

Our ref: CRS 726,826
Your ref:

via email

██████████
Charging and Enforcement Policy Team
Leader
WMRCC Quinton
1 Ridgeway, Quinton
Birmingham B32 1AF

29 September 2015

Dear ██████████

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST - DART CHARGE

Thank you for your email under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requesting information about Dart Charge. The specific details of your request have been extracted from your email verbatim and are highlighted in bold with our responses below.

We note that your questions relate to a 'toll'. Toll charges were levied at the Crossing until 2003 when the debts associated with the construction of the QEII Bridge and tunnels had been fully discharged. The toll charge was replaced by a road user charge in 2003. In answering your questions we have taken your use of the term toll to refer to the current road user charge.

As requested, the responses to your questions relate specifically to the date range 30 November 2014 to 31 August 2015.

Please supply the following information –

1. The number of crossings made on the Dartford Crossing during charging hours.

34,240,920 vehicle passages have been recorded within chargeable hours.

2. Warning letters issued for failing to pay the toll.

632,190 warning letters have been issued to drivers.

Warning letters are issued on the first occasion a vehicle is registered using the Crossing but no payment is made. They give the road user an additional fourteen days to pay any crossing charges due and have any penalty charges associated with those crossings cancelled.

Please note that one warning letter can be used to avoid multiple penalty charges.

3. Penalty Charge Notices issued for failing to pay the toll

A total of 1,028,000 penalty charge notices have been issued to UK drivers over this period for non-payment of the crossing charge.

189,247 penalty charge notices have been passed to our European Debt Recovery Agents for issue to overseas drivers.

4. The number of fixed penalty notices that have been cancelled without a formal appeal.

609,640 penalty charges have been cancelled without a formal appeal. To note this figure includes some PCNs that were cancelled before they were sent out due to customers paying outstanding crossing charges following receipt of a warning letter and therefore not included in our answer to Q3 above.

5. If recorded, and feasible within cost limits, please include the reasons for cancellation (e.g. number plate being misread).

Each PCN cancelled without recourse to a formal appeal process is considered and assessed on its own merits and on a case-by-case basis.

The majority of these PCNs have been cancelled as a result of road users paying outstanding crossing charges following the receipt of a warning letter. Other reasons for cancellation include if it is evident that a PCN has been issued in error (if, for example, a vehicle registration mark has been misread): these cases can often be resolved by our customer service team without the need for a formal representation.

6. The number of fixed penalty notices that have been cancelled following an appeal.

There are two main stages for challenging a penalty charge. The first stage is to submit a representation in response to the Penalty Charge Notice, stating the grounds for their representation and providing any relevant evidence. 48,484 representations have been accepted, resulting in the cancellation of the PCN.

Should a representation be rejected, customers can appeal to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal (TPT). 595 appeal closure actions have resulted in the cancellation of PCNs. Please note that a single closure action may involve multiple PCNs for the same road user.

7. If the reasons for cancellation have been recorded, please include them if feasible within cost limits.

The grounds for making a representation are recorded on the back of the PCN and it is these grounds that are considered, along with any documentary evidence, when considering cancellation.

The three most common reasons for accepting a representation are:

- Evidence that the vehicle is being used under a hire agreement (in these cases a PCN is reissued to the hirer)
- A payment has been made but attributed to the wrong vehicle (often as the payee has incorrectly entered the vehicle registration)
- Review of the image shows that the vehicle registration has been misread

Similarly, appeals for Dart Charge are presided by Traffic Penalty Tribunal (TPT), TPT are independent adjudicators who will, following appeal, judge if an appealed penalty charge is payable. The grounds for appeal are available on their website:

http://www.trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk/homepage/28/grounds_of_appeal_-_dartford_river_crossing.

The three most common reasons for accepting an appeal are:

- Evidence that a valid payment has been made
- Cases where the vehicle has been hired
- Cases where the driver is unaware of Dart Charge (in these cases the driver generally agrees to pay the outstanding crossing charge)

8. The number of crossing charges that have been refunded after being wrongly debited from customers' Dart Charge accounts.

46,310 crossing charges have been refunded after being wrongly debited from customers' Dart Charge accounts during the period requested. These were duplicate crossing charges and all of these cases were fully resolved by end June 2015 with payments being either reversed or re-credited to customers. There have been no further occurrences of this issue.

9. If the reasons for the refund have been recorded, please include the most common ones if feasible within cost limits.

Please see our response to question 8 above.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the legislation, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. We may therefore be publishing the information you requested, together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context, via the [Gov.uk website](http://www.gov.uk).

If you are unhappy with the way we have handled your request you may ask for an internal review. Our internal review process is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/highways-england/about/complaints-procedure>

If you require a print copy, please phone the Information Line on 0300 123 5000; or e-mail info@highwaysengland.co.uk. You should contact me if you wish to complain.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote reference number CRS 726,826 in any future communications.

Yours sincerely


Charging and Enforcement Policy Team Leader
Email: @highwaysengland.co.uk

