

The Severn Crossings Concession Agreement, UK



On the 29th October 1990 the UK Government granted Severn River Crossing Plc (SRC) a concession to operate the M4 and M48 Severn Crossings. The Concession included for the funding, design, construction, maintenance and operation of the M4 Second Severn Crossing and the maintenance and operation of the original M48 Severn Crossing. The Concession is currently projected to continue until 2016.

The Concession Agreement, provides for the appointment of the Government's Representative to act as the Secretary of State's agent in connection with the operation and maintenance of both these major estuarial crossings between England and South Wales. The role of the Government's Representative is to safeguard the Government's long term interests in the Severn Crossings. Flint & Neill Limited was appointed as the Government's Representative prior to the commencement of the concession period and continued in the role until 2005.

The M48 Severn Bridge was the world's first steel box girder suspension bridge and was completed in 1966. The crossing also includes the cable stayed Wye Bridge and 1.2 km of connecting steel box girder viaduct. The newer M4 Crossing is the UK's longest cable stay bridge and opened in 1996.

Apart from overseeing all general aspects of operation and maintenance, and liaison with adjacent authorities, F&N's role has included several specific duties including the following.

- To undertake a condition survey of the M48 Crossing with SRC and to agree on the works necessary to bring the structures to the condition expected by the terms of the Concession Agreement.
- To oversee, at concession commencement, the change in tolling strategy from two-way tolling to one-way tolling.
- To ensure a seamless introduction of the M4 Second Severn Crossing into the national motorway network.
- To provide advice and assistance to the Government with the re-financing of the Concession Agreement following changes to the tax regime relating to the applicability of VAT on toll income.
- To manage an undertaking given by Government to the Local Harbour Authority relating to the provision and maintenance of enhanced navigational aids and a Pilot Watch Radar System.

F&N continues to be consulted by the Highways Agency and the Concessionaire in relation to these structures because of their long standing association with the crossings.