

Our ref:

www.highways.gov.uk

24 July 2017

Dear

Dartford Crossing Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your email to Highways England Customer Contact Centre on 26 June 2017 regarding the usage of the traffic lights at Dartford Crossing. Your request has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI).

You have asked for the details of all recorded information held by us related to the number of interruptions per day to traffic flow through the Dartford tunnels anti clockwise caused by the traffic lights before the tunnel between 26 March 2017 and 26 June 2017.

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed our search for the information which you requested on 26 June. We do not hold information relating solely to red light activation. To enable us to provide information on the number of interruptions caused by traffic lights per day would involve cross referencing an extensive amount of information from a range of datasets that would exceed the cost limits of 18 hours. Therefore the information you requested is being withheld in reliance on the exemption in Section 12 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents>) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 because we would exceed the limit of 18 hours working time locating the requested data.

However to be as helpful as possible we have provided the data we do have available which relates to the various ways in which the traffic safety system at Dartford is utilised. A copy of the information is attached. For clarification purposes, I'll define the purpose of the traffic lights before the tunnel and the meanings of the data within the attachment.

The traffic lights before the tunnel are part of the safety system for the Dartford Tunnels. This detects vehicles that may present a hazard to the tunnels (e.g. they are carrying dangerous goods or are too high to safely transit the tunnels) and don't obey the relevant tunnel regulations. These are termed "non-compliant vehicles". Highways England only collates data on the number of events, i.e. the number of dangerous goods vehicles escorted or detections of non-compliant vehicles. A number of activities can happen within each specific event including multiple activations of the traffic lights.

In the table attached;

- The term escort refers to the total number of times that traffic has been specifically stopped to facilitate the safe escort of either Dangerous Goods Vehicles or abnormal loads.
- Metering events are where the traffic is stopped on the Kent side of the crossing to prevent stationary traffic in either one or both of the tunnels, this could be due to congestion or an incident that has occurred. Please note metering events are separated by tunnel. If metering is placed on both tunnels simultaneously this counts as 2 events. Highways England only records the total red light time per event.
- Assessments of Potentially Non-Compliant Vehicles means that either our technology has detected a vehicle which could be classified as an unregistered dangerous goods vehicle or an over height vehicle, or a member of our control team at Dartford is concerned over the width, length or a safety aspect of a vehicle which they have spotted. Each detection would cause a safety event to be initiated. Of the 1603 activations carried out, 967 were identified for further assessment.
- The 'All Extractions' data are vehicles which have gone through the assessment process and subsequently been identified as non-compliant for the primary reason indicated.

I'd like to advise you that when we extract a vehicle, where possible we seek to use the opportunity to conduct escorts of dangerous goods vehicles at the same time.

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

If you require a print copy, please phone the Information Line on 0300 123 5000; or e-mail info@highwaysengland.co.uk. If you are unhappy with the way we have handled your request you may ask for an internal review. Our review process is available at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/highways-england/about/complaints-procedure

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

Yours sincerely

