



Ms. Niamh Maguire
Committee Secretariat
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House
Dublin 2

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Dáta | Date

Ár dTag. | Our Ref.

Bhur dTag. | Your Ref.

1st March 2013

Dear Ms. Maguire,

Further to our appearance before the Committee on 7th February 2013, we would like to supply the following additional information.

1.0 Galway City Outer Bypass

We confirm that the figure of €14 million given by myself at the meeting, as being the cost to date of the Galway City Outer Bypass subject to being checked, is correct.

2.0 Variable Operation Payments – Traffic Guarantees

Variable Operation Payments in the form of traffic guarantees arise on two of the NRA's PPP schemes, i.e., the M3 Clonee-Kells scheme and the Limerick Tunnel Schemes. Taking these two projects together the shortfall in traffic as against the PPP Companies tendered forecasts have lead to toll revenue being €40 million as at end 2012 less than the PPP Companies expectation as tendered. Under the risk sharing mechanisms in these contracts the NRA has carried €15.5million of the shortfall and the PPP Companies €24.5 million. The NRA's contribution to the revenue shortfall has been offset by receipts to end 2012 of approximately €30 million from risk sharing arrangements across the NRA's PPP Programme.

The forecast variable operations payments on a five horizon (2013 – 2017 inclusive) assuming traffic growth at 2.5% and an annual inflation rate of 2% is that the payments will total in or about €49.7 million, offset to some extent by risk sharing gains to the Authority of approximately €11 million over the same period. It should however be noted that the revenue share receipts that will accrue to the Authority are forecast to increase markedly in the later years of the PPP concessions.

3.0 eFlow's Compliance

eFlow has an overall compliance rate of circa 96%. This means that when you take all trips through the M50 toll point and look at the percentage of tolls paid overall, 96% of all trips are paid for.

The passages that are not paid for include trips made by domestic vehicles, Northern Irish vehicles and other foreign vehicles. The Authority has engaged an enforcement service provider to pursue unpaid tolls, both domestic vehicles and also foreign vehicles (Pierse & Fitzgibbon Solicitors and their subcontractor EPC plc, a UK based firm).

Taking these in order:

- Regarding the enforcement of the non payment of tolls for domestic vehicles, there are many options available to the Authority through its enforcement service provider, Pierse & Fitzgibbon Solicitors (P&F). Throughout 2012, P&F issued approximately 15,000 legal demand letters and over 500 Civil Summons per month on behalf of the Authority. Where payment is not received the Authority goes about obtaining a judgement from the Courts against the violator. The options open to the Authority on receipt of a court judgment which is not complied with by the defendant is to publish the judgement in Stubbs Gazette and/or placing a judgement in the hands of the Sheriff for seizure of goods equivalent to the value of the debt owed and registering a judgment mortgage against any property owned by the violator.

Regarding trips made by Northern Irish motorists, in early 2010 a pilot scheme, under a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Irish and UK Governments, was set up to allow for the exchange of data between the two Governments. The MOU allows for unpaid tolls and other motoring/traffic offences from Northern Ireland to be pursued by the Irish Government and parking/other motoring and traffic offences from Republic of Ireland motorists to be pursued by the Northern Irish Authorities. The MOU in combination with marketing and brand awareness campaign (to promote the benefits of registration) that takes place in Northern Ireland has resulted in improved compliance rates.

- Regards trips made by foreign vehicles, over the last 12 months 46 different countries were identified as being the country of registration. Some vehicles travelled through the toll point only once, others many times. The Authority adopts a prudent cost effective approach when pursuing vehicles from foreign countries and utilises a company based in London, EPC plc, to provide this service.

The total value of 2012 tolls written off was €3.3 million. Approximately 28 per cent of the write off relates to Northern Ireland vehicle passages, 15 per cent relates to non Irish registered vehicles (excluding Northern Ireland) and the balance, 57 per cent, relates to domestic registered vehicles.

3.1 eFlow's Procedures for Handling Vehicles with "cloned plates"

The specific procedure for dealing with "cloned plates" is as follows:

- A vehicle with the "cloned plate" uses the barrier-free toll on the M50.
- The registered owner of the vehicle by reference to the Licence Plate Number (LPN) as listed on the National Vehicle Driver File will then receive a Standard Toll Request (STR) in the case where the toll has not been paid by the deadline. This occurs as the tolling system uses the registered owner details from the national vehicle database and issues the STR letter to the owner.
- Where the customer disputes the passage, the customer contacts eFlow (normally using the contact details on the STR which they would have received in the post) to report that they "did not use the road". At this stage most customers are unaware that there is a vehicle in circulation which is incorrectly using their LPN.
- Once contacted the eFlow team will then commence an initial investigation of the matter.
 - a. If it is an obvious that the plate has been cloned (e.g. the vehicle is clearly a different make, model and colour from the vehicle which is owned by the customer) then the customer's case is accepted.
 - i. In this case eFlow then initiates the cloned plate process in the system. This process involves a detailed examination of subsequent passages relating to the cloned LPN with the objective of avoiding the customer receiving any further correspondence from eFlow, where the vehicle with the cloned plate uses the toll road again.
 - b. The customer is also advised to contact An Garda Síochána to report the matter given that issues can also arise in the event that the vehicle with the cloned plate is involved in a crime and / or accident, speeding offences etc.
 - i. The customer is also informed that once the Gardaí are satisfied that they are dealing with a cloned plate, the Gardaí will make contact directly with eFlow to advise eFlow of same.
 - ii. At this stage eFlow then initiates the cloned plate process in the system which stops the customer receiving further correspondence from eFlow where the vehicle with the cloned plate uses the toll road again.

We have not commented on or provided any information regarding the specific case raised by Deputy O'Dowds. We would be happy to initiate a specific review of the case being referred to if required to ascertain if the standard procedure for cloned plates was followed correctly. If

Deputy O'Dowd wishes us to undertake this investigation we will require the name and address of the registered owner of the vehicle and their licence plate number.

3.2 eFlow's Customer Care and Contact Details

The NRA and eFlow management team were concerned and disappointed by the comments made at the Public Accounts Committee meeting regarding eFlow's alleged lack of customer focus and in particular the alleged lack of responsiveness and the difficulties expressed in relation to contacting eFlow.

The NRA and the eFlow management team take customer care extremely seriously and the customer experience is genuinely at the heart of everything that is done. eFlow handle about 120,000 customer contacts per week (around 6 million on an annual basis) which includes phone calls, website visits, web-mails and customer visits to pay in the Payzone retail shops, as well as more recently customer interaction via social media (e.g. twitter and boards.ie).

eFlow also regularly monitor and review levels of customer satisfaction across the business. For example, eFlow undertake Mystery Shopping exercises every quarter and carry out regular Customer Satisfaction Surveys (CSATs) twice per quarter (8 times per year). These customer satisfaction surveys are carried out by an independent supplier and the results are presented to the management team in eFlow. All feedback is captured in a customised database, so that feedback can be given to the contact centre. Any customer who is not 100% satisfied with the service that they receive is investigated within the contact centre, the customer is then contacted to have any outstanding issues resolved and a report of the findings are circulated to management.

The table below provides an overview of some of the key metrics in this area for the last four years.

	Annual Customer Service Metrics				
	M50 Toll Annual Traffic Volumes	Phone Calls Offered (Abandoned %)	Disputes Raised	New Accounts (registrations)*	Customer Satisfaction Surveys
2009	33.8 million	1,514,281 (5.5%)	273,472	141,853	N/A
2010	36.5 million	1,013,294 (1.6%)	65,624	141,160	98.00%
2011	39.5 million	900,104 (1.6%)	65,494	119,467	98.75%
2012	40.3 million	845,102 (1.6%)	59,234	112,805	99.33%

Table 1: Customer Service Metrics (2009 – 2010)

* Note: Current total amount of registered vehicles on eFlow accounts is approx 821,000.

The eFlow tolling operation and in particular the customer care team has been recognised internationally within the customer care sector / industry for placing the customer at the heart of the business and being truly customer focussed.

For example, eFlow was a finalist at the Contact Centre Association Awards in 2010 and building on this in 2011, the eFlow team was awarded 3 Gold's, 3 Silver and a Bronze medal in the Contact Centre World Awards for the European, Middle East and Asia region. eFlow was also awarded a Taoiseach's Public Sector Excellence Award in 2012 and won the prestigious Outsourcing Partnership of the Year at the Irish Contract Centre Association Awards in 2012.

We have also provided a small sample of some of the customer compliments which we have received.

"Between the helpfulness of the agents here on boards, and the brilliant banter from the twitter team, I have nothing but good things to say about eFlow,"

I'll agree with that. I dealt with them this morning. Best call-centre service I have ever received. Was not expecting this, so pleasantly surprised. Extremely professional and helpful.www.boards.ie

"I just want to say how fantastic I find your service. Your staff are always extremely courteous, professional and helpful and your online statements are easy to read and simple"

"Just a quick line to say what an excellent service desk you run at eFlow.ie The colleague I spoke with yesterday was highly knowledgeable, very helpful and very efficient. You clearly have some excellent staff working for you. Please pass on my thanks.

"I spoke to a gentleman tonight after having difficulties paying a single journey toll online. Unfortunately I didn't pick up the rep's name however I have to commend his handling of my query. He was polite, friendly, efficient, informative, helpful.....overall excellent. As Operations Manager for a large Irish call centre I felt compelled to pass on my comments." (webmail)

"I would like to express my thanks for your very professional, helpful and efficient service. I have used your service for the last few years and I recently closed my account as I no longer own a car, In all my dealing over the years I have always found your customer service team outstanding. A great example of excellence in customer service." (webmail)

In terms of responding to the comment relating to the difficulties in making contact with eFlow, we have set out below a list of the various ways eFlow contact details are available to the public.

- **M50 Road Signage** – which prominently displays eFlow's contact details.

The Authority implemented a road signage plan for eFlow tolling scheme to communicate in an understandable and consistent manner with users of the M50 motorway. The actual signage scheme is based on having a number of types of signage, as follows:



Reminder To Pay Signs – which are provided to inform drivers about payment obligation on the M50 toll road.

These signs have the message “M50 Toll - Pay Toll Before 8.00pm Tomorrow” and provide information on the payment channels for the public website (www.eflow.ie), the lo-call telephone number for the eFlow call centre (1890 50 10 50) and display the Payzone symbol for retail outlets.

There are two English language and one Irish language signs (i.e. three signs in total per direction) located on the left hand side of the motorway approximately 200 to 500 metres after passing the tolling gantries in the direction of travel. The sign-faces are approximately 3 metres wide by 4 metres high.

Toll Charge Signs – which are provided to inform the drivers about the different unregistered toll charges for vehicles.

These signs set out the toll charges for all classes of vehicles using pictorial images for different vehicles. These signs also contain the message “Register for Discounts” (in English and Irish language) and provide information on the payment channels for the public website (www.eflow.ie), the lo-call telephone number for the eFlow call centre (1890 50 10 50) and display the Payzone symbol for retail outlets.



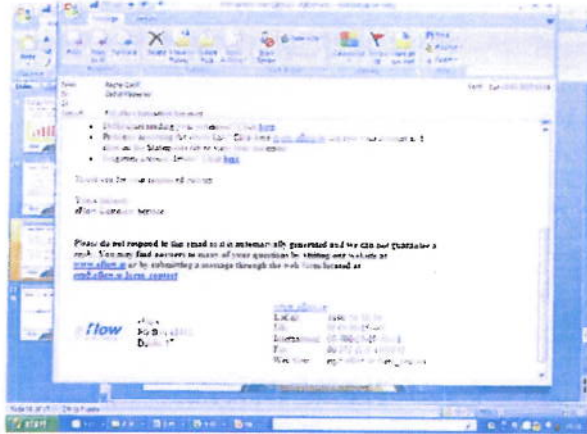
There is one Toll Charge sign per direction located on the left hand side of the motorway approximately 200 metres after passing the tolling gantries in the direction of travel. The sign-face is approximately 3 metres wide by 6 metres high.

Advance Signage and Gantry Signage – which are to provide information to drivers in advance of the Toll Location so that drivers have the opportunity to choose another route in the case that they do not want to use the Toll Road and incur a toll charge. Also the signage on the tolling gantries (in both directions) provide additional reminders to pay as well as providing contact details.

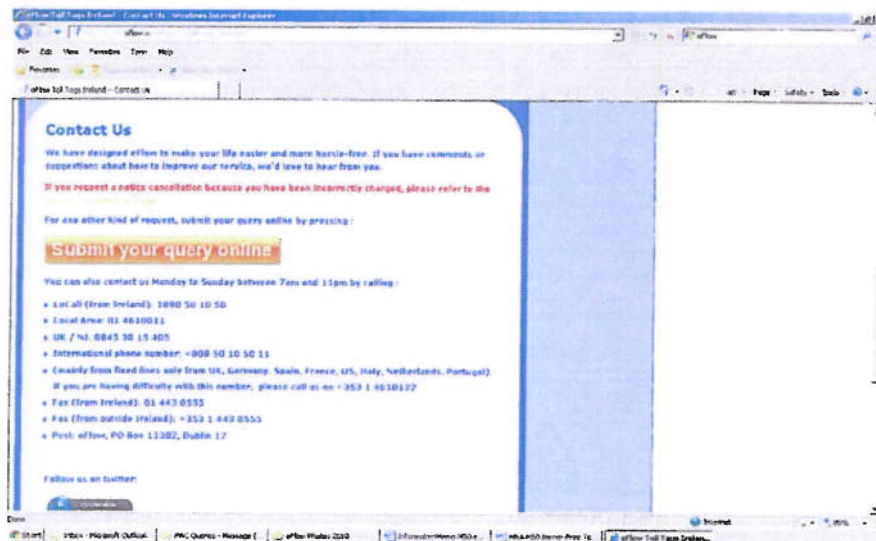


- Customer Correspondence (letter statements, STRs, UTNs etc) – all display eFlow contact details. Emails issued from eFlow do have a no-reply email address – this is standard

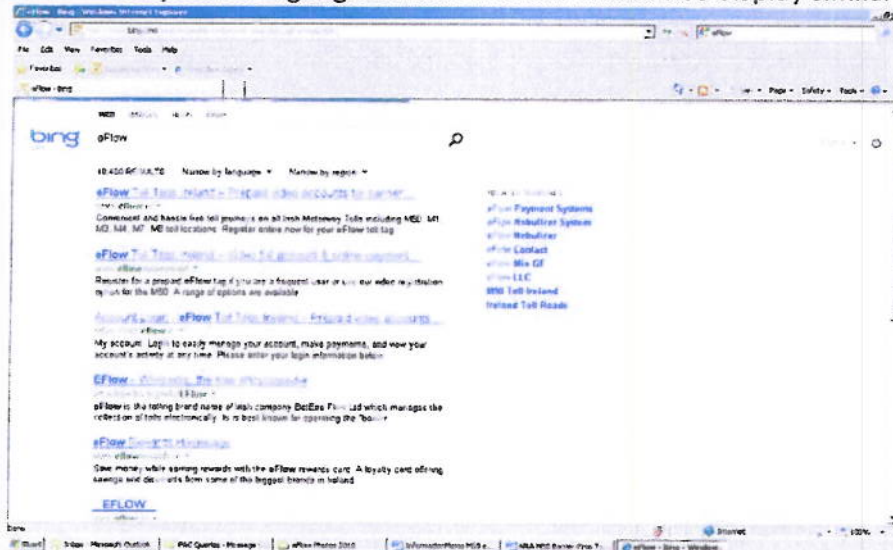
practice across the customer services industry for operational reasons. The email itself contains contact details – see sample attached below:



- eFlow Website – the eFlow website has a prominent Contact Us section in the left hand side menu bar. This Contact Us section provides a number of methods to contact the eFlow team including by phone, using the online webmail method or by post and fax. Please refer to the screenshot from the website below. (Please note that a link to the eFlow website is also displayed prominently on the NRA website – www.nra.ie)



- Search Engine Optimisation – eFlow’s details (e.g webpage links) are prominently displayed on internet search engines. A sample screenshot of search engine Bing is shown below for 11 February 2013. A google search of eFlow would also display similar results.

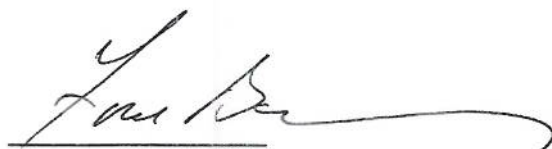


- Golden Pages. eFlow contact details are included in the Golden Pages.
- Other – the eFlow customer management team also proactively engage with customers on social media sites including Boards.ie and twitter.

4.0 Traffic in Goresbridge, Graiguenamanagh, Cuffesgrange and Johnstown

The Authority is in touch with the County Council about traffic in these places, and we will write directly to Deputy McGuinness on the matter.

Yours sincerely,


Fred Barry
Chief Executive

c.c.: Tom O’Mahony, Secretary General, Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport