

MERSEY GATEWAY TOLLS BLITZ ON DRIVERS

A massive operation is taking place to pursue drivers who have allegedly missed paying a toll on the Mersey Gateway bridge. Some drivers have been faced with demands that could run up to £30,000 or more, over 5,000 cases have already had 'warrants of control' issued and there are at least 200,000 more cases in the pipeline.

The figures come from Scrap Mersey Tolls who have been offering advice and assistance to drivers caught in the penalty trap. They have also obtained figures from Halton Borough Council. These figures show what has happened in the 63 weeks from when the new bridge opened up to the end of December 2018.

During that period Merseyflow issued over a million fines or 'penalty charge notices'. The figures are even more staggering when related to the number of crossings where a toll was due. During that same period there were 28.3 million crossings of which 17.4 million were liable to pay a toll. That means that there was one fine for every sixteenth crossing by a driver who was liable to pay a toll.

In the latter part of 2018, Merseyflow racked up their enforcement process to recover tolls and fines. The process leads to visits from bailiffs, seizure of goods and clamping of cars. By the end of December 2018, Merseyflow had issued some 247,000 Charge Certificates which increase the penalty payable to £60. These were followed by 56,000 Recovery Orders and 5,600 Warrants of Control which start the bailiff action. By this stage the fine has increased to £143 for each unpaid toll. There are then additional charges of £235 if a bailiff calls and further charges if they 'seize' goods.

John McGoldrick from Scrap Mersey Tolls said "There are many people in despair because of the demands that they are getting. One person we are helping has been issued with 197 fines which by the time they reach the bailiffs amount to demands for £30,000. It is criminal to demand such sums for what until sixteen months ago was a free crossing. We have been submitting evidence to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal showing that everything about these tolls and their enforcement is contrary to both statute law and human rights. Whatever the Tribunal decides on the various test cases, we call on the politicians to do something to stop the pain, nuisance and costs of this terrible system."

Notes

1. A 'warrant of control' is the stage in the enforcement process where an 'enforcement agent' (commonly referred to as a bailiff) is authorised to visit people's homes and seize goods or clamp vehicles.
2. Scrap Mersey Tolls is in touch with various people whose demands have reached over £10,000. One person has been issued with 197 penalty charge notices for £394 of tolls that are allegedly unpaid. By the time it reaches the warrant of control stage the demand is £145 for each and every unpaid toll. That gives a potential demand for £28,565. There are then additional fees of £235 for a visit by the 'enforcement agent' plus a further 'fee' of £110 if they seize belongings.
THE TOTAL AMOUNT DEMANDED FOR JUST ONE CROSSING COULD BE AS MUCH AS £490.
3. [Link to figures supplied by Halton Council](#)

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

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/scrapmerseytolls/>