

Our ref: EIR 768888

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Bridge House  
1 Walnut Tree Close  
Guildford GU1 4LZ

[www.highwaysengland.co.uk](http://www.highwaysengland.co.uk)

6 March 2019

Dear ██████████

**Environmental Information Regulations 2004**  
**Information related to Dartford Crossing closure due to wind**

Thank you for your email to the Highways England Customer Contact Centre on 7 February regarding the closure of the bridge at Dartford Crossing in the morning of 7 February due to “high winds”. I have handled your enquiry under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

I have responded to each of your requests in the format that you requested them:

**Can you please confirm this was the case?**

The bridge was closed due to high winds, please see answers below.

**Can you also please disclose:**

**- The date and time the decision to close the bridge was taken please?**

The decision to close the bridge was taken on 7 February 2019 at 04:31am when the gusts reached over 60 mph. At 05:04am the bridge was closed.

**- The wind speed measurements data available from 12 hours before the decision above was taken and for the rest of the 7th February.**

Please see attached graphs that cover this period:

- 6 Feb 14:00 (2pm) to 7 Feb 04:00 (4am)
- 6 Feb 22:00 (10pm) to 7 Feb 12:00 (Midday)
- 7 Feb 06:00 (6am) to 20:00 (8pm)
- 7 Feb 14:00 (2pm) to 8 Feb 04:00 (4am)

**- The source of any winds speeds forecast you use/reference.**

We receive two forecasts a day from the Met office regarding wind speeds and monitor the forecast ourselves regularly throughout the day with Live forecasts on our SCADA Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system.

**- The guidance document that is referred to that defines the 'safe' wind speed and the need to close the bridge.**

### Protocol for operating the A282 Dartford – Thurrock River Crossing during periods of strong winds

This Protocol is to ensure the users of the Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Bridge are protected against an accident caused by high winds on this high exposed structure. The Protocol is based upon the wind speeds and direction measured by the Dartford - Thurrock River Crossing anemometers located on the QEII Bridge, and forecast data received from the Meteorological office. In the text below, “closed” means all types of vehicle are prohibited. There is no differentiation made between high sided vehicles and other forms of traffic.

The decision to implement speed limits, lane restrictions or the full closure of the QE II Bridge is the responsibility of a senior member of Connect Plus, the operator of the Dartford – Thurrock River Crossing. This decision is based on the criteria below and an appropriate risk assessment.

When the QE II Bridge is closed, vehicles wishing to continue southbound via the Dartford – Thurrock River Crossing will be diverted through the east tunnel (height restriction 5.03 metres/16' 6"). Northbound traffic through the Crossing will be restricted to the west tunnel (height restriction 4.80 metres/15' 9").

1. When the crosswind speed reaches 50 mph or the headwind speed reaches 60 mph, the matrix and variable speed limit signs at the Crossing will be activated to show an advisory limit of 30 mph.
2. When the crosswind speed reaches 55 mph or the headwind speed reaches 65 mph, lane closures will be introduced. If the wind is from the east, lanes 2&4 will be closed; if the wind is from the west, lanes 1&3 will be closed.
3. When the on-site anemometers and Met office forecast predicts the crosswind speeds increasing to over 60 mph, the QE II Bridge will be closed to all traffic. When the on-site anemometers and Met office forecast predicts the headwind speed increasing to 70 mph, the QE II Bridge will be closed to all traffic.
4. It may be necessary to implement restrictions based on the gusts of wind measured, even though the average wind speed is below the thresholds listed above.
5. The speed limit, lane restrictions or full closure will remain in place until the high winds have passed.

**- The date/time the decision was made to reopen.**

7 February 2019 at 07:22am.

**- The date/time the bridge was reopened (and traffic flowed) after this closure.**

7 February 2019 at 07:45am.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us quoting reference number EIR 768888 in any future communications.

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; 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

Yours sincerely

