



The Mersey Gateway Project

The Mersey Gateway Project is a major scheme to build a new six-lane toll bridge over the River Mersey in the north west of England. It will link the towns of Runcorn and Widnes and will relieve the congested and ageing Silver Jubilee Bridge.

The Merseylink consortium has now been appointed by Halton Borough Council as the preferred bidder for the project, which has been given planning approval and conditional funding support of up to £470 million from the UK Government.

The project also includes or facilitates:

- plans to develop and integrate public transport, cycle and pedestrian links across Halton,
- plans to kick start a major 20-year regeneration programme for Halton,
- improving regional transport links to encourage new and inward investment, and
- road user charges on the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge between the two towns.

The new bridge will:

- mean an estimated 4,640 new jobs through direct employment, regeneration activity and inward investment,
- generate an estimated £61.9 million a year in Gross Value Added from the new jobs by 2030,
- cross the river around 1.5km to the east of the Silver Jubilee Bridge,
- be a tolled crossing with a speed limit of 60mph,
- have three lanes across the Mersey in each direction, and
- form the centrepiece of a new and improved high standard link road (9.5km long) connecting the national motorway network in north Cheshire with Merseyside.

Tolling

Both the new bridge and the Silver Jubilee Bridge will be tolled.

The exact toll/charge levels have not yet been set, but they are likely to be similar to the cost of travelling through one of the Mersey Tunnels*.

The project team is actively investigating the best way to provide discounts to groups like local people and regular users.

The project will use an open road tolling system to speed up the traffic flow across the river and minimise operating costs. This means there will be no need to build toll booths as the project will use sophisticated technology to register vehicles using the bridges.

*As of July 2013 it costs £1.60 for a one-way car journey through one of the Mersey Tunnels.

Timetable

Now that the Merseylink consortium has been appointed as the preferred bidder, the council is working closely with it to deliver the benefits the project will bring as quickly as possible.

The new bridge is scheduled to open in spring 2017 but that is just one part of our busy timetable.

Winter 2013

Contract signed with preferred bidder

Winter 2013

Construction work starts

Spring 2017

Mersey Gateway Bridge scheduled to open

Spring 2017

Silver Jubilee Bridge closed for refurbishment

Autumn 2017

Silver Jubilee Bridge scheduled to re-open

Costs and funding

The total projected construction and land assembly cost of the Mersey Gateway Project is around £600 million.

The total project costs/revenues over the next 30 years will be around £2 billion.

The majority (around 70%) of the funding comes from the tolls paid by road users. The UK Government is contributing up to £470 million. This comes in two parts:

- an upfront grant of £86 million, and
- long term revenue support of up to £14.55 million a year for 26.5 years after opening.

The project has come in under budget which is what the procurement process was designed to achieve. The actual savings, and these are expected to be significant, will be confirmed and published later this year when the council has a contract with Merseylink.

Studies estimate that the economic benefits the project will bring to Halton and the surrounding area are almost four times greater than its cost.

Merseylink

The Merseylink consortium was appointed as the preferred bidder for the Mersey Gateway Project in June 2013.

It is now working with Halton Borough Council to finalise the legal and financial arrangements with a view to agreeing a contract to design, build, finance and operate the bridge over the next 30 years.

The appointment came after an 18-month procurement process involving competitive dialogue with three shortlisted bidders.

The Merseylink consortium is made up of experienced sponsors with a track record in delivering major infrastructure projects, alongside their partners, who are world leaders in their field.



The new bridge as it crosses St Helens Canal in Widnes

Objectives

The objectives of the project are to:

- relieve the congested Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) and better provide for local transport needs,
- apply minimum toll charges to both the new bridge and the SJB to allow the project to be funded,
- improve accessibility to maximise local development and regional economic growth opportunities,
- improve local air quality and enhance the general urban environment,
- improve public transport links across the river,
- encourage the increased use of cycling and walking, and
- restore effective network resilience for transport across the River Mersey.

The new bridge

The design of the new Mersey Gateway Bridge is based on a cable-stay structure similar to the second Severn Crossing, but with three towers. It will be 2.3km long with a river span of 1km.

The main bridge deck will be made from reinforced concrete and the spans will be supported by steel cable stays attached to towers rising up to a maximum of around 150m above the river bed.

The new bridge will be designed to carry up to six traffic lanes forming part of a new and improved high standard road (9.5km long) connecting north Widnes and Merseyside with Runcorn and the national motorway network in north Cheshire. Traffic would benefit from congestion free uninterrupted travel across the Mersey for the foreseeable future.



The new bridge alongside the Silver Jubilee Bridge

Benefits

The project will bring huge estimated benefits for people and businesses in Halton, the Liverpool city-region, Cheshire and across the north west.

We are already seeing the early impact of the plans with new investment coming to Halton on both sides of the river.

Economic benefits:

- 470 permanent full time equivalent jobs on site during the construction phase,
- 4,640 permanent new jobs as a result of the operation of the Mersey Gateway, regeneration activity and inward investment, and
- £61.9 million a year in Gross Value Added from the new jobs by 2030.

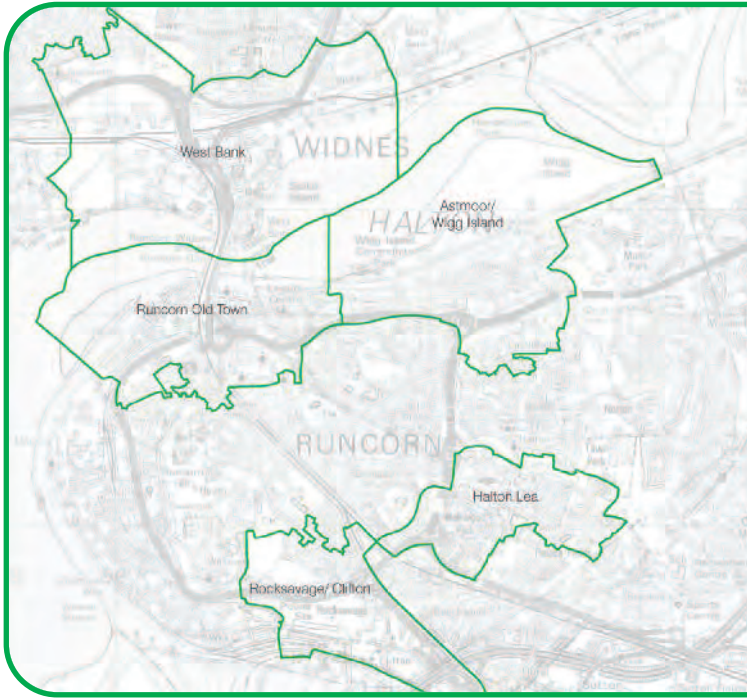
It will also support sustained growth at Liverpool Ports and Liverpool John Lennon Airport and improve business productivity throughout the Mersey corridor (known as agglomeration impacts).

Transport benefits:

- reductions in some journey times of up to 10 minutes in peak periods,
- increase in journey time reliability,
- less congestion resulting in lower carbon emissions,
- reductions in the cost of accidents of up to £39 million,
- 80% less traffic using the Silver Jubilee Bridge, freeing it up for use as a local bridge,
- increased network resilience and civil contingencies,
- reductions in maintenance delays as a result of reduced congestion, and
- a major strategic new transport route linking the Liverpool city-region and the north west to the rest of the country.

Social benefits:

- improvements to public transport facilities,
- improvements to walking and cycling facilities,
- improved health as a result of reduced air pollution,
- safer new routes for cyclists and pedestrians across and around the river, and
- more reliable access to emergency services and more robust emergency civil contingency planning.



Regeneration areas

The Mersey Gateway Project is a unique opportunity to stimulate long-term regeneration initiatives in Halton and to provide essential support for the delivery of economic growth across the region. The local regeneration strategy covers five of the borough's most deprived areas (see map left). It spreads across 20sq km and provides a bold and challenging 20-year vision for regeneration in Halton.

Across the region, Mersey Gateway is seen as a transformational project that will drive economic recovery and in particular support expansion at Liverpool Ports and Liverpool John Lennon Airport.



Environment

Mersey Gateway is a 'green' project that will bring major environmental benefits to the local area.

A unique new charity – the Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust – has been created to promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the environment across a 1600 hectare area of the Upper Mersey Estuary running from the new bridge up river to Warrington.

The Trust, which will also manage a new 28.5 hectare nature reserve alongside the bridge, is unique for a major construction project in the UK.

The Silver Jubilee Bridge

Built in 1961, and now crossed by over 26 million users every year, the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) is the only route for cars to cross the Mersey through Halton and a notorious traffic bottleneck.

Incidents and routine maintenance result in extensive delay where the local and regional road networks become 'gridlocked' for several hours.

To deliver the traffic and environmental benefits when the new bridge opens, the SJB will be subject to road user charges – but

it will be free for buses, cyclists and pedestrians.

Around 80% of traffic will use the new bridge and the SJB will be reconfigured as a local bridge – with one lane of traffic in each direction, alongside dedicated space for cyclists and pedestrians.

Keep in touch

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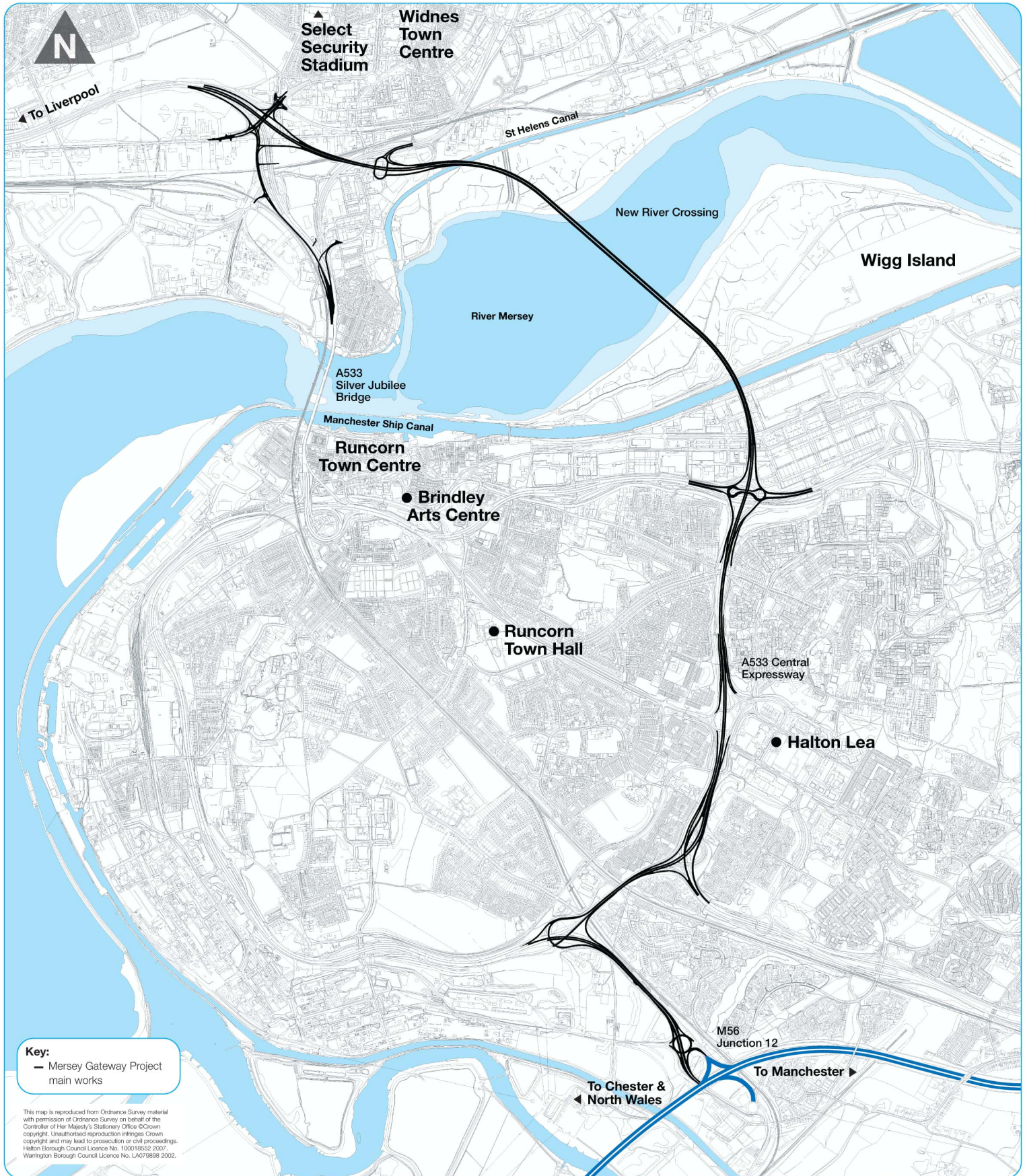
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The route



The key benefits the project will bring include:

- reduced congestion, with some journey times improved by up to 10 minutes per trip in peak periods
- 4,640 new jobs, 1,400 new homes and substantial new business opportunities
- £500,000 a year to improve local public transport.
- more reliable journeys
- improved health and reduced air pollution