

DRIVERS WHO MISS PAYING MERSEY GATEWAY TOLLS FACE MASSIVE DEMANDS

A massive operation is taking place to pursue drivers who have missed paying a toll on the Mersey Gateway bridge. Figures obtained by anti toll campaign group Scrap Mersey Tolls show that on average there was a penalty charge notice issued for every sixteenth crossing by a driver who was liable to pay a toll.

In the 63 weeks from when the new bridge opened to the end of 2018, the toll collector, Merseyflow, had issued over a million fines of £40. They had also issued over 247,000 Charge Certificates which increase the penalty payable to £60. As many of these are not paid, Merseyflow had also applied to the Courts for 56,000 Recovery Orders and 5,600 Warrants of Control which start the bailiff action. By this stage the fine increases to £143 for each unpaid toll. There are then additional charges of £235 if a bailiff calls and further charges if the bailiff seizes goods.

There have been claims that the toll collection is illegal but the Local Government Ombudsman, following a complaint by 'Mr B' ruled that there was no 'injustice' in the tolls even in the period up to April 2018 where the Traffic Penalty Tribunal had ruled that the tolls were not enforceable.

Scrap Mersey Tolls who have been offering advice and assistance to drivers caught in the "penalty trap" say that the whole system is a shambles and is causing extreme worry for many people.

John McGoldrick from Scrap Mersey Tolls said "There are many people in despair because of the demands that they are getting. One person we have helped had been issued with 197 fines which by the time they reach the bailiffs would amount to demands for £30,000. It is criminal to demand such sums for what until sixteen months ago was a free crossing. When Merseyflow are pressed they may reduce their extortionate demands and waive the fines, but many people do not realise this and because of the fear of bailiff action some have had to go to money lenders."

"What makes this even worse is that, despite what the Ombudsman said, we still believe that the actions of Merseyflow and even the Courts are illegal. We have submitted evidence to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal showing that the tolls and their enforcement are contrary to both statute law and human rights. The Tribunal decision is expected to be released soon; whatever they have decided, we call on the politicians to stop the pain, nuisance and costs of this terrible system."

Notes

1. Up to the end of 2018 there were 28,335,000 crossings of which 17,401,000 were liable to pay a toll. There were 1,056,000 fines. That is one fine for every 16.48 crossings where a toll was payable.
 2. 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.
 3. Scrap Mersey Tolls is in touch with various people whose demands have reached over £10,000. One person had 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/>