

WHITCHURCH BRIDGE COMPANY TOLL APPLICATION DATED 5th NOVEMBER 2014

Management of Toll Collection

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this document is to give more details of how the Company manages the collection of Tolls.

2 Collecting Hours

2.1 Under its Acts the Company is entitled to collect Tolls at all times. However, it is not economic to collect Tolls at night, as the volume of traffic would not cover staff and other variable costs (eg heating in the Toll Booth). The Company has fixed the start and finish time for Toll collection based on traffic volumes and staff costs, and also the duty hours of the Bridge Manager in relation to statutory requirements on working hours.

3 Internal control

3.1 Internal control is based on the bespoke Toll collection system supplied by Parkare Ltd consisting of:

- card readers, automatic barriers, and road axle-counting loops at the Toll Booth
- pre-paid proximity cards (known as Bridge Cards) which any user can purchase and use (if it has a pre-paid crossings credit) to open the automatic barrier computer equipment in the Toll Booth and Toll House
- software including a database to record all transactions, maintain audit trails and provide management reports

3.2 Each Toll Collector signs on to the Parkare system at the start of their shift and signs off at the end of their shift. At sign off the system produces a shift report which shows:

- Operator ID
- Cash taken for Bridge Card top-ups
- Number of Bridge card uses
- Number of cash Toll collections:

3.3 In addition, at the end of their shift the Toll Collector completes Control Forms showing

- the cash handed in to the Bridge Manager
- number of Bridge Card packs sold (at £20)
- advance of pay taken

3.4 They also record any reason (eg Parkare system faults) for the non-collection of Tolls at any time during their shift.

3 Bridge Manager's Responsibilities

4.1 The Bridge Manager completes a Daily Control Sheet which summarises:

- Cash taken
- Number of Bridge Card packs sold
- Number of Class 2 books sold
- Cash used for sundry expenses, eg paper required by Bridge Manager.

4.2 The Bridge Manager audits each shift by comparing the cash collected with that expected from the number of cash Tolls, Bridge Card top-ups and Bridge Card packs sold. This is known as Collection Efficiency. Collection Efficiency in excess of 97% is expected and normally achieved.

- 4.3 Losses are due mainly to
- “free crossings” by emergency services
 - Non-payment of cash Tolls by drivers, normally lost or non-local, who claim to have no cash with them
 - RTA’s or temporary road closures which cause cars to turn at the Toll Booth (we only charge for one crossing in these circumstances)
 - Non-payment of Bridge Card Tolls because of Parkare system faults.
- 4.4 The Bridge Manager seeks an explanation from the Toll Collector concerned of any unexplained discrepancy in cash taken during their shift. The Company has procedures in place to address any patterns of unexplained discrepancies.

5. Company Secretary’s Responsibilities

- 5.1 Each week the Company Secretary collates information into an Excel spreadsheet on each day’s operations as follows:
- cash taken and banked (from the Bridge Manager and Bank statements)
 - cash taken for sundry expenses and Toll Collector wages
 - the number of Bridge Card packs sold (from the Bridge Manager’s Daily Control Sheet)
 - the total number of Crossings in collecting hours (from the Parkare system)
 - the number of crossings by pre-paid Bridge Cards (from the Parkare system)
 - the number of cash Tolls taken (from the Parkare system)
- 5.2 Using the above information the Company Secretary produces weekly Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reports and graphs showing:
- Number of crossings, 24 hours and collecting hours
 - % of Tolls paid by Bridge Card
 - Average Toll, ie pence per crossing
 - Toll Revenue
 - Collection Efficiency
- 5.3 The Company Secretary also produces Monthly KPI Reports (using the above information) for the Committee of Management. These Reports compare actual performance against budgeted performance, and explains any variances.
- 5.4 The Company Secretary is accountable to the Committee of Management for the management of Toll Revenue.

6 Effective Recruitment, Training and Supervision of the Toll Collectors

- 6.1 Recruitment is achieved by advertisements at the Toll Booth and also by word of mouth from existing staff. Applicants submit an Application Form and are interviewed by the Bridge Manager, who has the authority to recruit Toll collection staff.
- 6.2 2 copies of a Contract of Employment are prepared by the Company Secretary. The new employee is asked to read the document and to sign both copies of he/she is satisfied with its contents. Both copies are then signed by the Bridge Manager (on behalf of the Company). One copy is retained by the new Employee, and one by the Company Secretary.
- 6.3 On the job training is carried out by the Bridge Manager or other experienced staff. Following training, the employee’s competence is assessed and documented by the Bridge Manager. This assessment Form is retained for the Company’s records. .
- 6.4 After competence is established, the Toll Collector is rostered for shifts as per his/her Contract of Employment. The Bridge Manager makes regular visits to the Toll Booth whilst the new Employee gains confidence and proficiency.

- 6.5 As part of his/her normal duties, the Bridge Manager spends some time in the Toll Booth with all Toll Collectors to observe their performance and discuss any issues of interest or concern. The time spent with each Toll Collector will depend upon their experience, the Bridge Manager's knowledge of them, and any abnormal traffic conditions.

7 CCTV

- 7.1 Since 2004, CCTV with secure digital recording has been installed to monitor traffic movements and the Toll collection process. The purpose of the system is to discourage Bridge users from avoiding paying the Toll due or abusing the Company's staff.
- 7.2 The system also provides evidence which can be used to support a prosecution or other police action, and to support insurance claims against third parties who cause damage to the Company's property.

8 New Toll Payment Methods

- 8.1 The Company is aware of the trend away from using cash and is actively researching cashless payment methods for Tolls, Bridge Card purchases and Bridge Card top-ups. Any new cashless system needs to be able to integrate with the existing Bridge Card and barrier control system.
- 8.2 Any cashless system will need to work alongside a cash system – whilst London buses and some car parks do not permit cash payments, the Company believes that it will be necessary to accept cash at the Toll Booth for the foreseeable future.
- 8.3 The opportunity of savings from introducing a cashless system are limited and it is thus difficult to make a business case for cashless payments. However, the market is changing quickly and the Company will watch developments.

9 Traffic Flow Trends

- 9.1 The Company is of course aware that the presence of the Toll Bridge is one factor that will affect drivers' decisions on the routes they take: some drivers will avoid Tolls either on principle or because they perceive that the Toll they pay does not justify the utility they gain from using the Bridge.
- 8.2 The Company monitors the number of crossings and the long term (ie over several years) trend. Since 2008 the number of crossings measured by the Company at the Toll Booth has declined at 2.2 % per annum as compared to the 0.6 % per annum forecast in the 2008 Toll Application. The actual measured decline over the 5 years from 2008 until the closure of the Bridge in October 2013 (ie 11 %) is consistent with data produced by Oxfordshire County Council.
- 8.3 Following the re-opening of the Bridge in September 2014 traffic levels recovered more slowly than the Company was expecting: however by March 2015 crossings were back on the minus 2.2 % per annum trend line.

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