

Our ref: CRS 717,096
Your ref:

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

01 April 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

DARTFORD CROSSING - FOIA 2000

Thank you for your request for information about the Dartford Crossing dated 14 February 2015 under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The specific questions extracted from your enquiry are outlined in bold with our responses added below

“1) This a FOIA 2000 request on the Dartford Crossing Toll, You the Highways Agency right by law to approach DVLA and demand drivers details, what right have you to receive details from DVLA.”

In response to questions 1, and 3 I can confirm that the Highways Agency (HA) and its Service Provider require disclosure of registered keeper details in order to operate the Dart Charge Scheme in accordance with the A282 Trunk Road (Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Charging Scheme) Order 2013. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) provide the data on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which sets out the terms under which it is shared. Both the HA and the DVLA are Executive Agencies of the Department for Transport and therefore both act on behalf of the Secretary of State.

“2) So it seems you will have to pay DVLA a fee. How much is that for each enquiry? and cost to send to Driver?”

I can confirm that under the MOU, the HA pays to DVLA a recurring fixed annual fee of £12,176.27, plus a monthly enquiry fee of £416 (+VAT) for the first 29,999 enquiries and £100 (+VAT) for each additional 10,000 enquiries. In addition, a quarterly fee of £433.50 is paid for access to the offline DVLA database, which contains no personal information. There are no costs to the driver.

“3) Are you an Agency on the DVLA list of Approvers list to have drivers data release?”

Please refer to the response to question 1.

“4) Who build this crossing, was any public money used and who was the owner of the crossing before the Highways Agency took over! Are you paid by a private company?”

The Thames crossing between Dartford and Thurrock consists of two tunnels and the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge. The first tunnel was built in 1963, the second in 1980 and the bridge was opened in 1991. Initially the tunnels were financed by public funds. Then an early Private Finance Initiative (PFI) concession, enacted by the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act 1988, transferred the existing debt from the tunnels to the private sector who retained toll revenue to pay off the existing debt and the debt incurred by building the new bridge. Tolls were set by the Department for Transport (and its forerunners) in conjunction with the Concessionaire. The concession was for a period of 20 years from 31 July 1988, but could be ended as soon as the debt was repaid. The then Secretary of State determined that all financial commitments had been met by 31 March 2002.

The crossing is owned by the Government and the maintenance and charging functions are carried out by third parties on behalf of the HA which is currently an executive Agency of the Department for Transport. From 1 April 2015, the HA will be replaced by Highways England which will be a government-owned company.

The Highways Agency awarded the main contract for vehicle detection, charging and enforcement management services to Sanef Operations Ltd on 26 September 2013.

“ 5) So you will ask foreign drivers to pay a fee. How do you know their data? What costs will it be to your agency to ask £3 fee to a driver living in Turkey etc.”

“6) A subsequent clarification enquiry was made and I note that you would also like information about the initial cost of collecting the £3 road user charge from an overseas driver?”

In response to questions 5 and 6, I can confirm that drivers of foreign vehicles can open accounts and make one-off payments for crossings in the same way as UK drivers. Where they fail to pay for a crossing, the HA's contractor employs a European debt recovery agency to pursue payment as the DVLA does not hold non-UK keeper details.

It is not possible to determine an individual figure for recovering the costs as this varies according to individual circumstances of that driver.

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](https://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-agency/about/complaints-procedure>

If you require a print copy, please phone the Highways Agency Information Line on 0300 123 5000; or e-mail ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.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:



An executive agency of the
Department for Transport

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 717,096 in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Charging and Enforcement Team Leader
Email: [REDACTED]



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