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Dear Mike,

Dart Charge user experience

I am writing following a productive meeting with Highways England and Sanef concerning the Dart Charge.

Transport Focus welcomes the journey time improvements that the scheme has delivered for road users, however we have noted concerns raised about the process for making payments and the administration of Penalty Charge Notices. Following the meeting we still have some concerns.

At our meeting Highways England acknowledged that the Dart Charge website is not as clear and user-friendly as it could be. We were assured that improvements are planned, but it wasn't clear exactly what changes were intended or how quickly they would come about.

A specific concern is that it is possible for payments made by users of rental vehicles to be attributed to crossings made by a previous or future hirer of the same vehicle. We understand that this problem has been eased by the consistent application of the deadline for payment, but it has not been eliminated. At our meeting this was acknowledged, but we were not reassured that there are firm plans to fully address it. Clearly, road users should not be receiving a Penalty Charge Notice for crossings for which they have in fact paid. Might it help if users had the option to specify the date of their crossing? Or input the date(s) and time(s) that they are responsible for a particular vehicle?

Finally, we are concerned that there is nothing physical on the approach to Dartford to say how much it costs to use the crossing. It is a basic consumer principle that potential users of any product or service should know the price before they commit. As well as addressing this point, making it more obvious that a crossing costs money may further reduce the number of drivers who do not pay through genuine misunderstanding.



I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these points and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Guy Dangerfield
Road User Director