

 Regulatory Policy Committee	OPINION	
Impact Assessment (IA)	‘Free-Flow’ Road User Charging at the Dartford-Thurrock River Crossing	
Lead Department/Agency	Department for Transport	
Stage	Final	
Origin	Domestic	
Date submitted to RPC	22/04/2013	
RPC Opinion date and reference	17/06/2013	RPC12-DfT-1393(2)
Overall Assessment	GREEN	
<p>The impact assessment covers the costs and benefits of a spending/infrastructure measure that requires a very small regulatory component to ensure an appropriate payment and enforcement mechanism is in place to support the change to a “free-flow” traffic management and charging system.</p> <p>The impact assessment identifies that the regulatory change has a potential impact on business with an associated equivalent annual net cost to business of £0.139 million, scored as an IN under One-in, Two-out (OITO). However, following discussions between the Regulatory Policy Committee and the Better Regulation Executive over the handling of such infrastructure spending decisions, which require a small regulatory delivery component, it has been agreed that such measures should be classed as “Out of Scope” of OITO.</p>		
Background (extracts from IA)		
<p>What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary?</p>		
<p>The Dartford-Thurrock River Crossing (the crossing) is a key part of the strategic road network, forming a link in the M25 motorway between Essex and Kent. A road user charge has been collected at the crossing since 2003 as a way of managing the high demand for its use. However, there is still considerable congestion at the crossing due to high levels of use relative to capacity, with over 50 million vehicles using it each year. This congestion reduces the efficiency of movement of people and goods to the detriment of business productivity and the economic and social activities of individuals. The congestion is compounded during the charging hours due to the need for drivers to stop and pay the road user charge at barriers on the south side of the Thames. The crossing is Government owned, operated and maintained, so only Government can intervene to mitigate the negative impacts caused by congestion at the crossing.</p>		
<p>What are the policy objectives and the intended effects?</p>		
<p>The Government’s objective is to improve traffic flow at the crossing through the introduction of a ‘free-flow’ charging arrangement. ‘Free-flow’ charging would reduce congestion whilst continuing to maintain an effective road user charging scheme to manage demand for use of the crossing. The policy objective is to support delivery of a ‘free-flow’ road user charging operation in both directions at the crossing, which would reduce journey times and the variability in journey times whilst maintaining revenues that enable the Department for Transport (DfT) to continue to prioritise development and funding of improvements in the short, medium and longer term. There will be a number of secondary social and environmental effects which have been quantified and considered as part of the DfT appraisal process.</p>		
Identification of costs and benefits, and the impacts on small firms, public and		

third sector organisations, individuals and community groups and reflection of these in the choice of options

The costs and benefits of this proposal have been adequately assessed, including the cost to (compliant) businesses of dealing with any incorrectly issued Penalty Charge Notices following a move to a “free-flow” traffic managements system.

Have the necessary burden reductions required by One-in, Two-out (OITO) been identified and are they robust?

The IA categorises the regulatory aspect of the proposal as in scope of OITO and accordingly scores it as an ‘IN’ with an equivalent annual net cost to business of £0.139 million.

However, as mentioned above this measure should be classified as Out of Scope. This has been discussed with the Department and subject to this change being made to the IA the RPC would class this IA as Fit for Purpose.

Signed



Michael Gibbons, Chairman