

Penalty Charge Notice Service

Case study





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With increasing congestion and restrictions imposed on commercial vehicles, penalty charge notices (PCNs) are a fact of life for logistics operators. However, appealing and challenging fines is just one aspect of a successful PCN management system. Using the Freight Transport Association's (FTA) independent expertise to analyse data, identify patterns and hotspots and provide tailored advice, our PCN Service can do far more. Here is how FTA assisted one major retailer in saving more than than £61,000 in a single year.

FTA's partner is a large retailer with a complex supply-chain network stretching the length and breadth of the UK. FTA was tasked with reviewing the PCN record of its home delivery service. Its vehicles were receiving several thousand tickets each year.



Empowering clients with a tailored service

Like most operators, the FTA's partner had in-house expertise and was recording data about the level and cost of PCN fines, but there were a number of additional options it had not considered. The FTA team

brought fresh perspective and used a tailored approach to put proven strategies into action. These include the following.

- Identifying trends in driver behaviour and advising on appropriate action and training
- Analysing hotspots and proactively

liaising with local authorities to seek ways to reduce ticketing

- Identifying possible changes in delivery patterns to avoid infringements
- Systematically challenging and appealing penalties

As Samantha Law, from FTA's PCN service explains:

"Of course, challenging PCNs where appropriate and using the most effective strategy is important, but FTA can do far more than that. What we do is personal. Every operator has different challenges and needs. We have many years of expertise in analysing data and providing innovative solutions to help reduce the cost of PCNs. We do not just identify issues, we provide proven strategies and take appropriate action on our clients' behalf, working over the long term."

Independent analysis, insight and strategy

When the FTA team analysed the PCN data from their large retail client, they found most penalties were related to driver behaviour, for example driving in a bus lane or failing to comply with local parking restrictions. This insight allowed them to advise managers on ways to educate and inform drivers, helping to modify their behaviour. This resulted in a considerable reduction in the number of driver-related PCNs.

The FTA team also collated data about key penalty hotspots. This allowed the client to identify opportunities for adapting delivery schedules and providing better

driver information. FTA also established that many PCNs were not related to specific delivery requirements and so entirely avoidable.

FTA's work demonstrated that a single newly-opened store, sited in a major urban conurbation was the sole cause of an overall increase in PCNs over the year in review, with deliveries to just ten stores responsible for nearly half of all PCNs. This allowed the organisation to focus its planning and driver education work on the most critical areas.

FTA's policy experts work alongside the PCN team to provide support on a national level. For example, when Transport for London proposed increasing penalty charges on the capital's Red Routes, FTA mounted robust opposition on behalf of logistics operators, contacting decision-makers directly and outlining its objections in the media. In February 2018, the Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling, stepped in to stop the increase.



Bespoke approach to challenge and reduce charges

FTA does not send out generic appeal letters. Each document is drafted by experts, able to apply the best approach to each individual PCN. In this case, this personal approach was paired with a wider strategy for reviewing and challenging PCNs already issued. Over 2015-16 this achieved dramatic results including:

- cancellation of a proportion of tickets issued, saving more than £20,000
- reduction in penalty charges, totalling more than £17,000
- appealing PCNs submitted late by drivers and stores, to reinstate the early payment discount, saving more than £23,000

In one instance, the introduction of major new traffic restrictions on a busy city junction resulted in a sudden increase in PCNs issued. FTA approached the local authority and successfully argued that commercial vehicle operators had not been given enough notice of the new restrictions. The council accepted FTA's arguments and cancelled all tickets issued to its client over the initial three months, resulting in a saving of £16,500.

Ongoing support and expert oversight

As operating conditions change, so will patterns of PCN infringement. FTA's team continues to monitor and oversee these changes for its client, applying the latest information in a flexible way.

Clients can monitor the progress of all PCN work using FTA's cutting-edge Vision software which offers, not only PCN data, but tachograph analysis and the chance to view all vehicle inspections and audit reports in one place.

According to Samantha Law, FTA's aim is to form a long-term partnership.

"We want to assist whilst adding value to our partners wherever we can. FTA organises regular reviews and meetings to ensure they are given the most up-to-date information and they can feed back on what is and is not working on the ground. You cannot just throw the same interventions at every problem and hope they might work. It is about smart and flexible thinking. That is what makes our service unique."

Overall, FTA's work for its client between 2015-16 saved the retailer a total of £61,782, which easily covered FTA's fees and provided an overall benefit of many thousands of pounds.

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