

Dartford Crossing Fines Canceled After Major System Error Hits Thousands of Drivers

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Tens of thousands of drivers have had their penalty charges for using the Dartford Crossing canceled after a major error involving automated number plate recognition systems. Since the start of 2025, more than 60,000 penalty charge notices (PCNs) have been overturned following widespread issues linked to the technology used to monitor vehicles passing through the busy toll crossing that connects Kent and Essex. The

problem began shortly after the U.S.-based firm Conduent took over the operation in July 2023.

National Highways, which oversees the crossing, confirmed the mistake and has apologized for the disruption caused to affected drivers. The agency stated that the issue stemmed from misreads of number plates, which led to thousands of motorists being wrongly fined, some receiving multiple penalties for journeys they never made. Officials say the error rate has now been reduced to below one percent, and system upgrades have been implemented to prevent further incidents.

Despite the ongoing technical challenges, the Dartford Crossing has continued to generate significant revenue. In the first four months of 2025 alone, £12 million was collected through enforcement fines, while a record £115 million was raised in tolls during 2024, as over 56 million vehicles used the route. However, the surge in wrongful fines has drawn strong criticism, especially from drivers who were hit with multiple charges despite efforts to comply with payment rules.

One woman reportedly received 34 penalty notices in seven months due to repeated misidentification of her vehicle. Another driver accumulated over £2,000 in fines after the online payment system failed to acknowledge multiple payment attempts. These cases have intensified calls for improved oversight and a more reliable appeals process.

National Highways is urging anyone who believes they were wrongly fined to come forward and appeal. The agency insists that enforcement is used only as a last resort and is now reviewing its operational procedures. The incident has raised broader concerns about the reliability of automated

toll enforcement and the importance of accountability when errors affect ordinary motorists navigating the UK's road network.