

Our ref: CRS 719,209  
Your ref:

Mr [REDACTED]  
Via email

[REDACTED]  
Charging and Enforcement Policy Team  
Leader  
WMRCC Quinton  
1 Ridgeway, Quinton  
Birmingham B32 1AF

8 May 2015

Dear Mr [REDACTED]

### **Dart Charge – Freedom of Information Act 2000**

Thank you for your email and request for information about Dart Charge dated 10 April 2015 under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Your specific questions are highlighted in bold within the body of this letter, with our responses below.

In our last correspondence with you, I note we mentioned that a map illustrating the location and wording of the new Dart Charge signage is to be added to the website. I have included copies of these maps and can confirm that these are indicative of the final versions. As was previously advised, we considered the optimum amount of information displayed on the signs to ensure that it was not distracting to road users. Road safety is at the forefront of our operations, and we can confirm that the signs at the Crossing have been audited and approved by the Highways England Net Serve team who have confirmed our signage meets all legal requirements.

In the context of your comments about the system being “designed solely to be a cash cow”. I can advise that all income generated from road user charging schemes is covered by Schedule 12 of the Transport Act 2000, where there is a requirement that any net proceeds be available only for application for the purposes of directly or indirectly facilitating the achievement of any policies or proposals relating to transport. Formal complaints on government policy should be directed to the Department of Transport. -<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/complaints-procedure>.

With regard to your question, **I would like to know how many vehicles have made the crossing, have paid the toll and how many have been fined for non-payment of the toll, from the time the tollbooths ceased operating to 31 March 2015.**

Between the 30/11/2014 and 31/03/2015, and during the chargeable hours which are 6am to 10pm we can confirm the following –

Number of vehicles making the crossing during the charging hours	13,993,470
Number of crossing users who have paid the charge	12,836,511
Number of crossing users who have been fined for non payment of the charge	357,162*

\* PCNs for this period continue to be issued.

Highways England (formerly the Highways Agency) recognise that Dart Charge presented a big change for drivers. We are doing everything possible to help all Crossing users adjust to the new payment arrangements and, as part of this, we delayed issuing the first Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to give drivers more time to pay. We are also giving drivers the opportunity to pay the outstanding charge within 14 days of receiving their first PCN without incurring the additional penalty charge. This balanced approach means that we expect to continue to receive payments for crossings made during this period, further reducing the number of charges which remain unpaid.

In response to your question i.e. **what happened to the original statement that the "toll will only apply until the Crossing is paid for?"**

Highways England operate the Dartford Crossing on behalf of the Department for Transport. We can confirm that the Government made a commitment to improving the Crossing experience for the millions of people who use it every year. Toll charges were levied until 2003 when the debts associated with the construction of the QEII Bridge and the tunnels had been fully discharged. A Road User Charge was introduced by the Department for Transport in 2003, to manage the high demand for use of the Crossing, after a study reported that traffic levels would be 17% higher if payment was removed. The charges imposed and collected are used to fund transport improvements in accordance with the Transport Act 2000, though not exclusively Dartford related improvements.

**Again, under the Freedom of Information regulations, I would enquire as to how much the crossing cost, and how much has been collected gross, what expenses have been incurred on a yearly basis.**

We can confirm that the cost of building the Dartford Crossing was £178 million.

We do not hold the total figure for all of the revenue collected at the Crossing to date. There has been a charge in place to use the Dartford River Crossing since 1963 when the first tunnel was opened.

The accounts for 2014-15 will be published by Spring 2016.

Under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we are not required to provide information, which is already reasonably accessible to you. The accounts and expenditure information you requested from 1 April 2003 until 2014 are available via

<https://www.gov.uk/search?q=Dartford+accounts>

and at the National Archive at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20131223235300/http://www.highways.gov.uk/publications/the-dartford-thurrock-river-crossing-publications#3>

From 31 July 1988 until 31 March 2003, the crossing was managed by the Dartford River Crossing Company Ltd under an early Private Finance Initiative (PFI). They were required to produce annual accounts during this period and these may be requested from Companies House, who can be contacted at:

Companies House, Main Office, Crown Way, Maindy, Cardiff, CF14 3UZ. Telephone: 0303 1234 500. E-mail: [enquiries@companies-house.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@companies-house.gov.uk)

Until 30 July 1988, collection of the tolls was the responsibility of the Essex and Kent County Council Joint Consultation Committee. We don't have audited accounts for this period, but you may wish to approach either of these councils to see if they retain any information about the toll revenues collected. The councils can be contacted at:

Essex County Council, County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH. Telephone: 0845 743 0430. E-mail: [contact@essex.gov.uk](mailto:contact@essex.gov.uk)

Kent County Council, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ. Telephone: 03000 414141. E-mail: [county.hall@kent.gov.uk](mailto:county.hall@kent.gov.uk)

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](#).

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](mailto: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 719,209 in any future communications.

Yours sincerely



  
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