



**An Roinn Iompair
Turasóireachta agus Spóirt**
**Department of Transport,
Tourism and Sport**



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Deputy Imelda Munster
Constituency Office
Unit 6, 84 West St
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Co. Louth

Dear Deputy Munster

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding tolls on sliproads in Drogheda. Your letter and emails follow on from our exchange on the matter during Priority Questions on 19 July and again following the Transport Committee meeting on 5 October.

As I explained in my reply to your PQ of 19 July, as Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual roads (including the M1) is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Furthermore, the statutory power to levy tolls on national roads, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into agreements relating to tolls on national roads is vested in Transport Infrastructure Ireland under Part V of the Roads Act 1993 as amended. The contractual arrangements relating to M1 tolls are, therefore, matters for TII.

Arising from our contacts on the issue of the Donore toll ramps, TII briefed my Department on the rationale for the 2002 Toll Scheme and the findings of a 2012 study which examined the implications of changing the tolling arrangements. TII's briefing is included in the attached note which indicates that TII will be updating the 2012 study, taking into account any changes in traffic volumes and patterns.



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Yours sincerely,

Minister Shane Ross

Minister for Transport Tourism and Sport

*The Minister is a Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015
(details available on www.lobbying.ie)*

TII Briefing on tolling on Donore road ramps on the M1

The rationale for the 2002 Toll Scheme

The tolling strategy was designed to minimise diversions off the M1 and to minimise traffic impacts on local roads. Therefore the tolls on the north facing slip ramps at Donore were installed to protect the residents of Drogheda from any 'rat-running' that may occur due to traffic, particularly northbound, that may wish to avoid the mainline toll plaza at Balgeen. In addition, the presence of the ramp plazas at Donore, discourage people migrating to/from the N2 road to avoid the mainline toll plaza. Similar ramp tolling arrangements to those at Donore exist on the M4 Kinnegad to Kilcock toll road where ramp plazas are provided on the west facing ramps at the Enfield grade separated junction and on the M8 Rathcormac/Fermoy toll road where the north facing ramps of Corrin grade separated junction are tolled. In all cases the traffic studies undertaken identified that in the absence of the ramp tolls significant diversion from the mainline toll would occur.

When the NRA adopted the Toll Scheme for the M1 Northern motorway in June 2002, it incorporated a provision on the recommendation of the independent inspector appointed, to ensure that there was no 'disincentive' to people who wished to travel into the town of Drogheda. The following is an extract from the Authority's adoption of the Toll Scheme on the M1;

"b) provide that, where road users exit the toll road having made a toll payment and within a short period, e.g. three hours, re-enter the toll road to continue on their journey in the same direction of travel, a second toll payment will not be required."

In effect, this means that toll users travelling northbound for example, having paid the toll at Balgeen, can exit the Motorway at Donore to visit Drogheda, and provided that they return to Donore to continue their journey northbound within a three hour period, may pass through the northbound on-ramp at Donore toll free. A similar three hour stopover provision exists on the M4 Kinnegad to Kilcock toll road.

The M1 Northern Motorway to the west of Drogheda forms part of the core Trans-European Transport Network (TENT) from Northern Ireland to Dublin. It is a part of the strategic national road network intended to cater for interurban and inter-regional traffic rather than short locally generated trips. The M1 motorway in the vicinity of Drogheda is currently carrying 38,000 vehicles daily and provides an important benefit and relief to the town of Drogheda.

It has always been recognised by the Authority, and borne out in traffic studies undertaken, that the old N1 (existing R132) route would continue to attract significant traffic volumes due to the commercial/residential traffic movements in and around Drogheda town, the movements to/from Drogheda, and the movements to/from Drogheda Port. The decision of the NRA Board to adopt the Toll Scheme noted that the existing R132 route would continue to operate as a toll free public road. A study carried out by the Authority in 2012 demonstrated that this toll strategy has been effective as the overall volume of toll avoidance rates on the M1 is relatively low at less than 3% through the length of the scheme.

The NRA entered into a contract with the PPP Company, Celtic Roads Group (Dundalk) Ltd. (CRG). This contract provided for:

- construction, operation and maintenance of Dundalk bypass, a 11 km length of motorway;
- operation and maintenance of 42 km of the existing M1 motorway; and
- operation of the Drogheda Tolling Facilities at Balgeen.

In accordance with the contract entered into with CRG, they are entitled to charge tolls in line with the approved Toll scheme which provides for mainline and slip ramp tolls. The PPP contract was signed on the 5th February 2004 and will extend for 30 years from that date.

Implications of altering the toll strategy

In 2012 following representations, the Authority carried out a study to understand the impact of removal of the tolls at the north facing slip roads at the M1 Junction 9 at Donore. Data on travel patterns and toll avoidance was collected to inform the study. The following two scenarios were studied.

- 1. Scenario 1: Remove ramp tolls only**
- 2. Scenario 2: Remove ramp tolls, but increase mainline toll**

Scenario 1: Remove ramp tolls only

The study showed that removal of the slip tolls would lead to diversions from the M1 to this junction to avoid the mainline toll and attract traffic that currently avoids the junction because of tolling. North facing ramp flows would increase from 3,000 to 18,800 vehicles per day leading to a significant increase in light and heavy vehicular traffic on both the Donore and Duleek roads (R152). The residents adjacent to these roads would experience higher levels of congestion, and associated negative impacts on the road pavement, air quality, road safety and noise. These roads do not have the capacity to carry the additional 15,800 vehicles per day.

It would also result in the creation of a toll avoidance route on the R132 through Julianstown, increasing the traffic on the southern environs of Drogheda by 4,000 vehicles per day. The study also indicated that removal of the tolls leads to impacts on the N2 corridor. Traffic currently on the N2 towards Slane and Ardee to gain access to the M1, would reroute via the R152 to join the M1 at Junction 9 (Donore).

This measure would also reduce traffic on the M1 mainline toll by approximately 4,500 vehicles per day. Annual toll revenue was forecast to reduce by €6.4 million per annum with the removal of slip tolls. Accordingly the State would have to pay between €6 and €7 million in compensation to the PPP Company until 2034 with the amount increasing every year.

Scenario 2: Remove ramp tolls, but increase mainline toll

This option studied the implications of the removal of slip tolls accompanied by a mainline toll increase so as to reduce or eliminate the amount of compensation payable to the PPP Company. The study tested removal of slips toll together with an increase in mainline toll of between 10% and 50%. North facing ramp flows would increase from 3,000 to between 19,000 and 20,700 vehicles per day leading to a significant increase in light and heavy vehicular traffic on both the Donore and Duleek roads (R152).

Increasing the mainline tolls however induces an increased level of diversion off the M1, decreasing the volume of toll paying traffic on the mainline. In order to achieve revenue neutrality and to avoid the State having to make any payment to the PPP Company it is estimated that the mainline toll would have to be increased by between 40% and 60%.

