

## Dartford Crossing Toll Changes



The Department for Transport (DfT) are proposing to change the tolls on the Dartford Crossing from January 2008 (picture above).

The standard toll for cars will rise from £1 to £1.50 but users of Dart-Tag will only pay £1 (they presently pay 93p). Dart-Tag is an electronic tag that is purchased in advance – it expedites travel through all the toll barriers, and there is sometimes a reserved lane for tag users although that now seems to be generally kept open for all users.

They are also examining the possibility of making the toll free from 10 pm to 6 am so as to encourage lorries to use it at quieter times – these typically congest the area leading up to the toll booths as they can't use the automatic toll booths.

Dartford MP Howard Stoate says the increase should be scrapped, and in fact he wants the tolls scrapped altogether. They clearly cause needless congestion on this stretch of motorway, and readers are reminded that the Government promised to remove the tolls once the bridge had been paid for, which it was by 2003. It also appears to contravene European law in that the tolls are higher than they need to be to cover the operating costs.

A consultation document has been published on the internet at: [www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft\\_roads/documents/page/dft\\_roads\\_613833.hcsp](http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_roads/documents/page/dft_roads_613833.hcsp) . Readers who use this crossing should make sure they respond.

*(Editor's Comments: making it free at certain times to reduce congestion is certainly a step forward. And encouraging Dart-Tag use is also a good idea as vehicles using them pass through much more quickly – the previous price differentiation was not enough to encourage take-up. But the increase in the basic charge is too much, and I think the Government should still stick to its original promise and remove the tolls altogether).*

Roger Lawson, BBRAG, Dec 2006