

Congestion charging

What is it?

A £5 daily congestion charge will help get London moving. It will reduce traffic, making journeys and delivery times more reliable, and raise millions each week to re-invest in London's transport system. Vehicles entering will have their number plates read and checked to see if the car has been paid for. The map on the right shows where it is.



How does it work?



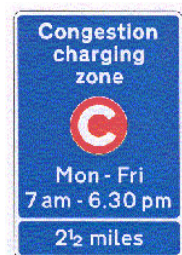
There will be no tollbooths or barriers around the central London congestion charging zone and no physical tickets or passes. Instead, you will be paying to register your vehicle registration number on a database for journeys within the charging zone.

There is a network of 203 camera sites monitoring every entrance and exit to the congestion charging zone along the boundary road, and monitoring journeys made solely within the charging zone.

Each camera site consists of at least one colour camera plus a monochrome camera for each lane of traffic being monitored.

The cameras are similar to those currently used in ports, airports and the City of London's "ring of steel" – they provide high-quality video signals to Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) software, which reads and records each number plate. Tests show that the cameras read more than 90% of all number plates accurately.

If some such number plates are not read automatically, they will be presented to a manual checker who will scrutinise the image and record the correct number plate. However, dirty or non-standard number plates are illegal and, in conjunction with the Police, Transport for London will be performing regular "filter" operations during which any such vehicles may be stopped and any further necessary action taken by the Police.



What happens if you haven't paid?

At midnight, images of all of the vehicles that have been in the congestion charging zone are checked against the vehicle registration numbers of vehicles which have paid their congestion charge for that day. The computer keeps the registration numbers of vehicles that should have paid but not done so. A Penalty Charge Notice will be issued to the registered keeper of the vehicle.

Why is it needed?

The main reasons are:

- London suffers the worst traffic congestion in the UK and amongst the worst in Europe.
- Drivers in central London spend 50% of their time in queues
- Every weekday morning, the equivalent of 25 busy motorway lanes of traffic tries to enter central London.
- It has been estimated that London loses between £2-4 million every week in terms of lost time caused by congestion.

Not surprisingly, Londoners say congestion is one of the biggest issues facing the capital.

Surveys have shown that Londoners do not want to see congestion clogging up roads, threatening businesses and damaging London's status as a thriving world city.

If your main home is in the congestion charging zone, you can register one private vehicle for a 90% discount from the charge for a minimum period of one week (so you pay £2.50 instead of £25, for example). You may want to pay for a month or for a year. More than one person at each address (aged 17+) can register a vehicle for the discount.

Q1 What is being controlled?

Q2 What is being detected?

Q3 Is this an example of automatic control? Explain why/why not.

Q4 How does the system have an impact (positive or negative) on society?