

The Dartford Crossing: A review of online information about crossing with a bike

July 2016



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1. Introduction

Transport Focus is the independent consumer watchdog representing the interests of all users of England's motorways and major 'A' roads, the Strategic Road Network. All users in this context includes cyclists.

The Dartford Crossing (the A282) comprises the Queen Elizabeth II suspension bridge (southbound) and Dartford tunnels (northbound) and it crosses the River Thames connecting the M25 in Essex with the M25 in Kent. It is managed by Highways England as part of the Strategic Road Network.

It is not permitted to cycle on the bridge or in the tunnels. However, the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act 1988 provides for pedal cycles and cyclists to be driven across/through free of charge. Part III, Section 27, of the Act states:

27 Services for transporting cycles and cyclists through crossing.

(1)The Secretary of State shall either provide, maintain and operate vehicles for the purpose of carrying pedal cycles and cyclists through the crossing or make such arrangements as he considers appropriate with any other person for securing the provision, maintenance and operation of vehicles for that purpose.

(2)No charge shall be made in respect of the carriage of any cycle or cyclist on any vehicle provided by, or in pursuance of arrangements made by, the Secretary of State under subsection (1) above.

Transport Focus has investigated what information is available online:

- about the fact that this facility exists
- about the times it is available
- about how to use it

This document illustrates what we found.

2. Method

We conducted a series of internet searches and recorded what we found by taking screenshots which are included in this document.

3. Summary of findings

The results of this exercise were:

- That apart from the Act of Parliament itself, we found no official source of information that this facility exists, the hours it is available or how to use it. We defined 'official source' as being www.gov.uk. See figures 1-3.

- The information we found on the internet was from past personal accounts or web-based cycling forums (see Figures 4-6)
- We found evidence that a timetable has existed in the past (perhaps it still does) in accounts from cycling websites, but we found no current or official information.
- We found no information about the type of cycle that would be carried – i.e. is it just conventional bicycles, or are tandems, accessories like child trailers etc. carried too.
- We found evidence that cyclists seeking to use the facility can have to wait for some time before crossing (see Figure 4).
- We found no information about the recommended cycling route to and from the point at which you are picked up/dropped off.

4. Recommendations

Transport Focus makes the following recommendations in light of this:

- That a web page is created on www.gov.uk providing the official source of information about the facility for cyclists to use the Dartford Crossing. This should include:
 1. A description of the service
 2. Details of the times of day and days of the week that it is available
 3. Confirmation that the service is provided free of charge.
 4. Clarity about the type of cycle that will be carried (e.g. does it include tandems, trailers etc.)
 5. Instructions on how to use the facility
 6. Recommended cycling routes to the points where cyclists are picked up/dropped off
 7. Contact details for further information or assistance
- That in conjunction with the local authorities, a survey is carried out of the condition of the cycling routes to/from the collection/drop off points, including of the surface, signage and lighting provision.

5. Screenshots: Current Websites

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.gov.uk/search?q=Dartford+crossing+bicycle>. The page header features the GOV.UK logo. Below the header, the search results are displayed for the query "Dartford crossing bicycle". A search bar contains the text "Dartford crossing bicycle" and a search icon. The results are filtered by "Organisations" and show 286 results found. The first result is "Pay the Dartford Crossing charge (Dart Charge)", which includes a sub-heading "Pay the Dartford Crossing charge (Dart Charge)" and a description: "Pay the Dart Charge - set up an account, register for a local resident discount, transfer a DART-Tag account to a Dart Charge account". The second result is "Dartford Crossing charges, exemptions and penalties", with a sub-heading "Dartford Crossing charges, exemptions and penalties" and a description: "Dart Charge - how much you'll pay, exemptions and penalties for non-payment". The third result is "Dart Charge: local resident discount", with a sub-heading "Dart Charge: local resident discount" and a description: "Residents in the Dartford or Thurrock council area can apply for a discount on the Dart Charge - the charge for the Dartford Crossing." The fourth result is "Pay the Dartford Crossing charge (Dart Charge) by post", with a sub-heading "Pay the Dartford Crossing charge (Dart Charge) by post" and a description: "16 December 2014, Form, Highways England. Use this form to pay the Dartford Crossing charge (Dart Charge) in advance by post." The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the Windows logo, several application icons, and the system tray with the time 14:19 and date 19/05/2016.

Figure 1: gov.uk search for “Dartford crossing bicycle” – scrolling down did not produce anything relevant

Home

Dartford Crossing charges, exemptions and penalties

Elsewhere on GOV.UK
[Pay the Dartford Crossing charge \(Dart Charge\)](#)

You must pay if you use the Dartford Crossing between 6am and 10pm. You must pay by midnight on the day after you cross. The payment service is called Dart Charge.

You no longer pay at the barriers when you use the Dartford Crossing.

The fee depends on the type of vehicle you have and whether you've set up an account or not. You can get a [discount if you live in Dartford or Thurrock](#).

Cameras read your number plate when you cross.

Dartford Crossing charges

Vehicle class	Type of vehicle	Single journey	Standard or commercial account	Local resident discount account
B	Cars (including trailers), motorhomes, passenger vans and buses with less than 9 seats	£2.50	£1.67	£10 a year for 50 crossings and 20p per extra crossing, or £20 a year for unlimited crossings

Figure 2: information on gov.uk refers only to payment arrangements for motor vehicles

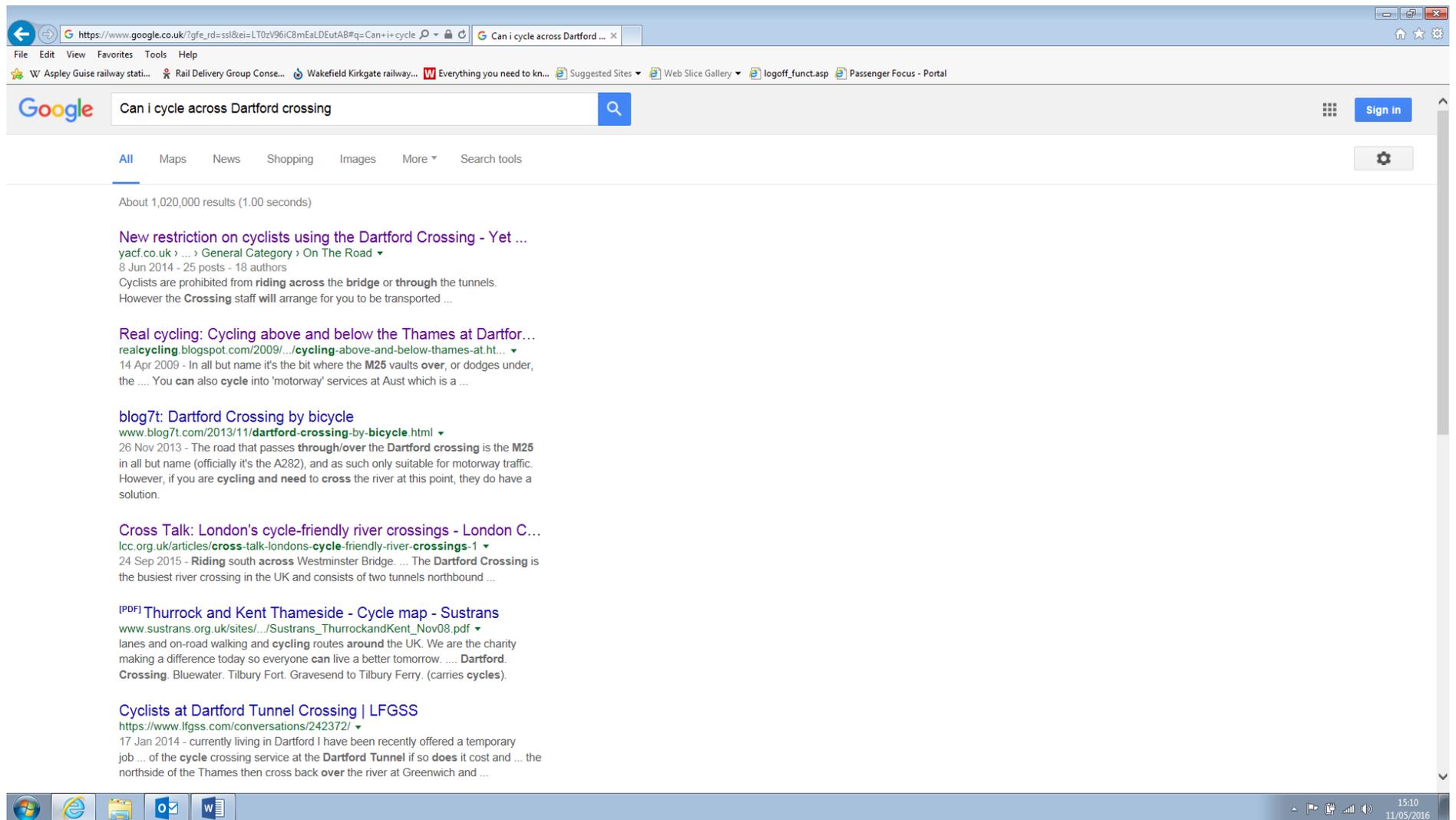


Figure 3: Google search on “Can I cycle across the Dartford crossing” – there are no results from www.gov.uk

https://yacf.co.uk/forum/index.php?topic=83061.0

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

W Aspley Guise railway stati... Rail Delivery Group Conse... Wakefield Kirkgate railway... Everything you need to kn... Suggested Sites Web Slice Gallery logoff_func.asp Passenger Focus - Portal

yacf Search

Home Help Search Calendar Login Register

Yet Another Cycling Forum » General Category » On The Road » New restriction on cyclists using the Dartford Crossing

Pages: [1] 2 3

« previous next » PRINT

Author Topic: New restriction on cyclists using the Dartford Crossing (Read 4422 times)

Wowbagger
Dez's butler

New restriction on cyclists using the Dartford Crossing
« on: June 08, 2014, 07:20:29 pm »

I used it one-way today, north to south.

I left Grays station at about 8.30 and turned up at the crossing at about 8.50. Three men were sitting roun a table in the southbound control. I asked them for a lit across. They advised me to use the phone outside, which I had overlooked, but did. I dialled the number and was told that I was too late to cross an would have to wait until 10.30.

I then noticed a notice which I previously hadn't which listed the times when cyclists can't cross. 9.00 am to 10.30 am. I pointed out that it was 8.50 and therefore I wasn't too late.

"I'm on the south side and you're on the north side" came the reply. "By the time I've got to you and brought you over I will be into my break, so you'll have to wait until 10.30."

I wasn't happy with this and told the three men who were siting round the table that I wasn't. One of them picked up the phone. "He'll be here in a minute" came the reply, and sure enough a large pickup truck with bike rack soon appeared. I was taken across and took my bike off at 9.05.

This whole episode strikes me as being firstly pathetic and secondly insidious. Imagine the outcry if the bridge were to be closed to motorised traffic for a total of 5 hours a day just so that a small group of workers could have a break.

There is no mention of these restrictions that I have been able to find on the [crossing's website](#). It seems to me to be an arbitrary decision taken by someone who may well not have the authority to take that decision. When the crossing was introduced in the 1960s safeguards were put in place to ensure that cyclists could cross.

Quote

Cyclists

Cyclists are prohibited from riding across the bridge or through the tunnels. However the Crossing staff will arrange for you to be transported from one side to the other free of charge.

Northbound cyclists should head to the Kent Control Point. Southbound cyclists should dismount at the Essex control point — a free call telephone is provided should this point be unattended. The transfer should take 15 to 30 minutes.

If you are riding a tandem or travelling as a group it is advisable to make prior arrangements by contacting the Crossing.

<https://twitter.com/WowbaggerHT/status/475568761777709056>

The notice reads:
Quote

15:18 11/05/2016

Figure 4: Webpage of YACF (yet another cycling forum), a web-based forum for cyclists. This post hints at complexities involved in using the service, even if you manage to find out about it.

Real Cycling! Everyday biking from A to B, via other letters...



What is real cycling?

It's not about lycra. It's not about racing, or saving the world, or crossing the Nullarbor Plain alone except for the film crew.

It's about the best way of commuting, shopping, sightseeing, socialising, partying, and generally just getting from A to B every day: by bike.

We're based in York, but get around the UK a fair bit.

Read my Real Cycling column every month in [Cycling Plus](#) magazine.

Are you a real cyclist? Take the test
[London Thames All 34 bike bridges, tunnels, ferries](#)
[Bike Monopoly](#) Cycle the game's squares
[Bike part streets](#) Helmet Row, Bell Yard etc
[Quirky London 20 odd places to cycle](#)

Click on a pic in slideshow below to see full size with description. Nothing showing? Try the [full-screen version](#)

Slideshow



14 April 2009

Cycling above and below the Thames at Dartford Crossing

I cycled the [Dartford Crossing](#) yesterday. Sort of.

It consists of a tunnel (for northbound traffic) and the Queen Elizabeth II bridge (southbound). In all but name it's the bit where the M25 vaults over, or dodges under, the Thames Estuary, linking Thurrock in Essex with Dartford in Kent.

Neither the tunnel nor the [bridge](#) were built for bikes. However, thanks to [paragraph 27](#) of the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act 1988, cyclists have to be transported free of charge.

(A reliable source tells me this was inserted by our bicycling baronet chums in the Lords, after the evil anti-cycling House of Commons tried to push it through without pedalling provision.)

In practice this means you cycle to a control-point car park at either end, and stand around until a chap in a tie and high-vis jacket pops out and asks you if you want a lift across. A lurid, op-art Land Rover suggestive of a Zandra Rhodes migraine turns up; your bike goes on a rack on the back and you're whisked across.

The facility works 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Each Land Rover can take up to three people at a time. They have a big bike trailer for cycling groups, though they need a phone call in advance to set it up.

On both my north and south trips I had a friendly and chatty lady driver whose knowledge of the relative merits of Bluewater and Lakeside shopping centres, on opposite sides of the estuary, was detailed and comprehensive. Up on the Thurrock side I had a couple of pints in a rather shabby Essex pub populated by [Fast Show](#) characters where everything was either sticky, broken, or nailed down.

The southbound journey, across the bridge, is impressive. You're pretty high up (180 feet, my likeable cabbie informed me in between observations on the new John Lewis food court in Bluewater) and get a commanding view of the refineries, ships and marshy sweeps. Splendid, in a Netherlands sort of way.

But being in a vehicle, you can't stop, and it all flits superficially by, a glimpsed estuarial zoetrope. If only they'd built a bike lane... like they did with the Humber Bridge, which is much better because you can therefore dawdle and stop and enjoy the panoramas of mud, sand and chimneys.

Neither bike access point is easy to find by bike. Signage is sporadic and the route not obvious. Your final mile or two will be spent in narrow strips of tarmac alongside what are effectively motorways. The most convenient way to do the crossing from London is to cycle out on [National](#)





15:19
11/05/2016

Figure 5: Webpage of Real Cycling! This example gives a personal account of a journey over the crossing but again the information is over eight years old.

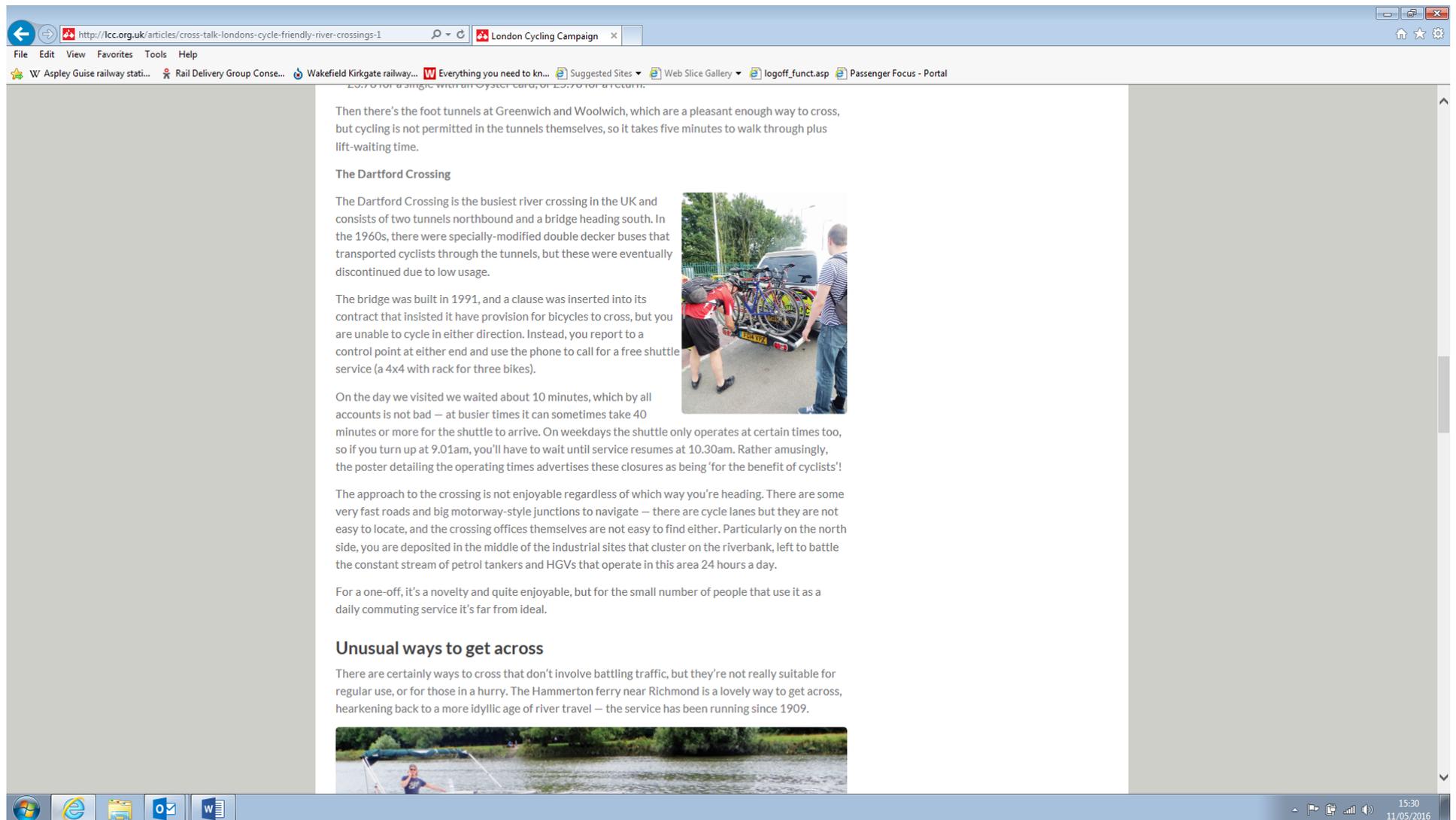


Figure 6: Webpage from the London Cycling Campaign giving information on the River Thames crossing. Dartford is shown but gives no link to an official source of information.

6. Screenshots: Dartford – Thurrock Crossing Act 1988

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the legislation.gov.uk website. The address bar shows the URL: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/20/contents>. The page title is "Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act 1988". The main content area shows the title "Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act 1988" and the year "1988 c. 20". Below the title, there are tabs for "Table of Contents", "Content", and "More Resources". A "Changes to legislation" section indicates that there are currently no known outstanding effects for this Act. The main text is organized into sections: "Introductory Text", "Part I Construction of New Bridge over River Thames" (with a list of 3 items), "Part II Transfer of Tunnels and Tunnel Approaches" (with a list of 5 items), "Transfers consequential on section 4" (with a list of 3 items), "Financial provisions" (with a list of 2 items), and "Part III Operation of the Crossing" (with a list of 1 item). The left sidebar contains options for "What Version" (Latest available (Revised) and Original (As enacted)), "Opening Options", and "More Resources" (Original Print PDF). The bottom of the browser window shows the Windows taskbar with the time 15:48 and date 11/05/2016.

Figure 7: Screenshot showing the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act 1988

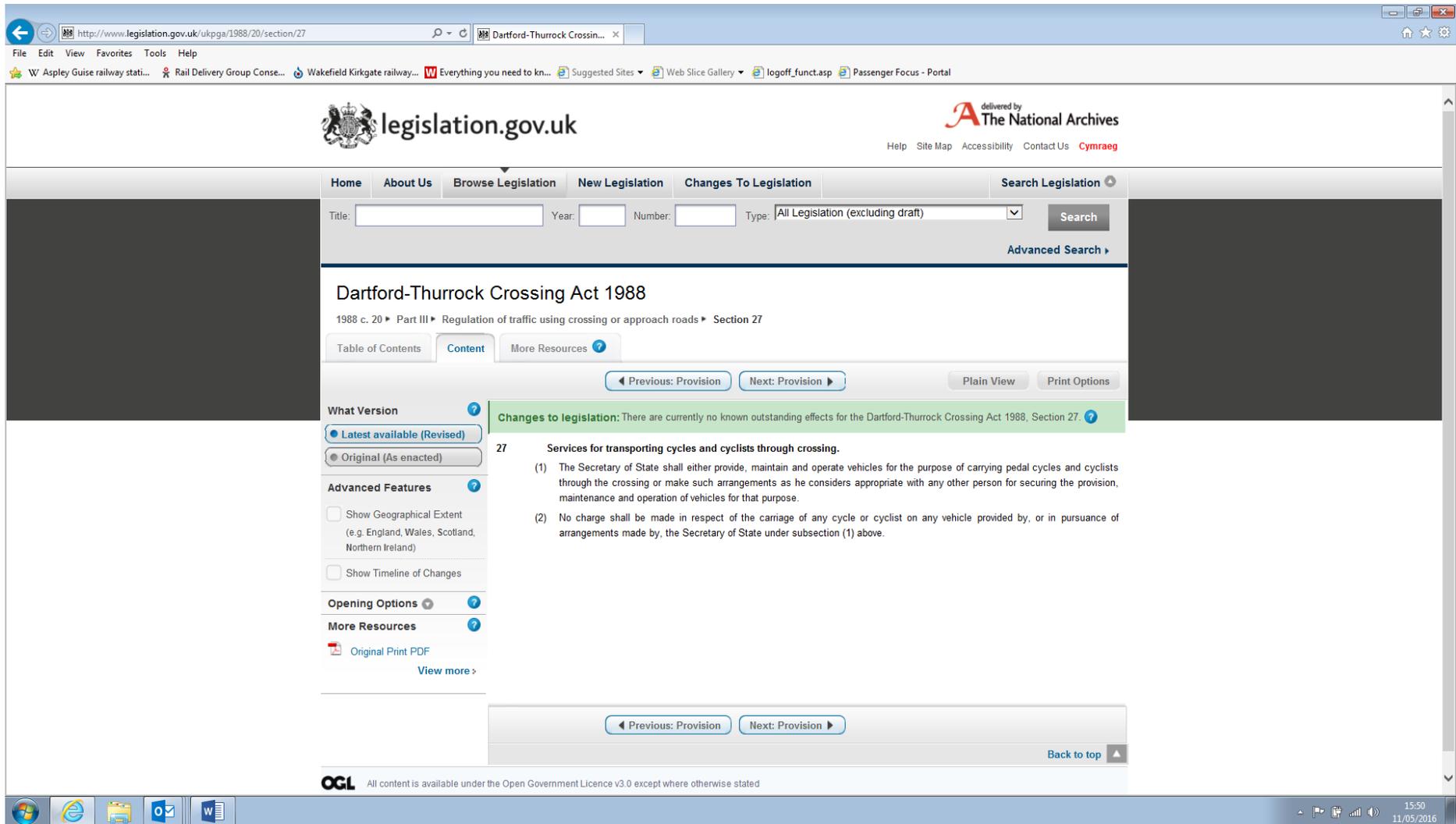


Figure 8: Screenshot depicting Part III, Section 27 of the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act in relation to cycling provision.

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