

Evening Post

Letters To The Editor

Fury Over Thames Toll Charges

Dear Sir/Madam,
I wish to bring to the attention of the readers of your newspaper the problems I encounter during my daily journey to work from Brentwood in Essex to Dartford in Kent. This is only a distance of fifteen miles but the issue of course is the fact that I have to use the M25, one of the busiest orbital Motorways in the UK (if not the world!) followed by crossing the River Thames using the Queen Elizabeth II toll suspension bridge.

My journey to work every morning is a nightmare! On a good day it takes at least thirty minutes to travel the fifteen miles, an average speed of thirty miles per hour. On a really bad day, the journey can take up to four hours which is an average speed of

approximately four miles per hour. I could just as well still be living in Victorian times when motorised vehicles had to follow a man carrying a red flag warning of the imminent danger of an approaching motor vehicle!

The worst journeys occur when the toll bridge crossing suffers from major congestion caused either by a road traffic accident or high winds when the bridge can be closed altogether. On days like these I might as well just turn round (if you could actually manage to do that on the motorway!) and go home. Fortunately, on most days, the traffic travels smoothly but at an alarmingly slow pace. The problem of course is having to pay a toll to cross the bridge.



Travelling from Brentwood, which is north of the bridge, the traffic slows right down even before the bridge comes into sight. You then have to crawl in first or second gear for what seems an eternity until you approach the toll booths. Now in this day and age you'd think you could just show your credit card and be waved through – but no! They want cash, admittedly you can pay in Euros if you have forgotten your English money. But cash it is! So, the poor motorist has to squeeze his hand into his trouser pocket (or her handbag) to find £1.50 (soon to rise to £2) each time they cross. People who cross regularly know to have the correct money ready. However, many people

are making an occasional visit to the channel port of Dover, in order to holiday on the continent and are not prepared for this archaic payment system. Hence virtually everyone is stationary at the toll booth for up to two minutes resulting in huge queues.

My solution is simple. Remove the toll booths and let the traffic flow freely. The government has already made millions of pounds out of this bridge and should, from now on, let everyone use it for free.

Yours,
Angry Driver

Fury Over Thames Toll Charges

Section A

Choose the best word or group of words to fit the passage and put a ring around your choice.

Dear Sir, I wish to complain about my daily journey to work. I use the

1 **M6** **M1** **M26** **M25**

motorway and cross the River Thames using the

2 **Queen Elizabeth I** **Queen Victoria**
Queen Mary II **Queen Elizabeth II**

toll bridge. On a good day it takes

3 **15 minutes** **30 minutes** **4 hours** **6 hours**

to make this journey. On a bad day the bridge may be closed by

4 **hot sun.** **a flood.** **heavy rain.** **high winds.**

The main problem is having to stop to

5 **buy an ice cream.** **pay to cross the bridge.**
fix a flat tyre. **have a rest.**

Each time you cross you have to pay

6 **50p.** **£1.** **£1.50.** **£2.00.**

If the toll booths were taken away the traffic would flow freely all of the time.
Yours, Angry Driver

Section B

- 1 What is a toll bridge?

- 2 'My journey to work every morning is a nightmare!' Why do you think the writer feels this way about his/her journey to work?

- 3 Why do you think the writer compares a bad journey to work to living in Victorian Times?

- 4 On which days does the writer feel like turning round and going home?

- 5 Why is having to pay a toll to cross the bridge a problem for the writer?

- 6 What has the writer used the phrase 'cash it is' to emphasise?

- 7 What is the writer describing when he/she uses the phrase 'archaic payment system'?

- 8 What do you understand by the term 'major congestion'?

Section C

Imagine you work for the organisation which operates the toll bridge. Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper telling how important it is for every motorist to stop and pay to use this expensive bridge.