



B.B.R.A.G.

THE BROMLEY BOROUGH ROADS ACTION GROUP

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Committee Members: P.Appleby, R.W.Lawson, M.J.Stilwell, D. Andrews

Julian Smith
Dartford Crossing Consultation
Department for Transport
Zone 3/5, Great Minster House
76 Marsham St
London
SW1 4DR

14 February, 2007

Dartford Crossing Consultation

Dear Mr Smith,

On behalf of our association I wish to make the following comments on the proposed changes to the Dartford crossing:

1. We believe that all charges at the crossing should be removed. The government has reneged on promises to scrap the charges, contained in the original Act that authorised construction of the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge.
2. The existing congestion at the Crossing, and the associated poor air quality, is directly related to the toll booths. If the toll booths were removed, there would be no congestion. This is obvious to anyone who uses the crossing regularly – the fact that there are 4 lanes on the southbound bridge, and yet three lanes before and afterwards, and still traffic queues up for much of the time on the bridge, demonstrates clearly that the tolls are the sole cause of the congestion.

Although there might be some small increase in traffic if charges were removed, this is unlikely to offset the benefits of removing the cause of the existing congestion.

3. Note that we are opposed in principle to the imposition of charges as a means of regulating traffic flows – this is equivalent to general road tolls and is anathema to the general public as is adequately demonstrated by the recent electronic petition against such tolls presented to the Prime Minister's office.

4. We do not accept that removal of the toll booths would create any safety problems – indeed it would probably improve matters as clearly there are numerous incidents where vehicle crash into the booths or into each other as they change lanes just before the tolls. In addition the retention of the toll booths while making the crossing free at certain times would create safety problems by itself to which there is no simple solution.

5. It is clear from the proposals that have been made that it is recognized that commercial vehicles (eg. HGVs) cause congestion early in the morning at the north bound toll booths where they have to stop and pay manually. If it is not considered wise to remove all tolls, the best alternative would simply be to remove tolls for those vehicles altogether, or remove tolls before a certain time of day. There should be no increase in tolls for other vehicles.

6. But scrapping the tolls would remove all the complex and expensive administrative overhead associated with collecting the tolls which is simply unproductive work. All road tolls are an old-fashioned concept and should only ever be used to raise funds for specific short term projects – not as a permanent feature of our road network.

Yours sincerely

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