


# **Mersey Gateway Pre-Planning Application Public Consultation**

## **Part II, Factual Report on the Public Consultation**



Halton Borough Council  
The Mersey Gateway Team  
Environment Directorate  
Rutland House  
Runcorn  
WA7 2GW

[mersey.gateway@halton.gov.uk](mailto:mersey.gateway@halton.gov.uk)  
[www.merseygateway.co.uk](http://www.merseygateway.co.uk)

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1.1</b>
1.1	Introduction	1.1
1.2	Background	1.1
1.3	Report Structure	1.1
<b>2</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>2.1</b>
2.1	Introduction	2.1
2.2	Data Collection	2.1
2.3	Analysis Techniques	2.2
<b>3</b>	<b>Findings: Stakeholders</b>	<b>3.1</b>
3.1	Introduction	3.1
3.2	Types of stakeholder	3.1
3.3	Overall perceptions of the scheme	3.1
3.4	Support for the scheme	3.2
3.5	Questions about the scheme	3.3
3.6	Opposition to the scheme	3.4
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings: General Public</b>	<b>4.2</b>
4.1	Introduction	4.2
4.2	Approaches to Tolling	4.2
4.3	Redeveloping the Silver Jubilee Bridge	4.2
4.4	Open comments on the Mersey Gateway Proposals	4.3
<b>5</b>	<b>Summary of Findings</b>	<b>5.1</b>
5.1	Introduction	5.1
5.2	Overall	5.1

## Contents

### Tables

Table 3.1 Profile of Stakeholders	3.1
Table 3.2 Perceptions of the scheme	3.1
Table 4.1 Preferred approach to toll discounts	4.2
Table 4.2 Redevelopment of Silver Jubilee Bridge for the maximum benefit of local people	4.2
Table 4.3 Thematic breakdown of open comments by communication method	4.3
Table 4.4 Thematic breakdown of open comments	4.4
Table 4.5 Concern about specific geographical areas	4.5
Table 4.6 Thematic breakdown of comments about the tolling regime	4.6

### Appendices

A Consultation Sheet

B Questionnaire

# Summary

MVA consultancy were commissioned by Gifford, in association with Halton Borough Council, to analyse data collated from the Mersey Gateway public consultation exercise, held between July and September 2007. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how local stakeholders and the general public felt about the construction and operation of the Mersey Gateway and to consider how these views could best inform the development of the scheme. It was envisaged that public consultation presented a final opportunity to express views before the council submitted proposals to the statutory planning process in 2008. The consultation period ran from 18<sup>th</sup> June to the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2007.

A questionnaire was developed by the project team and distributed to Halton residents. This took the form of both a postal (3069 responses) and online survey (202 responses). The general public's perceptions were also recorded by email (78 responses), telephone enquiries (29 responses), text (2 responses) and comments made during a series of public exhibitions (208 responses). Stakeholders were also asked to comment on the proposal; this was primarily accomplished through postal correspondence. A total of thirty stakeholders participated in the consultation process.

A mixed-method approach was adopted for the analyses. This comprised of a detailed and systematic reading of respondent's open comments, whilst statistical techniques were applied to the analysis of the quantitative data. Thematic interpretations of the data set were then collated to consider similarities and differences in opinion.

Overall, stakeholders showed a positive and enthusiastic attitude towards the development of the Mersey Gateway. The beneficial impact on the regeneration of Halton, as well as the wider region, was frequently noted. Issues surrounding improvements to the road network were also highlighted. In comparison, the general public focused on issues surrounding the tolling regime; respondents stated that discounts should be provided for locals.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 In August 2007, MVA Consultancy was commissioned by Gifford (on behalf of Halton Borough Council) to conduct analyses of data generated during consultations with the public regarding the Mersey Gateway Project. This report provides details of the feedback from the pre-planning application public consultation exercise. It was envisaged that the consultation would present a final opportunity for comments prior to commencing the formal planning procedure 2008.

## 1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 As part of the Mersey Gateway Communications Strategy (April 2007), a series of public consultation events were conducted between June 18<sup>th</sup> and September 21<sup>st</sup> 2007.

- 1.2.2 Consulting with the public formed an integral feature of the pre-planning application for the Mersey Gateway Project and was specifically related to a number of objectives to:

- Inform and help shape the Mersey Gateway planning application, which will be submitted early 2008;
- Inform stakeholders of the Mersey Gateway plans and proposed timetable of activity;
- Ensure third parties are informed directly at the earliest appropriate opportunity of proposals that could directly impact upon them;
- Seek views and opinions of stakeholders on proposals, particularly those aspects of the project which are still flexible;
- Use stakeholder comments to assist with mitigating potential objections prior to the formal planning process;
- Seek to build and maintain support for the project amongst its stakeholders; and
- Ensure that the project is employing best practice and meeting relevant consultation guidelines at all points.

- 1.2.3 This report provides details of the consultation response. This will inform the Interpretive Report (November 2007) to be produced by the project team.

## 1.3 Report Structure

- 1.3.1 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Chapter two describes the methodology used to analyse data;
- Chapter three presents the views of stakeholders;
- Chapter four details responses from the public; and
- Chapter five provides a summary of the findings.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This report considers the feedback gathered from the public consultation with local stakeholders, wider stakeholders, as well as the wider travelling public.

2.1.2 As stated in the Mersey Gateway Consultation Action Plan (March 2007), the consultation period comprised a number of activities:

- Leaflets and questionnaires were delivered to each of the 56,000 households and businesses in Halton;
- An exhibition about the project was held at 15 sites across Halton between June 8<sup>th</sup> and September 21<sup>st</sup> 2007;
- Editorials were placed in Council publications, such as Halton Today; and
- Information was placed on the Mersey Gateway and Halton Borough Council websites.

### 2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 The responses from the questionnaire formed the main source of data for the analysis; 3271 questionnaires were returned (3069 postal and 202 online).

2.2.2 Further data came from ad hoc emails which had been sent to Halton Borough Council by members of the public. In total, 78 emails were included in the analysis. Whilst some of these focused on specific questions, others were concerned with broader topics relating to the scheme and its impact on the local area.

2.2.3 The exhibitions produced 208 public consultation sheets.

2.2.4 A small number of telephone enquiries (29), and 30 letters from stakeholders, formed the final data source for this analysis.

2.2.5 As such, feedback from the public took a variety of forms, including:

- Questionnaire responses;
- Email queries;
- Public consultation sheets;
- Telephone enquiry sheets; and
- Stakeholder letters.

2.2.6 A text facility was also available for the public to use; however, only two transmissions were received from text.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.3 Analysis Techniques

- 2.3.1 The Mersey Gateway Project team provided this raw data on an ad-hoc basis. This took various formats; whilst electronic copies of stakeholder letters were supplied, questionnaire data was downloaded from the Business Collaborator and scanned copies were forwarded on to MVA. The copies of email enquiries were also forwarded on to MVA.
- 2.3.2 Data was subsequently logged and analysed in a systematic and transparent way thus enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings to produce a robust research process.
- 2.3.3 The analysis process comprised various stages. Initially, data was examined at the clustered level; therefore, comments from the questionnaire were separated from those identified at the exhibitions, or stated through email or telephone.
- 2.3.4 Key themes were identified based on the frequency of their inclusion in the comments made by respondents. This technique formed a coding frame for the issues which respondents raised and also distinguished the topics most frequently mentioned by the public or stakeholders. The intensity of these views was subsequently considered, thus ensuring a comprehensive interpretation of the entire data set.
- 2.3.5 The questionnaire also comprised two closed questions. In these cases, respondents were able to choose two options from a selection of pre-defined topics. Responses were totalled and percentages generated for each of these questions.
- 2.3.6 The first of these questions asked respondents about the tolling regime:
- Both crossings will be tolled. We are currently investigating options for discounts for different people crossing the bridges. Which approach would you prefer to see adopted?*
- 2.3.7 Respondents were asked to choose a maximum of two answers from the following: same rate for all users, discounts for regular users, discounts for local people, discounts for Silver Jubilee Bridge users and discounts for off peak users. Respondents were also able to define an 'other' answer. These answers were coded separately, using a similar system to that which was used on the open comments. Each answer was assigned a number based on the topic of the comments; a frequency of these comments was then compiled.
- 2.3.8 The second closed question focused on the use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge:
- The Silver Jubilee Bridge will be redeveloped as a bridge for local users as part of the project. How would you like to see the Silver Jubilee Bridge changed for the maximum benefit of local people?*
- 2.3.9 Once again, respondents were able to choose a maximum of two answers to this question, including: retained as it is, introduce bus priority lanes, introduce cycle lanes, provide more frequent buses across the bridge and improve pedestrian facilities.
- 2.3.10 Although the public consultation data was initially analysed based on type of communication method, data has been grouped together for reporting purposes. This presents the emerging themes and perceptions of the overall sample in order to highlight any significant differences in opinion across the different types of communication method.

## 2 Methodology

- 2.3.11 The postal and online questionnaire provided a useful medium through which the general public were able to communicate with the Mersey Gateway Project team, along with the public exhibitions. Emails were less frequently used by the public and the telephone enquiries were mainly confined to requests for additional information. In comparison, stakeholders primarily registered their views by postal correspondence.



## 3 Findings: Stakeholders

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Data collated from local stakeholders' correspondence is discussed within this chapter. Findings draw on the correspondence between the Mersey Gateway Team and organisations or authorities from the Halton area.
- 3.1.2 Similarly to the views provided by the public, stakeholder perceptions are considered thematically, as based on the comments made by stakeholders and their support for the Mersey Gateway Project rated on a scale of one to five (where 1 equals strongly oppose and 5 equals strongly support).

### 3.2 Types of stakeholder

- 3.2.1 The sample reflected views from a variety of stakeholder types. Table 3.1 shows the profile of stakeholders included in the sample.

**Table 3.1 Profile of Stakeholders**

Type of Stakeholder	Frequency
Local Authority	11
Independent Organisation	10
Private Company	7
Activist Group	2
Total	30

### 3.3 Overall perceptions of the scheme

- 3.3.1 Overall, stakeholders were positive about the Mersey Gateway Project. Only one of the stakeholders strongly opposed and none opposed. Twelve of the stakeholders remained neutral, whilst over half of the sample agreed with the implementation of the scheme (twelve were supportive and five strongly supportive).

**Table 3.2 Perceptions of the scheme**

	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Oppose	1	3
Oppose	0	-
Neutral	12	40
Support	12	40
Strongly Support	5	17
Total	30	100

### 3 Findings: Stakeholders

- 3.3.2 The stakeholder which opposed to the scheme represented an environmental group, whilst those that registered their support mainly came from local authorities or regeneration agencies.

#### 3.4 Support for the scheme

- 3.4.1 Over half of the sample (17 stakeholders) exemplified a supportive attitude towards the Mersey Gateway Project. This took various guises but concentrated on the subsequent improvements to road network and associated benefits for business travellers within Halton.

- 3.4.2 A number of stakeholders made reference to their support for the Mersey Gateway Project, highlighting that this had **stemmed from earlier stages** of the consultation process.

*"As you know [name of stakeholder] supports the latest proposals for the Mersey Gateway Project."*

*"We strongly support this major regional infrastructure project."*

*"We support the development of this scheme."*

*"We are fully supportive of the Mersey Gateway proposal."*

*"[Name of stakeholder] strongly supports the proposed construction of a new crossing of the River Mersey."*

*"[Name of stakeholder] reaffirms its support in principle for the project."*

- 3.4.3 Furthermore, one stakeholder felt *"confident that this level of support will continue."*

- 3.4.4 In describing their support, respondents commented on the importance of the scheme for both the **local area and wider region**.

*"I do not need to restate all the advantages and benefits that the project will bring not only to Cheshire but to the whole sub region."*

*"The planning application for this project will be regionally significant."*

*"We have followed the development of this project with considerable interest over the a period of years and believe very strongly that the proposals, as currently put forward, are the right way forward for both the local area and wider region."*

- 3.4.5 This was specifically related to the **regeneration of the area** in many instances. Stakeholders acknowledged that the Mersey Gateway Project would help contribute to further investment in the area thus encouraging greater economic growth and regeneration. It was agreed by these stakeholders that the scheme would assist *"businesses in the area as it will provide the transport reliability needed to further continue business growth."*

*"The new crossing will have a significant impact on the continuing regeneration of South Liverpool."*

*"The Mersey Gateway will remove a major barrier to growth in the City Region."*

### 3 Findings: Stakeholders

*"A new Mersey Crossing will aid regeneration in the region and deliver improvements to the environment and economy which will benefit residents of Halton, Warrington and Merseyside."*

*"The new crossing could also help to act as a catalyst for regeneration in Widnes and Runcorn and attract new private sector investment."*

*"The Mersey Gateway will provide the missing link in the region's road network, cut congestion and improve accessibility across Merseyside, Cheshire and North Wales. Consequently it is of great strategic importance to the performance and expansion of the North West's economy and will be invaluable to everyone who lives and works here."*

- 3.4.6 Other stakeholders were keen to demonstrate their awareness of the benefits which would be brought to **traffic levels** within the area. Particular reference was made to the ways in which the scheme would relieve the volume of traffic currently experienced on the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

*"Given the problems that Warrington experiences with strategic North-South traffic within its town centre, Warrington clearly recognises the vital importance of providing a new crossing of the River Mersey in Halton."*

*"We believe that the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge is clearly totally inadequate to deal with both the existing and expected future levels of traffic...A new crossing of the river sited away from the most built up areas of Halton and linking directly to new expressways and the M56 motorway will both greatly improve fast road links to and from the area and reduce congestion."*

*"Clearly without the Mersey Gateway the extra airport traffic, combined with the other expected increases in traffic volumes over the Silver Jubilee Bridge, will put the existing crossing under even greater pressure and increase the existing problems of journey time and reliability."*

- 3.4.7 One stakeholder identified specific areas of the **road network** which would receive the greatest benefit from the Mersey Gateway Project.

*"The scheme will deliver a major improvement to the A557 route between the M56 and M62 motorways and improve access to and from the A562/A561 route in Widnes."*

#### 3.5 Questions about the scheme

- 3.5.1 Despite illustrating support for the scheme, one stakeholder discussed the tolls to be included in the scheme because *"it will be important to have some form of regular user discount to minimise the financial impact for such employees."*

- 3.5.2 In addition, several respondents queried the design of the scheme, both the new crossing and changes to existing roads. *"One issue yet to be resolved is access to and from the M56, currently proposed via junction 12."*

*"I note that the documentation provided gives no indication of the height of the proposed development."*

### 3 Findings: Stakeholders

- 3.5.3 Some comments extended to suggested **improvements** for dealing with such difficulties.

*"The introduction of priority bus lanes and any increased frequency in buses crossing the bridge will be important if further improvements are to be made to bus access from across the region involving cross river journeys at Runcorn/Widnes."*

- 3.5.4 Two of the stakeholders felt it was important to ensure any unexpected discoveries of archaeological features were also considered during the construction of the scheme.

*"I think that there should be provision for something more than a watching brief in the industrial zone (trial trenching/evacuation)...there needs to be an adequate contingency of time and money to deal with unexpected discoveries from the channel."*

- 3.5.5 **Environmental concerns** were also incorporated into the considerations for the development of the scheme.

*"There will be a need for off-site mitigation to enable the functionality of the landscape to be maintained. This mitigation may need to consider a range of issues, such as access, visual amenity and biodiversity issues."*

*"If deposits with a higher organic content are uncovered during construction, then a further assessment should be undertaken."*

#### 3.6 Opposition to the scheme

- 3.6.1 The only stakeholder to present a mainly negative conception of the Mersey Gateway Project was from an activists group. This response focused on the detrimental effects to the **environment**. However, it should be noted that this was not entirely specific to the Mersey Gateway but in relation to the *"unsustainability of major road projects and the urgent need to reduce mankind's carbon footprint and tackle climate change."*

- 3.6.2 Nonetheless, particular reference was made to the specificities of the consultation process; therefore, highlighting a negative impression of the scheme.

*"This is yet another flawed consultation about a deeply flawed scheme."*

## 4 Findings: General Public

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 This chapter details the findings from the analysis of comments gathered during the public consultation. Unless otherwise stated, results are presented for the overall sample and discussed thematically, as set out in the previous chapter.
- 4.1.2 Since the questionnaire produced the largest volume of data, findings will be based on these results and similarities and differences highlighted in respect of the other forms of communication utilised by respondents.

### 4.2 Approaches to Tolling

- 4.2.1 The postal and online questionnaire asked respondents to consider the type of discounts they would prefer for both the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the new crossing. Respondents were able to choose a maximum of two options from a list and were also provided with space to state an other option. Table 4.1 illustrates these results.

**Table 4.1 Preferred approach to toll discounts**

	Frequency	Percentage of responses %	Percentage of respondents % *
Discounts for local people	2268	49	85
Discounts for regular users	1055	23	40
Discounts for off peak users	578	13	22
Discounts for Silver Jubilee Bridge users	575	12	22
Same rate for all users	130	3	5
Total	4606	100	-

\*Percentage based on the total number of respondents who answered this question

- 4.2.2 Respondents stated that they would prefer discounts for local people (2268 responses), as well as regular users of the bridges (1055).
- 4.2.3 Furthermore, the least preferred approach to tolling was that all users would pay the same rate; this option only received 130 responses.

## 4 Findings: General Public

4.2.4 A substantial number of respondents suggested other approaches to the tolling system, including (number of respondents in brackets):

- No toll at all/free travel (733);
- Discounts for disabled or elderly travellers (124);
- Discounts for specific types of vehicles e.g. taxis, cyclists (38);
- Limited charging plans e.g. car sharing, special daily rates (23);
- Discounts for Halton businesses (15); and
- Restrictions for Heavy Goods Vehicles (11).

4.2.5 Respondents most frequently stated that there should not be a toll imposed on the bridge (733), whilst 124 responses felt that the toll system should allow for specific discounts for elderly or disabled travellers.

4.2.6 A total of 136 respondents specifically stated their support for maintaining free travel on the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

### 4.3 Redeveloping the Silver Jubilee Bridge

4.3.1 Respondents answering the postal or online questionnaire were specifically asked about their views concerning the redevelopment of the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB). Respondents were able to choose a maximum of two options from the list provided. Table 4.2 shows which strategies respondents would like to see implemented in the redevelopment of the SJB.

**Table 4.2 Redevelopment of Silver Jubilee Bridge for the maximum benefit of local people**

	Frequency	Percentage of responses %	Percentage of respondents %*
Retained as it is	1793	39	60
Introduce priority bus lanes	578	13	19
Introduce cycle lanes	755	17	25
Improve pedestrian facilities	754	17	25
Provide more frequent buses across the bridge	675	15	22
Total	4555	100	-

\* Percentage based on the total number of respondents who answered this question

4.3.2 As can be seen from the table above, respondents indicated that they would rather retain the Silver Jubilee Bridge in its current state (1793 responses). Introducing cycling lanes (755

## 4 Findings: General Public

responses) was also considered an effective way to redevelop the bridge, together with improving pedestrian facilities (754 responses).

- 4.3.3 In comparison, the least preferred options for redeveloping the SJB were introducing priority bus lanes (578 responses) and providing a more frequent bus service (675 responses).

### 4.4 Open comments on the Mersey Gateway Proposals

- 4.4.1 Respondents were asked about their comments on the draft proposals for the Mersey Gateway. The questionnaire included space for the respondents to state their views accordingly.

- 4.4.2 The table below presents the thematic breakdown of comments across the different communication techniques used by the general public.

**Table 4.3 Thematic breakdown of open comments by communication method**

Communication Method	Questionnaire	Email	Telephone	Exhibition
<b>Theme</b>				
Tolling	1347	33	7	90
No comment	1136	0	0	0
Design/construction of the scheme	388	22	6	70
Support the scheme/overdue	243	3	2	20
Traffic concerns/congestion	222	18	3	26
General support for the scheme but have specific concerns	93	10	1	8
Social segregation	71	0	0	3
Environmental impact	70	5	1	32
Wildlife concerns	57	0	0	5
Disillusioned with the scheme	26	0	0	0
Project communication/marketing material	14	10	4	0
Other	119	5	9	26

- 4.4.3 As can be seen from Table 4.3, respondents relied on the questionnaire method to state their views on the Mersey Gateway Project. The public exhibitions also proved a useful arena for the general public to discuss their perceptions. However, fewer numbers of people utilised electronic techniques or used the telephone.

## 4 Findings: General Public

- 4.4.4 Table 4.4 shows a breakdown of responses to the open question in the questionnaire (both postal and online). It should be noted that where respondents made more than one comment, all have been coded separately to minimise the loss of any data.

**Table 4.4 Thematic breakdown of open comments**

	Frequency	Percentage of responses %	Percentage of respondents %*
Tolling	1347	36	41
No comment	1136	30	35
Design/construction of the scheme	388	10	12
Support the scheme/overdue	243	6	7
Traffic concerns/congestion	222	6	7
General support for the scheme but have specific concerns	93	2	3
Social segregation	71	2	2
Environmental impact	70	2	2
Wildlife concerns	57	2	2
Disillusioned with the scheme	26	1	1
Project communication/marketing material	14	<1	<1
Other	119	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3786</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>

\*Percentage based on the total number of respondents who answered this question

- 4.4.5 In addition to the themes which respondents spoke about, the analysis of the data from the public consultation comprised a breakdown of specific geographical areas mentioned in respondents' open comments.
- 4.4.6 Table 4.5 presents these findings. As can be seen, respondents most frequently discussed the impact of the Mersey Gateway on the M56, particularly Junction 11. Discussion about the Mersey Tunnels mainly focused on the issue of tolls, whilst a similar percentage of responses highlighted the congestion problems in Daresbury or the damage to wildlife on Wigg Island.



## 4 Findings: General Public

**Table 4.5 Concern about specific geographical areas**

	Frequency	Percentage of responses %	Percentage of respondents %*
M56	97	25	3
Junction 11	26	7	1
Junction 11A	11	3	<1
Junction 12	19	5	1
Central Expressway	58	15	2
Mersey Tunnels	50	13	1
Daresbury	38	10	1
Wigg Island	37	10	1
Astmoor	29	7	1
Ditton	23	6	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>

\*Percentage based on the total number of respondents who answered this question

### Tolling

- 4.4.7 The issues surrounding the tolling of the bridges were discussed most frequently by respondents, regardless of the communication technique they employed to register their beliefs. Table 4.6 shows the sub-thematic breakdown of comments about the tolling regime.

**Table 4.6 Thematic breakdown of comments about the tolling regime**

	Frequency	Percentage %
Discounts for locals	593	44
Funding issues	128	10
Impact on business/shops	117	9
No toll	116	9
Concerns about tolling both bridges	81	6
Impact on social segregation	76	6
Discounts for disabled/OAPs	65	5
Design of tolling scheme	61	5
Impact on congestion	40	3
Appreciate tolling principles	40	3
Impact on local services	18	1
Other	12	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1347</b>	<b>100</b>

4.4.8 Comments most commonly referred to the provision of **discounts for local residents or businesses**, both for the Mersey Gateway and Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB).

*“To toll the Mersey Gateway and the SJB would be very, very unfair on regular and local users.”*

*“Why should local people have to pay to cross the bridge?”*

*“Tolling local people to use the bridge is out of order.”*

*“We don't think it is fair for local people to pay at all, especially Runcorn people.”*

*“People living in Runcorn and Widnes should be able to use the SJB free.”*

*“Provide special passes to people who live in Runcorn and have to travel every day to Widnes to work.”*

*“Local people should have badge/permit to cross for free. We should not have to pay.”*

4.4.9 Many respondents felt that it was **unfair** to toll residents in addition to other financial costs involved with owning a car or living in Halton.

*“The new bridge should be tolled to cover costs, but local residents should not have to pay tolls. We pay enough in Council tax and road tax.”*

*“We pay enough taxes to pay for this bridge. There should be no toll on it.”*

## 4 Findings: General Public

*"Local people should not pay any toll for using the SJB, as we are local people and pay enough in our poll tax for being so."*

*"Totally disagree with tolling when the cost of motoring is already very expensive."*

- 4.4.10 Several respondents illustrated that the **cost of the tolls** was particularly pertinent for residents in Halton due to the typically low income in the area.

*"A large percentage of people who live in this area (Runcorn/Widnes area) are on low incomes and are living on the bread line. This should be reflected in the toll charges applied."*

*"Why are the bridges to be tolled? This can cause financial hardship for regular users who live in Halton."*

*"Halton is a very financially poor area and a toll is going to be a tax on visiting friends and family."*

- 4.4.11 **Discounts for elderly or disabled travellers** were also highlighted in the responses to the questionnaire.

*"Pensioners cannot afford tolls! Passage should be free to all over 65, especially as they grow older, 70 and 80. These groups represent the poorest in our society and are deserving of special consideration!"*

*"Will consideration be given to OAPs and those who work on the other side of the bridge from their homes, for "free" or at a reduced rate?"*

*"What about discounts for disabled car users? Some disabled people feel uncomfortable using public transport."*

*"Will disabled drivers/carers be exempt from paying these charges due to the fact through no fault of their own they have to travel to Liverpool etc to receive specialist care."*

- 4.4.12 A small number of respondents referred to **other bridges** which are not tolled to illustrate their disagreement with the proposed tolling system.

*"Are any of the London bridges tolled?"*

*"I strongly object to tolling of the SJB on top of road tax, petrol tax, etc considering the number of untaxed crossings of the Thames and other city river crossings in the country."*

*"Why should local people have to pay to cross the bridge? How many bridges are tolled across the Thames or the Tyne - not many!"*

- 4.4.13 A smaller section of the sample presented doubts about the **implications of the scheme for businesses and shops** in Halton.

*"If these businesses are to stay and thrive (and continue to provide valuable jobs locally), they must receive a heavy discounted toll to remain viable and profitable. Otherwise, many would have no choice but to relocate out of the area, taking jobs with them."*

## 4 Findings: General Public

*"The day you start charging to cross the bridge(s) is the day this household will stop shopping in Widnes, St Helens and Speke areas."*

*"There is already a reluctance between locals to use facilities on either side of the river, and I am sure paying toll will deter them."*

- 4.4.14 Many respondents used the open comment section of the questionnaire to highlight their reservations about the **funding** of the scheme. Comments highlighted respondent's misconceptions about funding the completion of the entire scheme.

*"Bridge should be funded out of taxes paid by motorists."*

*"Why should the population of Halton (not 30 million) pay for the new bridge that is mainly used by outside traffic? Make non Halton residents pay for the privilege and make it free for Halton residents to freely access the full services and facilities offered across the whole of the Borough."*

*"The vast majority of users in peak time are non Halton residents or work in Halton. So why should the minority of users pay for the majority?"*

- 4.4.15 The **design of the tolling system** was raised by many respondents as a further dimension of concern. This related to the finer details of the scheme (which direction of travel will be tolled and how much), as well as the tangible design.

*"Will bridges be tolled one way only or both ways? Why will bridges be toll free for cyclists?"*

*"Make tolls automated, like London's congestion charge."*

*"Will there be "fast tag" booths for pre-payment users?"*

*"I have concerns for the viability of tolling interchanges as I genuinely believe that simple technology to identify pre-paid vehicles must be adopted by 2014."*

- 4.4.16 Several respondents went further to suggest that the tolling system would greatly increase **congestion on the bridges and surrounding area**.

*"Stopping to pay at a toll will only mean more queuing and congestion."*

*"You say it will cut traffic jams. I don't think so. You still have to stop to pay and traffic will build up more than ever, causing more delays."*

*"With having toll on the bridges, will this cause hold ups on the bridges?"*

*"We feel that if the toll charge is too high, people will avoid using the bridge and travel through Warrington which could cause major disruption, especially on weekends as people from Runcorn could possibly avoid going to Widnes for shopping and visit other areas."*

- 4.4.17 A small group of respondents noted that added congestion from tolling the bridges would have a detrimental impact on **local services**, such as emergency services and access to health facilities.

## 4 Findings: General Public

*"We are very worried about toll charges. We now have to go to Warrington hospital for all operations and serious illnesses. This will cause added travel time and costs to an already expensive and stressful time."*

*"This is an aspect that concerns me deeply, and would desperately like to see passes/concessions for public sector workers, i.e. district nurses that do cover large areas. Ambulances given clearance to pass through free of charge. Police vehicles with no charge to cross the bridges. Doctors do not cover out of area anyway apart from out of hours providers. I would welcome these concessions to maintain services in Halton are not affected."*

- 4.4.18 Issues surrounding the **tolling of both bridges** were subsequently raised by many respondents; whilst they recognised that the new bridge would be tolled, many questioned the need to also toll the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

*"Silver Jubilee Bridge should not be tolled. Tolls for the new crossing should be sufficient for its construction and upkeep, and traffic flow should be improved by non-local users being directed to the new crossing."*

*"Silver Jubilee Bridge should remain free for locals."*

*"Whilst we accept the need for a new bridge to be tolled, it is totally unacceptable for tolls to be charged on the existing bridge. Local residents that have put up with the congestion for years should not have to be charged for use of the old bridge."*

*"The Mersey Gateway bridge should be tolled to pay for itself. The Silver Jubilee Bridge should be left as it is and used by locals for free. This is the only way locals will be happy."*

- 4.4.19 Despite feelings of anxiety, a small group of respondents illustrated **support for the tolling regime** and understand that it is needed.

*"Tolling on the new Mersey Gateway crossing would be a good way of funding the bridge and on-going repairs which will be needed."*

*"I think the toll will be a good idea."*

*"We agree the bridges must be tolled. We paid to use the Transporter."*

*"I agree with tolls as it helps to pay for both bridge repairs and painting when necessary."*

*"I think the issue for tolling is a great idea."*

- 4.4.20 Nevertheless, a small group of respondents continued to state concerns about the **impact of the tolls on social segregation** within the area.

*"It has been difficult enough getting people from Widnes and Runcorn to see themselves as Halton."*

*"By sticking all the tolls on Widnes side of the Borough, you are already restricting Runcorn residents from working on the tolls as they will have higher travelling fees to pay to get from/to work by car or taxi. The tolls will cause segregation of the Borough - Widnes versus Runcorn - as people resident on one side of the Borough will look for future work/residence*

## 4 Findings: General Public

*that lies on the same side of the Borough, unless the employer is large enough that it will pay travelling expenses."*

*"If Widnes and Runcorn is one Borough, it's classed as one town. How can you charge for a toll bridge within a town?"*

*"We agree strongly another crossing is needed and soon, but think that both bridges being "toll paying" will put bus fares up and separate the towns of Runcorn/Widnes even further."*

### Design/construction of scheme

4.4.21 A variety of issues relating to the design and construction of the scheme were identified by respondents using the questionnaire and discussing their concerns at the exhibitions.

4.4.22 Responses to the postal and online questionnaire showed particular concerns about **access to the area during the construction** of the bridge and completion of the scheme.

*"Will the Daresbury Expressway be made into dual carriageway to accommodate the increased traffic from and to the new bridge?"*

*"My concerns are for the A56 between J11 and the Murdishaw island, i.e. Preston Brook. This new bridge will take a large percentage of the traffic from the SJB, not necessarily only the traffic Eastbound. If plans are implemented to limit the capacity on the SJB, that means that traffic from Liverpool will end up at the Murdishaw island and join the M56 at J11 as opposed to struggling with J12, thereby travelling through the village of Preston Brook."*

*"The exit off the Gateway should be at the top end of Widnes, not near old bridge exit roads. The exit roads off both bridges are too close together on the Widnes side, which will result in congestion and not the relief of it."*

4.4.23 **Stylistic features** were also mentioned by respondents thus highlighting the importance of the aesthetic appeal of the bridge.

*"I do not see why the bridge cannot be straight, as making a curve creates more work time, plus materials, hence more cost."*

*"It seems to me that the plans for the new bridge do not look futuristic enough."*

*"Why do you have to build such a big and bulky bridge?"*

4.4.24 The chosen **location of the bridge** and proposed changes to the surrounding road networks were also identified as important issues. Many respondents highlighted reservations about the positioning of the scheme, the specific design of adjoining roads and the layout of the crossing.

*"The only comment I ever had was always in my mind was why the new bridge was to be erected across the wider part of the Mersey? The shortest route was straight across at the narrow point."*

*"I feel the new bridge is sited in the wrong place and will cause even more traffic congestion. The new bridge should be further up river tying in with the Knowsley Expressway."*

## 4 Findings: General Public

*"Would like to know where the new roads will be built. The map provided does not give enough detail, i.e. street names. I am currently buying a property and would like to know where these new roads will be in relation to this property."*

*"The new proposed bridge will not be wide enough. Three lanes each way will be inadequate. You need to double the proposed number of lanes each way."*

*"Make sure it has plenty of room in the lanes."*

- 4.4.25 Furthermore, several respondents considered how the location of the scheme would **impact on residential land use**.

*"It is unclear from the map on this web site as to where the new bridge will go. I am concerned as I am in the process of buying a property on Sandymoor. Will the bridge be built near here should I be concerned?"*

- 4.4.26 **Safety** issues were explored by respondents in relation to both the construction and operation of the scheme, especially for pedestrians using the bridge.

*"Make easy access for pedestrians and cyclists. Speed limited to 30 miles an hour."*

*"As a resident very close to the new slip roads at the Astmoor Junction, I'd like to know what safety methods are being implemented for the extra heavy traffic we can expect."*

### Support for the scheme

- 4.4.27 Although the majority of respondents used the consultation process to raise questions about the Mersey Gateway Project, others emphasised the **importance of the scheme** and discussed their support.

*"I think the draft looks to be very good and well planned and very long needed, and will certainly help to regenerate Widnes and Runcorn which can only be good for our towns."*

*"I can only applaud the plans for the new Mersey crossing, something that is well overdue, the plans look terrific."*

- 4.4.28 Many respondents felt that the construction of a new crossing was **long over due**; some comments questioned the amount of time to complete the construction period.

*"Why 2014 until opening, seven years? Compared to 2012 for Olympic Village. It needs to be open sooner."*

*"Please start building the new bridge quickly!"*

*"Proceed as soon as possible."*

*"We desperately need this new crossing - it is overdue. The proposed Mersey Gateway looks good."*

*"It should be built as soon as possible. Desperately needed for the sake of all businesses, employees and hospitals"*

## 4 Findings: General Public

*"This new bridge is well overdue. It's needed for the congestion and to give relief to the existing bridge."*

*"Would like to see this project moved forward more rapidly. I understand that this is an enormous project but it seems crazy to take four years until we can start building. Can you look into shortening the time between stepping stones and decrease time to two years?"*

- 4.4.29 Those that did not specifically highlight timescales for the project exemplified their support for the **underpinning principles of the scheme**. Respondents described benefits for the economic regeneration of the area, together with easing congestion levels in the borough.

*"We as a family think the idea of a second bridge is excellent and very exciting."*

*"Great idea that will regenerate the area."*

*"It looks like a lot of planning and hard work has gone into the Mersey Gateway. I can't wait to see it completed. I don't drive myself but I do travel over Runcorn Bridge by bus and I noticed the amount of traffic on it every day. It is a wonder that bridge has lasted. As for the Mersey Gateway, bring it on as soon as possible. It looks fantastic. Can't wait to see and use it. Well done!"*

*"It's a good idea. The bridge is a nightmare in the mornings."*

*"This area urgently needs a second crossing for the growing prosperity of Halton and access to the expanding John Lennon Airport."*

*"The plans are impressive. Implementation will improve the Borough economically and aesthetically. As it will be a local landmark, a viewing platform and/or visitor centre should be considered."*

*"This is an excellent development and will be totally positive for the area. Economic prosperity will improve beyond forecasts."*

### Traffic concerns/increased congestion

- 4.4.30 Respondents generally indicated an apprehensive attitude towards the impact of the Mersey Gateway Project on the congestion experienced in the area.

- 4.4.31 Whilst some respondents felt that **increased volumes of traffic** would primarily impact on surrounding areas of the bridges, others emphasised the continued congestion on the Silver Jubilee Bridge. Once again, these comments largely consisted of questions about specific design features of the Mersey Gateway Project.

*"Unless a "restricted" junction is provided on the M56 between J11 and J12, I am concerned about the effect on J11 and at Daresbury roundabout. Traffic from the East will not exit the motorway at J12, but will nearly always use J11. This will cause considerable congestion. The best solution would be a J11a, with access to/from the East only."*

*"I feel the new bridge is sited in the wrong place and will cause even more traffic congestion."*



*"What action will be taken to ensure that heavy traffic uses the new bridge, when they are doing business around the Ditton Road and West Bank area, and the SJB is the easier option? In the event of accidents on either bridge, how will the traffic be diverted to the bridge not blocked? What signs will be erected to show drivers of any hold-ups. Presently the first people know is when they arrive at the hold-up or it is broadcast on local radio. Will the bridges be directed as local traffic (SJB) or through traffic (Mersey Gateway)?"*

*"The proposed de-linking of the roads to the SJB will cause problems for old town residents."*

*"Unless cyclists and pedestrians are completely annexed from the main bridge users, i.e. motorised transport, then the objective of free flowing traffic would not be accomplished."*

*"Effectively the plan provides an exit off the M56 to Widnes and Liverpool and will cause massive increase to traffic through the heart of Runcorn with little disruption to Widnes. At present there are signs on the M6 and M62 "For Liverpool Airport, follow Runcorn". What is wrong with the M62 and the link off there for the airport? If this bridge is to help local traffic, why connect to M56? The expressway used will be all but motorway and will cut Runcorn in two, removing this stretch off expressway for local traffic."*

*"Any new junction to M56 requires further improvements to local housing estate access. Area already congested at peak times."*

*"If the SJB is slowed down by bus lanes/cycle lanes, it is not going to be of much use."*

*"De-linking of SJB worries me, as Halton residents are familiar with these links. If de-linking is to encourage users onto new bridge, other options should be considered."*

- 4.4.32 In addition to this uneasiness about the real impact on traffic conditions, some respondents were also worried about the ramifications for **public transport**.

*"I agree we need to sort something out to ease the SJB, but why can't we concentrate on public transport instead!"*

*"People use their cars to travel to work simply because bus services do not serve their place of work. I work in Manchester - no buses go from Widnes to Manchester at 6:00 am!"*

*"Will the cost on public transport be increased to meet raised expenditure for using the bridges?"*

### **Environmental impact**

- 4.4.33 **Environmental concerns** were highlighted by respondents using all forms of communication types but were more frequently mentioned by those attending a public exhibition. Noise and air pollution were primarily discussed.

*"We insist that the promises made to protect the environment are carried out to the letter!"*

*"Why should residents be forced to accept this added noise pollution?"*

*"Noise pollution and air pollution will increase proportionally with traffic forecast to grow."*

*"It will have an adverse effect in noise and air quality for residents living in the areas."*

## 4 Findings: General Public

- 4.4.34 **Air quality and noise pollution** were also identified as significant concerns to be considered by the Mersey Gateway Project Team.

*"The proposed new roads and improving existing roads will obviously cause extra traffic, disruption and pollution caused by vehicle exhausts."*

*"Local air quality - I don't think air quality on the borders of the Central Expressway will be improved."*

*"The problem of noise pollution affecting residents who live in close proximity to the proposed route needs to be addressed."*

*"My main concern would be the extra pollution building the bridge would create. It would be great to see the construction of the bridge to be made as environmentally friendly as possible."*

- 4.4.35 More general ideas about the environment were also noted by respondents, rather than relating to specifics about the scheme, these comments highlighted the **policy agenda**.

*"I am concerned about this proposal because of its environmental impact on the Borough and on the planet."*

*"Local landscaping is important to make the most of the new views created."*

*"I believe the proposals should reflect a commitment to reducing the environmental impact of two crossings."*

### Wildlife concerns

- 4.4.36 Damage to **natural habitats and the removal of wildlife** were especially highlighted and the impact on natural ecosystems was most commonly mentioned by respondents.

*"There is a concern about the Whigg Island nature area being affected by air and noise pollution as the bridge will pass through it."*

*"Work and construction site should not to disrupt the use or any destruction of Whigg Island park."*

### Support Mersey Gateway scheme but have some concerns

- 4.4.37 Despite showing some concerns about the Mersey Gateway Project, some respondents were also keen to identify their **support**. In such cases, concerns focused on the cost of the bridge, environmental impact, increased social segregation, added congestion or the design/construction of the bridge.

- 4.4.38 Issues of cost related to the **funding and tolls** of the bridges.

*"The ideas for improvement are excellent. The need for "tolling" is not ideal, but the majority of sensible road users will be understanding."*

## 4 Findings: General Public

*"The overall proposal is fine. However the current proposal to charge a toll is unacceptable. Where else in the Country to you have to pay a toll to move from one part of your own Borough to another part?"*

*"I accept that we need a further Mersey crossing and that it will have to be paid for at least partly by some system of tolling. However I think that it is morally wrong for the council tax payers of Halton to have to pay both towards its construction and its upkeep, and also to be tolled to pass from one part of their town to another."*

- 4.4.39 Environmental concerns highlighted the importance of mitigating any detrimental impact on the **natural ecosystems** in the site of the new crossing, both in the short and long term.

*"I have nothing against the new bridge being built as it will benefit this community. But I strongly oppose that the bridge is going to cross Wigg Island as I have noticed this from the aerial photograph. At present I walk my dogs there nearly every day, and it is a peaceful haven for birds, bats and wildlife, and is enjoyed by walkers, cyclists, children and dog walkers like myself."*

*"We are in general very much in favour of the Mersey Gateway...but we have significant concerns about the effect on the natural environment. Whilst there will be disruption during the construction, there will also be a lasting impact as a result of the Gateway. It is important that the opportunity is taken to introduce compensatory measures to mitigate this impact, both visually and biologically."*

- 4.4.40 **Social segregation** was discussed to a lesser extent by respondents who generally supported the project but had some reservations.

*"I fully support the proposals for the Mersey Gateway and understand the requirement for tolling. However, since Runcorn and Widnes became Halton in 1974, several attempts have been made to unite the two towns. These haven't worked particularly well. By introducing a toll, in my opinion will only encourage that divide...Efforts should be made to reduce any negative impacts on the local community."*

*"The Mersey Gateway Bridge in principle is of good design and much needed. However, I am opposed to the unification of "Halton" as a Borough, only to have it Split in two by tolled bridges."*

- 4.4.41 Respondents who showed concern for added **congestion** in the area described the impact on roads local to their residence.

*"After years of putting up with frustrating congestion on the SJB, I imagine like myself most residents welcomes the news that a second crossing was to be built. We then find ourselves in the position that the proposal is to toll both the new crossing and the SJB. Considering that 70% of traffic is through traffic and doesn't contribute anything to the Borough, but on the contrary has caused congestion and will continue to do so."*

*"In essence, I believe that the proposed bridge will be of great benefit. I do, however, have concerns that (as a resident on Chester Road, Sutton Weaver) it will cause a major increase of traffic through this village. We are already suffering structural damage from the current volume of heavy goods traffic, and an increase in this is bound to lead to an escalation of problems."*

## 4 Findings: General Public

- 4.4.42 A number of respondents exemplified support for the Mersey Gateway Project but remained uneasy about certain elements of the **design and construction phases** involved in the completing the scheme.

*"It looks like a great bridge, but make sure it has plenty of room in the lanes."*

*"Great idea.. wrong place. it should be on the other side of the current Runcorn bridge.. it should link up with the Knowsley's expressway and cross the river to join up with the M56 link road. pointless being in Widnes."*

*"I like the proposals for the new bridge and its immediate approaches. My main concerns are with the M56 junction. Why change the roundabout on the South side of the junction? The present arrangement seems to work pretty well."*

### Social segregation

- 4.4.43 Respondents mainly identified issues associated with the social segregation of **local communities** by the new infrastructure of the Mersey Gateway or imposed tolling system. It was assumed by the majority of respondents that the scheme would encourage *"Widnes and Runcorn residents to stay on their own sides of the river thus creating segregation."*

*"I think it is a disgrace to expect the people who live in Halton to pay a toll for travelling from one side of their Borough to the other...There is already a huge drift between Widnes and Runcorn as things stand. Introducing a toll bridge will make it worse. You may as well do away with Halton Borough Council and put Runcorn back under Cheshire Authority and Widnes in Merseyside."*

- 4.4.44 Although the social impact was mentioned most frequently, the segregation of **work patterns** was also mentioned.

*"For local people and those who work in the Borough, the introduction of tolls will have an impact on people's willingness to work, attend activities across the river, etc. It will further divide the Widnes and Runcorn people."*

### Disillusioned with the scheme

- 4.4.45 A small proportion of the sample merely emphasised negative perceptions of the scheme. These ideas generally related to the **timescales and intentions of the scheme**, rather than particular aspects of the Mersey Gateway Project.

*"I don't particularly agree with the idea that we need a new bridge in addition to the one we already have...I don't have a lot of confidence, based on previous experience of your ability (or your contractors) to carry out the vast amount of work entailed in this project, and I am not looking forward to the mess that it will likely bring."*

*"By the time it's built half the people living in Halton will have aged about 50%. I believe the money should be spent developing the town."*

*"No new bridge is needed. Better traffic control measures would prevent the build up of much of the queuing that occurs. New regulations for movement on the bridge itself would prevent/reduce accidents. Such measures would ensure constant movement of traffic at an*

## 4 Findings: General Public

*acceptably low speed and prevent the stop/go movement that causes build up and driver frustration."*

*"I am opposed to the construction of a new road bridge on principle and on environmental grounds. Money instead should be used to improve public transport, for example by extending Merseyrail to Runcorn from Hunts Cross."*

### Project Communication

- 4.4.46 Some respondents believed that **communication** between the project team and residents/businesses in the local area should have provided more detailed information about the scheme. This topic was particularly emphasised by respondents using the telephone to request more detailed and specific information about the scheme.

*"Map needs to be more detailed concerning road names which may be affected."*

*"Your plans are not explained to the high quality and standard I require, as it does not explain how it will affect people who do not drive, as I am one of those people. Nor does it explain the disruption it will have on public transport."*

*"We would therefore be grateful if you could provide us with details as to the up to date position of this proposed route along with any proposed construction timetable."*

- 4.4.47 Furthermore, a smaller group of respondents suggested techniques for **better improving communication with the public**.

*"Not everybody has a computer. So how do you intend to keep these people informed?"*

*"Provide an e-mail site to enable access to view progress throughout planning and construction."*

*"The Mersey Gateway Project leaflet is very well presented. The background map could well be in bolder outline though."*

*"Please could a model be made to make the position of the new bridge clearer in relation to the Runcorn layout"*

*"I would like to be kept informed of progress on this subject by ordinary mail, as I don't have a computer."*

*"I received the consultation pdf document recently. I was just wondering whether a higher resolution (clearer) version of the map within the pdf document exists, either in paper form or ideally electronically that you could send me?"*

## 4 Findings: General Public

### Other

4.4.48 The remaining comments were situated within wider topical debates, including:

- The impact on local business;
- Effects on house prices/residential land;
- Legislation/policy makers;
- Job losses; and
- Construction force.

### Local Business

4.4.49 Respondents made a range of comments about the impact of the Mersey Gateway Project on businesses within Halton. Although some registered concern that businesses would move out of the area altogether, other respondents focused on the need for suitable support in the relocation of businesses.

*"I think trade and businesses will bypass Halton when the new bridge opens, meaning both Widnes and Runcorn will become ghost towns."*

*"Any local businesses affected will be treated fairly, i.e. compensation and time and help to re-locate."*

### House Prices

4.4.50 Several respondents highlighted the expected fall in house prices, raising the question as to whether *"the new bridge will affect house prices due to increase in traffic, noise and pollution?"*

### Policy

4.4.51 Some respondents used the questionnaire to voice opinions about wider policy issues. These comments presented dissatisfaction with the funding strategies of both local and national government.

*"The Government could well afford to fund the whole cost of this bridge if it stopped subsidising the Scottish Parliament, stopped subsidising the Welsh Assembly, stopped fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan."*

*"If the Labour Government was as quick building bridges and hospitals as it was to go to war in Iraq, we would not have closed five wards out of six at Halton hospital."*

## 4 Findings: General Public

### Job Losses

- 4.4.52 Although only a small number of respondents made any specific reference to the loss of jobs in the construction of the Mersey Gateway Project, those that did illustrated rather strong viewpoints on this topic.

*“My husband has just got a permanent job on Astmoor and now found out the job will be gone when bridge work starts. Why has the bridge got to be put through Astmoor Industrial Estate? All the jobs will be gone so unemployment will be up again. Where will all the unemployed people find jobs if Astmoor Industrial Estate has gone?”*

*“I was extremely concerned to learn that 800 jobs will be lost temporarily as a result of land acquisition for the scheme.”*

### Construction Force

- 4.4.53 A larger group of respondents stated their eagerness for the Mersey Gateway Project to utilise local labour, than those concerned with job losses.

*“It would benefit local people if contractors employed a percentage of Halton residents. I has been well publicised that the new developments planned for the Halton area will generate many jobs.”*

*“Try to ensure that as many local people as possible are employed on the construction of the bridge. This will maximise the beneficial effect on the local economy.”*

- 4.4.54 Whilst respondents recognised the short term benefits of these employment opportunities, more long term planning was also acknowledged that *“it would be a good idea to generate training programmes that would skill up unemployed people.”*

## 5 Summary of Findings

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This final chapter highlights some of the key findings which have emerged from the pre-planning public consultation exercise.

#### Design and location of the scheme

- 5.1.2 Tolling was the most frequent topic discussed by the general public, across all forms of communication method. Whilst it is clear that local residents expect to have discounted travel across the bridge, it was also felt that regular users should receive priority. Furthermore, it was also agreed by much of the sample that it would be inappropriate to toll the Silver Jubilee Bridge.
- 5.1.3 Respondents illustrated some concern about the final design of the new crossing and the subsequent changes to adjoining roads. This was mainly in relation to increased congestion. In addition, stakeholders were keen to stipulate their future involvement in finalising modifications to the surrounding road networks.
- 5.1.4 Most respondents demonstrated an enthusiasm to be kept informed about the development of the project; details about timescales, demolition of industrial property and road closures were requested by the general public and stakeholders.

#### Construction and operation of the Mersey Gateway

- 5.1.5 The need to hire a local labour force was identified by some members of the general public, whilst stakeholders concentrated on the benefits which would be brought to the surrounding road network by the Mersey Gateway Project.
- 5.1.6 The general public seemed more concerned about the congestion during the operation of the scheme and subsequent impacts on their choice of shopping on either side of the bridge, as well as for visiting friends and family. Stakeholders did not raise any issues involving social segregation within the borough.

### 5.2 Overall

- 5.2.1 Although participants indicated concerns about the Mersey Gateway, a spectrum of positive conceptions was also distinguished.
- 5.2.2 The negative responses suggest that members of the public are primarily concerned with cost issues, therefore the funding behind the scheme and any subsequent tolling. In comparison, stakeholders recognise the benefit of the scheme to the regional and local transport networks.
- 5.2.3 In comparison to the general public, local stakeholders demonstrated an enhanced understanding about the intentions of the Mersey Gateway Project. This included the specificities of the design, as well as the intended modifications to the surrounding transport network.



## 5 Summary of Findings

- 5.2.4 The stakeholders included in the consultation process demonstrated that they were particularly appreciative for being included in the pre-planning of the Mersey Gateway Project.
- 5.2.5 Respondents who came from the general public illustrated a more inquisitive attitude towards the scheme, requesting further information about the exact design and impact of the Mersey Gateway on land use.
- 5.2.6 In addition, respondents acknowledged the relevance of environmental issues, particularly concentrating on the impact to Wigg Island and micro ecosystems.