

Our ref: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
via email

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

2 January 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your e-mail dated 1 December 2017 received under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The specific details of your request have been extracted from your email and are highlighted in bold within the body of this letter.

To start, I would like to assure you that Highways England is committed to taking a fair and balanced approach to enforcing non-payment of the road user charge at the Dartford Crossing. Court-appointed enforcement agents are only ever used as a last resort, and only when each case has been authorised by the Traffic Enforcement Centre at Northamptonshire County Court. More than 150 million chargeable crossings have been processed at the Dartford Crossing since Dart Charge went live in November 2014, and the overwhelming majority of them have been smooth and problem free. Around 95% of journeys are paid on time, and our enforcement process for non-payment begins with offering first-time offenders the opportunity to pay for their outstanding crossings and avoid a penalty.

In response to your Freedom of Information request –

For each of the last two full years for which figures are available, please provide me with the following information:

1. How many times Highways England has engaged bailiffs to recover PCNs for unpaid toll charges in England.

2016 was the first year that Highways England's contracts with debt recovery companies were fully operational. 200,609 warrants were issued in that year. I can advise that one warrant is issued for each unpaid Penalty Charge Notice (PCN), so, for example, if a customer has two unpaid PCNs, two warrants will be issued.

There had been 99 million chargeable journeys made at the Dartford Crossing to the end of that period.

2. Of those, how many such cases were dropped after it was shown the person living at the first address attended was not the owner or driver of the vehicle in question.

I can confirm that no cases have been dropped in these circumstances. When it is confirmed that the registered keeper of the vehicle does not live at the given address, as obtained from the DVLA database, investigations are undertaken to ascertain the correct address.

3. How many complaints HE has received from people who believe they were wrongly given a PCN for failing to pay a toll charge.

And

4. Of those, how many cases were upheld.

We do not categorise complaints in the format requested that is easily retrievable to provide details as this would require manual interrogation of historic information.

5. How many complaints against HE regarding alleged unpaid PCNs were referred to the Independent Complaints Assessor.

Eight complaints related to Penalty Charge Notices have been referred to the Independent Complaints Assessor (ICA).

6. How many complaints against HE regarding alleged unpaid PCNs were referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO).

No complaints about Dart Charge have been referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO).

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](https://www.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. 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 [REDACTED] in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]