



The Mersey Gateway Project



For many years we have been campaigning for a new crossing over the River Mersey to help ease the traffic congestion many people face every day.

In March 2006 the Mersey Gateway came a step closer when the terms on which this scheme could be funded were agreed with the Government. Since then we have been working hard behind the scenes to carry out the detailed planning needed for such a major project.

This leaflet outlines why we think this is so important. We are now in a position to share these plans with you, and we want to hear your views so they can be taken into account. Please complete the enclosed questionnaire or contact us to have your say.

Cllr Tony McDermott MBE
Leader, Halton Borough Council

A bridge to prosperity

The new crossing will make Halton an even better place to live and work. It will also bring huge benefits for our neighbours in the Liverpool city-region, Cheshire and across the north west. Our studies have shown the Mersey Gateway would mean:

- hundreds of new jobs and new opportunities for our local businesses
- a chance to build new homes, shops, offices and leisure facilities
- fewer traffic jams, making journeys faster and more reliable
- more possibilities to continue the improvement to our towns
- opportunities for better public transport links across the river
- safer routes for cyclists and pedestrians
- better links between Halton, the north west and the rest of the country
- improved health as a result of reduced air pollution caused by congestion
- a statement of the positive contribution Halton is making to the north west economy
- a new iconic attraction for Halton.



The need for a new bridge

The new crossing will have three lanes in each direction. It will link the existing Central Expressway in Runcorn to the Eastern Bypass in Widnes and ultimately connect with Speke Road heading towards Liverpool.

All our research comes to only one conclusion – doing nothing is not an option:

- the Silver Jubilee Bridge is struggling to cope with the 30 million vehicles that use it every year. This is ten times the number it was originally designed for
- this number is on the up – traffic on the Silver Jubilee Bridge is forecast to grow at 1.2% every year, which means without a new crossing it would be like ‘rush hour’ all day on the bridge
- all of this means delays for local people trying to go about their daily business who frequently get stuck in traffic jams
- many people who would like to walk or cycle across the Silver Jubilee Bridge are put off by the volume of traffic which makes them feel unsafe
- businesses in our area find crossing the Silver Jubilee Bridge makes it slower for them to get to their customers
- delays are a real concern for the police, ambulance and fire services, and others who deliver emergency services
- things will get worse – the Silver Jubilee Bridge is over 40 years old and in need of major repairs that will mean closing the bridge causing serious disruption.

The NEW Mersey Gateway Bridge

The new bridge will be tolled – this is the only way we can build a new crossing.

The cost of the overall Mersey Gateway project is £390 million. This includes building the bridge and its new road approaches, improving road junctions, buying land and work we need to do before we can start building.

Tolling is not new. People using the Mersey Tunnels and new roads like the M6 Toll already contribute to the cost of these roads. It is also likely that paying to travel on roads will become increasingly common over the coming years.

The Silver Jubilee Bridge and the existing highway network

With a new bridge in place we can make the Silver Jubilee Bridge a local bridge again – it will be quicker to cross, safer, cleaner and more reliable for local people to use.

We are proposing to modify the Silver Jubilee Bridge to improve it for local people. We would like to know your views on what form these improvements should take.

The Silver Jubilee Bridge will be tolled, but will be free for buses, cyclists and pedestrians.

Major improvements will be carried out to existing roads in Halton to direct traffic travelling from outside or through the borough, away from the Silver Jubilee Bridge on to the new bridge.

Why tolling is our only option

There are a number of reasons why we need to toll:

- a toll free new bridge is simply not an option – the Government has told us it will not fund the whole cost of building the Mersey Gateway
- a tolled Mersey Gateway with a free to use Silver Jubilee Bridge would not solve the congestion problems for local people
- we have to do something to solve the traffic problems on the Silver Jubilee Bridge – so even without a new bridge we may have to introduce tolls.

We know that tolls are an issue of great concern to many of you, and we are looking closely at how we can introduce discounts.

Our research with local people and businesses has told us they would prefer to pay tolls to having no new bridge at all - most people understand that doing nothing is not an option.

The exact toll has not yet been set. However, as a guide the cost of crossing the bridges will be about the same as it costs to go through one of the Mersey Tunnels.

Public exhibitions

This project is important to you and to the future of Halton. That is why we are holding exhibitions where you can find out more about it and ask us any questions you may have:

Wednesday 4 July 12noon - 8pm
Halton Stadium*

Thursday 5 July 12noon - 8pm
The Brindley*

Friday 6 July 10am - 4pm
Halton Lea – Town Square

Saturday 7 July 10am - 2pm
Halton Lea – Town Square

Monday 9 July 9am - 5pm
Halton Direct Link – Widnes

Tuesday 10 July 9am - 4pm
Halton Direct Link – Widnes

Thursday 12 July 10am - 8pm
Halton Stadium*

Friday 13 July 10am - 4pm
Greenoaks – Widnes

Saturday 14 July 10am - 2pm
Greenoaks – Widnes

Monday 16 July 9am - 5pm
Halton Direct Link –
Runcorn Church Street

Tuesday 17 July 9am - 5pm
Halton Direct Link –
Runcorn Church Street

Wednesday 18 July 2pm - 8pm
The Brindley*

Saturday 21 July 10am - 2pm
Halton Stadium*

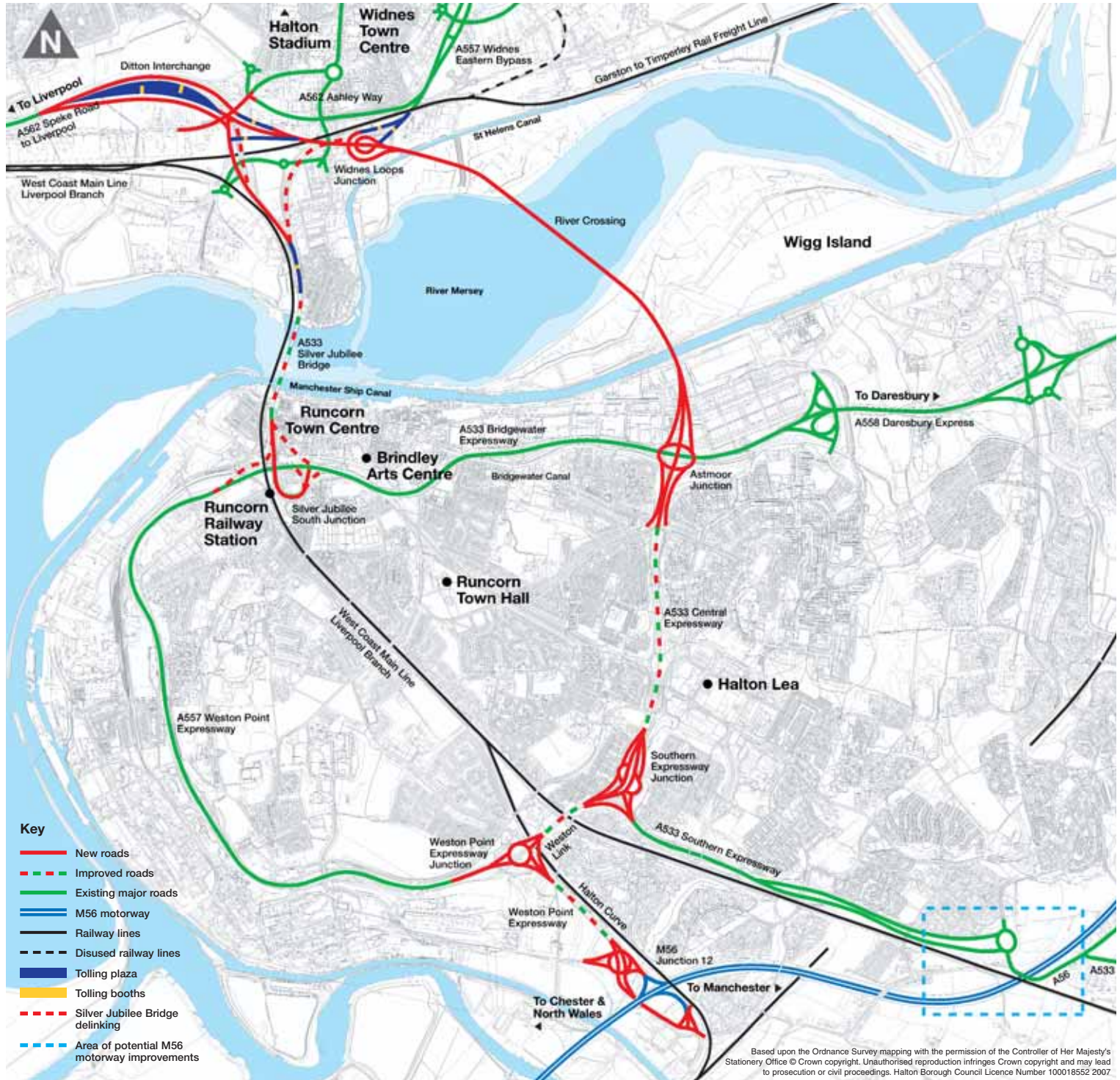
* Full exhibition at these venues

You will also find information about the project at any of our Halton Direct Link one-stop-shops at:

Halton Lea, Runcorn
Church Street, Runcorn
Brook Street, Widnes
Queens Avenue, Ditton, Widnes

The route

The Mersey Gateway will transform the borough of Halton, improve the lives of local people and create new opportunities for business and investment in Halton, the Liverpool city-region, Cheshire, the north west and beyond.



Protecting our environment

We attach great importance to environmental issues in this unique location, and consequently we are carrying out a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the issues associated with the Mersey Gateway.

The preliminary results are summarised on the table to the right.

The detailed findings of the EIA will be presented in the Environmental Statement (ES) which will be submitted with the planning application.

Issues	Effect of proposals	Comment
Construction	Adverse / Neutral	There will be localised impacts associated with this major construction operation. Sensitive siting of construction compounds, haul routes and control of construction processes and selection of construction techniques will ensure that these impacts are managed and controlled at source.
Noise	Beneficial	Overall the project will reduce noise impacts to local residents. However, there will be increased traffic noise levels on the Central Expressway, and mitigation measures will be introduced to minimise the impact on properties.
Local Air Quality	Neutral / Beneficial	In areas where traffic is removed through de-linking and where peak-hour congestion is reduced, there will be an improvement in local air quality.
Landscape	Beneficial	The project will provide the opportunity to regenerate and enhance the local landscape.
Townscape	Beneficial	Both the project and the economic regeneration and reinstatement of derelict land that will follow will provide the opportunity to improve the townscape.
Heritage of Historic Resources	Adverse / Neutral	The proximity of the new crossing will alter the setting, including distant views of the listed Silver Jubilee Bridge, which is a prominent regional landmark of iconic status. However, this landmark will be protected as essential maintenance will be possible and the excess loading of heavy traffic will be removed.
Biodiversity	Adverse	The project will result in the temporary and permanent loss of some habitats. However, new habitats and management strategies will be created as part of the scheme to minimise the impact.
Hydrodynamics (River Channel Processes)	Neutral	New structures in the upper estuary may interact with the channel. Extensive pre- and post-development monitoring, modelling of channel behaviour and design of the new structures will ensure that the potential for any adverse impact is minimised, and observed changes in channel behaviour are managed and mitigated.
Water Environment	Neutral	Environmental management and the design of the surface water drainage system will ensure that water quality is maintained.

Have your say

If approved, the Mersey Gateway is due to open in 2014. Before then, there are a number of important stepping stones along the way.

The blue sections show where you will have an opportunity to give your views.

June – September 2007

Mersey Gateway pre-application consultation

November 2007

Consultation results published

Early 2008

Mersey Gateway planning application submitted

Spring 2008

Halton Borough Council consultation on the planning application

Summer 2008

Halton Borough Council gives formal response to planning application

Winter 2008

Likely public inquiry

Late 2009

Outcome of public inquiry announced

2010

Invite tenders from companies interested in building and operating the Mersey Gateway

2011

Appoint the successful company and start building

2014

Mersey Gateway opens

To find out more

If you would like to find out more about the project, please contact us:

- **in person** – come and view one of the exhibitions listed inside the leaflet or visit a Halton Direct Link one-stop shop
- **by phone** – call Halton Borough Council 24 hours a day on 0151 907 8300
- **online** – log on to www.merseygateway.co.uk

or tell us your views:

- **by FREEPOST** – fill in and return the enclosed questionnaire
- **by email** – email mersey.gateway@halton.gov.uk
- **by text** – 07786 203 300

If you need this information in a different format such as large print, audio tape, Braille or another language please call 0151 907 8300.

About us

The Mersey Gateway Project team is a dedicated unit set up within Halton Borough Council.

The project is supported by the Mersey Crossing Group, which is made up of representatives from regional government, other local authorities and businesses from across the region.

