](#) and published 7 days in advance of each meeting [Joint Transport Committee Tyne and Wear Sub Committee - North East Combined Authority \(northeastca.gov.uk\)](#).
- 2.5. Details of consultation measures in respect of disabled blue badge holders, the key group affected by the changes in the Proposed Order, were set out in the report to the North East Joint Transport Subcommittee of 8 July 2021 (see at paragraphs 2.5 to 2.11) and details of the feedback received from that consultation and NECA's response to it are set out in the Consultation feedback report at Appendix 1 below and Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 2 below.

Future transparency

- 2.6. In the event of making of the Proposed Order, NECA intends to continue to share information with and communicate with key stakeholders and the public in relation to the ongoing implementation of free flow traffic measures at the Tunnels. Information will be communicated by, amongst other means:
- 2.6.1. Facebook - @TransportNE <https://www.facebook.com/TransportNE>
 - 2.6.2. LinkedIn - Transport North East <http://www.linkedin.com/company/transportnortheast>
 - 2.6.3. Twitter - @transport_north https://twitter.com/transport_north
 - 2.6.4. Transport North East website Tyne Pass page - [Tyne Pass Scheme at the Tyne Tunnels - Transport North East](#)
 - 2.6.5. TT2 website - [Tyne Pass – Tyne Tunnel 2 \(tt2.co.uk\)](#)

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'm. barker', written in a cursive style.

On behalf of NECA (on behalf of the North East Joint Transport Committee)

Date: 17 February 2022

Mike Barker
Monitoring Officer (Transport)

Gateshead Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Civic Centre
Regent Street
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE8 1HH

Appendix 1– Consultation Response and Feedback Report



Consultation
feedback and respons

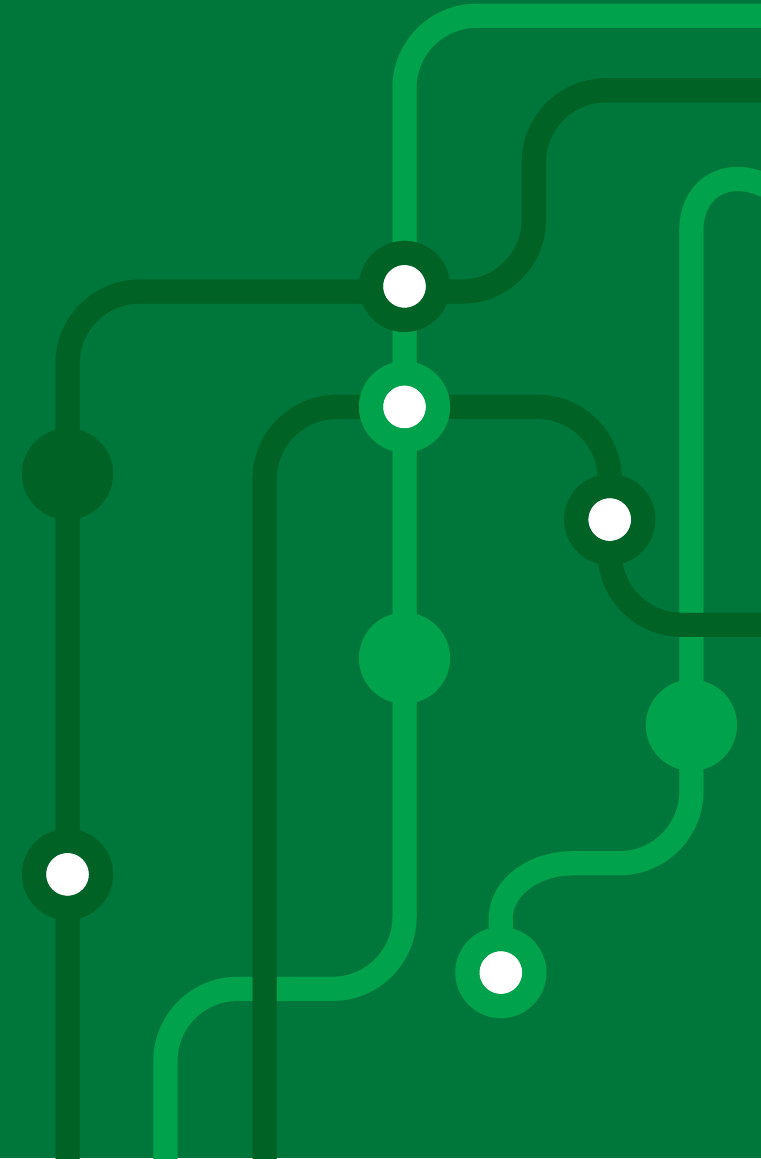


Transport **North East**

Changes to the Tyne Tunnels toll
exemption for disabled people

**Your consultation feedback and
our response**

Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East.



Background

The purpose of this consultation was to obtain input from the public on changes to the disabled person exemption at the Tyne Tunnels. Change is necessary in order to implement the Tyne Pass barrier-less open road tolling scheme which is anticipated to come into operation in late 2021. This new open road scheme will see the removal of all barriers at the Tyne Tunnels and will bring benefits to tunnel users, as it will reduce journey times and will significantly reduce carbon emissions from vehicles using the tunnels.

The change to the disabled person exemption would affect all current Blue Badge holders and new applicants.

The current scheme at the Tyne Tunnels allows two types of toll exemption for disabled people:

1. Vehicles registered with DVLA for a disabled person's exemption from road tax
2. Any vehicle carrying a Blue Badge holder.

Currently, disabled people travelling in vehicles that meet either of these conditions can apply for a Toll Exemption Account and receive a permit to use at the Tyne Tunnel barriers to prove the exemption.

It is also currently possible for a Blue Badge holder in person to display the Blue Badge itself at the barriers, although this can cause unnecessary delays as it must be manually checked, and so holders are encouraged to apply for a Toll Exemption account.

With the introduction of the Tyne Pass barrierless open-road tolling scheme in late 2021, vehicles will no longer stop as they pass through the barrier area. All interactions with the tolling system will be through an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system and drivers will pay the toll due before or after their journey.

The new Tyne Pass system will benefit exempt drivers as they will not need to stop and prove their exemption by way of a permit or by a visual inspection of a badge, they will pass through in exactly the same manner as other drivers without having to stop or show any proof of exemption in public.

The ANPR system means that the ability to display a Blue Badge at a toll booth to prove exemption will not be possible. A change is therefore required for technical reasons to allow the barrierless free-flow scheme to operate.

There are two options which are under consideration for this change:

Option 1: Remove Blue Badges exemption. Blue Badge holders would no longer be exempt from paying the Toll. Only tax-exempt DVLA registered disabled users would be able to register their vehicles for an exemption.

Option 2: Continue Blue Badges exemption with mandatory registration of a vehicle. Blue Badge

holders would apply to register one vehicle number plate on TT2 systems and would therefore continue to be exempt from paying the Toll when using the registered vehicle.

Under all options the ability to present a Blue Badge in person at the barriers will no longer be possible.

Transport North East has consulted the public on the changes proposed to address this issue, on behalf of the North East Joint Transport Committee which is the authority responsible for implementing the change.

The consultation period ran from 17 February 2021 to 14 April 2021.

How we told you about the consultation

In order to reach out to as many people as possible, a multi-channel approach was used, including:

- posts on Transport North East social media channels and TT2 social media;
- information and an online survey were made readily available via transportnortheast.gov.uk;
- a dedicated email address signposted in our consultation document all queries for feedback;
- newspaper adverts across regional outlets via print and online, with digital impressions figures suggesting a reach of 50,009 people;
- Northern Echo, Sunderland Echo, Shields Gazette, Northumberland Gazette - four quarter page adverts
- The Journal and The Chronicle – quarter page advert
- TT2 advertising board at the Tyne Tunnels ran an advert for 28 days during the consultation period
- TT2 monthly newsletter promoted the consultation and was emailed to 25,361 customers and received 398 clicks
- e-mails to key stakeholders



Consultation open until 14 April 2021

We are consulting on a change to the disabled person exemption at the Tyne Tunnels. A change is needed to implement Tyne Pass, a new barrier-less free flow scheme which will come into operation this December. Blue Badge holders will be affected, as badges will no longer be able to be shown in person at the barriers, therefore options are being considered.

Visit www.transportnortheast.gov.uk/tunnelsconsultation to find out more and let us know your thoughts.

To respond to the consultation, please fill out the online survey or email NECATyneTunnels@transportnortheast.gov.uk before the closing date.

For further information call 0191 574 0031

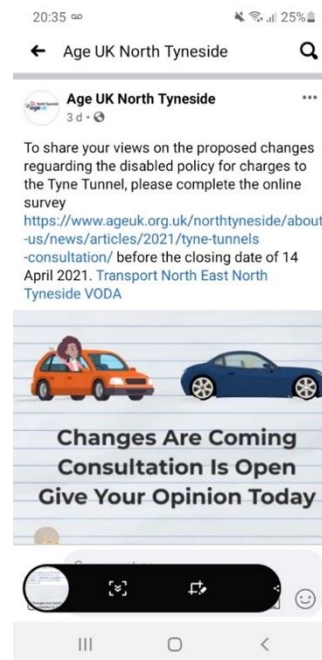
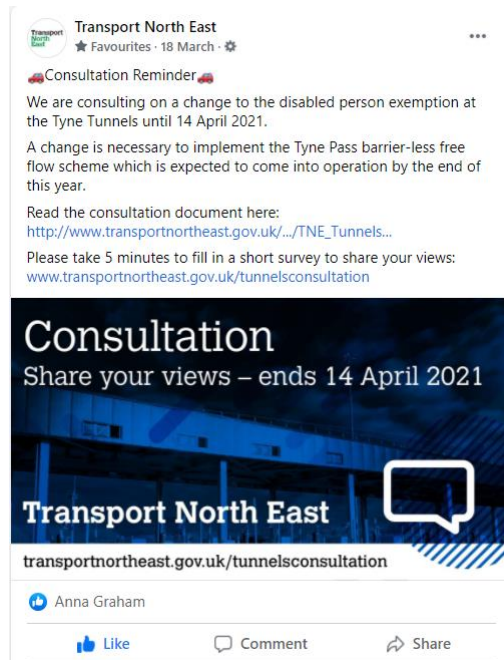
Transport North East



We worked with local authorities, TT2 and a range of partners to ensure that messaging around the consultation was shared extensively.

We made sure that everyone's needs were taken into account by making sure the Consultation Document and the questionnaire were available in whatever format was required. This included large print and audio versions of the Consultation Document and an Easy Read version.

Recognising our aspiration to engage with disabled groups and local stakeholders, we also contacted 59 groups and organisations and asked them to engage with us and to publicise the consultation to their members.



Your response

In total, we had 226 replies as part of the consultation.

The majority of you responded by completing the questionnaire that accompanied the Tyne Tunnels consultation but we also received feedback over the phone, via email and via TT2.

To summarise, we received:

- 211 completed survey questionnaires;
- 2 phone calls;
- 13 e-mails.

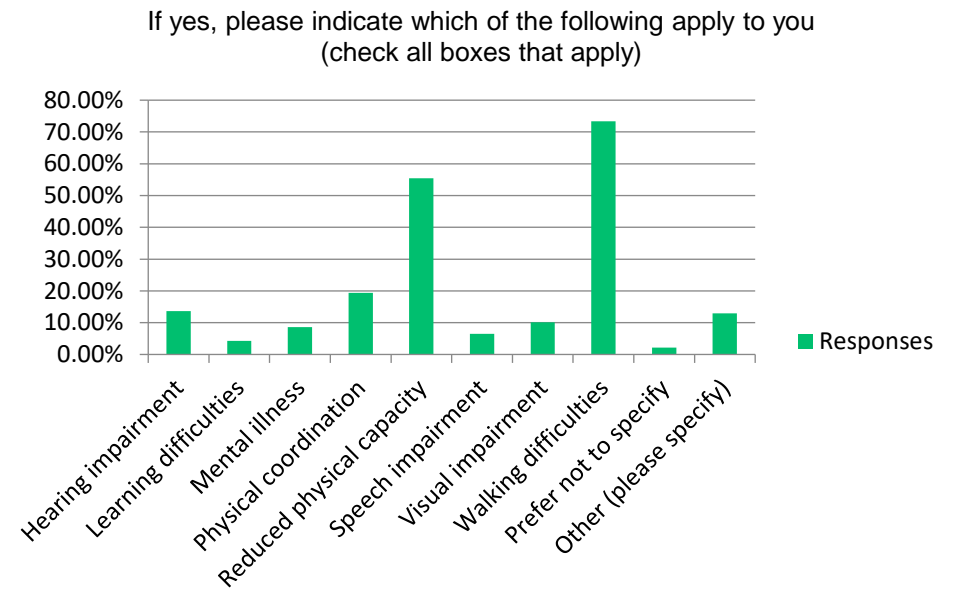
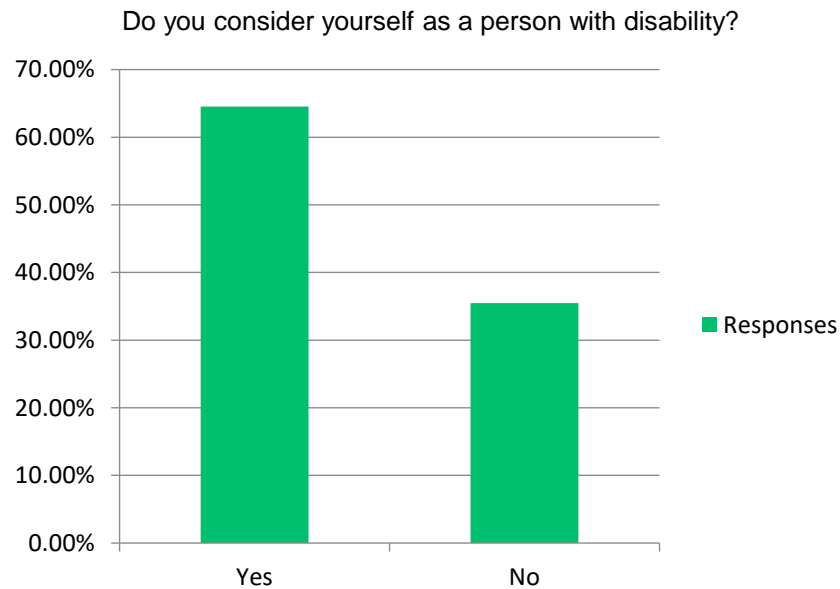
On average you took 8 minutes 20 seconds to complete the survey and everyone who took part completed 100% of the questions.

Who replied

The survey was designed to be completed by individuals to find out about their personal views and details of their own experiences using the Tyne Tunnels. When we contacted local groups and organisations they forwarded our flyer on to their members to ask the individual members to complete the survey. Some groups also reposted our social media messages, for example Age Concern.

- 98% of responses came individually
- 2% responses came directly from groups

- 64% of respondents consider themselves to have a disability
- Respondents indicated that they had various disabilities including hearing impairments, visual impairments and learning difficulties
- 56% of disabled respondents indicated that they have reduced physical capacity
- 70% of disabled respondents indicated that they have walking difficulties.

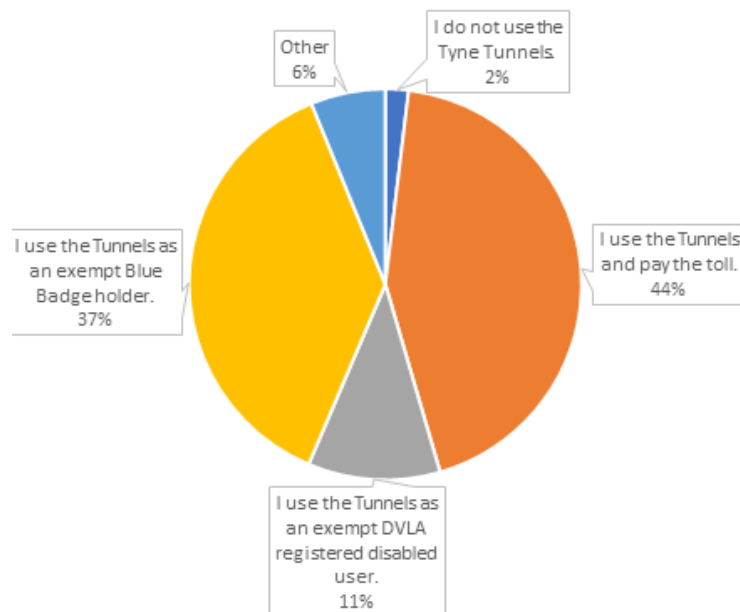


How you use the Tyne Tunnels

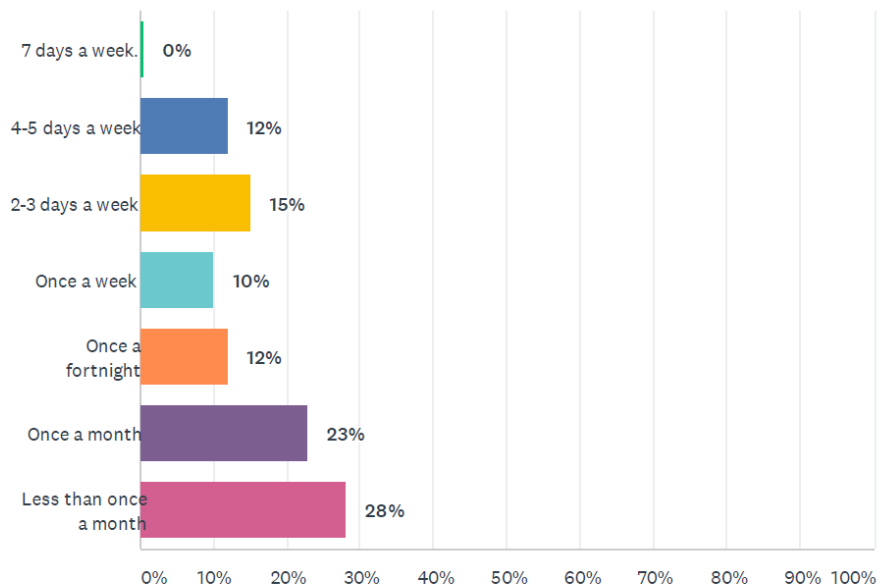
When we asked how you use the tunnels almost half of respondents (43%) pay a toll, while just under half (48%) make use of exemptions. Our analysis of the results shows that 23% of users who consider themselves disabled pay tolls despite their disability, which suggests that not all disabled users make use of a Blue Badge or a DVLA tax exemption.

When we asked how often you use the Tyne Tunnels, over half of respondents (51%) used it infrequently only once a month or less. However, 37% of respondents used the Tunnels every week at least once.

How do you use the Tyne Tunnels?



How often do you normally use the Tyne Tunnels?



What you told us

The feedback suggested that you were in favour of maintaining exemptions for disabled users.

When we asked you whether DVLA registered vehicles and Blue Badge holders should be exempt from paying the toll, the majority agreed that both exemptions should remain in place.

You also agreed (83%) that the Tyne Pass will provide a benefit for disabled users as they will not have to stop at the barriers and produce a permit, card or badge in public to prove the exemption.

Tyne Tunnels survey key questions and responses			
All figures in percentages, some may not add up to 100 due to rounding to nearest number	Agreed	Disagreed	Neither agreed or disagreed
DVLA registered vehicles should be exempt from paying tolls	75	21	3
Blue badge holders should be exempt from paying tolls	70	28	2
Tyne Pass will provide a benefit for disabled users	83	11	6

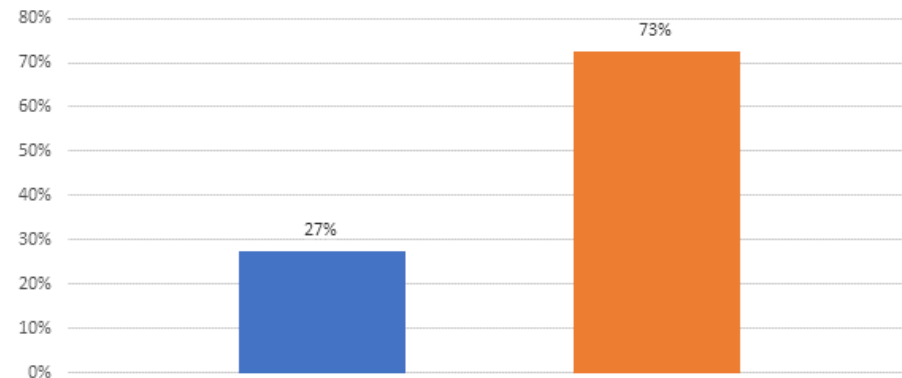
Your preferred option for the future

We set out two options which were under consideration to change the disabled exemptions to enable the Tyne Pass system to operate. Most respondents favoured Option 2 (73.3%) which retains the Blue Badge exemption allowing each badge holder to register a vehicle to claim their toll exemption automatically when their vehicle passes through the tunnels.

Given the overwhelming support for Option 2 we consider that this should be the recommended option to present to the Joint Transport Committee for disabled users of the Tyne Tunnels.

This option carries a cost, however, this cost is accounted for currently, so would not be an additional cost for the Tyne Tunnels budget.

Which option do you prefer, Option 1 or Option 2?
For more details on the options under consideration please read the consultation document.



Option 1: Remove Blue Badges exemption. Blue Badge holders would no longer be exempt from paying the Toll. Under this option, DVLA Registered Disabled person’s vehicles (tax exempt vehicles) would continue to be exempt.

Option 2: Continue Blue Badges exemption with mandatory registration of vehicle. Blue Badge holders would apply to register one vehicle number plate on TT2 systems and would therefore continue to be exempt from paying the Toll when travelling in that vehicle. Under this option, DVLA Registered Disabled person’s vehicles (tax exempt vehicles) would continue to be exempt.

Key insights from the consultation

Topic	Your Insights	Your views	Our response
<p>Should Blue Badge holders be exempt from the toll at the Tyne Tunnels?</p>	<p>There were a significant number (28%) of respondents who were of the opinion that Blue Badge holders should not be exempt from paying the toll. Views were expressed that everyone should pay something for using the tunnel, that the Blue Badge exemption was open to abuse and that it was intended as a parking benefit.</p> <p>However, far more respondents were in favour of retaining the exemption (70%). Some respondents explained that the car is a 'lifeline' and they cannot use public transport due to their disability, so rely on the exemption as a benefit and a vital aid to their accessibility.</p>	<p><i>"Why should people who are disabled not pay to travel through the tunnel like everyone else?"</i></p> <p><i>"I have a blue badge but pay for my journeys, the idea of a blue badge is easier nearer parking, not a free toll."</i></p> <p><i>"I work as much as I can without claiming the other benefits, but that is financially limited due to a disability that is hidden it is also hard to be heard and show the disability, so any support makes a huge difference."</i></p> <p><i>"Help for disabled people should be encouraged and the potential lost revenue for the tunnel would be small in comparison to the help it would be."</i></p> <p><i>"I regularly transport my disabled mother and providing easy access North of the Tyne improves her quality of life."</i></p> <p><i>"Disabled people often have a lot more to pay out to live their lives and have less income to do so. Help like this is fantastic and enables them to travel more"</i></p>	<p>One of the options under consideration was to remove the Blue Badge exemption altogether in line with most other toll operators in the UK, reflecting the fact that the Blue Badge scheme was intended as a parking benefit.</p> <p>However, having consulted with the public we understand much more about how valuable this benefit is to users and how it affects their lives and their finances.</p> <p>Some disabled respondents told us they travel to work via the tunnel and many told us they use their exemption when attending hospital and other medical appointments. The responses have given us an insight into the purpose of the journeys of disabled users and how the toll exemption can improve their quality of life as well as get them to work, education and medical appointments.</p> <p>The Transport Plan has an objective to "overcome inequality and grow our economy" and we consider that retaining the Blue Badge toll exemption would contribute to this aim.</p>

Topic	Your Insights	Your views	Our response
<p>Tyne Pass system is a new system - should we change from the status quo?</p>	<p>Some respondents stated that they don't want change and would rather keep the exemption as it is, but most felt that the Tyne Pass system would bring benefits.</p> <p>Nearly half of respondents (45%) were unconcerned at the change to Tyne Pass, reporting that the change would have little or no effect on them, provided that Option 2 was taken forward, as this Option ensures that they retain their Blue Badge exemption.</p>	<p><i>"It will cause more issues since there may be more Unpaid Toll Notices issued. Can we have a magnetic card (like TT2 season tickets) or similar so the barriers know as we approach, that we are exempt (in addition to ANPR)."</i></p> <p><i>"Option 2 is the most near-perfect option since it means little to no change for everybody."</i></p> <p><i>"I would be happy to register my vehicle with a blue badge for exemption for free passage through the tunnel."</i></p>	<p>Change to the disabled toll exemption is necessary in order to implement the Tyne Pass system. There is no option to keep things the same and implement the new system. There will be no toll barriers at all in the new system.</p> <p>The ANPR system means that the ability to display a Blue Badge at a toll booth to prove exemption will not be possible. A change is therefore required for technical reasons to allow the barrierless free-flow scheme to operate.</p> <p>Option 2 provides the least change for users as the Blue Badge toll exemption will still apply, but users will be required to register their vehicle and their exemption will be limited to one vehicle per badge holder. On the basis of this consultation, this is the Option which most consultees supported and which we intend recommending to the Joint Transport Committee.</p>

Topic	Your Insights	Your views	Our response
<p>Concerns about fraud and misuse of Blue Badges at Tyne Tunnels</p>	<p>People raised the issue that Blue Badge misuse and fraud is common and that the current system and the ANPR system could both be open to abuse. The most common fraud suggested is that a vehicle can pass through the tunnels and claim an exemption, even if the Blue Badge holder is not in the vehicle.</p>	<p><i>“The vehicle may not be occupied by the disabled person, therefore the system is open to abuse.”</i></p> <p><i>“Current system is open to abuse as it is impossible to know if the driver/user is the actual holder. Registering of one car per badge would reduce this.”</i></p>	<p>We are aware that Blue Badge fraud does take place and TT2 has carried out some research to understand the scale of the problem. Their research suggested that up to 1 in 5 vehicles claiming exemption may not be carrying the Blue Badge holder and that some users of a Toll Exemption permit were passing it to friends and family members to use for journeys.</p> <p>We consider that registration of a Blue Badge holders' vehicle as proposed for the Tyne Pass ANPR system will reduce this misuse as the exemption will attach to a vehicle rather than a hand held permit or badge and cannot be passed on to others to use when travelling through the tunnels.</p> <p>We understand that when a vehicle is registered on the ANPR system there will still be the potential for fraud as a driver could attempt to use the toll exemption even when the Blue Badge holder is not in the vehicle. We have asked TT2 to consider ways to discourage this via spot checks and the possibility of byelaw prosecutions in future for fraudulent use of the exemption.</p>

Topic	Your Insights	Your views	Our response
<p>Tyne Pass barrierless system will make user journeys easier and quicker</p>	<p>Many respondents were of the opinion that removal of the barriers will speed up journeys and make the whole experience easier.</p>	<p><i>“Less stress and hopefully a quicker journey.”</i></p> <p><i>“It will save stop start in queue and keep traffic flowing.”</i></p>	<p>We agree that this is an important benefit of the Tyne Pass system and will benefit all users. This is backed by evidence from Dartford and other toll crossings where free-flow has made a real difference to queuing and journey times.</p>
<p>Tyne Pass barrierless system is good for the environment</p>	<p>Respondents mentioned that the Tyne Pass system results in less emissions and less congestion and considered this as an important benefit of the Tyne Pass system.</p>	<p><i>“Smooth flow of traffic at all times with time and green benefits for all.”</i></p> <p><i>“Anything to reduce carbon footprint is beneficial.”</i></p>	<p>We recognise that this is a major benefit of the Tyne Pass scheme for the region. The system does not require vehicles to stop at a toll booth and accelerate to pull away from the toll plaza as the system is free-flowing and traffic will pass through without stopping. It is proven that on this basis carbon emissions will be significantly reduced. This is one of the main reasons why a change to barrierless tolling is welcomed and is supported by the North East Joint Transport Committee.</p>

Topic	Your Insights	Your views	Our response
<p>Tyne Pass freeflow will benefit disabled users as reduces stress or being different/singled out</p>	<p>Respondents reported finding the current system stressful and discriminatory as disabled users are treated differently from toll paying customers. They felt that the Tyne Pass system would be beneficial in this respect as it would treat all users the same and would eliminate this concern.</p>	<p><i>“It’s a benefit for all users, but specifically exempt users as those waiting behind are not inconvenienced nor is the exempt user subjected to any potential embarrassment from having to present an exemption.”</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes I have to wait a while for someone to answer and I feel embarrassed when a queue builds up.”</i></p> <p><i>“As an occasional user of the Tunnels, the current system saves me money (I am on a very fixed income), but is frustrating at the toll booth as having to show my Blue badge can often take some time as the phone has to be answered, causing a build up of traffic waiting behind me. A “drive through” system will improve things greatly.”</i></p>	<p>This is an important benefit of the Tyne Pass Scheme which has become more apparent through the responses we have received to this consultation. It is clear that having to stop and show a card or badge could be seen to discriminate against disabled people as it singles them out as different. Having to press a button for a staff member to check the exemption means the user has to wait and traffic can build up behind the vehicle.</p> <p>The Tyne Pass scheme will eliminate this issue as all users will pass through in the same way and it will not be noticeable who is a disabled exempt user and who is a toll payer. All vehicles will pass through without stopping and the ANPR cameras will identify the vehicle and process any exemptions via the software system.</p>

Topic	Your Insights	Your views	Our response
<p>I need the ability to move between several vehicles</p>	<p>Several respondents raised the issue that they currently use their Blue Badge to travel in several vehicles and claim an exemption for each journey. This will not be possible in the Tyne Pass scheme as users will have to register one vehicle per badge holder. This means that for journeys in extra vehicles, users may have to pay the toll for those additional journeys.</p>	<p><i>“Tyne Pass will improve the journey for Blue Badge holders who regularly use Tyne Tunnels in the same car for each journey but will incur a cost for infrequent users or people who travel in different cars, perhaps because family members take turns to drive the Blue Badge holder.”</i></p>	<p>We understand that if Option 2 is implemented this means that users can register only one vehicle per badge holder. This will affect some users who travel in more than one vehicle. The effect will be financial as they will be toll exempt in their nominated vehicle but will have to pay the toll if they travel in a second or third vehicle.</p> <p>We have considered whether badge holders could nominate several vehicles, but this is considered disproportionately costly and could result in higher levels of fraud. It is also in line with the DVLA exemption to allow one vehicle per badge holder, as DVLA tax exempt disabled users can only register one vehicle.</p> <p>We have asked TT2 to amend the scheme to allow users to change their nominated vehicle each month to give users some flexibility and enable them to travel in a different vehicle if they need to change. TT2 has agreed to make this provision.</p>

Further insights

Topic	Your insights	Your views	Our response
<p>How will the systems work?</p>	<p>Some consultees were not clear how the system would work.</p>	<p><i>“I have a blue badge. How do I show this, if there are no barriers?”</i></p> <p><i>“Unsure how a Blue Badge holder would be recognised”</i></p>	<p>There will be no barriers in the Tyne Pass system and no ability to show a Blue Badge. This is why we need to make changes to the disabled exemptions as they cannot work in the same way as before.</p> <p>If Option 2 is approved, Blue Badge exemptions will be maintained and all users will need to register with TT2 and provide their vehicle registration number which can be recognised by the ANPR cameras.</p>
<p>How can I pay for a journey if the Blue Badge holder is not in the vehicle?</p>	<p>Some respondents wanted more information on how to pay for a journey when the Blue Badge holder is not in the vehicle.</p>	<p><i>“How will the TT2 system know that my registered vehicle may not be carrying my disabled brother (ie when I am travelling alone) and therefore not entitled to the exemption?”</i></p> <p><i>“On the issue of registered vehicles being used on non-disabled business I would think that you should be able to adapt your post-pay software to allow such drivers to either pay or charge to a pre-paid account after the event and hence stay legal.”</i></p>	<p>We have taken account of these requests for information and have asked TT2 to provide clear information to all drivers on how to use the new systems.</p> <p>It is clear that TT2 must make available a straightforward process for drivers to be able to pay for their journey if their car is registered as exempt, but they make a journey without the Blue Badge holder in the vehicle. TT2 is in the process of setting up payment systems to facilitate this and will provide information on this function in due course.</p>

Topic	Your Insights	Our response	Your views
<p>The registration system must be easy to use for disabled users.</p>	<p>Several respondents had technical queries about how the registration system would work.</p>	<p><i>“Not all users are confident with online systems”</i></p>	<p>It is imperative that the system for registration must be easy to use and there must be provision made for disabled users who need assistance with registration as some may not be able to go online to register.</p> <p>TT2 is currently investigating how to make the registration process more simple and straight forward for disabled users and intends granting users access to their account online or via an app when the system is operational. This would give users the ability to easily add and change their nominated vehicle each month (if required). It is proposed that there will either be a dedicated TT2 app for disabled users or a functionality on the main TT2 app which will be specifically designed for disabled users with features to make the process easier to understand and follow.</p> <p>We also intend engaging with local disabled groups over the coming months of Tyne Pass implementation to provide them with information on the vehicle registration process for disabled toll exemptions. This means that groups can provide information and assistance to their members to enable them to register their vehicle and can provide TT2 with ongoing advice and guidance on how to make the process more accessible.</p> <p>TT2 is also making provision for users who cannot easily use online/digital services to telephone a customer services advisor who can talk them through the registration process and assist them in setting up their toll exemption account.</p>

Topic	Your Insights	Our response	Your views
<p>The system should be automatic for DVLA tax exempt registered disabled vehicles.</p>	<p>Users of the DVLA registration asked whether this could be an automatic exemption.</p>	<p><i>“Tyne Tunnel should adopt the Dartford Tunnel system where there is no need to apply for exemption in advance. Their system uses the DVLA database and identifies the car as a DVLA Registered Disabled person's vehicle. That removes any need to register the vehicle.”</i></p>	<p>We have asked TT2 to consider whether their systems can be adapted to allow DVLA registered vehicles to be automatically identified, rather than asking all DVLA exempt vehicles to register with TT2.</p>

Conclusion

We're grateful for your feedback as we look to the future for the Tyne Tunnels and the Tyne Pass barrierless scheme. Your insights have given us a better picture of what steps we need to take going forward and will prove to be crucial in deciding where we go regarding the future of the toll exemptions through the Tyne Tunnels, with every single response and comment having been carefully considered and accounted for.

Having taken on board all the feedback and insights provided by this consultation, we intend making a recommendation to the North East Joint Transport Committee to maintain both of the disabled exemptions at the Tyne Tunnels, namely the DVLA registered disabled person's vehicle exemption and the Blue Badge exemption.

We intend recommending Option 2 which will allow Blue Badge holders to register one vehicle per badge holder for a toll exemption.

Following the insight provided by this consultation we are working closely with TT2 to ensure their systems and processes for the Tyne Pass scheme are adapted to suit the needs of disabled users. The aim is to provide the best customer experience possible for Blue Badge holders and DVLA registered disabled drivers using the Tyne Tunnels.

Appendices

EASY READ VERSION OF CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Tyne Tunnels

Changes to the toll exemption for disabled people

February 2021



Do you use the Tyne Tunnels?



We are making changes to the toll exemption for disabled people.

1



Toll exemption is when you do not have to pay to use the tunnels.

We are asking you to tell us what you think.

2



The changes will affect:

- Blue Badge holders
- new applicants (this means people asking for toll exemption for the first time)

3



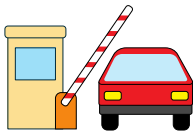
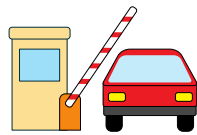
4

The way it works now:

1. if you are a disabled person,

and your car is registered with DVLA,

and DVLA has agreed you do not pay road tax for it,



OR

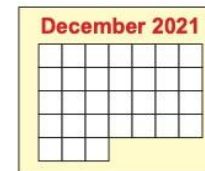
2. if you are a Blue Badge holder,

you can apply for a Toll Exemption Account.

This means you can get a permit to show at the barriers,

so that you do not have to pay the toll.

5



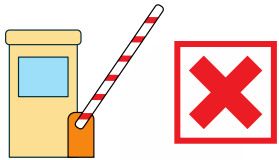
Or, you can show your Blue Badge at the barriers,

so that you do not have to pay the toll.

From December 2021:

There will be a new way of driving through the Tyne Tunnels.

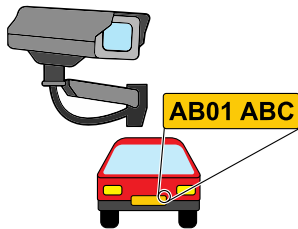
6



It is called a free flow scheme.
There will not be any barriers.



Traffic will not have to stop.



Instead, cameras will check
the car number plates.

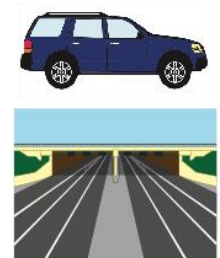
7



Drivers will pay the toll before
or after their journey.



If you are a disabled person,

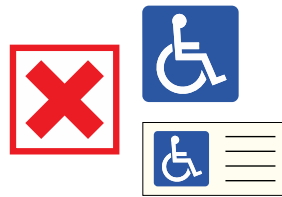


you will drive through just like
everyone else.

8



You will not be able to stop.



You will not be able to show your badge or permit.



So we need to make some changes.

There are 2 changes we are thinking about:

9



Option 1: Remove Blue Badges exemption.

This means even if you have a Blue Badge,



you will have to pay the toll like everyone else.



You can apply for your car to be exempt, but only if:

10



you are a disabled person,
and

your car is registered with
DVLA, and

DVLA has agreed you do not
pay road tax for it.

11



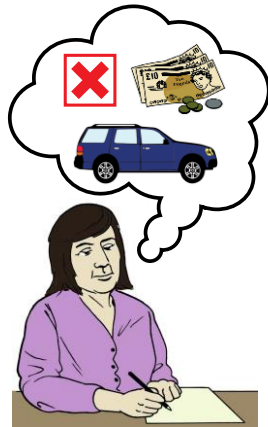
**Option 2: Continue
Blue Badges
exemption with
mandatory
registration of a
vehicle.**

This means if you have a Blue
Badge,

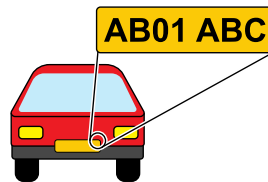
you can choose **1** car to be
exempt.

12

Transport North East



You will have to apply for an exemption.



You will have to tell us the car number plate.

13



Transport North East



When you drive through the tunnels in this car, you will not have to pay the toll.

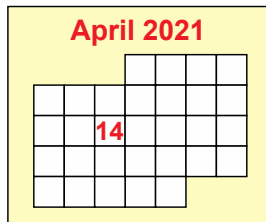
Transport North East is keen to know what you think.

14



Please fill in the online survey at:

www.transportnortheast.gov.uk/tunnelsconsultation



The survey will close on **14 April 2021**.

15



If you have any questions,

please call: **0191 5740031**



or email: **NECATyneTunnels@transportnortheast.gov.uk**

16



Disabled Exemptions at Tyne Tunnels Consultation

Please provide as much supporting evidence as possible with each of your responses to the following questions.

Thank you for taking part in the consultation. The closing date is 14th April, 2021.

Before proceeding with the following questions, please read the consultation [document](#).

All starred (*) questions require an answer.

* 1. I am responding on behalf of

- Individual
- Company
- Charity
- Organisation

2. If responding on behalf of a company, charity or organisation, please make it clear who is being represented and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

* 3. Do you consider yourself as a person with disability?

- Yes
- No

4. If yes, please indicate which of the following apply to you (check all boxes that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing impairment | <input type="checkbox"/> Speech impairment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual impairment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental illness | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking difficulties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical coordination | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to specify |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced physical capacity | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

* 5. How do you use the Tyne Tunnels?

- I do not use the Tyne Tunnels.
- I use the Tunnels and pay the toll.
- I use the Tunnels as an exempt DVLA registered disabled user.
- I use the Tunnels as an exempt Blue Badge holder.
- Other (please specify)

* 6. How often do you normally use the Tyne Tunnels? (Tick whichever is most applicable)

- 7 days a week.
- 4-5 days a week
- 2-3 days a week
- Once a week
- Once a fortnight
- Once a month
- Less than once a month

* 7. The Tyne Pass free-flow system will provide a smoother and quicker journey through the Tyne Tunnels for exempt disabled users as they will not have to stop at the barriers and produce a permit, card or badge in public, to prove their exemption. Do you agree that this is a benefit for exempt disabled users of the Tyne Tunnels?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please provide a reason for your answer.

* 8. Do you agree or disagree that DVLA Registered Disabled person's vehicles (tax exempt vehicles) should be exempt from paying the toll at the Tyne Tunnels?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please provide a reason for your answer.

* 9. Do you agree or disagree that Blue Badge holders should be exempt from paying the toll at the Tyne Tunnels?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please provide a reason for your answer.

* 10. Which option do you prefer, Option 1 or Option 2?

For more details on the options under consideration please read the consultation [document](#).

- Option 1: Remove Blue Badges exemption.** Blue Badge holders would no longer be exempt from paying the Toll. Under this option, DVLA Registered Disabled person's vehicles (tax exempt vehicles) would continue to be exempt.
- Option 2: Continue Blue Badges exemption with mandatory registration of vehicle.** Blue Badge holders would apply to register one vehicle number plate on TT2 systems and would therefore continue to be exempt from paying the Toll when travelling in that vehicle. Under this option, DVLA Registered Disabled person's vehicles (tax exempt vehicles) would continue to be exempt.

If you have any other comment about this proposal and the options, please tell us below.

11. How will you be affected if **Option 1** is approved as the most suitable option?

12. How will you be affected if **Option 2** is approved as the most suitable option?

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Policy and process changes to the disabled toll exemptions at the Tyne Tunnels. The proposed change will preserve the existing toll exemptions for DVLA registered vehicles and for Blue Badge holders, and will require Blue Badge holders to register one vehicle on the ANPR systems.
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	Change is required to implement the Tyne Pass barrierless system which will modernise the toll payment system at the Tyne Tunnels, cutting journey times, reducing carbon emissions, bringing environmental benefits and new jobs to the region.
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	Consultation took place with the public for 8 weeks in February to April 2021. The consultation was advertised and promoted via the web, social media and newspaper adverts. Engagement with local groups and stakeholders via email and telephone and by completion of the questionnaire. 226 respondents gave over 700 comments and views which were analyzed and considered.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	Disabled users of the Tyne Tunnels who rely on a Blue Badge toll exemption.
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	As the changes are being implemented we will engage with TT2 and Blue Badge holders on a continuous basis to monitor take up, and there will be a review of the impact of the policy in January/February 2022 when the system is operational.

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Disability	1. Yes –Positive	1. Disabled users will benefit from the new barrierless system as they will be able to travel through the tunnels without stopping to prove their exemption. This will avoid them feeling singled out or embarrassed when making use of their exemption, as many users reported in the consultation that this was a concern for them currently using the toll exemption by displaying their badge to a staff member. The new Tyne Pass free flow automated system removes this barrier.	1. Positive – no action needed.
	2. Yes – positive.	2. Streamlined process allows for faster travel for disabled users. Their journeys will be quicker and easier as journey times are reduced and traffic queues/congestion at the toll barriers will be eliminated. Evidence from Dartford and other free-flow systems has shown that journey times and congestion is reduced.	2. Positive – no action needed.
	3. Yes –negative	3. As the recommended policy change requires preregistration, disabled users who are new to the area could be negatively impacted as they may not have the benefit of being aware that the exemptions are in place.	3. Action – ensure adequate messaging and information is provided about the Tyne Tunnels on websites and in tourist guides, so that visitors to the region can plan their journey and register easily before travelling.

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
		This was a concern raised by a respondent to the consultation.	
	4. Yes - negative	4. Users who are not able to access the internet for whatever reason would potentially be unable to sign up for the automated vehicle registration scheme. This was a concern which was raised in the public consultation.	4. Action – TT2 have agreed to put in place new systems specifically designed for disabled users including an app for Blue Badge holders and a facility for telephone registration for those unable to use online services.
	5. Yes - negative	5. Lack of movability between vehicles, as only one vehicle per Blue Badge holder can be registered. This could disadvantage some disabled users who wish to travel in more than one vehicle as a passenger. The effect is financial as they would have to pay the £1.90 toll for journeys using second or third vehicles. This was a concern which was raised in the public consultation.	5. Action –TT2 have agreed to give users the ability to change their registered nominated vehicle once per month to allow greater flexibility. Secondly, a policy has been agreed so that users do not have to be a driver or car owner to benefit from the exemption, as they can nominate a family member or friend’s vehicle as their chosen vehicle. Finally officers are discussing with TT2 the possibility that users can register one vehicle using their DVLA tax exempt status and a second vehicle using their Blue Badge so that those disabled users who are eligible for both exemptions could potentially register two vehicles.
Gender reassignment	No		
Marriage or civil partnership	No		

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Pregnancy and maternity	No		
Race	No		
Religion or belief	No		
Sexual orientation	No		
Sex (gender)	No		
Age	Yes – negative	Blue Badge holders are more likely to be older and more likely to find it difficult to register online which could be a barrier to making use of the exemption.	Action – TT2 have agreed to put in place new systems specifically designed for disabled users including an app for Blue Badge holders and a facility for telephone registration for those unable to use online services.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	<p>The changes to the policy and process proposed under the Tyne Pass barrierless system will have both negative and positive effects on the group compared with the current system.</p> <p>Positive effects will be the faster, easier journeys which do not single out disabled people for different treatment, as all drivers and passengers in the Tyne Pass system are treated the same and can drive through without stopping.</p> <p>The negative effects are on those who may travel in several cars and the effect would be financial as they may have to pay the toll when using a second or third vehicle. There may also be a negative effect on users who cannot easily use on-line systems. These negative effects have been mitigated by putting in place software and customer service systems to help disabled people and make the process easier and simpler and by allowing some flexibility in the choice of nominated vehicle.</p>
Date completed:	29th June 2021