

Scrap Mersey Tolls Press Release 4 December 2018 as revised 6 December

DRIVERS CAUGHT IN A PENALTY TRAP ON MERSEY GATEWAY AS PENALTIES REACH ONE MILLION FIGURE

Widespread worry and trouble is being caused by Halton Council to thousands of users of the Gateway bridge according to anti toll campaigners.

Since the new toll bridge across the Mersey opened last year it is estimated that Merseyflow, who are employed by Halton Council, have issued over one million penalties. Many drivers are not paying the penalties and up to the end of September, 180 thousand charge certificates had been issued. The certificates are the first step in recovery action which ends with debt enforcement agents calling at people's houses and taking possessions and vehicles.

The Council about the 1st December stepped up the recovery action and have turned the screw further on drivers.

There has been no announcement but warrants have been executed and bailiffs - Marston - have started sending out letters threatening to "seize your belongings" if you do not pay.

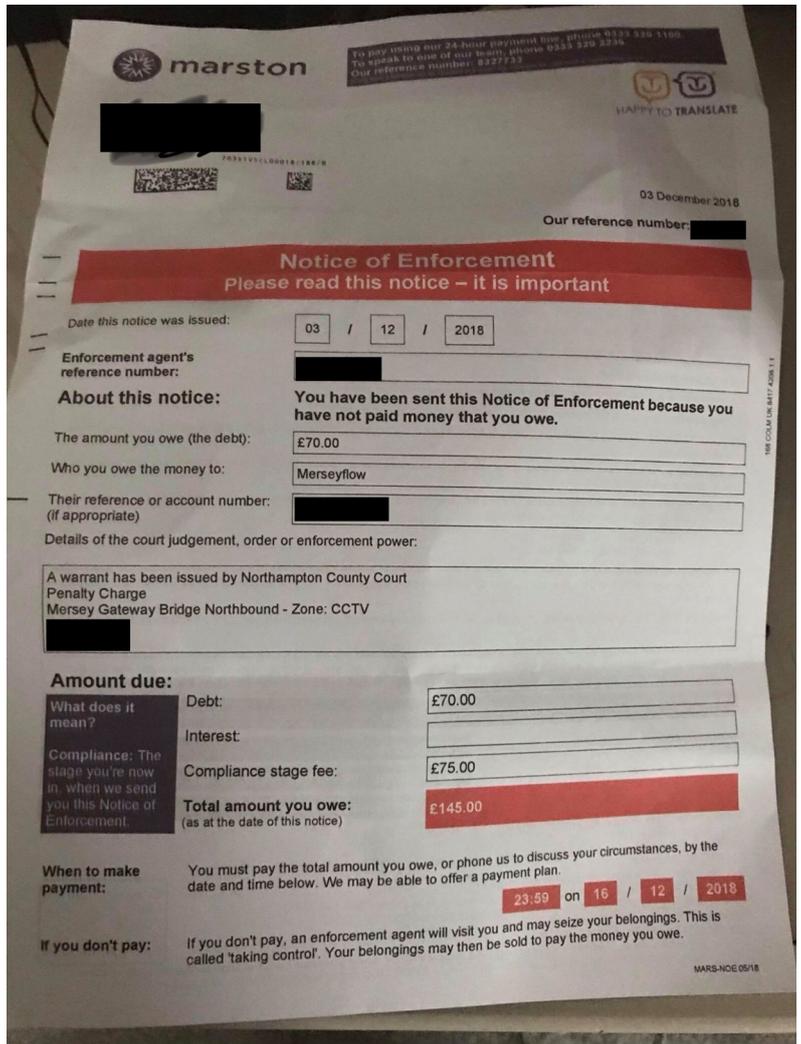
The earliest letter we have seen was dated 3rd December. The charge is £145 per £2 toll.

John McGoldrick for Scrap Mersey Tolls said that the number of penalties being issued was staggering. "We have been unable to get up to date figures from the Council but up to the end of September they were on average issuing 2,430 penalty notices every day. If you do not include those drivers who do not have to pay because they live in Halton or have a Blue Badge then every sixteenth crossing of the bridge results in a fine."

"The penalties are causing a lot of worry, aggravation and inconvenience to many people who may have other problems. The whole system is little short of criminal particularly as the Merseyside politicians who inflicted tolls and penalties on this previously free crossing of the Mersey knew exactly what the effect would be."

"We believe that the toll enforcement procedures are not lawful, and so far the Traffic Penalty Tribunal seems to have had the same view as the Council have so far not won a single appeal to the Tribunal. Unfortunately most people are intimidated when they get a penalty notice and will pay it whatever the circumstances. People do this because either they fear that the penalties and costs will escalate or because they think it is difficult and time consuming to challenge it. Only one in two hundred penalties is appealed as far as the Tribunal."

"The situation is a disgrace and you would have hoped that our local politicians would have taken an interest in what is going on and tried to get the regime of tolls and penalties scrapped."



Notes

The over one million penalties is based on the last figure that Halton Council revealed which was 855,000 penalties to the end of September. That works out at 2,429 a day, at that rate the one million figure would have been reached on 29th or 30th November. Though the trend is that the number of penalties is going up, so it is possible that the one million figure was reached a bit earlier.

The figures section on our web page gives more details and includes a copy of the information supplied by Halton Council-

<http://www.notolls.org.uk/smtpcn.htm>

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