New Mersey Crossing Tolling Feasibility Study – Focus Groups

Final Report

Prepared for
Gifford and Partners

September 2004
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Primary Author: Susanne Falp

Other Author(s): Rachel Harding

Reviewer(s): Joanne Christensen

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Summary

Background

Halton Borough Council submitted a bid for a new Mersey crossing, with a preferred route that runs from the Central Expressway in Runcorn to the Eastern Bypass in Widnes (Route 3A), to the Department for Transport in July 2003.

In December 2003, the Government gave its support in principle to the bid by classifying the work done to date as "Super Work in Progress".

Following this, detailed discussions took place early in 2004 between the Department for Transport, Halton Borough Council and Gifford.

Halton Borough Council agreed to carry out further studies in a number of areas, including environmental assessments, impact on the wider traffic network and, while the Council still supports an untolled crossing, the feasibility of tolling.

Social Impact Assessment

In order to explore the feasibility of tolling the new crossing, a Social Impact Assessment is required.

Gifford commissioned MVA to conduct focus groups with residents, employees and employers of Halton to inform the Social Impact Assessment. Research needed to address Halton as a whole but with a particular focus on those wards around the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the proposed route for the New Mersey Crossing.

It was essential that representatives from hard to reach groups (elderly, disabled, low income) were included in the process.

The aim of the research was to obtain respondents’ views regarding the implementation of tolls on the New Mersey Crossing and/or the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

Methodology

A total of eight focus groups were conducted, four with residents, two with employees and two with employers. Details are shown below.

Focus Group Plan

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<th>Group</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Residents from Castlefield, Mersey, Halton Brook and Riverside wards</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Residents on low income</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Representatives from businesses in Runcorn</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Representatives from businesses in Widnes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A discussion guide was designed in conjunction with the client. The guide covered the following areas:

- Reasons for and frequency of crossing the River Mersey
- Mode of transport used;
• Opinions on the tolling scenarios (toll both bridges, toll neither bridge, toll only the new bridge) and expected impacts;
• Opinions of restricted use of Silver Jubilee Bridge (e.g. only for Public Transport, Cyclist and Pedestrians, Weight Limit etc.);
• Willingness to pay the toll;
• Alternative routes they may take/methods they may use;
• Willingness to walk/cycle over the bridge; and
• Impact of tolls on access to local services/amenities etc.

Key Findings

The Silver Jubilee Bridge

All respondents frequently use the Silver Jubilee Bridge, many on a daily basis but all at least once a week. They make trips across the bridge for social, leisure and work purposes. The vast majority of respondents cross the bridge by car, a very small number use public transport.

Problems with congestion on the bridge are a major concern, especially for the business representatives as it has a financial impact on their company. Residents are less likely to visit family and friends across the river as journey time is so unreliable.

"I was on that bridge yesterday for half an hour trying to get to Runcorn, cause of the traffic."

"I've got staff who live in Widnes that travel back and forth. We also have to go over to do a lot of our work, so we are back and to over the bridge all day long, so it really affects us when the bridge is slowing down."

"Widnes is one of the main areas where we rely on getting business from, and we don't get as much these days cause of the traffic."

"Well, the state of the bridge now, my son rings me up and says I am not going over that bridge. He just turns round and comes off at the turn off to Widnes and has to go back to Speke, because of the tailbacks. At a weekend. It is at weekends isn't it that you can go visit them."

The Silver Jubilee is considered by most people to be their only option to cross the river as it is the most direct route and alternative routes are also congested.

"....Widnes is gridlocked, and now Warrington is getting that way, cause everyone is trying to get round Warrington."

The New Mersey Crossing

All respondents had heard about the New Mersey Crossing; however, there was a great deal of confusion regarding where it was to be built.

There was strong feeling that a new bridge is necessary and that building it should be seen as a priority. Business representatives, particularly those based in Widnes, stated that the bridge is vital to the economy of the area.

A new crossing is expected to increase the number of journeys that people make across the river. Respondents stated that they would make spontaneous trips, something that the
current problems often prevented them from doing. A new bridge was also expected to increase employment opportunities and be beneficial to the economy of the Borough.

"Yeah (I'd make more trips), cause it wouldn't put you off as much as it does now."

"I think it [the area] would flourish."

The need to ensure that feeder roads are designed properly and that they are able to cope with the projected volume of traffic was emphasised.

"The biggest problem you've got, it's alright pionking a bridge there. How do you get to it? On A roads so that means you've got to have a massive road system built."

Opinions of Tolling

The majority of respondents are not in favour of any form of road user charging as they believe motorists in the UK are already charged for use of roads through road tax and tax on petrol. Some respondents stated that tolling is acceptable on routes that people do not have to travel frequently or where there is a toll-free alternative.

"My opinion is that I'm not against tolling at all, as long as there was an alternative route. So if tolling makes it a faster way to get somewhere, and there are two bridges, one that is bigger and faster, one that is older and slower, then it's ok. If people want to pay to go faster, then that's ok."

Not surprisingly, ideally respondents would prefer the new bridge to be toll-free. A significant number of respondents felt very strongly about this, insisting that they already pay Road Tax and high levels of Council Tax and should not have to pay additional charges to cross from one area of their Borough to another. Many respondents were of the opinion that the Council Tax they have paid already should cover the costs of building a new bridge.

"We're paying our Council Tax and everything anyway here, so we are contributing to it, so why charge us double."

However, if tolling was the only way to fund a new crossing, the majority of respondents were supportive.

"If you can get it for free then bonus, but I just can't see it being done without it [the toll] and I think you've got to be realistic."

If tolling was introduced, initially many respondents thought that only the new bridge should be tolled. However, they were concerned that the majority of people would continue to use the Silver Jubilee Bridge and hence the traffic problems would remain. Respondents discussed free use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge for Halton residents and businesses, through the use of a pass. However, there were concerns about the practicalities of this and the fact that if people had to show passes it would slow traffic once again. Respondents thought that as technology progressed some sort of electronic tag for registered users could be introduced.

"I heard they are going to charge them to go onto the new one and if that's the case it won't solve the problem of the other bridge. They'll just go over that one for free rather than go over the new one and pay."

"If they could work out a system but not penalising the residents of Halton because we are the ones that use the bridge regularly. If they could have some kind of scheme. Whether they put in those sensors on the cars."
"I'd prefer to see a ten mile radius drawn around the bridge, and some kind of tagging system being applied to those vehicles, they do that for the Dartford River crossing, and those vehicles, the local businesses and local vehicles are exempt. And vehicles from out of town are charged."

Respondents were particularly sensitive about paying a toll on the Silver Jubilee Bridge, as it is currently toll free. However, it was accepted that there would be practical problems with only tolling the new bridge and, even with road modifications, traffic would use local roads to access the Silver Jubilee Bridge and hence avoid paying a toll. They were also concerned about the practicalities of restricting use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

"If you toll them both you'd probably have a near riot on in Runcorn."

"You can't charge people for something you've had for free for so long."

"If you toll one and not the other one people are definitely going to go for the one that's not tolled."

"Maybe they could have one bridge for the local traffic, just going to Runcorn and Widnes, and then one bridge for those going further afield, such as to Liverpool, could they do that?"

When respondents were asked to rank (in order of preference) the scenarios, 'building a new bridge and both bridges being toll-free' was not surprisingly the most preferred and 'not building the new crossing' the least preferred. The order of preference for all scenarios is shown in the table below.

Mean Rank Values for Scenarios

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<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>(1=most preferred, 5 = least preferred)</th>
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<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge</td>
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<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge with</td>
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<td>restricted use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and toll both bridges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not build a new bridge</td>
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Some respondents believe that tolling the bridge may encourage people to use public transport. However, there needs to be an improvement in public transport provision for this to be an effective alternative, in particular respondents mentioned the need for good train links on both sides of the river and a reliable bus service. The current road network on the approaches to the bridge is not thought to offer an easy/comfortable route for cyclists or pedestrians; therefore, very few respondents were positive about walking or cycling on the Silver Jubilee Bridge increasing.

"If public transport was good enough, then we'd use it"

"If you are going to put public transport on, it has to be more convenient for the people to use it than to use their car."

"They could always put a station on the other side of the bridge so that we could get a train one side of the water to the other."

"I might cycle, if it was safe."
**Tolling Impacts**

Many of the residents thought that if tolling was introduced there would be a major negative impact on the local community. They expressed concerns that it would increase the alienation between the two communities of Runcorn and Widnes, with residents only seeking work on their own side of the Borough. In addition, where currently residents travel across the river for social, leisure and shopping purposes, they stated that they would look for alternative venues/locations. For reasons such as visiting family and friends, respondents stated that they would make fewer trips if they had to pay a toll and would no longer just drop in to see people but only visit when they had made firm arrangements. This was expected to have particular impact on vulnerable groups, like the disabled and elderly.

"We'd go back to being them and us, in history it's always been Runcorn and Widnes, we're just beginning to come together again.....you don't pay to get from one side of the borough to another."

"Say twenty of your staff are from Runcorn, they are going to by mithering for a pay rise, because its costing them an extra say thirty forty quid to get to work. So then, you're looking at actually alienating your employment. You'll say oh we can only really employ people from this side of the water."

"The cinema, you'd go to Warrington instead."

"If there was a choice between paying to go to Widnes to go shopping to a smaller shopping centre, or go to Warrington, then you'd go to Warrington."

"I think so because I'd normally go into town, into Liverpool to go shopping over the weekend and like I said before, I'd got to Cheshire Oaks or Ellesmere Port. I don't like sitting in queues...."

"I think there is a lot of old people, whose only family is in Liverpool, because they have younger daughters and all that. I think a lot of them are going to end up very lonely and scared because their families will just say - I'm out of work I can't afford the toll. And she's stuck here in a little flat on her own."

There was a split in opinion of business representatives, with some expressing concerns that the effects would be so high they would go out of business. However, others thought that a free flowing tolled bridge would be more economically advantageous than the current situation. The business representatives in Widnes thought that the impact of a toll would be greater than those in Runcorn. This was due to the need of the Widnes representatives to cross the river more frequently. They were also concerned that tolling the new bridge would decrease the available labour pool (particularly semi-skilled) as people living in Cheshire, North Wales and other areas would not be willing to pay a toll on a daily basis.

"If you had a fleet of wagons that were using the bridge it would cost you a fortune. If you had more than one vehicle, it would cost more, and put people out of business."

"Our suppliers, who have loads of vehicles, would have to put up their costs to cover that."

"I would imagine they would look for work where they didn't have to cross the bridge."

"I think it would encourage people to set up business here."

Both residents and business respondents were of the opinion that tolling the new bridge would discourage new businesses from locating in Halton.
"They are not going to come are they? They are going to go to Liverpool or Warrington or somewhere like that because they are going to turn around and say I'm not going there because it is going to cost me so much per year for the toll."

There were also concerns that tolling the new crossing would cause congestion and hence negate the benefits of a new bridge.

**Tolling Levels and Concessions**

Respondents were not keen on discussing acceptable toll levels, as many were not willing to consider the idea of tolling the bridge. However, when encouraged, most felt that the toll level should be around one pound and that if it was much higher it would discourage local residents from travelling across Halton. Equality with the toll on the Mersey Tunnels was also mentioned.

Respondents were concerned that, although initially low toll levels may be introduced, they would be increased as people became reliant on the crossing and got used to paying the toll.

"Everyone agrees yes we'll have a toll. There's nothing to stop them putting that toll up then is there once it's started."

Respondents thought that local residents and businesses should not have to take the full impact of a toll; they suggested either the use of cheap weekly passes, daily fixed fees (for frequent business users) or even full exemption.

"If they come up with a scheme which I think has worked on one of the other bridges, I can't remember whether it is Preston, or one of the other toll bridges around, that if you live within certain postcode areas around it is actually free, and you have passes, so that it is for the people who travel from outside who pay for it. People such as us, who commute, then it wouldn't be a charge."

"We're only a small firm. Like I said earlier we have to cross the bridge maybe ten twenty times a day, so if we have to pay a fixed toll say £2, that could be £40 a day. So rather than just pay £2 or whatever every time we go, could we pay just one fee."

Respondents also suggested the use of concessions for the elderly, disabled, students and emergency service workers.

"I think they've got to be realistic and know that Halton isn't a place with a lot of money. There are a lot of council estates and a lot of single parent families and the like and students. There's a big college in Widnes and you've got to be realistic."

"So what would you do if it's an elderly person wanting to get to Halton Hospital you know and hasn't got the money to get across."

Respondents stressed that if any concessions were introduced a tolling system would need to be in place that allowed free-flowing traffic otherwise the benefits of a new bridge would be negated.
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Halton Borough Council and the Merseyside region are heavily dependent on the existing Runcorn – Widnes (Silver Jubilee) bridge, but it can no longer cope with the heavy traffic flows that cause:

- an unacceptable number of personal injury accidents;
- congestion during peak periods; and
- regular gridlock over a wide area.

1.1.2 As traffic levels continue to increase, congestion will become worse and essential maintenance will become increasingly disruptive.

1.1.3 Halton Borough Council and the Mersey Crossing Group believe that a new Mersey crossing in Halton is essential as a solution to the problems of the existing bridge. The Mersey Crossing Group was formed to promote a new Mersey crossing and to guide the development of the project. The Group comprises Halton Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, the Metropolitan Borough Councils of Knowsley, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral, Warrington Borough Council, Merseytravel, English Partnerships, Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise, other local Chambers of Commerce and Peel Holdings.

1.1.4 The main objectives of a New Mersey Crossing are:

- to relieve the Silver Jubilee Bridge;
- to maximise development opportunities;
- to improve public transport links across the river; and
- to encourage the increased use of cycling and walking.

1.1.5 In July 2001, the Mersey Crossing Group appointed Gifford and Partners as Project Manager and Lead Consultant to undertake further studies necessary to take the project forward. This includes a comprehensive environmental impact assessment (EIA) to inform decisions on the preferred route option and bridge form, as well as detailed design work.

1.1.6 An important component of the EIA is to consult with relevant stakeholders including local residents, businesses, travellers, regional partners, local authorities, transport providers and user groups, environmental interest and statutory bodies. Effective consultation will ensure a scheme is developed that is widely acceptable.

Stage One

1.1.7 The consultation process has been carried out in defined stages. Stage One focused on current perceptions of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and travel needs. This has now been reported (New Mersey Crossing Consultation - Stage One). The report details: current use of the bridge; problems using the bridge and their impacts; suggested improvements to the bridge; support for a new crossing; and expectations and potential impacts of a new crossing.

1.1.8 The Stage One public consultation also included initial perceptions regarding a number of possible crossing options. However, the selection of a preferred route option was not an objective at this stage.
Stage Two

1.1.9 Following the completion of Stage One, detailed research provided an assessment of the impact of each of the route options. Stage Two therefore concentrated on detailed discussions of the routes, including: probable impacts; advantages; disadvantages; and the identification of preferred routes.

Route Options

1.1.10 Consulting Engineers and Environmentalists examined a number of options for a new crossing, some of which were suggested during the Stage One consultation. Some of the options considered did not satisfactorily meet the objectives or were too expensive and hence were rejected. The four options below did meet the project objectives and were therefore taken forward to public consultation.

1.1.11 For ease of explanation and reporting, the four proposed routes were given the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 3A. With Option 1 being the proposed route closest to the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge and Options 3 and 3A being the routes furthest east from the existing bridge. The proposed route options are as follows:

- Option 1 – A new bridge between West Bank in Widnes and Runcorn Old Town alongside the Silver Jubilee Bridge;
- Option 2 – From Astmoor interchange in Runcorn to Ditton roundabout in Widnes (passing to the West of the Rhodia works);
- Option 3 – From the Central Expressway in Runcorn to Widnes Eastern bypass (passing to the East of the Rhodia works); and
- Option 3A – From the Central Expressway in Runcorn (as Option 3) to Ditton roundabout in Widnes (passing to the West of the Rhodia works).

1.1.12 Figure 1.1 shows a map of the proposed and rejected routes (T-Tunnel).

Figure 1.1 Map of proposed routes

1.1.13 A combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques were used for Phase II. Initial qualitative research with the identified stakeholder groups to generate detailed views regarding the proposed route options. In addition, a large-scale
postal survey was conducted to determine preference for a route option with a larger sample.

1.1.14 It was clear from the consultation that respondents are supportive of a new crossing. Congestion problems on the current bridge have a great impact on residents and businesses in the Borough of Halton, and improvement is vital. In addition, the bridge also acts as a barrier to both residents and businesses on opposite sides of the river, making it difficult for them to socialise and work together.

1.1.15 The research indicated that Halton Borough Council could expect to secure public support for a new crossing at either Option 3 or Option 3A. However, if the Council were to select Option 1 or Option 2 they would need to clearly communicate their reasons and have strong reasons for their choice. Option 1, in particular, would not be a popular choice.

1.2 Current Situation

1.2.1 Halton Borough Council submitted a bid for the new crossing, with a preferred route that runs from the Central Expressway in Runcorn to the Eastern Bypass in Widnes (Route 3A), to the Department for Transport in July 2003.

1.2.2 In December 2003 the Government gave its support in principle to the bid by classifying the work done to date as "Super Work in Progress".

1.2.3 Following this, detailed discussions took place early in 2004 between the Department for Transport, Halton Borough Council and Gifford.

1.2.4 Halton Borough Council agreed to carry out further studies in a number of areas, including environmental assessments, impact on the wider traffic network and, while the Council still supports an untolled crossing, the feasibility of tolling.

1.3 Social Impact Assessment

1.3.1 In order to explore the feasibility of tolling the new crossing, a Social Impact Assessment is required.

1.3.2 Focus groups with residents, employees and employers of Halton were conducted to inform the Social Impact Assessment. Research needed to address Halton as a whole but with a particular focus on those wards around the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the proposed route for the New Mersey Crossing.

1.3.3 It was essential that representatives from hard to reach groups (elderly, disabled, low income) were included in the process.

1.3.4 The aim of the research was to obtain respondents' views regarding the implementation of tolls on the New Mersey Crossing and/or the Silver Jubilee Bridge.
2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The research aimed to obtain the views of Halton residents, employees and businesses towards the implementation of tolls on the New Mersey Crossing and/or the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

2.1.2 In particular, their opinions of different tolling scenarios (toll both bridges, toll neither bridge, toll only the new bridge) and the expected social and economic impacts were sought.

2.2 Research Plan

2.2.1 A total of eight focus groups were conducted, four with residents, two with employees and two with employers. Details are shown in Table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Residents from Castlefield, Mersey, Halton Brook and Riverside wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Residents on low income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Elderly and/or disabled residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Residents from other areas of Halton who use the Silver Jubilee Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Employees from businesses in Runcorn who cross the river into Widnes when commuting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Employees from businesses in Widnes who cross the river into Runcorn when commuting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Representatives from businesses in Runcorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Representatives from businesses in Widnes</td>
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2.2.2 Groups 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 were held at Runcorn Town Hall. Groups 3 and 8 were held at the Halton Stadium in Widnes.

2.2.3 All recruitment was conducted face-to-face by a specialist recruitment agency, Quality Fieldwork, who have worked with MVA on a large number of projects over more than ten years. Ten respondents were recruited for each of the groups in the expectation that between eight and ten attend.

2.2.4 Where appropriate, quotas were set for age and gender. Recruitment quotas can be found in Appendix A.

2.2.5 Respondents were paid an incentive of £25 for attending the groups, to cover their travel costs and compensate them for their time. Business representatives were paid £35.

2.3 Discussion Guide

2.3.1 A discussion guide was designed in conjunction with the client. The guide covered the following areas:

- Reasons for and frequency of crossing the River Mersey
- Mode of transport used;
- Opinions on the tolling scenarios (toll both bridges, toll neither bridge, toll only the new bridge) and expected impacts;
- Opinions of restricted use of Silver Jubilee Bridge (e.g. only for Public Transport, Cyclist and Pedestrians, Weight Limit etc.).
- Willingness to pay the toll;
- Alternative routes they may take/methods they may use;
- Willingness to walk/cycle over the bridge; and
- Impact of tolls on access to local services/amenities etc.

2.3.2 A copy of the discussion guide can be found in Appendix B.
3 Residents of Castlefield, Mersey, Halton Brook and Riverside wards

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Respondents in this group are residents from Castlefield, Mersey, Halton Brook or Riverside wards.

3.2 Socio-Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
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<td>55-59</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>75 years and over</td>
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Disability

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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting mobility</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting hearing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting vision</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, a learning disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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Employment

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time (30 hours or more)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time (less than 30 hours)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed (full or part time)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed and available for work</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after the home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholly retired from work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>On a government training scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full time education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Carer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanently sick/disabled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doing something else</td>
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How many cars available to you?

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
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Receiving benefits

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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
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</table>

Household income

<p>| | |</p>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£20,000 or under</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20,000 - £29,999</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£30,000 - £39,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>£40,000 - £49,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£50,000 and over</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 **Use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge**

3.3.1 To begin with, the group discussed their reasons for crossing the River Mersey. The group cross over the river for a number of reasons, mainly work, shopping and leisure.

"Work, shopping, leisure every reason that you can think of."

"Mostly I go over the other side because there is not a lot of shops over here."

3.3.2 The group use the Silver Jubilee Bridge to cross the river the majority of the time, as it is the most convenient route from where they live. However, on some occasions they use other routes in order to cross the river.

"Sometimes I'll take the Express Way and go on the M56."

"It is the most convenient way from here. The alternatives are Warrington, or to go through the tunnel. If you drive from here to Birkenhead and then through the tunnel it is half an hour longer, plus you have to pay a toll."

3.3.3 All members of the group are frequent users of the bridge, most using it daily to travel to and from work.

"Twice a day and sometimes more."

"Same as me for work."

"More than once a week, probably more like four or five times, sometimes more than that."

"Three days a week."

"It depends on where I am working, it can be six times morning and evening."

3.3.4 The group were asked where they are usually travelling to when they cross the River Mersey. All of the group use the bridge to travel to the other side of Halton. Several also use it to travel further a field, including Manchester, Liverpool, Preston and Chorley.

"On the motorways to Manchester."

"Widnes to work and then also Widnes to go down the motorway to pick my step-daughter up, Widnes to go shopping."

"I use it to go to Speke. Every day, for working and shopping."

"People use it if they are going to the Gemini Centre or somewhere like that."

"If I am going to Preston or Chorley to see relations, rather than going over the viaduct at Warrington, which is problematic at the moment it's easier to go over the bridge and on to the M62."

3.3.5 Some felt that despite the high levels of congestion on the bridge, it could still be quicker to use than other routes, as they felt that these were as equally congested and time consuming.

"It's very time consuming though that way [viaduct]."
"Yeah with that viaduct, you can be stuck there for three quarters of an hour."

"I'd have to leave at quarter to six in the morning if I went that way."

3.3.6 All but one member of the group use a car to cross the Silver Jubilee Bridge, whilst the remaining member occasionally travels over by bus.

"Sometimes public transport."

3.3.7 Everyone in the group highlighted that they almost always find it very difficult to cross the bridge because of high volumes of traffic.

"I live right before the bridge so I usually turn up at the bottom of my road, and the childminder is just before the turn off and I have to double all the way back a the moment to get round so I don't get caught up in a queue that way, and then have to wait 10 minutes to be let out onto the road to get in the queue for the bridge, and it took me, that 100 yards, took me 25 minute this morning just to get on to the bridge."

"It took me an hour and 20 minutes to get home on a 15 minute run."

"It took me once to get from Speke into the retail park and it took me two and a half hours just to get onto the bridge and that was only just past the Widnes turnoff."

"I was like that the other day, I felt like crying. I really did."

3.3.8 Although everyone agreed that high traffic volumes are constant on the bridge, they did feel that it was at its worst during peak hours.

"Mainly peak hours. They build up they are not too bad at half past six in the morning - it is not too bad then, you can get over."

"It is normally about eight o'clock isn't it?"

"It starts round about quarter past seven, half seven."

"Friday is your worst day on the bridge. I wouldn't even attempt that and the weekend is just as bad."

3.3.9 Respondents also stressed that levels of congestion on and around the bridge could also be affected by the weather.

"When it's raining it's really bad, the weather really affects it."

3.3.10 One respondent highlighted how he did not think that the problems with traffic were particularly new, and that even in the late eighties there were difficulties in traffic levels in the area. The group did stress however that in their opinion the problem was getting worse.

"It is not a new problem, I lived in Weston for a long time and moved out for eight weeks whilst the house was gutted, went to live in Birchfield Road in Widnes - as it was then, eleven minutes from Weston, and an hour and five minutes to Birchfield Road, which is only about five miles further. So I mean that was the late eighties."

"Bad as it is now, when I lived in Southbank Terrace in my teens, after about midnight until six in the morning, there is next to no traffic at all across the bridge,
but now I have gone over it at two o'clock in the morning, three o'clock in the morning and it is still busy – it just never, ever stops now.”

“It is worse now.”

3.3.11 It was felt that many of the problems associated with the bridge were due to the road networks in the area, as all the roads seemed to lead into one at the bridge, creating a bottleneck.

“It is like all roads lead to the bridge, don't they? You have got the road from Liverpool coming in, the road from Widnes, they all seem to join at the same bit and bottlenecks while every one tries to get into the lane.”

3.3.12 Respondents also thought that roadworks in the area made crossing the bridge more difficult.

“It’s worse now that they are doing the roadworks.”

3.3.13 Many of the respondents live very close to the bridge and complained that the roadworks where not just causing them problem on the roads, but also at home due to excessive noise.

“. . . it is terrible.”

“Can’t even sleep at night can you?”

“Last year they were working on it last year, and I had actually got out of bed at half past one in the morning and have a word with someone on the scaffolding lorry and he was literally standing on the back and working, at half past one.”

3.4 Views on the proposed New Mersey Crossing

3.4.1 The group knew very little about the proposed New Mersey Crossing. A few respondents were vaguely aware of the proposed route.

“Very little.”

“Each side is a railway bridge.”

3.4.2 Everyone did agree however that a new bridge was required.

“I think they ought to get this other bridge in and slow down this congestion.”

3.4.3 They were asked whether they felt that the proposed new bridge would help traffic congestion in Halton, but they felt that this was dependent on whether or not the bridge was tolled.

“It depends on whether it is a toll or not.”

“It’s not going to take the die hard off the normal bridge like me and you, because we all have to pay so much and most of the people that use that bridge are doing it to go to work. Look at the times it is congested, it is people going to work. So they are doing that two, three, four times a day. They are not going to fork out money every time to go to other bridge.”

“What percentage of traffic has come from the Chester direction onto the current bridge? All the people that come down the M56 and turn off at Junction 12, and come up the Expressway passed Weston, all that, that really is a busy side, to get
to that bridge - none of that traffic is going to travel five miles further to go and get on a toll bridge. So no one is going to get off at Junction 12 and drive through that bit or go onto Junction 13 and have to go four or five miles further and then pay for the privilege of going over the bridge. All those people are just going to carry on going on the old bridge, so this is not going to significantly reduce that traffic.”

3.4.4 The group did feel that if the bridge was not tolled then it would be frequently used.

“If it wasn’t a toll bridge it would be used loads.”

3.4.5 Everyone agreed that the introduction of a new toll free bridge would encourage them to make a lot more journeys and trips than they do at present.

“Yes, because it puts you off, you go, I am not going over that bridge.”

“Yeah, maybe I would see more of the family. I work all week and the only time they can come and see me is at the weekend. The only thing that is putting them off it’s getting over that bridge.”

3.4.6 The group highlighted how they often look at the amount of traffic on and around the bridge and choose not to make journeys, or to travel to different places, when the bridge is heavily congested.

“Living in the Old Town and you are walking around and you can see the traffic and you think oh I’m not going over to Widnes today.”

“I drive to Warrington and go to Warrington to shop rather than go to Widnes. Because of the bridge.”

“I would say, I could be wrong, I can see the traffic from where I live, and I don’t go much, but if I could see that it wasn’t that bad, then yeah, I’d travel over to Widnes, to Liverpool. I have been here for two years and I have hardly been to Widnes, because of the traffic, I am worried about getting back.”

3.5 General thoughts on tolling

3.5.1 The majority of the group do not agree with road user charging in general, as they feel that motorists already have to pay a substantial amount in taxes.

“Well I don’t agree with charges at all.”

“I don’t agree with them.”

“You shouldn’t have to pay for it.”

“We already pay enough in rates and road tax.”

3.5.2 However, one member felt that in some instances, mainly in other countries, road user charging could be effective.

“I will give you a slightly different view - in isolation I don’t agree with them whilst you remain paying fuel, road tax charges that we already do, if you took the French view or the Austrian view, the Italian view, then you would reduce the road fund licence, and pay less in fuel, but then pay to drive on the fast routes from north to south France as you do, if you go from Paris to Cannes. Now that is about £90. But road tax there is only £45.”
3.5.3 One member of the group had recently travelled to Birmingham and highlighted how much quicker the journey was because of the introduction of the M6 toll road. Although he did not actually use the new road, a significant proportion of drivers were doing so, which had alleviated traffic on the M6.

"......have you been to Birmingham lately, I mean, I worked in Cadbury for over a year and would commute from here, and if I left at quarter to six, and be in Birmingham at seven. If I left at quarter past six, it was quarter past eight. Because once you hit the services from then on you just queue, and slow, basically never got over 30 mile an hour to the centre of Birmingham. I went down four weeks ago, three weeks ago, left here at eight o'clock in the morning and I was in Birmingham by half past nine, and that's cause of that new road.... I went down the M6, cause that's where I was going but it is much lighter, so people are paying to go on the new road, I have no problem with people paying to go on that new road."

3.5.4 Another member of the group had recently used the M6 toll road, and claimed that she did not mind paying this as it was not a journey she frequently makes. However, she did point out that she would not be willing to pay daily to use a toll bridge.

"When I went to see a friend in Coventry I used that toll road, if I had to do it every day, I wouldn't use it but because I only go and see her once every three months, I don't mind, but if I was doing it every day, there is no way I would use that toll bridge."

3.5.5 The group agreed that in some instances road user charging may be acceptable, particularly on routes that people do not travel frequently. They felt that a toll was only acceptable to people as an occasional one off charge. The group felt that paying a toll would not work, or be fair on a new Mersey crossing, as they believed that the majority of motorists on the bridge were local people who use it daily.

"As a one off charge every now and again."

"It's okay for people who do long distance travel down all the way to London and down the M6. For business users who can reclaim 20% of that back in tax and so on and so forth, it's worthwhile, to toll a bridge here which is predominately a commuter bridge, I think is not going to work. Certainly the local people are not going to use it. So who is going to use it? When you think most of the north Liverpool traffic will go up and along the M62 and then into Liverpool that way, so who is actually going to use this bridge?"

3.5.6 Respondents were generally against the idea of paying a toll to cross the River Mersey. One respondent felt that it may be acceptable if they were assured that the money collected would be used to fund and maintain the bridge.

"It depends, I mean, people go through the tunnel now and pay a toll. Up until the last couple of months, that toll has been severely restricted and the money I thought to be used on the maintenance of the tunnel. That's just been lifted, so where is the money going to go? If the money that you are going to collect is to actually pay for the bridge, in some way, that's fine, what happens when the bridge is paid for, is it going to be free?"

"....what I'm trying to get at, is if there is no money for the bridge, if we have got to pay, let's just say that they say, OK the government will fund 55% and we have got to find 45%, then when we borrow the 45% over 20 years and toll that taken on the bridge pay off the loan, that is how they funded the Humber Bridge if I remember rightly. I think so that's how that was done. But there are severe
constraints on what the money that is collected can be done. It has to be banked and at the end of the time the money is actually used to maintain the bridge and that is all it can be used for."

"If it is to pay for that bridge or in some way to benefit Runcorn, but if it is going into some government coffer, and being used for speed cameras in you know...."

3.5.7 The rest of the group however were completely against the idea as they felt that they already contributed enough money through road tax.

"You are already paying for the maintenance and everything through your road tax."

"You pay enough so why pay again?"

3.5.8 The group were asked if they would find a toll acceptable, if it was the only way to fund a new crossing. Some felt that it would depend on how much the toll would be, whereas others felt that even a toll as low as £1 would work out as very expensive for them, due to the number of journeys they make.

"I think it depends on how much it will be."

"Say they charged a pound, for arguments sake, if it was a pound to go over the bridge, it is going to cost me £10 a week. Now I wouldn't be able to go and do my overtime because that could be costing me, so for two of us, so it is costing us £20 a week to go over the bridge."

"Is it worth going to work if it costs you £20? You may as well stay on this side of the river."

3.5.9 One respondent suggested that a scheme could be implemented whereby local residents are exempt from paying to cross the bridge, and only those who live outside the local area have to pay.

"If they come up with a scheme which I think has worked on one of the other bridges, I can't remember whether it is Preston, or one of the other toll bridges around, that if you live within certain postcode areas around it is actually free, and you have passes, so that it is for the people who travel from outside who pay for it. People such as us, who commute, then it wouldn't be a charge."

3.5.10 Others argued though that the majority of the traffic was local so this would mean that almost all users would be exempt, and those coming from further away would simply choose to use a different route.

"But we have already said that most of the people that go over it are local people anyway."

"Because then they would go round the motorway system and not pay anything, and that's what you are competing against. I mean, anybody coming north going to Liverpool, are they going to come this way and pay a toll or are they going to go straight up the motorway and along the M62 and into Liverpool and pay nothing?"

3.5.11 Some respondents felt that motorists may actually choose to use a toll bridge if the alternative is to travel further, as they would be saving on petrol costs.

"It is going to be cheaper to pay the £1 to go over the bridge than go 15 miles round and pay 15 miles of petrol."
3.5.12 Respondents stated that the introduction of a toll would more than likely result in them making fewer journeys across the river than they do at present.

"I wouldn't go."

3.5.13 They were asked if they would perhaps consider taking different routes in order to avoid paying a toll. Some felt that this was not practical as it would be too time consuming.

"Because you are talking time consuming, if I was to go from Castlefield through Warrington, through everywhere else, just to get to work over the bridge, which is 15 minutes, and it takes a 45 minute journey to get there, all the petrol and everything like that - it wouldn't be worth my while. You are talking about an hour and a half every day travelling just to go 13 minutes actually - a 13 minute run over the bridge."

3.5.14 The group would not consider using public transport as an alternative if tolling was introduced. They felt that public transport in the area was not practical or reliable, and that was why they mostly chose to drive.

"You try getting a bus at six o'clock in the morning. And trying to get them to stop outside Jaguar, because there are no buses that stop outside Jaguar at all. They go into Speke."

"That's why we have two cars."

"If public transport was good enough, then we'd use it"

"You can't depend on it."

"I mean, if it was good enough now, how many people would actually use it to go to Widnes and therefore it would reduce the amount of traffic that was going over it. Public transport is not going to solve even this problem or any other problem unless it is convenient for everyone to use it."

"I lived one side of the bridge and I work the other side of the bridge, literally, just past West Bank, Gorse Lane. I would have to start work at nine o'clock on public transport, I would have to be at the bus stop for half past seven, and it would drop me for about a 40 minute walk away from my workplace. It took me that long to make sure I got into work on time and the bus journey was a half hour bus journey, because it went all round Widnes, to drop me 40 minutes walk from where I needed to be."

"To walk to Gorse Lane in Widnes is probably quicker than doing it by bus."

"I ended up getting taxis half the time because the bus was late."

"If you are going to put public transport on, it has to be more convenient for the people to use it than to use their car."

3.5.15 Respondents could not imagine anyone choosing to walk or cycle over the River Mersey for a number of reasons. Firstly they felt that based on the exiting bridge it was not safe to walk across in high winds.

"Have you ever gone over it on a windy day?"

"There is nobody really walks over it now. It is too scary at the moment. Feel like you are going to fall over."
"You can walk over the old bridge, but people don't do it as a matter of course, do they? You never see anyone walking over that."

3.5.16 Others ruled out the option as they are afraid of heights.

"I would not walk over there because I am terrified of heights?"

"I get vertigo as well."

3.5.17 It was also highlighted that walking is not always practical for some people, due to the nature of trips they are making.

"No it is not practical, you are running round dropping your kids off at school, and the childminders and you know, to drop your car off and walk over the bridge and then walk back, get your kid and the shopping and it is not happening."

"Nobody walks nowadays. Or very few people walk, coming back from the pubs and run out of taxi money. That is the only time you do it."

3.5.18 The group felt that tolling just the new bridge would result in everyone continuing to use the existing bridge.

"So what are people going to do? They will use the old bridge."

3.5.19 The group were asked what they felt would happen if both the new and existing bridge were tolled. They were concerned some local people would not be able to afford to continue working.

"A lot of people wouldn't be able to go to work. They wouldn't be able to afford to go to work."

"I think if they toll both bridges, it wouldn't work because they can’t afford to go over there and back again every single day."

"You'd be better off on the dole money."

3.5.20 One member highlighted an example of the impact that introducing new costs to employees can have on a workforce, with those in lower paid jobs being forced to leave.

"Here is a comparison, in Birmingham, Cadbury started charging for car parking, that was for everybody, all staff, and pretty much all the contract cleaning staff had to leave, because they couldn't afford it."

3.5.21 Others felt that although they were aware that some people do have to pay a daily toll, such as those who use the Mersey Tunnel, in those cases people were aware of the situation when they took their jobs, and therefore it would have been built into their living costs. This was not the case for people living near to the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

"When you compare it to people who live in Birkenhead and work in Liverpool and vice versa I suppose, when they took the jobs they were taking, they knew there was a charge to get to the other side, so they built it into their income but for most people, certainly anybody under 10, 15 pounds an hour isn't going to - it is not going to be worth it."

3.5.22 If tolling was to be introduced, the group were asked if they would prefer to see the new bridge tolled, the old one, or both. Again some respondents were
adamant that they did not want tolling to be introduced at all. However, everyone agreed that if it had to they would prefer to see the new bridge tolled.

"The new one."

3.5.23 The group were asked what they felt would happen if only one of the bridges was tolled. They felt that the new bridge would get little use unless a significant delay occurred on the existing bridge.

"You wouldn't get no traffic on it."

"People would only pay to use it if there was an accident on the other one."

"I think that anybody coming from the Chester direction - if you put the entrance way where you say you are going to put it, they are not going to use it anyway, because they have to drive them further, and if there is going to be a toll and disincentive to use it. Coming from the other direction, I don't see that there is, depends on how much you charge, but if it is going to be two or three pounds to take car over the bridge, which one suspects it is going to be, or even £5 to take a car over, then....."

3.5.24 One member warned of the strong local feeling that tolling both bridges may have on local people.

"If you toll them both you'd probably have a near riot on in Runcorn."

3.5.25 The group were asked to consider what they felt would be an acceptable level to charge people to cross the bridge. Due to the frequency of use, they did not think that it would be fair to charge any more than one pound return. They felt that at this rate some motorists may consider using the new bridge.

"£1 return. Then I might consider it, but your journey there and your journey back and you think £5 a week, maybe."

"That would probably take some people off it and free up the other bridge, if it was a nominal charge like that, I would probably think - well, yeah, £1 a day, I might, I might do it every day but a couple of days, if you think I know that one is going to be clear."

3.5.26 Others however still could not envisage anyone choosing to pay to cross the river when there is a free alternative so close by.

"If you come across the marsh you can see the queue - so you make the decision then. I just cannot see once it is all running smoothly, anybody going out of their way to go over a nice fancy new bridge, when they can go over the old bridge and it not make a difference, especially when they don't have to pay for it."

3.5.27 The group felt that local residents using the bridge to get to and from work should be excluded from having to pay a toll. They did feel that it would be okay however to charge them when making trips for other purposes, such as leisure.

"I think people who live on this side and have to go over the other side and who have jobs over there. Every day, five days a week."

"I think people have to go across for work, otherwise you are just going to use it for pleasure then..."
"If you are just using it for pleasure, fair enough, but if you have got to use it everyday for work then people who work and have to cross the bridge."

"I certainly wouldn’t mind paying a pound return if it is just for pleasure, but when you have got to do it every day."

"Locals should be using it and free, or a pound a day return, no more."

3.5.28 Respondents came up with several ideas of tailoring a toll to have a lesser impact on local residents. Suggestions included introducing a five pound weekly pass, as well as introducing a lane/pass for local residents’ exclusive use.

"Perhaps you could get a weekly pass for a fiver or something like that."

"If you were in a household here, and this is your only residence, then you automatically get a pass, but where are you going to extend that to? Does that go out as far as Frodsham, or is that only in Runcorn, the boundary has to be drawn somewhere. So that local people can just go over the bridge and back, same with the Widnes people coming over to Runcorn, so that the locals could sort of, drive straight through, a special lane and their magnetic pass, goes through. Everybody else pays. That would apply also to the local haulage companies and that happens there as well."

3.5.29 The group were asked what their opinions were on just introducing tolling at certain times of the day, or days of the week. The group did not think this would make a difference, as charging at rush hour would still impact on local residents who are travelling to work and could not afford to pay.

"Referring to this lady who is on low income travelling over the bridge, it is still going to impact on those who are going over there to earn a living."

"If you look at this area of the country, it is not one of the wealthiest areas of the country anyway, people aren’t on high incomes I think you know, way below the national average on what they earn round here, so for you to take a slice, a huge slice of their money by making them go to work then there is no incentive, you know."

"They’ll be so borderline as to whether or not they are better off on benefits than working."

"I know I would be better off if I didn’t work because I am a single parent. I’d get a house and paid for and if it was me and I had to go over the bridge I would just say, well I’ll pack in my job then."

"That’s what makes my wages, my overtime actually makes my wages up. So if I was go back over the bridge twice a day, again, once I have done that and have to go back, it would not be worth it. You’re defeating the object of doing the overtime, cause my overtime money has got to pay for it, so it wouldn’t be worth it."

3.6 Impact of tolling a New Mersey Crossing

3.6.1 It was clear that the group were extremely worried about the effects that tolling would have on themselves and their families. Some felt that the cost would be too much for them to afford and they would have to considering leaving their jobs as it would not be possible, or worthwhile, paying to get to work everyday.
"But like me and my husband we have to use that bridge and we both work in **, and we can’t use one car because he does shift work, and I just do permanent days. So we both have to go across that bridge four times a day. Sometimes I use it four times a day myself, if I am on a double shift. And then he uses it, so how much is that going to cost us? If we had to pay. It is going to be a lot of money. So he could keep his job and I would have to pack my job in because I could not afford it, I couldn’t do.”

“Well I’m the same, my fella works over in Widnes too.”

“I would have to pack my job in.”

“I couldn’t do it, I mean, there is no way because we use the bridge everyday. So having to pay to and from work, every day.”

“How would it affect me? Well I would have to travel to Runcorn, unless the company I work for would pay. I would find another job.”

3.6.2 Some respondents highlighted that where possible they would choose alternative routes in which to reach their destinations.

“But for one of the trips to Manchester I would just go on the M56 instead.”

“To see my step daughter I would find an alternative route I wouldn’t go over.”

3.6.3 Those who use the bridge less frequently did not think that a toll would impact on them as much.

“It probably wouldn’t affect me that much because I only go over it about twice a week anyway.”

3.6.4 Respondents were also worried about the potential effects that a toll might have on businesses in the area. Respondents gave several examples of how they expected tolling to affect the companies that they and their friends work for.

“That’s another thing, I work for a transport company, and it is based in Widnes, very few of its customers are based in Widnes, they are all over the bridge, and you are adding on costs for being situated in Widnes that can’t be passed on to the customers.”

“They’ll go out of business.”

“If they toll both bridges, I would say friends of mine, her son, he works for an alarm company, now he can get eight, nine calls out a day and he can use that bridge between eight and nine times a day, could be a call out in Widnes, it could be in Speke, it could be in Runcorn, because that’s the area which he covers. As she said, if he were to use that bridge eight, nine times a day, the company would lose work, they couldn’t do it.”

“I work in **, and I heard that they would pull out. Would actually pull out of Liverpool if they tolled.”

3.6.5 Respondents were extremely worried that small businesses in the area would be unable to cope with the additional costs that tolling would bring, and may go out of business.

“How many small firms are going to be put out of business through this?”
"A lot of people go into Morrison’s because Morrison’s is cheaper, right, so you go over the bridge, just to save yourself £10, £15 on your messages, so you are not going to go. So it is going to hit Morrison’s."

"The little shops, they will go out of business because people won’t use them any more because what is the point if you pay to go over the bridge just to go to a little shop that sells something that you need."

"It’s a shame cause it used to be so enjoyable going over there once, didn’t it."

3.6.6 Respondents did not think that the introduction of a toll would only affect businesses in the area, but also the potential for new business and economic growth. They highlighted how unlikely it was that any new firms would consider locating premises in the area.

"If you took someone bringing new business, significant business here, and their customers were generally in that area, if you base them somewhere, would you put them right next to a toll bridge, so that every time you went over some of your customers would have to pay a toll? Or would you put them somewhere in Warrington so that they can go wherever? So this area would not even get considered by most large businesses or even medium sized businesses, what would your company do? If every time you drove out of your depot you are going to pay a £5 toll to take the truck over the bridge, are you going to move your depot to Warrington so that you can use the motorway or are you going to stay where you are?"

"Tolling it will kill Runcorn, because the M62 is north of Widnes they will feel it less, because traffic coming down the M6 will go along the 62 and traffic coming northwards will go to the M6 and not over the bridge."

"You are just moving one problem from one place to another, because if they are not going to pay."

3.6.7 The group felt that for many people, the introduction of a toll would mean that they may look for alternative employment closer to home on their own side of the bridge, destabilising the employment in the area.

"People will look for jobs on this side."

"If that is tolled then it starts to take the businesses away from this corner of Cheshire rather than Widnes, where are you going to find the work. It is the effect that businesses don’t come here because it is tolled - however where are you going to find that work without going over that bridge? And that is a real issue that you could destabilise the employment situation that is there now by building that bridge and tolling it."

3.6.8 The group did recognise however that the area did need a new crossing, but felt that the only way it would help the area would be if both bridges were to remain toll free.

"But at the same time, we do need another bridge, to ease congestion we already have on the one we’ve got."

"It has got to be free. It is the bottom line is that. There is no option. Once you toll that bridge, even individually or with the other one, that does not help this area in any way, shape or form."
3.6.9 The group were asked how they would feel if a toll was introduced on the bridge that ceased once the bridge has been paid for. They did not feel that this would be practical as it would not change the fact the people would still not be able to afford to pay the toll, and it would still affect businesses in the area.

"It makes no difference if you can't afford it, if you can't afford it, you can't afford it."

"It won't help us no matter how we pay for it, if it is tolled. Because no industry is going to come to a place where it knows it is going have to pay a toll."

"Say in twenty years time, that's no good to them is it, when they are all out of business."

3.6.10 Respondents highlighted that introducing a toll was likely to influence their decisions on where to travel to for reasons such as leisure, something that the congestion is already affecting.

"If there was a choice between paying to go to Widnes to go shopping to a smaller shopping centre, or go to Warrington, then you'd go to Warrington."

"I'd get the train to Liverpool."

"I have started, when I go to Manchester, going on the 56 rather than crossing the bridge."

"I think you will find most people who live in Runcorn or Widnes are quite sort of, imaginative when it comes to finding things to do with their social time that does not include going over the bridge. If I have got a day off on Saturday and I would do something with my girl and she wants to go swimming, I would rather go all the way to the Northgate Arena and take her there than go over that bridge. And that's what I do and it is also, it is nicer in Chester, you can go for a nice lunch, you know, Widnes is not the nicest place to go, it is not attractive it is not lovely, there is no great shakes about going there."

"But then if I was going to Liverpool, I would get on the train, I live right by the train station, so leave my car, get on the train, it is a couple of quid return, I can have a drink while I'm there, so I don't need to worry about the car and the bridge and getting stuck in it. So people in Runcorn or Widnes will find ways around not using that bridge if they can."

"If they said, we are just going to toll the bridge at weekends and just charging leisure users, those people are quite used to doing without the bridge at the weekend anyway, they just go Chester instead or catch the train. Doesn't bother me you can toll it much as you want I will find something else to do and find somewhere else to go."

3.6.11 However, for reasons such as visiting family and friends, things they could not go to other destinations for, it would mean they would make less frequent trips.

"Well, the state of the bridge now, my son rings me up and say I am not going over that bridge. He just turns round and comes off at the turn off to Widnes and he has to turn back and has to go back to Speke, because of the tailbacks. At a weekend. So the only way that I am going to see him more, it is at weekends isn't it you can go visit them."
3.6.12 The group were also aware that tolling the bridge could have great impact on certain vulnerable groups such as the disabled and elderly, and indirectly through Council Tax, on the local residents.

"The other side of this is if you were to get a taxi from the Old Town, in Runcorn to Widnes town centre now, my guess is it is under a fiver. That is a guess I don't know. I have not done it for years. If that taxi had to go out to Astmoor and go over the bridge, you can go to quadruple the distance, how much is it then going to be? So if you are talking about disabled people and so on and so forth, and then all of the school traffic, and those kids that have like a taxi service to take them to school and so on and so forth, we pay for that through our council tax and so on and so forth. We are going to put our prices, the cost of the council tax and so on and so forth has to go up to take account of that. What about the extra cost of the Police travelling backward and forwards because it is one thing. What about ambulances and so on and so forth? The additional cost just in fuel, wear and tear, on the vehicles and the added time and so on and so forth, has all of this actually been thought out. Probably not. But it will actually add a cost to the Halton Borough to have a second bridge."

3.6.13 The group were asked if they had anything further that they would like to add about tolling the new bridge or the new bridge in general. Respondents were keen to know if the construction would mean generating local employment, and what exactly the time plans were for the new bridge to be introduced.

"Are they going to generate local employment when the build it?"

"If it is going to start, do you have a date for starting?"

3.7 Scenarios

3.7.1 Respondents were asked to rank bridge scenarios in order of preference. They were instructed to allocate '1' to their most preferred option and '5' to their least preferred. Table 3.1 shows the mean ranking values.

Table 3.1: Mean Rank Values - Group 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Mean Rank Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not build a new bridge (however, road works will increase on the current bridge)</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and both bridges toll free</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge with restricted use (e.g. public transport, walking/cycling only) of the Silver Jubilee Bridge</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and toll both bridges</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7.2 Not surprisingly, all respondents would like to see the new bridge built, and both bridges being toll free. The least preferred option was to not build a new bridge, as respondents felt that a new bridge was definitely needed.
# Residents from other areas of Halton

## 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Respondents in this group are all residents of Halton, but do not live in Castlefield, Mersey, Halton Brook or Riverside wards.

## 4.2 Socio-Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 years and over</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting mobility</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting hearing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a learning disability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time (30 hours or more)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time (less than 30 hours)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed (full or part time)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed and available for work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after the home</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholly retired from work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a government training scheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently sick/disabled</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing something else</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many cars available to you?</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receiving benefits</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household income</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;£20,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20,000 - £29,999</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£30,000 - £39,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£40,000 - £49,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£50,000 and over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge

4.3.1 All respondents regularly use the Silver Jubilee Bridge to cross the River Mersey, in most cases this journey is carried out by car.

4.3.2 The group was asked how frequently they crossed the bridge and this varied. Most respondents used the bridge three to four times per week, however one respondent highlighted that he currently crosses the bridge eight times per day. The group also agreed that these frequencies were estimations, as crossing the bridge is a necessity and can often be unexpected.

"Three times a week."

"Four times sometimes. It varies, what's going on."

"I use it eight times a day."

"I try to vary it. I have to go and look after my sick mum. I'm back and forwards doing jobs etc., depends when I'm working on that side or this side, where I get my materials from."

4.3.3 The group were familiar with the problems that occur on the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the impact of these problems. Each member had experienced problems, including traffic congestion causing journey delays and problems on the road network.

"Sitting in traffic is the most common one."

"(Delays) Three hours a day at the moment."

"On the bridge yes. Not so bad going from this side (Runcorn). Coming from the Liverpool side is just terrible."

"No I don't think it is. Coming from Runcorn side your exits, you've only got one or two exits actually to get onto the slip road. Now a lot of it is people's stupidity because they won't give way, they won't filter properly. That is the biggest thing. But coming from the Liverpool side you've got a multiple of exits all come along at the same time and nobody is prepared to give and there's bottlenecks."

4.3.4 Numerous impacts were highlighted by the group as a result of these problems. Frustration occurs when there are delays to an individual's journey time and these are exacerbated by inefficient feeder roads and inappropriate driving habits.

"Yes it's frustrating"

"Especially if you're a bit late and you're thinking, I'm not going to get there."

"Yes it is bad because sitting in queues coming from Widnes you're trying to get in the queue as soon as you can and you've got these motorists that are shooting off right past you and like you said pushing in and that drives me insane."

"I take my mum back and forth to Halton Hospital she's disabled and I have to take her and it's stressful. I suffer with panic attacks and for me to be in that queue and then as you say pushing in. I get very very nervous anyway. My mother says we're not going to get there and I say mother calm down we are going to get there, but then she gets worked up as well so it stresses me even more."
4.3.5 Some respondents were more concerned with the impact that this was having on their productivity. Working days are made shorter, due to problems on the bridge, as well as the cost of this wasted time and fuel.

"It makes your working day shorter."

"And the cost because you are sitting there doing nothing. You are just burning petrol doing nothing."

4.3.6 The group discussed possible alternative routes to the Silver Jubilee Bridge. However the bridge was considered by most as their only option, as it is the most direct route. Some respondents highlighted that they have tried to use alternative routes, stating that they would rather be moving than stuck in traffic. These journeys were not necessarily any quicker, just less infuriating. Some respondents felt that if an alternative route has to be sought, (due to closure of the bridge), then the same problems exist and driver frustration is high.

"No. I’ve got to go onto the bridge to get to Halton. I don’t know another way. St. Helen’s and all that. I don’t know that way."

"It’s the most direct route."

"Yes you’ll go the long way round and then you get stuck in St. Helen’s so you do revert to coming back that way don’t you?"

"You’ve got a bottleneck whichever way you want to get out at the moment."

"Last week I came to the bridge, the bridge was chocker so I said, stuff this, turned round, come out at the Hale turn off, turned round went back on the bypass through Warrington that was at five o’clock. I got home at quarter to eight because everywhere there was traffic. It was just unbelievable. I just gave up."

"I turn round and get into more traffic so it makes you more tense and then you try another route."

"You’ve got those two routes there the bridge and then the Thelwall, but then you get an accident on the Thelwall and you are tailback for God knows how long."

4.4 Views on the proposed New Mersey Crossing

4.4.1 The group were aware of discussions regarding a New Mersey Crossing; however they did not know any specific details. Some of the respondents felt that there have been so many different rumours that it was hard to decipher fact from fiction. None of the group had any knowledge of where it was likely to be located. One member of the group had heard rumours that the bridge would be tolled.

"There’s that many different stories."

"A toll bridge isn’t it?"

"Yes there has been talk of a new route."

"But where we don’t know."

"I’ve not heard of where they’re actually thinking of putting it."

"It needs something doesn’t it? It’s horrendous at the moment isn’t it?"
4.4.2 The entire group agreed that the construction of a new bridge is essential and felt that it would relieve congestion. One person felt that having a one-way bridge would make the traffic flow better.

"Why can't they make a bridge one way?"

"One way. You've got four lanes on that bridge, the traffic could just fly through right and the new bridge, four lanes going the other way. You've got not traffic bumping into each other head on."

"Not those great big lorries coming at you, that's what frightens me."

4.4.3 Another respondent highlighted that having another Mersey crossing would decrease pollution, as cars will no longer be sat in grid-lock traffic emitting fumes.

"At the end of the day the powers that be are mental in the fact that everybody is going on about greenhouse gases so they come along with roadworks and say right that'll do it, let's hold the traffic up and create a massive greenhouse gas and let's all sit there and breathe in all this carbon dioxide. So then we are all in hospital with bloody ailments connected right. Now that is costing the Government millions. It would be a damn sight cheaper to build another bridge. It's as simple as that. Plus you know another thirty years time we're going to have fuel shortages."

4.4.4 Generally the group felt that a new Mersey crossing would be positive for the Borough of Halton and would make life easier. One respondent was more sceptical saying that a new bridge would initially make life easier, however after ten years the new crossing would also reach capacity.

"But that's only going to last ten years."

"You're going to reach the same pitch you're looking at now. This is the only way through to Wales or anywhere out in that side of the country other than going on the motorway the M6, so the volume of traffic. People are getting more and more cars. The kids are getting cars. The girlfriend has a car. Now it's man and wife have got cars so there's more cars there'll be no space on the bridge because everybody is wanting to go somewhere at the same time. It's nice having a car."

4.4.5 The majority of the group felt that they may make more trips over the River Mersey if a new crossing was built. They emphasised the need to ensure that the feeder roads are designed properly and that they are able to cope with the projected volume of traffic. Some of the group felt that a new bridge would not increase their travel across the river.

"The biggest problem you've got it's alright plonking a bridge there. How do you get to it? On A roads so that means you've got to have a massive road system built."

"I would probably use it a bit more if it was easier to get over."

"Not really. A person is only going to go whenever they want to go."

"You're not going to want to go there any more."

4.5 General thoughts on tolling

4.5.1 The group were asked their opinions of road user charging; however not many of the group had any experience of toll roads or bridges. Some of the group felt that
tolling roads and bridges was not acceptable, as road tax is high enough and should cover this expense.

"But doesn't our road tax pay for that? That's what the road tax is supposed to pay for."

"That's what we pay our road tax and stuff like that for isn't it."

4.5.2 Others felt that Council Tax should include this expense, which would make financing the bridge a lot fairer as everyone would be charged a small fee. Others had a conflicting opinion and felt that this would not be accepted by the general public.

"Perhaps it should be toll free and put something on the rates."

"Have an increase on your rates."

"Then somebody will start a group up for people who never ever use the bridge."

"If you put it on the rates some people are not going to be happy are they."

"Put 50p on everybody's rates. End of story."

4.5.3 The entire group felt that tolling may encourage people onto public transport. However it was emphasised by some respondents that a useable train station would need to be built on each side of bridge. Some respondents highlighted that they would use this as a regular alternative, others stated that it would be used for specific journeys, such as socialising and shopping.

"They could always put a station on the other side of the bridge so that we could get a train one side of the water to the other."

"Of course they would. There's people who don't like cars. People are terrified of going over that bridge."

"Could go by train couldn't you. But there's no station on the other side of Bridge Street to hop on and hop off is there."

"There's everybody possibility. Nobody knows. But at the moment, let's say a car breaks down, how am I going get over the bridge? Taxi? I can get a bus, but I'm not into using buses I've still got to go over the bridge, whereas if you can jump on the train I know there's nothing can stop that. Nothing is going to stop that on steel rails, nothing it going to get in the way. It's gone. It's as simple as that. All you want is to get from point A to point B in the quickest time as possible."

"Depends what you're doing."

"You might do it for some trips, but you might not do it for every trip."

"Nine times out of time if he's working he's not going to get a train is he. But if he was going out socialising he might say well yeah we'll get the train."

4.5.4 The group was asked if they would be willing to walk/cycle over the bridge to avoid paying a toll. One person said that some people may be encouraged to do this, however after further prompting; some respondents felt that currently there wasn't anywhere to go once the bridge had been crossed.

"Some people would."
"The only time people would use that is if you had the Shopping City directly on
the other side of the bridge, where they've got somewhere to go. Otherwise you
walk over the bridge where do you go from there?"

"There's nothing but Expressways. There's nothing there"

4.6 Impact of tolling a New Mersey Crossing

4.6.1 There were mixed views in the group when the discussion focused on the logistics
of tolling a new Mersey crossing. Some of the respondents were of the opinion
that the only possible solution would be to toll both bridges, others would be
against paying a toll for a bridge that was originally free.

"If you toll one bridge you'd have to toll the other one."

"But this bridge has already been bought and paid for. They are doing
maintenance on it. That maintenance comes out of your road tax that you've
already paid."

"Why should you pay for something you've been using for donkey's years
anyway?"

"But you can't charge people for something you've had for free for so long."

"If you toll one and not the other one people are definitely going to go for the one
that's not tolled."

"It's like somebody saying to you we're charging you for the air you're breathing."

4.6.2 Some of the group felt that if both bridges were tolled there would be no
alternative but to pay the toll and eventually everyone would use it. One
respondent felt that once a toll had been introduced on both bridges for 12
months, the toll should be phased out on the original bridge, as by that time the
public would have decided which route was preferable and would continue using
this route, whether tolled or not. Again there were conflicting views, some of the
respondents felt that this was unfair, as people with money would cross the bridge
quicker than those without.

"Yes the other way is actually to put a toll on both bridges but just put it on the old
one for say a period of 12 months, two years, three years, to get people used to
paying. So once they are used to paying then it doesn't matter which you go. If
you take the toll off the other one they are still going to go the other way because
it's quick and easy"

"I think that happens with everything originally and then six months down the line
they may say I'm sick of sitting in this traffic I'll try that one."

"Then again it might put all the heavy traffic on the old one because it's the most
direct route."

"The wagon drivers and people like that whose on time, right are going to be using
the other bridge. Now take into account if there's fifteen hundred cars going
across that bridge and all of a sudden five hundred of them are prepared to go on
another one to get across you are going to get through a lot quicker. So it's going
to benefit you."
"I understand that, but where I come from in Widnes I know people that have gone over that bridge every day for work and would say there may be a queue but I'm not paying that toll I'll leave half an hour earlier and queue up in it."

"That's why we are saying no toll on the first bridge and people who've got the money, who can afford to go on the toll bridge who've got busy lives as you say or on business they can take the opportunity. If I'm going to spend an hour on the bridge and it's going to cost me two quid, my other costs vastly outweigh the cost of coming over the bridge and getting over the bridge in ten minutes."

4.6.3 Earlier, the majority of the group said that a free flowing bridge would encourage more trips, but after having thought about the possible impact of a toll, some members of the group now stated that they would not make more trips.

"Then you've got the opposite to what you've just said though. If the traffic is flowing well would you go and see your mum, then you'd think well if it's going to cost me two quid am I going to keep doing it and no I'm not am I."

"For some people two quid might be a lot of money."

4.6.4 Regardless of the groups' thoughts on which bridge should be tolled, the discussion developed to talking about an acceptable toll level. Some of the group felt that bridges should be free of charge for specific groups of people, for example low income groups, those who regularly visit the hospital, carers and people with a disability. Some respondents felt that lower toll levels should be offered to regular users of the bridge, for example workers. When asked, the group also stated that Halton citizens should pay less.

"And people go round, but having a toll road and having a free bridge people should be given the choice. There's people that can afford it and the one's who can afford it will take the new one and the one's who can't afford it have got more space because the one's who have got the money are off on a better road."

"Some people are unemployed."

"The regular users and disabled."

"Yes people on low income making visits to hospital or visiting sick parents and stuff like that."

"I should imagine that people that are using it regularly, that are driving for a living they'll pay to go on there."

"If you've got to go across there for work all the time then it should be cheaper because you are going over there to work."

"If you are using it twice a day I'd expect to pay a lot less than somebody using it once a month."

"They might get it free."

"They should get it back."

4.6.5 All respondents felt that the bridge/s should be free for the elderly and sick.

"Well you get bus passes and that when you retire."

"You could get a pass to get across there."
“So having a pass to cross a bridge you need a valid reason.”

“Or a discount or something.”

4.6.6 Some respondents highlighted that for ‘normal’ users, who are not offered any discount to cross the bridge, £2.50 would be too expensive and if only one bridge was tolled, people would rather sit in traffic and take the bridge that was not tolled. For regular users (e.g. employees, Taxis) some respondents felt that companies would pay up to £2 as this can be funded by inflating prices.

“But if you put a toll on the new bridge and it costs you two quid or five quid and you are sitting on the Ford Road and there’s another way and I haven’t got the money I’m just going to have to sit there.”

“I don’t think they should pay £2.”

“If it’s going to be £2 that’s £10 a week and people haven’t got that.”

“No that’s too much.”

“Their companies will stand the two quid.”

“People that are working and people that need to be there will pay the money.”

“Taxis will use the toll.”

“Especially if you can put it on expenses.”

“Maybe the company he works for would pay it.”

4.6.7 One person mentioned the toll bridge in Lymm, and suggested that a toll of 50p each way was adequate and that people would be willing to pay this.

“It’s only a little back track it doesn’t go anywhere, but you pay that rather than go round the route. It’s only 50p but then again you’ve got to come back that way as well, so it’s another 50p.”

4.6.8 The discussion developed by debating how tolling would work in practice. Some respondents were not convinced that tolling would relieve congestion as drivers would have to wait to pay their toll. Some suggestions of how tolling could work were made by other respondents and the group seemed to agree that having an automated electronic system would be the best method.

“Because if they toll this one isn’t it going to have the same problem because you have to stop to pay and aren’t people going to be queuing up?”

“Yes. You may have no small change in your pocket. Then you are stuck there panicking.”

“You’d have to have something that electronically does it not a sign in the window because you’d get some wise guy with doctor in his windsheen you know. It would have to be done electronically. So put your registration in and then they can just go across when they want and automatically they are just let through.”

“What you just said then a pass, could you not do that if you go over every day?”

“They need a pass don’t they. You shouldn’t pay two quid for every trip.”
4.6.9 Having this system was felt to be especially important for those individuals who had discounted tolls, but it was also suggested that everyone could have a pass and those who have to pay tolls are then invoiced directly each month. The pass would be placed on the windscreen and picked up every time the car passed the checkpoint.

"Pay monthly or something and every time you use it show your pass".

"The only other way is by camera. Send out a bill."

"Yeah a camera so they could send the bills out once a week because you'll have regular people using it so end up possibly with an account system."

"[Passes] on your windscreen."

"If you have a toll you'd have a disc like your tax disc and then you go through."

4.6.10 The group all agreed that tolling the bridge at specific times of the day, or on specific days would not be effective, as it would just expand or move peak hours. In addition it was mentioned that working hours are so different nowadays that this would not be a fair way of collecting funds.

"It's a non starter really trying to pick the time of day it really is because years ago people used to work eight till five-thirty say. Now people are working from six or seven o'clock in the morning, finishing at two, three o'clock in the afternoon. Other people are finishing at four, some five and once you get near that bridge quarter to four it's chocker until at least half past seven."

"The workforce now it's all phased at different times. There's no set peak at five anymore. There's no set nine till five or nine till six. People want to go out when they want and come back in when they want."

"Saturday and Sunday it's like that all day."

4.6.11 One person mentioned the benefits of a toll, stating that it would generate new business, as people would rather cross a bridge that is not congested.

"Easier transport would create a new generation of businesses. If people are getting snarled up in traffic and have to pay drivers to sit there for an hour a day, forget it, they go elsewhere."

4.6.12 The general consensus amongst the group was that the toll would not have an effect on employment opportunities, however following further prompts; some respondents felt that it might isolate certain areas and deter people from getting jobs on opposite sides of the bridge.

"Shouldn't do."

"I don’t think so."

"The only way it will limit is if this man here is earning £120 a week and he's going to have to start lashing out £16 a week for the toll."

"People might think to work over there I've got to pay £16 to get over there so I might as well just stop in bed."

"It could affect the way some people think. You are going to take a job over there and it's going to cost you to work there you might think it's not worth it."
"It's not worth me doing it. But say you've got the opportunity to get a pass that's not going to cost them the same because they are commuting all the time, then that'll will encourage them because they're using it for work."

4.7 Scenarios

4.7.1 Respondents were asked to rank bridge scenarios in order of preference. They were instructed to allocate '1' to their most preferred option and '5' to their least preferred. Table 4.1 shows the mean ranking values.

Table 4.1: Mean Rank Values – Group 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Mean Rank Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not build a new bridge (however, road works will increase on the current bridge)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and both bridges toll free</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge with restricted use (eg public transport, walking/cycling only) of the Silver Jubilee Bridge</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and toll both bridges</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7.2 The respondents were asked their reasons for choosing their preferred option. Most respondents felt that both bridges should be toll free, as the public already pay road tax and fuel bills. It was felt that business users are paying enough and that tolls may have a knock-on effect on small businesses.

4.7.3 The overall reason that respondents chose the option of tolling both bridges was because they thought that tolling only one bridge would not eliminate congestion.

"That would be easier and what we've been talking about."

4.7.4 The reason for choosing the option building a new bridge, but only toll the new one was given because it was thought that industrial users would use the toll bridge, as longer term this would be cheaper for them and quicker.

4.7.5 Finally all respondents felt that their least preferred option would be not to build a new bridge, as they believe it is essential that another route across the River Mersey is made available.
5 Residents from low income households

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Respondents in this group all have a household income of less than £20,000. They are residents in Halton, but not from Castlefield, Mersey, Halton Brook or Riverside wards.

5.2 Socio-Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
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<td>55-59</td>
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<td>60-64</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 years and over</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting mobility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting hearing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a learning disability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(30 hours or more)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(less than 30 hours)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(full or part time)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed and available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after the home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholly retired from work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a government training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently sick/disabled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing something else</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many cars available to you?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receiving benefits</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household income</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;£20,000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20,000 - £29,999</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£30,000 - £39,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£40,000 - £49,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£50,000 and over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Use of Silver Jubilee Bridge

5.3.1 The entire group stated that they regularly use the Silver Jubilee Bridge, and in most cases daily. Reasons for using the bridge included: for work purposes, to travel to college, to visit family or to attend the hospital. One respondent works as a fire-fighter and uses the bridge to attend emergency situations, but sometimes experiences problems that can affect how he does his job.

"I live in Widnes and work in Runcorn and use it every day to get to work."

"Every morning."

"I get the bus every day to college"

"I use it to visit the hospital and appointments."

"And my family live in Runcorn so it’s getting back to see the family."

"Well as a Fire Fighter it’s all hours.....But sometimes you can’t actually get through. So you have to send a message then to say you can’t attend."

"I’d say I use it at least once a week. I go to college too I go one night a week so I go across for that. But at the moment it is a case of avoiding it."

"Last night. I play five aside on a Sunday night, but I’ve stopped playing now because the bridge is just too chocker at eight o’clock at night."

5.3.2 Crossing the River Mersey using the Silver Jubilee Bridge was considered to be the most feasible route; however following an incident on the bridge, the group did mention sometimes taking alternative routes such as the Mersey tunnel or through Warrington town centre.

"If there’s been a crash on the bridge."

"Yes if you can’t get over it and they divert you back round to Warrington."

"Warrington or get on the M62 and the M6."

"Yes convenient isn’t it really. Unless you went the other way which is Warrington and it’s adding an extra 20 minutes on your journey. So you wouldn’t want to go all round. So you do actually go over the bridge. If anything goes wrong with the bridge and you’ve got to go Warrington way, oh you know."

5.3.3 Respondents were asked if they experienced any problems when using the Silver Jubilee Bridge and most had experienced traffic congestion. This had impacted on the group in different ways, and almost all of the group could give examples of how traffic congestion impacts on their daily lives. Respondents felt that they did not go shopping over the bridge (Liverpool) as much as they might. Not visiting family was also reported to be a problem for some respondents raising stress and frustration levels. Some respondents stated that conditions on the bridge resulted in them being unreliable and often late for work. Respondents have to get up a lot earlier than they would normally. Some had even stopped socialising on the opposite side of the bridge.

"Well usually to go shopping I have to go over the bridge so I’ll just go to a local shop, whereas if there was that then I would go to Liverpool."
"Because the traffic is really jammed, so unless it is absolutely necessary to go across it I wouldn't. If it was to shop I wouldn't go into Liverpool to shop now because I wouldn't go into that waiting in the traffic."

"My family live there as well. Weekend would be the best time if people aren't working. But I wouldn't go across. My Niece actually lives in the Albert Dock and what she does now she actually parks her car up at Widnes and gets the bus over to Runcorn and when she is going back gets the bus back to Widnes and picks her car up because they buses have got their own lane so it's better for everyone now to be actually on the bus than in your car."

"Frustration."

"Road rage, that happens as well."

"Yes I think your stress levels are up though as well though aren't they so like with me my stress levels go through the roof when I'm darting and diving, skipping lanes to try to get through it."

"You are pushing and trying to get there quicker so it just happens. Road rage, you block someone, won't let someone in. Well I do anyway."

"Yes and you are late for work as well."

"They (employer) think you've overslept."

5.3.4 One respondent highlighted that problems on the Silver Jubilee Bridge are well known to employers, however if problems were to continue he felt that it would start to become more of an issue and employers would be less tolerant.

"They (employer) know. They know now because it's getting to be every day. It's not just me, it's everyone that lives in Widnes so if it carries on you could imagine them not being too lenient."

5.3.5 The design of the bridge was also commented upon by respondents. Some participants reported feeling unsafe and this feeling was further exacerbated by the volume of traffic crossing the bridge.

"I think when you get into the middle of it I think you feel worried."

"Yes swinging as you're going across."

"That bridge was never built to take that much traffic was it?"

"If something happens you know it's going to be major."

"Especially at rush hour. I think you get claustrophobic and your nerves are going because there's lorries speeding coming from everywhere."

5.4 Views on the proposed New Mersey Crossing

5.4.1 Within the group there was vague knowledge of a new Mersey crossing. Some were aware of the proposed location; others had heard rumours about tolling. The group also reported seeing artist's impressions of the design of a new bridge.

"I've heard that they're going to try and link it I think to the 57, the Roundabout at 57 which will take the traffic away from the Widnes area and it will basically link all the motorways together. You link the 57 with the 56. You'll be taking the ... traffic
away from the congested areas like the town centre of Runcom and stick it round the outside."

"I've heard they're going to charge them is that true?"

"I've only seen pictures."

5.4.2 Respondents felt that building a new Mersey crossing would relieve traffic congestion not only in Halton, but in surrounding areas.

"Well it's taking 90,000 vehicles a day and it's 40 odd years old now and it can't go on like that."

"I think it will help not just Halton it will help Warrington because when Halton, when that bridge goes Warrington will grind to a halt and then you know even comes as far as the motorways, they slow down so it affects everywhere."

5.4.3 As the group had heard rumours about a possible toll on the new bridge, they were not as willing to discuss whether or not building a new bridge would make them travel across the river more often. Initially, the group felt that they would cross the river on more occasions, however some respondents would not give their opinion, until they knew how much this would cost.

"Yes because there's only the one bridge and we're all waiting at that one little space all wanting to go across. Everyone is heading for the same place, all squeezing into one area so when we get there then coming from all over and all our cars are meeting in that little space."

"It depends how it's done. You can say that, but if you are going to charge through the roof and people aren't going to use it then it's a waste of time building it. It's got to be worth doing and doing properly or don't do it at all. If you're going to blow all this money you may as well do it properly."

"Well not make more trips but trips that you might have made but haven't because of the bridge. You'll think oh no I won't bother because that bridge is jam-packed. Maybe you would do the trip you wanted to do if you hadn't been put off."

"It puts you off doing trips rather than doing more."

5.4.4 Along with aiding traffic congestion, respondents felt that the new bridge would increase employment opportunities, as-well as making employees who live in Halton much more employable, as they will no longer be unreliable due to traffic on the bridge.

"Everything really. It's just going to open up the whole area for employment and everything else. It's traffic coming down the S7 straight across rather than trying to get over the bridge. It will reduce the workload on this bridge here. It will reduce repairs for a start. It won't get hammered as much as it is now."

5.5 General thoughts on tolling

5.5.1 The group were asked their opinions on road user charging, respondents found it hard to comment especially being aware of rumours regarding the possible tolling of a new Mersey crossing. One respondent felt that residents needed to be realistic, and that tolling may be the only way to finance the bridge.

"If you can get it for free then bonus, but I just can't see it being done without it and I think you've got to be realistic."
5.5.2 Some of the group felt that road user charging was fundamentally wrong, as drivers are already paying for the privilege of using the roads, through Council Tax, road tax and fuel prices.

"We're paying our Council Tax and everything anyway here so we are contributing to it so why charge us double."

"Why should we pay double?"

5.5.3 One person in the group made comparisons with tolling technology in America. He felt that it has been extremely successful and the population have accepted the need for tolling specific roads. He also mentioned that toll booths can get busy in rush hour.

"The way it's done in America they've got two roads that go to the same place. One is direct, the other takes the scenic route. The two motorways are the same size and everything. One they charge and one they don't and you can go on the slower way or you can go on the Freeway but it will take you longer. Go on the toll road and they charge you. They charge something like 30p every two miles and you stop, throw your money in and then you're gone and you don't have to use it because there's another way, but if you want to get there quicker, if you want to get there a lot quicker, probably about ten, twenty minutes quicker then you go and you pay and it's just like the one in Birmingham. If you want to go and queue and sit in traffic you go and do it, but if you want to get through and pay a couple of quid you go down the toll road."

"They are busy don't get me wrong but with five lanes, something like that, they are both used. Sometimes in the rush hour they are quite busy by the toll booths."

5.5.4 The group felt that if tolling was to occur on the new Mersey crossing there must be some concessions made for specific groups of people. They felt that the elderly and disabled should be able to cross the bridge free of charge. One respondent felt that it would be hard to draw the line, and was unsure who should be included in this bracket; however others felt that it should be those people who currently have a disabled badge.

"Then again how do you justify it? How do you say you are chronically ill?"

"But they would have a sticker on the car to say."

"If you are disabled you get it free, there you go."

5.5.5 Some of the group felt that it would be important for people who live in Halton to be able to cross the river for free. Employees working in Halton who have to cross the river were also identified as being suitable for exclusion from a toll. Respondents felt that residents and workers of Halton should be able to apply for a concessionary pass.

"If they could work out a system but not penalising the residents of Halton because we are the ones that use the bridge regularly. If they could have some kind of scheme. Whether they put in those sensors on the cars."

"Anybody who the (companies in Halton) employ should have some kind of reduction."

"Like if you're travelling to work you should receive a reduction if you live outside the county. But if you're travelling for work like lorry driver or taxi driver or that's
when you should be hit fully. Make your company pay. I'm not too sure about taxi drivers because they are like kind of self employed aren't they and they help reduce the traffic, but the likes of the lorries and stuff.”

“Yes. The people travelling into work you know they are part of the region, you know what I mean. They are part of the area.”

“So be on like an application basis or something.”

“You'd have to apply and say I live here you know.”

“Yes I think you hit on it before with like the Easy Ride it's called. It's like a little sensor that you stick in your windscreen. I don't know if you've seen the advert for it. There's an advert on the television about it now. You go to a toll booth, it registers that you've been through and then you go on the Internet and pay your bill.”

5.5.6 The group agreed that workers who use the bridge for business purposes and are not necessarily located in Halton, should pay the toll in full. However the group then began to discuss the logistics of doing this, and felt that the size of the company should be taken into account, as a toll would have a much larger effect on smaller businesses, compared with multinationals.

“Haulage companies will argue against it obviously because it's going to cost them money, but they are saving money in the long run because they've got a nice free route through. They're not queuing up wasting fuel on the bridge. They are saving man hours while they are driving. Time is money to them.”

“So that we don't pay the same as big businessmen. It would work out for them because it's making their journeys quicker, it's actually more cost effective for them and we are paying the same.”

“These are actual companies. They're using it as a business. It's meeting the needs of their business.”

“If it was meeting the needs of my business and I was making all kinds of money from my business I wouldn't mind paying to go in with that bridge.”

“I know but its drawing the line isn't it. You've got a haulage company with fifty lorries who are going to have to pay to do it, but then you've got the little old lady whose got a cleaning company goes to Runcorn every week.”

“But do you know what I mean, where do you draw the line. You charge your business for taking the trucks. Where do you draw the line?”

5.5.7 The group felt that to avoid further queues at toll booths, the tolls should be collected via electronic sensor, which is in effect a pay as you go card. It was suggested by one respondent that this should be fixed to the windscreen of vehicles.

“Stuck on your windscreen. You get your own lane for the business users and you just go through. It'll scan it and Bob's your uncle you're through. You don't need any money. It's all done you just go and pay it on-line when you want to. So I think if you were to look at some scheme like that for users Halton area maybe they'll have that in their windscreen to say I'm a resident of Halton. They'll have the little through roads at the side or whatever.”
“Yes just like a credit card but it’s scanned from a reader on the toll booth as you go through it scans to say you’ve been through. The time and that and then it’s put on a bill and if the local residents of Widnes and Runcorn were given that free. They’d still have the reader, they would just get a bill of zero. Other people would have to go and use the money. Local businesses could then keep a tally of the bill.”

5.5.8 The group were asked if they thought that tolling the bridge would increase the number of people walking or cycling, in order to avoid payment. Some of the group felt that it might, however it was stated that the current bridge design would need examining and feeder roads would have to be re-designed. All this would need to be taken into account when re-designing the new bridge. Other members of the group could not comment as they were unaware of how much a typical toll might be.

“I’d have to know how much the actual price was anyway really because if it was 20p well, but if someone said it’s £2 you know well you’d have to know the price you’re looking at wouldn’t you really.”

“I think it’s a bit dodgy walking or cycling over that bridge, I don’t think you’d do it.”

“That’s just because of the amount of traffic though isn’t it? If it was reduced then maybe people would.”

“The link roads are in position now, but for cyclists they have to use the footpath and it’s too dangerous and more and more cyclists are going down now because there’s a few blind bends on that because it cuts in sometimes where the stanchions are and some of the lads have had a few near misses.”

“Put a cycle lane in and if they make it into two lanes they’d have room for a cycle lane.”

5.5.9 The entire group felt that the bridge should not be tolled at specific times of day, or on specific days of the week. They felt that this would just alter the time of rush hour, rather than being helpful.

“You’d just change the rush hour then wouldn’t you?”

5.6 Impact of tolling a New Mersey Crossing

5.6.1 The group were asked what they thought an ideal toll level would be, and if they would be willing to pay this. One respondent felt that 50 pence each way would be acceptable, others felt that there were many people on low incomes in Halton and therefore the toll would need to be set at 20 pence each way. The group was unanimous in thinking that to pay one pound each way would be too expensive.

“The max I would pay is probably 50p maximum.”

“Not a pound.”

“A pound as you say is too expensive.”

“You’d need to do your basic maths. Say 50,000 vehicles went over that new bridge at a £1 that’s £50,000 per day.”

“Twenty pence I think.”
"Even that's a lot of money a day."

"I think they've got to be realistic and know that Halton isn't a place with a lot of money. There are a lot of council estates and a lot of single parent families and the like and students. There's a big college in Widnes and you've got to be realistic."

"I think something that you wouldn't really miss because although you wouldn't miss it it's still all building up then isn't it. 20p will be fifteen grand a day so that's still fifteen grand revenue that they've made from nothing."

5.6.2 The group then discussed if a toll would limit the use of the bridge, one respondent stated that the toll must be cheap, otherwise this would socially exclude certain people. Some of the respondents did feel that tolling the bridge would be the best option, as individuals crossing the bridge currently are wasting a lot of fuel. Another respondent felt that if the toll was too expensive, he would travel using the toll free bridge.

"If they don't go ahead with this bridge and they don't get the money we are going to be paying the money in petrol queuing and we probably have been paying that money in petrol queuing to get on the bridge."

"But what I'm saying is I might say I'll pay that two pounds, I don't mind doing it and then at the end of the month it might have cost me thirty pounds so I'll go on the free one."

"That's what I mean, if it's done right and if it's done to pay for the bridge and not to be lining their pockets it could be done well and so you are not pricing yourselves too high so only the people that have got money can afford it. In America is was like a quarter or 25 cents, 30 pence and I use that bridge twice a day, sometimes maybe four or six times, so it doesn't depend on how many times you use the bridge."

"I heard they are going to charge them to go onto the new one and if that's the case it won't solve the problem of the other bridge. They'll just go over that one for free rather than go over the new one and pay."

5.6.3 The group further commented on how they thought a toll would affect businesses in Halton. One member repeated that he felt it would be cheaper for businesses in the longer term as fuel costs would be lower, and working days would be longer. Some of the respondents felt that employees of businesses on the opposite side of the bridge to where they live would be less likely to work for these companies if a toll was introduced.

"In Birmingham they are doing that now. If they are queuing up they can save time by paying 50p and going on to that. So time is money to them. So going on a toll bridge paying 50p or whatever, a pound, it's going to save them fuel sat on the bridge there for 20 minutes and the driver will be 20 minutes down the road which is another ten, twenty miles on their journey."

"You probably can afford it the odd one or two days, but if that's part of your working life then you would go somewhere else if you can't afford to pay that."

5.6.4 The group discussed possible tolling options. There were many different opinions among the respondents. Some felt that the toll should be on both bridges, others felt that there should be no toll on either bridge, finally some respondents felt that one of the bridges needed to be toll free, otherwise it would exclude those who could not afford to pay a toll.
5.6.5 Respondents commented on the fact that tolling both bridges would be unfair on people who are on low incomes and those who forget to carry money with them.

"I suppose in a way that there has to be a bridge that's free because the amount of people that haven't got twenty pence. They may think that everybody has twenty pence but not everybody has."

"Why toll a bridge that's already paid for. It's getting its repairs paid for and it can be used by people who are on low incomes."

"Shouldn't there be an alternative like a choice. Again it's like the quick way. If you want to go the quick way you can go and pay your 20p. If you don't, if you don't mind"

"The amount who say yes you should keep one free because they don't mind waiting because they don't want to pay. Maybe they should think that way. I suppose there's got to be a free alternative because you have to do that, be able to still go across that way."

"I'm stuck here with no money and can't cross."

"Well it is you're coming down to that because that person. Two people might get out of bed one morning and the two of them are going in the same direction. One person's got say five pounds in their pocket, the other person might only have 50p in their pocket. They can't take that route that they are taking because they can't afford it, but the next person can because they can afford it. So we're all putting it down here, people are not equal."

5.6.6 Some respondents felt that Halton Borough Council could not justify tolling both bridges, as the Silver Jubilee Bridge has already been paid for. Other respondents disagreed and felt that both bridges should be tolled until they are paid for, however some of the group were doubtful that this would happen.

"I don't think you could justify tolling the other bridge. How could you justify it? Where's that money going?"

"Yes. How could you justify tolling the other bridge?"

"But you wouldn't trust them to say they'd stop it once the bridge was paid for because they've said things like that before."

"Yes and they never stopped it."

"But then these people that can't afford to do things they are still going to have to pay whereas they could have a free one where they don't have to pay. How can you justify charging for a bridge that's been there for forty years. What are you paying for on that bridge?"

5.6.7 Some of the group felt that both bridges should be tolled, but the toll amount should be split between the two bridges. One respondent felt that the group needed to be realistic, as the bridge needed to be built, and a toll was the only option to do this.

"If you have got two bridges then and you are going to charge for one then split the difference and charge the two because otherwise they are just. Say a student going to university and one bridge was free and the other was pay I am definitely going to use the free bridge you know I'm not going to pay am I."
"Yes I know but if they are going to do that and make people pay then say they are going to charge a pound, well then split that fifty fifty on both bridges because I think it goes back to money again. It's because you've got a better job and all that you can get there 20 minutes quicker, but you are not as well off so you've got to go the long way and I just don't think that's fair."

"If they've got to pay for that bridge then half it between the two bridges. Don't give anyone a better deal than the next person because they can't afford it."

"But it's the same as everything. You want a better car you pay for the better car. You want to get there quicker and you want the better way you pay for that better way."

"No sorry I don't agree with you. I think everyone has got equal rights whether you earn fifty thousand pounds or whether you've for five thousand pounds a year job."

"So halve it."

5.6.8 Some of the group mentioned that to solve the tolling problem one of bridges could have weight restrictions and this bridge should be the one tolled, whilst the other bridge would be for smaller vehicles and would not be tolled.

"Maybe put a weight restriction on, something like that."

"Because that (larger vehicles) is probably where the damage is coming from isn't it?"

"Transfer them (larger vehicles) over to that one and toll them as well."

"I think the new bridge will become more pleasing to haulage companies if you made it more accessible from the major roads like the 57 and the 56. If it was direct from that bridge across to Liverpool or whatever then as you were saying they are going to take the shortest route. If the Silver Jubilee is the quickest the way they're going they are going to use that aren't they."

5.6.9 The respondents then continued by discussing the expected impacts of a toll. They felt that it would have an impact on education. Some of the group were students and thought it would restrict their options of higher education facilities as they would not be able to afford to pay a toll.

"And these two guys both students and you were saying before how can you justify charging them to go to college you know. Don't charge them."

"These are two students like they said so they would constantly use that bridge going over and coming back home again, so let's face it we all know that students get next to nothing whatsoever. So they would be penalised you know so what are they getting? They're going to pay out again just to go over."

"I think with everything those things we do now we work out the cost of it don't we so if I thought I had to pay whatever and then weighed it all up and thought well I'm not doing that it's going to cost me £5 when I can jump on the bus for £2. Especially maybe not me, but somebody whose going to university every single day then you know it would have to be looked at wouldn't it every day."

"Well students if I want to go to university in Liverpool I don't want to pay to go to University all the way there."
"Well I'd have to look at Chester or somewhere like that, but like a less University rather than the one I want to go to which is best for me, say Liverpool but I'd have to look elsewhere."

5.6.10 The group stated that public transport would need to be improved to enable certain groups of people (e.g. students) to be able to cross the bridge cheaply.

"And then the buses are late and then if you've got your own car and you've saved for it, you're running it and you actually have to leave it because of the cost it's going to cost you and then the bus doesn't turn up or breaks down train or whatever then."

"I think it will put the price of public transport up so people may not use it."

"I just think that there's a lot of headaches with trains as you well know, public transport and the fact that you can't take your car because you can't afford to pay that toll and you are paying Council Tax and you are paying Road Tax and your car is parked totally because you can't afford to pay that bridge money, then I don't think it's really fair. It hasn't solved anything has it because some people it's made it worse for them then because they can't take their car?"

"Yes because you are relying on it aren't you. You know if you couldn't use your car and were told you had to use the train this week your whole thing would change wouldn't it. You'd have to get to the train and be wondering if it's going to come on time and I'd better get out quicker because I've got to make that train, if I miss that the next one is two hours isn't it and it could take up your whole day."

5.6.11 The group also discussed the economic impact that the toll may have on the Borough of Halton. Some respondents stated that people need an incentive to work in the Borough; however tolling the main transport link in and out of the area would not do this.

"You've got to watch them charging companies coming to Halton because it's having trouble getting companies to come to Halton."

"Yes. Having an individual bring work into the Halton area because of access. A big expansion of industrial estates and things like that so they should be given some kind of incentive for people to work there."

"It'll (toll) add to our overheads. It'll add to what we pay each week. Add a bit more stress on my mum and dad. We've got our bills. We've our running costs already and if we are going to have something else to add onto that then obviously it's going to be a bit more strain on what we've got."

"You are personalising it, but it's not. I think it's more than just individual basis of things. It's kind of if you did tolling I think it would isolate Runcorn and it would isolate Widnes because I know a lot of the Widnes workforce are from Runcorn and visa versa, so I think it would isolate Runcorn as it's own town again with Widnes where as it is now we are both basically in and out of each other's pockets pretty much."

"If it's going to start costing them more to get to work they are going to start looking for more wages and stop coming to work in Runcorn and start looking in Widnes. So that's what I mean by you are going to be isolated" 

5.6.12 The sorts of impacts mentioned by the group were: restricted health care access; isolating Runcorn, and less likely to visit friends.
“I think it will affect everyone you know. It will affect everyone in general. There is people that can’t afford to cross that bridge if they’ve got a car and it would stop you from doing a lot of things that you are used to doing. Say someone for instance a child was sick, you got the doctor out to them and no income, the baby is sick, called the doctor out and he said go to the chemist in Widnes and that person didn’t have any money to go across the bridge. What would happen you know? You can’t just look at it. You’ve got to look at it in every aspect what is going to happen to everyone. It’s just not your family. This is affecting every resident of Halton.”

"Friends might stop visiting you as well mightten they."

"It’s going to kind of isolate Runcom."

"You could be arguing whose going to go over the bridge."

5.7 Scenarios

5.7.1 Respondents were asked to rank bridge scenarios in order of preference. They were instructed to allocate ‘1’ to their most preferred option and ‘5’ to their least preferred. Table 5.1 shows the mean ranking values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Mean Rank Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not build a new bridge (however, road works will increase on the current bridge)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and both bridges toll free</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge with restricted use (e.g. public transport, walking/cycling only) of the Silver Jubilee Bridge</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and toll both bridges</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7.2 The Preferred option ‘building new bridge and only tolling the new bridge’ was considered to be the most realistic option by some people. The least preferred option of not building a bridge was unpopular, as current problems would continue and even get worse. One respondent did not like restricting use of one bridge, as everyone will want to use the bridge which gives them the quickest journey time.
6 Elderly and Disabled Residents

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Respondents in this group are all aged over 60 or disabled, and are residents in Halton.

6.2 Socio-Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 years and over</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting mobility</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting hearing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a learning disability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time (30 hours or more)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time (less than 30 hours)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed (full or part time)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed and available for work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after the home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholly retired from work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a government training scheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently sick/disabled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing something else</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many cars available to you?</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receiving benefits</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household income</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£20,000 - £29,999</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£30,000 - £39,999</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£40,000 - £49,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£50,000 and over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3 Use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge

6.3.1 Respondents cross the River Mersey for a wide range of reasons, including shopping, leisure and to visit family.

"Shopping."

"Back and forth to hospital and things like that."

"To see my family."

"Entertainment, like going to the pictures and that."

"To get to the station."

6.3.2 Everyone uses the Silver Jubilee Bridge to cross the river, ranging from two or three times a week to almost daily.

"Quite often I go over."

"Two or three times a week."

"A couple of times per week."

"We go about five or six times a week."

6.3.3 All respondents use a car to cross the Silver Jubilee Bridge and occasionally, public transport.

"In the car."

"Unless you’re visiting someone in the hospital, then the public transport....cause you have to pay in the car park now."

6.3.4 Most respondents highlighted that they do not use public transport as the services in their area are often limited or inconvenient. Only one respondent felt that their local service was frequent.

"Cause it would take me longer to get to the bus stop than it would to get over by car."

"There isn’t a good bus service over there."

"There’s no bus service at all round here."

"We have one on the hour and that’s it."

"There’s no service back after a certain time."

"You can get there to visit people but you can’t get back."

"On the other hand I have quite a good one from my way."

6.3.5 No one in the group had ever cycled across the bridge, but a few had previously walked over. Those who had crossed the bridge on foot described how it was not particularly pleasant or safe to do so.

"I’ve walked on there, it’s horrible."
"I’ve walked across, oh, it shakes."

"I’ve not walked over it recently, but I tell you what, it’s terrible really. The fumes are coming off it and everything. It’s dangerous to walk across too cause of the traffic."

"It’s not a place to walk really, for anyone."

6.3.6 Respondents were asked if they would consider walking over if it was made easier. The majority of the group would not consider it now due to their age, but some highlighted that they did in the past and therefore they felt that younger people may still consider it.

"No, not in our age group."

"We did when it first opened."

"I walked over recently and it would be nice to walk over if it wasn’t for the traffic."

6.3.7 Everyone in the group had experienced problems, due to congestion, when trying to cross the bridge. It was also highlighted how these problems were amplified due to road works and accidents on the bridge.

"I was on that bridge yesterday for half an hour trying to get to Runcorn, cause of the traffic."

"No matter when you go, even when the road works are not on, it’s still bad."

"If there’s a crash on there, then everybody stops."

6.3.8 Respondents reported that although traffic congestion was at its worst during peak hours, it was still a problem at all other times of the day.

"No it’s all day, but peak periods are horrendous."

"I have a friend who comes from Runcorn over here to work, and it took them an hour and a half to get on to the bridge and to get off it."

6.3.9 Respondents who lived closed to the bridge had the added burden that tailbacks from the bridge often stretched as far as their roads, blocking them and leaving them unable to drive anywhere. Some also found it frustrating that the high traffic volume in the area resulted in larger vehicles choosing to take alternative routes through residential areas.

"Not only that, we live not far from the bridge, so, all the traffic that is coming down, they don’t only go down the major roads, but they go down and block our roads."

"We can’t get out of our road sometimes."

"You can’t even get out your streets sometimes."

"You end up with wagons and things coming down your street which shouldn’t even be coming down."

6.3.10 Several respondents felt that the problems with congestion were largely due to too many approach roads in the area merging near to the bridge.
"It's cause there are eight lanes going into one at the moment, and even so, there are eight lanes going into two normally, and it is just horrendous, all through the day."

"I think the main problem is that there are too many approach roads, merging, to near the bridge."

6.3.11 Respondents highlighted how congestion on the bridge can make them think twice about travelling and making specific journeys. Some also felt that this was having a knock-on effect in other areas, such as Warrington, as people tried to use alternate routes to avoid the bridge.

"You think twice about going over the bridge."

".... Widnes is gridlocked, and now Warrington is getting that way, cause everyone is trying to get round Warrington."

6.4 Views on the proposed New Mersey Crossing

6.4.1 Respondents were aware that there were proposals to build a new Mersey crossing, but were unaware of any specific details.

"I hear that it's right over by Fiddles Ferry, which is a complete waste of time. It won't help the congestion at all."

"Haven't get a clue (where it will be)."

"We've no seen any description on where it's going to be."

6.4.2 The exact location for the proposed bridge and some background information was explained to the group. Some felt that the positioning was wrong, in relation to the source of traffic crossing the bridge, but others felt that it would help to reduce the congestion.

"The Runcorn side has only got two, they've got it coming from Chester, the M56, and they've got it from Runcorn, here, you've got it from four different directions."

"It should do (help congestion)."

6.4.3 Respondents were under the impression that if a new crossing was built, then the road structure would change to allow traffic to travel over one bridge one way, and then the other bridge for traffic in the other direction. However, some respondents were surprised to learn that this was not the case and felt that it was therefore less likely to help congestion.

"Is it not better to have one for going over and one for coming back?"

"That's not going to help is it, cause if one gets congested you can't turn off and go onto the other one."

"It's defeating the object."

6.4.4 Others however did not think the idea of one way traffic on each bridge was practical, as it would result in traffic being completely cut off or disrupted if blockages were to occur.

"If you make each bridge one way, as soon as there is a blockage on one bridge, then you've stopped all the traffic."
6.4.5 Everyone agreed that less traffic congestion in the area would definitely encourage them to make more journeys. Some respondents highlighted how they would also like to be more spontaneous in their life-style, when it comes to making journeys, something they could not do at present.

"Yeah (I'd make more trips), cause it wouldn't put you off as much as it does now."

"You have to plan for it at the moment don't you."

"You have to time it, go out an hour before."

6.4.6 Respondents indicated that less congestion would mean they would be more likely to carry out trips for pleasure, rather than just using the bridge for essential journeys.

"I'd go and see the kids more."

"You'd go to Wales or somewhere like that more."

"More days out."

"Well now you just think, oh I'm not going over that bridge."

"It would open up your world more if you could go over."

6.4.7 Respondents highlighted that local employees and businesses were most likely to benefit from a congestion free bridge, as they are the ones who use the current bridge most frequently.

"People who work over there."

"Local employees."

"The transport people, I feel sorry for them. The transport businesses will benefit."

6.5 General thoughts on tolling

6.5.1 Respondents were generally against the idea of road user charging. They felt that motorists were already contributing a significant amount of money towards the road network through other means, such as road tax and tax on petrol.

"I think we pay enough on the cars don't you."

"We are already giving in it one way (taxes etc.) it shouldn't be taken off us in other ways."

"It's taken off us in three ways then, you pay on your petrol, you pay on your rates, and your road tax."

"This is where your road tax came in, to pay for the roads and no other country pays it like we do......it's the same with the tax on the petrol."

6.5.2 Others felt that stopping to pay tolls also decreases traffic speeds on the approach to the toll booths.

"I think it will slow the traffic down."
6.5.3 Respondents were asked whether or not they would be willing to pay a toll to cross the River Mersey. They felt that it was difficult to say unless they knew how much the toll was likely to be.

"It depends how much it is."

"We can’t say whether we’d use it or not, until we know how much it is going to be."

6.5.4 Some respondents stressed that although they may consider paying a toll on a new Mersey crossing, they do not think it would be fair to toll the Silver Jubilee Bridge. They were aware however that this may result in everyone continuing to use the existing bridge.

"On the new bridge, maybe, but not on the old bridge. But then the problem would be that people would divert to the old one."

"Just like those who are not paying the Mersey tax, they are coming via the Runcorn-Widnes Bridge. So just in the same way, they would avoid using the new bridge to come on the old bridge, which is supposedly for more local traffic."

"It’s defeating the object."

6.5.5 Respondents were asked whether or not they would be willing to pay a toll, if it was the only way to fund a new Mersey crossing. They felt that it would be unfair to local people who had already contributed a significant amount of money towards the existing and, possibly, a new bridge. One respondent highlighted that she would only consider paying if road and petrol tax were reduced.

"No, cause we’ve been saving for years on our rates."

"They have been putting our rates up for years because of the bridge, so we have already paid for it once."

"If they can’t afford to buy a new bridge it’s because they squander their resources. Why should we pay twice?"

"If they dropped some tax on the petrol, or the road tax...."

6.5.6 Respondents were asked to consider what effect a toll would have on them, and the journeys that they make. Some highlighted that they would not use the new bridge, and instead would continue using the existing bridge (providing it was toll free).

"I wouldn’t use it."

"It would deter people from using it."

"I wouldn’t use it out of principle."

"I’d use the old bridge."

6.5.7 Others felt that as a last resort they may pay the toll, whilst some felt that they would consider paying if it was very low.

"It depends on how much, if they say it would be like twenty pence, then I wouldn’t mind that."
"It would be a last resort wouldn’t it."

6.5.8 Those against the idea of tolling felt that it would severely restrict the movement of people in Halton and those who had no choice but to pay a toll to get to work would be penalised.

"By putting a toll on they are keeping you in one spot."

“And if you work the other side it’s gonna result in a lot of money.”

6.5.9 Respondents felt that everyone in the area would suffer as a result of a toll, whether or not they used the bridge, as it would result in local firms increasing prices to cover the cost of the toll on their businesses.

“And the lorries moving the food, food will go up to pay these things.”

6.5.10 Several respondents indicated that they would avoid paying a toll by taking a different route to their destination when possible. Others pointed out however that this may in turn create congestion in other areas.

“I’d go a different way, round Warrington.”

“But then you’re coming back to the same thing, and Warrington would get grid locked.”

6.5.11 One respondent felt that taking a different route was indirectly going to cost the driver more as it would result in more petrol being used, so providing a toll was not too expensive then it may work out cheaper.

“You know you said you’d rather go round Warrington, to avoid the toll bridge, wouldn’t it be costing you more in petrol, than a pound to cross the bridge? It’s about 12 miles in petrol, so that’s why I said, it would depend on what the toll is. Plus, you can spend that much sat in a traffic jam on the bridge.”

6.5.12 No-one in the group would consider using public transport as an alternative to paying the toll, as they did not think public transport in the area was efficient or practical. They also questioned whether or not bus fares would have to increase as a result of the toll.

“No, it’s not practical.”

“There is no viable public transport, it’s not an option.”

“If they put a toll on the bridge, how would it affect the buses, would the bus fares go up?”

6.5.13 Respondents were asked what they thought would happen if a toll was also introduced on the Silver Jubilee Bridge. They felt that it would do little to tackle congestion in the area as vehicles would still have to slow down at the bridge, especially if there were a limited numbers of lanes.

"Presumably we’d be slowed down even more, to pay the tolls.”

"Then still be queues there, especially if they go back to two lanes, and two lanes on the other bridge, with toll booths, it’s gonna be was than what it is.”
6.5.14 Respondents were asked what they felt was an acceptable level for a toll to be. They stated that most residents would probably be happy to pay if it was as low as twenty pence to cross the bridge.

"Twenty pence"

"If it's only twenty pence or something, that aint bad."

"But that's still going to hold the traffic up."

6.5.15 Respondents felt that paying any more than this could prove to be very costly for residents and was therefore unacceptable.

"If it's anything like the tunnel it would be £1.20."

"If you say it's a pound a time, that's going to be two pound a day, which is ten pounds a week of their wages, that's a lot isn't it."

"That's dreadful, I'm sorry but I just wouldn't use it."

6.5.16 Respondents were asked what they felt would happen if a toll was only introduced on one of the bridges. They felt that it would mean that the majority of motorists would continue to use the un-tolled bridge.

"You'd have the same trouble, all trying to get on one bridge."

6.5.17 Some respondents felt that it would be fairer to have a discount in place for local residents, whilst charging a full amount to those who travel over the bridge from further a field. Others felt that local students and workers should also be offered discounts.

"Would it not be possible to have some form of pass for local residents of Halton?"

"The people who come this way from say Liverpool, who in effect come this way to avoid the tunnel charge, well then they would be tolled."

"For schools and things like that, the kids that go to colleges. Students. Parents might have three or four kids and it could be astronomical the costs."

"What about workers?"

6.5.18 Respondents thought that discount passes may be suitable for people who use the bridge for various reasons.

"Really it would depend on how often you use the pass, and whether it would be any benefit to you."

6.5.19 Not everyone however agreed with this, as they felt not only would it be difficult to differentiate between who is entitled to a discount and who isn’t, but it would be unfair to penalise one group of people to benefit another.

"I don't agree about local residents, I don't see why there should be two tiers, some privileged and some not."

"How could you differentiate between who deserves it and who doesn't?"

"What are you penalising one group of people to benefit another group. It's not fair."
"If you set up a toll roll you are facilitating one group of people at the expense of others. It's grossly unfair."

"It's all or nothing.

6.5.20 Respondents did not think that tolling at certain times of the day (i.e. rush hour) was a viable solution as it may result in slowing the traffic down even further.

"Yeah but if they make that at seven till nine it will be as bad as ever."

6.6 Impact of tolling a New Mersey Crossing

6.6.1 Finally, respondents looked at the effects of tolling a new Mersey crossing. Those who were strongly against the idea of tolling felt that it would result in people on lower incomes being restricted to their local area.

"Effectively, we would be subjected to an extra local tax. We would be restricted in our movement, we would be imprisoned in our homes."

6.6.2 Where possible, the group highlighted that they would travel to alternative destinations to avoid paying a toll.

"The cinema, you'd go to Warrington instead."

"Go shopping elsewhere too."

6.6.3 Respondents felt that it was not fair to introduce a charge for residents who wished to travel from one part of their borough to another, and that they should be able to move around freely.

"But then again it's not fair, cause you're paying your road tax and Council Tax but stuck in one town."

"The borough is divided, and we are part of that borough."

6.6.4 Some worried that a tolled crossing would create a further divide in the borough between Widnes and Runcorn.

"We'd go back to being them and us, in history its always been Runcorn and Widnes, we're just beginning to come together again....you don't pay to get from one side of the borough to another."

6.6.5 Respondents felt that residents in Widnes would be most affected by a toll, as they believed that most of the borough's facilities were based on the Runcorn side of the crossing. They stated that Widnes is already isolated and that a tolled crossing would isolate it even further.

"Runcorn and Warrington get everything, there is nothing here in Widnes."

"We used to have five picture houses, we've got none now."

6.6.6 Respondents were asked if they had any further comments that they wanted to make regarding the proposed new Mersey crossing. Some were sceptical as to how far their views would be taken into account, as they believed that a decision on whether or not to toll the bridge had probably already been decided.

"I suspect a decision has already been made, and all this is a waste of time."
6.6.7 Others lacked trust that a short-term toll would be possible, as they were aware that this had been suggested when building the Mersey Tunnel, and users were still having to pay.

"But like the Mersey Tunnel, when that was built, the toll was only going to be until it was paid for, and how long’s that tunnel been there?"

6.6.8 Some respondents were frustrated that they were currently paying road tax to the Government, who in turn would not provide much needed road improvements in the area.

"The Government have taken all this money off us in Road Tax, yet they won’t give us the money for a road that is desperately needed."

6.7 Scenarios

6.7.1 Respondents were asked to rank bridge scenarios in order of preference. They were instructed to allocate ‘1’ to their most preferred option and ‘5’ to their least preferred. Table 6.1 shows the mean ranking values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Mean Rank Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not build a new bridge (however, road works will increase on the current bridge)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and both bridges toll free</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge (e.g. public transport, walking/cycling only) of the Silver Jubilee Bridge</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and toll both bridges</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.7.2 Some respondents found it difficult to rank the options in order of preference, as they strongly disagreed with one or most of the choices.

"There is only one that I agree with, the second one."

"I really really disagree with the first one."

"I disagree with them all."

"That (fourth option) seems to me the most inane suggestion of the lot. It effectively means shutting the Silver Jubilee Bridge."

6.7.3 One respondent felt that it would be fairer to keep the existing bridge for the use of local residents as they had contributed towards it through their Council tax.

"Restrict the old bridge to local residents, cause as Council tax payers, we have paid a good amount towards this new bridge."

6.7.4 Others felt that if there was no option but to introduce a toll, then a toll would need to be placed on both bridges in order to have any effect.

"I don’t agree with it but if it’s the only way."

"You couldn’t have just one tolled."

"They would just go to the one that didn’t have the toll on."
### 7 Employees

#### 7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 All respondents in these groups work in either Runcorn or Widnes, and cross the Silver Jubilee Bridge in order to commute to work.

#### 7.2 Socio-Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Respondents Runcorn</th>
<th>Respondents Widnes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>45-54</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 years and over</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Respondents Runcorn</th>
<th>Respondents Widnes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting mobility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting hearing</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, affecting vision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a learning disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Respondents Runcorn</th>
<th>Respondents Widnes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time (30 hours or more)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time (less than 30 hours)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed (full or part time)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed and available for work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after the home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholly retired from work</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a government training scheme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently sick/disabled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing something else</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many cars available to you?</th>
<th>Respondents Runcorn</th>
<th>Respondents Widnes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receiving benefits</th>
<th>Respondents Runcorn</th>
<th>Respondents Widnes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household income</th>
<th>Respondents Runcorn</th>
<th>Respondents Widnes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;£20,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20,000 - £29,999</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£30,000 - £39,999</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£40,000 - £49,999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£50,000 and over</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3 Use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge

7.3.1 All members of both groups cross the River Mersey in order to get to work, as well as to visit family, friends, and for leisure purposes.

"Use it every day. My family don’t live in Runcorn. I have to cross the bridge to see my brother and Runcorn three to four times a week."

"I have family in Runcorn as well."

"Everybody uses it at the weekend don’t we?"

"Shopping."

7.3.2 All respondents are frequent users of the Silver Jubilee Bridge, some even claiming to cross the bridge between two and twenty times per day.

"At least twice a day. Weekends as well."

"I visit family three or four times a week."

"On a daily basis it can be between twice and twenty times."

"Well I work on empty properties and we have to dump the waste in Runcorn from Widnes so consequently we have to get from Runcorn to Widnes four or five times, maybe more, just depends how many properties a day we do."

7.3.3 Although most respondents work locally, they often use the bridge in order to travel to places further afield, such as Liverpool and Manchester.

"It is a quick way of getting to Manchester as well, it can be, you can get onto the M62 from the 57."

"Sometimes I’ll go to the DIY shops over there - like B&Q and that. We don’t have them in Runcorn so we tend to go over there, just before into Widnes and the shops like that."

"I use it for work, and I go to St Helens every day."

"I use it go for all the deliveries around Liverpool."

7.3.4 Most respondents use a car to travel across the bridge, and a few use public transport.

"Car."

"Public transport for me."

"On the bus."

7.3.5 All members had experienced problems when crossing the bridge, mainly traffic congestion causing journey delays.

"Mainly traffic build up."

7.3.6 For many respondents, the congestion on the bridge has a large impact, particularly on their working life. For those whose jobs involve frequently crossing the bridge, it can result in less work being carried out each day.
"It's really frustrating."

"You'd probably do more jobs as well wouldn't you?"

"We lose two or three hours a day if it's late back."

"It does it does make you frustrated."

7.3.7 One of the respondents is a bus driver and therefore his job involves frequently crossing the bridge. He highlighted how he found his job stressful because of the delays, as quite often passengers take their frustrations out on him.

"You get stressed. Especially when you have a busload of passengers. They get upset as well....I suppose I'm the one that has to get them home, so obviously they take it out on us."

7.3.8 Some of the respondents also highlighted that although there is a public transport lane on the bridge, quite often drivers ignore this and use the lane anyway.

"There is a lane, but -"

"It's supposed to be a taxi lane and a bus lane isn't it."

"You're not really supposed to go on."

7.3.9 Both groups highlighted how the delays on the bridge are so severe that it can limit them doing things such as visiting their families.

"I've got a mentally handicapped brother and he's been in hospital in Crewe for nine weeks and obviously Crewe is a long while away. I've had to take time off work because of the traffic on the bridge, it's so time consuming getting there. Now he's back in Northwich in the accommodation where he lives and because of the bridge, the way it is and my job, if I'm late going in for work in the morning, I have to be in for half past six I'm then stuck coming back over the bridge to get back at school. I finish at half eight, so then stuck getting to school so that causes all them problems. Now I've had to get the staff where my brother lives for them to bring him to my house. As I come in from work they have brought him, but today they were two hours late. He didn't come until 12.0'clock. By the time he comes I'm back in work at four I've got to be away by three so they've had to come and take him back again so obviously they are finding it difficult. So we're having to say right I'll do it one time, my sister does it another time and the staff are doing it another time."

7.3.10 Respondents found it impossible to get into a routine of doing things because it was impossible to predict the traffic levels on and around the bridge.

"You just can't predict it though can you?"

"Sometimes you'll say, oh I'll leave early and then you get wherever you need to go 45 minutes before you need to be there and then another time you leave on time and you're an hour late. You just can't predict it can you at all."

"Saturday when my son plays football it's awful getting over the bridge in a morning. I try and leave at nine o'clock but I haven't got the most reliable car, but I do my best but that doesn't help. By the time I've got there we were late on Saturday he missed the kick off because of the traffic and then when you're coming back everyone is going shopping like twelve, one o'clock, you're stuck in
that for ages and then they moan because they want a drink, they've had all the pop at football and you can't just get out of the car and go and get them a drink."

7.3.11 A couple of respondents had even changed their working hours in order to avoid the queues of traffic on the bridge, but had found that the traffic was just as bad at other times.

"Well we changed our work times we asked our boss if we could come in an hour earlier to avoid the traffic and finish work an hour earlier and we tried that for a couple of weeks, but it was just as bad. We start for eight in the morning normally and we've been coming in for seven, but we had to leave at six-thirty to get in for seven."

7.3.12 Due to congestion on the Silver Jubilee Bridge, respondents sometimes use other routes in order to cross the river.

"I sometimes go through Warrington because the bridge is sometimes that bad. Especially with roadworks on it."

"Yeah, sometimes the bridge and gone a few times through the tunnel."

"If its peak hour then I will avoid the bridge, I'll go round the Warrington way."

"I've gone a few times through the tunnel, to avoid the bridge."

7.3.13 Neither group felt that the traffic problems were exclusive to weekdays, as they felt the traffic could be just as bad, if not worse, at the weekends.

"And it's not worth us doing overtime Saturday mornings because of the bridge."

"Friday night through to Sunday night as well as Monday morning."

"At the weekend they close it down to one lane."

"All times of the day it's busy anyway."

"All day on Saturday it's backed up coming into Runcorn."

"I went over it a couple of days ago to go to go to a birthday party with my daughter and I was an hour and ten minutes in the queue, just to get over the bridge. That was about half past eleven, on a Saturday."

"Obviously there is that rush hour - you can see that. But even though it's rush hour it doesn't take a lot for the traffic to back up."

"I picked my son up last night from Widnes at nine o'clock and it took me 40 minutes to do a round trip, which usually you would usually be taking 20 minutes."

7.3.14 Traffic accidents appeared to aggravate the problems on the bridge even further, with many respondents recalling times when accidents had prevented them from even attempting to cross the bridge.

"Then last week there was two bad accidents. One in Runcorn wasn't there and one in Warrington. So the tailback last week all day long. Was it about 11.0'clock my neighbour said to me are you going over the bridge today and I said no it's not my turn today and she said it's bad there's been an accident."

"You just go back home."
"No there isn’t a way round anywhere else."

"If there’s an accident in Warrington there’s a knock on effect here in Widnes because everybody tries to get different ways to avoid the bridge."

7.3.15 However, for some respondents, such as the bus driver, they do not have the choice of taking another route or cancelling their journey, and therefore have to just queue.

"Yes it’s not as if you can just go down another road in a bus."

"You get a load of people on the bus as well with hospital appointments and everything like that saying, I’m going to be late."

7.3.16 Respondents also expressed concern that in order to reach a hospital, many residents have to cross the bridge, which is not ideal in emergency situations.

"If you live in Widnes you can go to Weston, but if you’re in Runcorn and especially, my son we had a match over here. He plays for a Runcorn Team and in two weeks we had to go to the hospital three times for all different things for him and there’d been an accident then. The work had stopped on the bridge then but there was still an accident. Took him to Halton and they couldn’t see to him so had to take him to Weston. Now I got stuck in that and that was a long long time. By the time I got there they said to me why have you only just brought him and I said. He’d broken his thumb. He could have carried on the match had nearly ended."

7.4 Views on the proposed New Mersey Crossing

7.4.1 Everyone agreed that there was urgent need for a new crossing over the River Mersey.

"The sooner the better."

7.4.2 Respondents were aware that there are plans for a new crossing, and some had a rough idea as to its proposed location.

"We’ve seen it in the newspaper that’s about it."

"The crossing was too wide because where Runcorn Bridge is actually now that’s the narrowest crossing isn’t it?"

"I have seen a couple of the layouts in the town centre."

"I think there was a couple of possibilities - wasn’t it?"

7.4.3 Some respondents were not aware that several routes had been proposed for the new crossing before a final route was selected, and one respondent felt that a crossing right next to the existing one would be more appropriate.

"The thing I can’t understand is that when they did the M6 and the Thelwall viaduct they put two bridges right next to each other, and it does work. It’s still not brilliant but it works a lot better than it did do, and why they aren’t doing the same with the Runcorn Bridge? Put one right next door to it."

7.4.4 Most respondents agreed that a new bridge would be extremely successful in helping the congestion problems in the area.
"Definitely."

"Hopefully it will make it a lot easier to get across the bridge."

7.4.5 However, others felt that it was dependent on the design of the road networks surrounding the bridges.

"...I don't know whether you are just condensing the traffic in to the same area."

"I don’t know I haven't seen all the routes that have been laid out."

7.4.6 Respondents highlighted that they would prefer to see HGVs restricted to just one of the bridges as many did not like driving alongside them.

"Stop the lorries from going on this bridge."

"And it's too narrow for a load of big lorries. When you’re driving and a lorry comes next to you feel like you are just going to go over the edge."

7.4.7 The majority agreed that the introduction of another bridge would encourage them to make more trips.

"Definitely."

"At the weekend yes. In the week I haven't got a huge problem. But at the weekend I do try to avoid it. But I would use it more yes."

"If you have got more access to over the water and you don't have to wait in queues for it then you are always going to use it aren't you. I know sometimes I will tend not to bother going places, but if I wasn't going to be sitting in traffic, then I probably would go over more."

7.4.8 However, others felt that it would depend on whether or not the bridge was to be tolled, as they were far less likely to use it if they had to pay.

"You can't say that because it depends on this tolling. Depends how much."

"That depends if there's a toll on it."

"If there's going to be a toll on it you wouldn't."

"It depends on what the congestion is like on that one and what the toll is like and everything. You know, can't say until it's up and running."

7.4.9 Some respondents objected to the suggestion of tolling a new bridge as they felt that their Council Tax should cover the cost of building and maintaining the bridge.

"Obviously within Halton Borough Council and Liverpool as well you pay your Council Tax and obviously your Council Tax should cover that toll so you shouldn't have to pay."

7.4.10 It was clear that the current levels of congestion prevented respondents from making as many trips as they would perhaps like to. Respondents also felt that the congestion on the bridge was having a knock-on effect on the traffic in other areas.

"The few times I have gone to go over and then I have thought 'no, I am not going in that traffic.'"
"You actually feel like you are boxed in. You can’t, you tend not to want to go over because you know you have to sit either in the traffic going over there or sit in the traffic coming back."

"Or even if you use the alternative routes, if you go round Warrington you are sitting in traffic there, cause other people think they will go round Warrington way, and you are sitting in traffic there so you think I am not bothering."

"Well I went Warrington way last Saturday, and as I say, my youngest had a birthday party in Penkhurst, and I went Warrington way and that was just as bad because of the bridge, because all the people have the same idea as well."

7.4.11 Some members felt although they would like to see a new bridge built to ease congestion, they would probably continue to use the existing one as it was closer to where they lived and worked.

"I don’t think it would encourage any of us to use the new bridge because we are two minutes away from the bridge now."

7.5 General thoughts on tolling

7.5.1 The majority of respondents were against the general idea of road user charging. They felt that motorists already contribute enough towards the roads through other means, and therefore did not want to see further charges incurred.

"Being honest, you pay your road tax and everything else, so why should you have to pay to use the road when you have already paid?"

"It is just ridiculous, asking us to pay for a road that you have already, I mean, it is being built with our money anyway - our tax money that’s funding the thing, so you get hammered three ways, it is not fair."

"Personally I don’t think any toll is acceptable, I just don’t agree with tolls I think as I said before I think we pay enough with our taxes for new road building and maintenance of bridges."

"I don’t like it either. We pay enough, road tax and everything."

"Your Council Tax and your Road Tax. If you drive you pay more tax."

7.5.2 Some respondents drew on examples of road user charging elsewhere in the country, and highlighted how they felt it was not working.

"They have done it in Birmingham and it is not working."

"They have a toll road at the Dartford Tunnel, the Dartford crossing, down south and that is absolute murder and it takes hours to get over that bridge, and you know it is a toll road, a toll bridge and there are so many toll booths open, it is still absolute mayhem even though it is a toll."

"That’s because of the toll and then you can’t get there any quicker."

7.5.3 One respondent felt that a large amount of money was already being generated from motorists and felt that money from other areas (such as speeding/parking fines) should be used to fund a new crossing.

"But why can’t they use the money off speeding fines and parking fines because they’re getting millions a year out of the motorist."
7.5.4 However, others still felt that in a round about way this would mean that they were indirectly funding the bridge.

"Even then we are still paying for it because we get fined don’t we.”

"And then if you have speed cameras your insurance goes up if you get points and stuff so you’d end up paying even more wouldn’t you.”

7.5.5 Respondents felt that the success of a toll would depend largely on how much the toll was.

"And also as well it depends on how much the toll is.”

7.5.6 Some were keen to know exactly what the money raised by tolling would be used to fund.

"Is the toll going to be to cover the cost of the building and maintenance?“

7.5.7 Most respondents did not feel that there were any circumstances in this country under which road user charging was acceptable or effective.

"Not in this country, no. We are paying to have like the heaviest duty petrol, so they are taking money off you there, and when you work it out a gallon of petrol is probably around 60p, and the rest of it is duty, and then you are being done on your tax for the car, so I personally think we are paying enough.”

“We are only paying more for the cost of the car anyway than on the continent.”

7.5.8 Some respondents did feel however that they would be more willing to pay a toll on a road that they only use occasionally.

“I’ve done that.”

7.5.9 Respondents highlighted how they felt that it was unreasonable to compare paying a toll on a local bridge to the new M6 toll road. They felt that whereas it may be more acceptable to pay a toll on a large stretch of motorway, it was not acceptable for local people to have to pay to cross what in their opinion is a short stretch of water.

"It is a local road, it’s not like the one in Birmingham that is a major road, this is a local road, ...... It is local for these people, local people.”

"This is on a smaller scale isn’t it, we are talking a bridge over the Mersey we are not talking 30 odd miles of motorway.”

7.5.10 One respondent also highlighted how paying a toll did not even guarantee that you would get to your destination any quicker.

“There is no guarantee that because you are paying to go down the road that you are not going to get stuck. They are not saying you are going to drive into you or there will be an accident.”

7.5.11 The majority of respondents stated that they would not be willing to pay a toll to cross the River Mersey.

“No. Not if I can help it no.”

“If the bosses put your wages up to compensate for you going over every day.”
"Because if you're local, if you want a decent night out, you have go to go over that bridge, and even if you just want to go and see the family, all my family are in Liverpool, if I want to see my family I have got to go across that bridge, and for me to be told that means a hell of a lot of money coming out of my pocket, especially during the week when I am working, also at weekends when I want to go and visit my family, I am not, say it is only £1 I am not going to spend the odd £30 a week."

7.5.12 Others however felt that providing the toll was not too expensive, they would be tempted to pay it if it meant that their journeys times were reduced.

"I know you don't like it and I'd hate a toll, but if there was a two hour queue and you paid say a pound or whatever, if I pay a pound I'm going to get home in ten minutes you'd pay it wouldn't you."

"Yes every time."

"You'd have to because you get that frustrated."

7.5.13 Some respondents highlighted that it was not that they could not afford to pay a toll, but rather that they felt that in principle they should not have to pay to use a local bridge.

"I think it is more not the fact about having to, beside that having to fork out, it's the principle of it, that we shouldn't be charged as you said as local people, shouldn't be charged for using that little bridge to go over for better shopping facilities and stuff."

7.5.14 One member felt that having a toll would not necessarily speed up the traffic on the new bridge, as he felt that the traffic would have to slow down at toll booths.

"You'd get that frustrated about the toll as well. You're still going to have a build up in the congestion of traffic because each car will have to stop to pay the money. You'll have somebody who hasn't got change and once that one car stops that's going to be a build up of traffic again."

7.5.15 Some respondents were worried that a low rate toll may be introduced in order to get drivers used to the idea of paying, but then there would be nothing preventing the toll being increased at a later date.

"Everyone agrees yes we'll have a toll. There's nothing to stop them putting that toll up then is there once it's started."

7.5.16 Respondents drew comparisons to the Mersey Tunnel, which was only going to be tolled until it had been paid for.

"I know we are not talking about it but the Mersey Tunnel has gone up hasn't it?"

"Yeah, it has gone up again, so you are looking at a similar sort of thing, aren't you, I don't know, they may start at a cheaper rate, but you're are still looking at a couple of quid a day aren't you."

"You are looking at the tunnel anyway and they said the tolls are only there until it's paid for, that thing has paid for itself about five or six times over. And they keep going up every year."
7.5.17 Several respondents highlighted that they were confused about what exactly the point of tolling was, as they were under the impression that it was only ever implemented until a road was paid for.

"I thought that was what all toll roads were for anyway. They want to pay for the actual building of it."

7.5.18 Respondents did not trust that a short term toll to cover the cost of building a new bridge would be adhered to, as they felt that this promise was made to residents near the Mersey Tunnel, who still had to pay currently.

"...I thought as soon as it was paid for that it would you know, stop."

"They said that on the Mersey tunnel, 56 years ago."

"Yeah, so you are not trusting that."

7.5.19 Respondents were interested in the rate of the toll for different user groups, and whether there was to be a fixed fee for all users.

"Are they going to fix one rate for everybody or would it be so much for disabled. So much for company vehicles. So much for wagons."

7.5.20 Some members felt that business users, such as lorries, should pay a higher fee, as they are making money out of using the bridge.

"Its business isn't it. They are making money out of it."

"That's a fair comment actually."

7.5.21 However others, including members who work for delivery firms, pointed out that many drivers are self employed, and that fees such as tolls actually come out of their own pockets, rather than the company.

"You know the lorries and things like that. The firm I work for they're all self employed. They don't get paid to go through tunnels. They don't get paid for anything like that. They get paid for delivering parcels and it's going to come out of their pocket. It's not going to come out of the business at the end of the day. It is going to come out of their pockets."

"90% of the drivers for us are actually self employed."

7.5.22 Respondents felt that local people should be excluded from paying a toll to cross the bridge.

"The locals should be."

"Anyone who lives in Halton."

"If they are tolling it, then they should give the local people discount on it."

7.5.23 Some worried however that giving discounts to residents may lead to the system being abused.

"Who is to say that this lady there doesn't go and get her toll thing and her brother has got a wagon and she gets him one and it is open for abuse isn't it?"
7.5.24 Respondents also felt that local, particularly small businesses should also be excluded or given a subsidised rate.

"I think the companies over here, use the bridge daily, and I think they should be given the discount and don't have to pay."

7.5.25 Respondents were asked what they felt would happen to businesses if they were to pay a higher toll than general car drivers. Some felt that smaller firms would risk going out of business. It was suggested that to avoid this, frequent users could pay one fixed fee each day that they use the bridge.

"I think they should be subsidised, cause if it gets too much they are going to move aren't they?"

"To keep the companies here I think you have got to, if you introduce a toll you've got to give them a discount."

"They'd go out of business wouldn't they?"

"We're only a small firm. Like I said earlier we have to cross the bridge maybe ten twenty times a day, so if we have to pay a fixed toll say £2, that could be £40 a day. So rather than just pay £2 or whatever every time we go, could we pay just one fee.

"Pay once a day but have a daily pass or whatever."

7.5.26 Respondents also felt that other users, such as taxis should be entitled to a privileged pass as they are using the bridge frequently.

"Taxis. They are only trying to make a living to shuffle people from A to B."

7.5.27 Some respondents felt that having a toll would also be unfair to certain groups of people, such as the elderly or unemployed.

"So what would you do if it's an elderly person wanted to get to Halton Hospital you know and hasn't got the money to get across."

"It's the same for the unemployed isn't it?"

"I don't think it's any fault of theirs because they are unemployed."

7.5.28 Although respondents did feel that the elderly may find it difficult to pay, some did not agree that the unemployed should be exempt. Respondents felt that they should not be penalised for working, especially as they felt they already contributed through payment of taxes.

"It's not any problem of ours and we're working. You can't just say they have to pay it and we don't have to pay can you."

"But I think we pay enough in taxes and we shouldn't have to pay."

"I agree with that. You pay your Council Tax. I mean a lot of the Council Tax really, but that's not the issue, is supposed to be paid to your local Police Authority. Years ago when people didn't pay a Council Tax or a Poll Tax the Police still got paid. It wasn't by us."

"It's not just Council Tax though there's Car Tax."
"So obviously your Council Tax is for the Council things and if the Council are helping to build a bridge then your Council Tax should go for that."

7.5.29 Respondents were asked to consider what they felt would be an acceptable toll level, and how much they would be willing to pay to cross the River Mersey. Respondents felt that if a toll was introduced it should be no higher than the Mersey Tunnel.

"They will charge what they are getting for the toll - that’s what they will go for, the 1.20, 1.40, because they know people in Birkenhead have had to pay that. So they will just go probably for the same amount."

"They couldn’t justify more or less because of that because people will compare it against that."

"I don’t know about that, but I think that’s the direction they will go. The same as the tunnel."

7.5.30 Some felt that even charging just over one pound would be unacceptable, as it was such a short crossing.

"I think we should be looking at 50p."

"It’s not a major crossing - it is two minutes over that bridge."

7.5.31 Some members were worried that having toll booths may have a negative effect on emergency services trying to cross the bridge. Others felt that this was already the case on the existing bridge due to traffic.

"With the tolls how are they going to pay the money, like Fire Engines they can’t just shoot through can they, if they have to pay a toll?"

"But the bridge like it is now if there’s a back up they can’t get through."

7.5.32 Respondents were asked what alternative routes they would consider taking, if they were not prepared to pay a toll to cross the river. Some highlighted that instead they would consider going via Warrington.

"Through Warrington."

"You don’t have to cross the Thelwall Viaduct to get to Warrington."

7.5.33 Others however felt that traffic on other routes in the area was just as bad as it was locally.

"Warrington’s a nightmare sometimes."

"It’s a nightmare really no matter where you go. You’ve got that swing bridge as well haven’t you? It’s just a nightmare whichever way you go."

7.5.34 Respondents pointed out that driving on different routes did add extra time onto their journey. Some however felt that they may still prefer to do this as they would prefer to be driving than sitting still in traffic jams.

"It’s about half an hour extra isn’t it just to get round Warrington to get back. Say example you want to go over the bridge and you get onto that Estate off the bridge. You’ve got to go all the way round the world to get to it."
"Sometimes you do it because you'd rather move wouldn't you than just sit still."

7.5.35 There were mixed views in the group when the discussion focused on the logistics of tolling either a new Mersey crossing, the existing bridge, or both.

"Just the new one."

"I would say none of them."

"I would like them not to toll either."

7.5.36 Some felt that just tolling a new bridge would result in people using the existing bridge instead to avoid paying to cross the river.

"If one is and one is not then you're going to use the free one aren't you."

"The thing with this one - the toll bridge, this new bridge, I personally think, and I'm not being funny but you still get of people who will just go I'm not gonna pay cause the old one is free."

"People will just use the old one."

7.5.37 Respondents were therefore asked what they would do if the Silver Jubilee Bridge was also tolled. Some felt that they would have no choice and would have to pay a toll. However, others felt that where possible they would use a different route to avoid paying.

"You've got no option then have you?"

"You have got to get to work."

"Depends on where you are going as well, cause say like I was going across to Liverpool, it's such a big diverse going the other way, you'd still use it."

"Sometimes easier to use it when it's necessary, to go over the bridge when it's a necessity, but if it's not a necessity then generally you tend to try and think of an alternative and somewhere else to go."

7.5.38 Respondents felt that local residents may object to having to pay to cross a bridge that had previously been toll free, and therefore the existing bridge should remain un-tolled.

"If you start tolling the old one it would kick up a stink wouldn't it. People have been used to going over it and not paying."

"And all of a sudden they start charging."

"People would expect a toll on the new bridge and leave the old bridge just as it is now."

"Start with the new one. See how that goes and then see about the other one."

"Because why should we have to pay for the old one as well?"

7.5.39 Respondents were asked what they felt would happen if a toll was introduced on both bridges. They felt that people on a higher income, or those that could claim back the cost through their work would do so, and that it was more likely to impact those on a low income.
"I think you find that the likes of company people who can claim it back would use the new one. The likes of people who, I don’t know shop workers who couldn’t they would use the existing one."

"Depends on people’s incomes and their jobs."

"I would for business use because I can claim it back. If I scare a traffic jam on the old one, I would use the new one to go to work. But that’s not the way to deal with it, is it, I’m just in the fortunately position where I can claim things back."

7.5.40 Respondents suggested other ways in which the new and existing bridges could be used. Some felt that leaving one bridge for local residents would be a good idea, whereas others felt that the bridges could be used for different directions of traffic.

"And just leave it to the likes of the local people. So all the wagons and everything else would be using the toll road. So it would be a lot clearer here anyway for us."

"Or have the new bridge going one way and this bridge going the other way."

"Four lanes going into Runcorn and four lanes coming out."

"What’s that one in America where they’ve built it like that so that one way is going that way and one’s going underneath that way? So if there’s any crashes then you know. You’d have to four lanes underneath and four lanes on top going opposite ways. You’ve got four lanes on this bit. Put two lanes going this way and two lanes going that way and as soon as one lane breaks down everyone stops."

7.5.41 Everyone was keen to see heavy goods vehicles restricted to using just one bridge, preferably the new one. They felt that this would not only be practical in terms of traffic flow, but also to improve levels of air pollution near to the town centre.

"Because HGVs backing up. An HGV is like four cars long isn’t it. So it would be better them all using the new bridge."

"A lot of the trouble on the bridge is HGVs jack knife."

"And if the new bridge was a bit further away from the town centre you’ve got less pollution. You’d have a lot less pollution in the town because they wouldn’t use the town streets."

7.5.42 Some respondents still felt that there would be a proportion of local people who may wish to use a toll bridge if it is going to make their journey to and from work quicker.

"For anyone, but I think more work people would use the toll bridge to get over quicker."

"That depends where you want to get to. If you use one bridge to get nearer to Warrington you’d use that one. If you wanted to use the Silver Jubilee Bridge to get nearer to Widnes you’d use that one."

"Yes but the Widnes Bridge is already paid for isn’t it. So paying your taxes for the new one you might as well leave the old one un-tolled."

7.5.43 Others disagreed, believing that the majority of people would choose to use the un-tolled bridge.
"But everyone's going to use that then aren't they."

7.5.44 Some respondents appeared to be confused over where the funding for a new bridge should/would come from. Some felt that road taxes should be used to pay for a new bridge.

"What do they use your road tax for? I thought your road tax was for all this kind of stuff? What does your road tax do then?"

"Yes when you think of how much we've got to pay in a year. Millions and millions. I just thought that's what your road tax was for."

"I thought the road tax was all collected in, given to the Government and the Government decides you know the North gets so much and the South gets so much. I'm not too sure whether that's right, but that's my opinion."

7.5.45 Several respondents suggested that perhaps a one-off payment card could be used instead.

"Or a one off payment on a card, no matter where you came from, get it stamped saying you've paid a fiver for the year and everybody can use the bridge no matter how many times. A fiver off everybody and that lasts them a year. Get it stamped."

"Get your card stamped. Show your card and go through."

"I was thinking over a year that would pay for the bridge."

7.5.46 Respondents were interested about the length of time a toll may be in place on the bridge, and wondered if it would be a permanent measure.

"O.K. say for example this toll did come into it right and you get the amount of money that you wanted, the Government. What will happen then?"

"You'll still keep paying it."

"They'll still keep the toll on."

"They're not going to stop it then."

7.5.47 Respondents discussed the maintenance that was required on the existing bridge, and suggested that opening a new toll-free bridge would allow the current bridge to be closed down and repaired, rather than carrying out low levels of maintenance over a longer period of time.

"So you know you're saying like you need all this work done on the bridge and say for example they do build this new one, don't you think we should shut that one down to stop like the big congestion that's going on at the moment. Do the work. Could do the work in say a month or two and then open it back up again."

7.5.48 Others argued that this would just transfer the congestion from one bridge to another. The majority of respondents did feel however that it would allow repairs to be carried out quicker and that this would be more preferable in the long term.

"But then the toll road would be congested wouldn't it because everybody would be using that."

"At least you are getting use of one bridge."
"It would get the job done yes."

"Because at the end of the day now you've done work on it last year. You've done work on it this year. You still haven't got it right. If they could just shut the bridge down and get the repairs done."

7.5.49 One respondent felt that by opening a new bridge, maintenance costs on the existing one would be lower, and that therefore this cost saving could be used to fund the new one.

"And if they open a secondary crossing which is going to be alleviating some of the traffic, in an ideal world, surely that is going to save money in maintenance on the existing bridge."

7.5.50 Respondents considered the logistics of tolling a new bridge, and wondered if a toll would be paid in both directions.

"If you're going over the bridge and paying your toll. Would the toll be on one side of the bridge? So if you were going over and you paid say a pound. Once you got over and you were coming back would you have to pay again?"

7.5.51 Respondents resented the idea of tolling a new bridge as they felt that money should be found to build the bridge from existing funds.

"So the Government are going to build it and then they are going to charge us to use it in theory?"

"It's our money that we are giving to the Government and they are telling us we've got to pay it again then and we given it them in the first place."

"The Government are making the revenue."

7.5.52 Some felt that indirectly it would be cheaper to pay for a bridge as congestion on the current bridge resulted in a lot of wasted man hours.

"The Government are being paid right left and centre for workers going to work to earn money that they are getting taxed on and they can't get to work if there's too much congestion. The wagons, the vans, the business people need to get to work to make money for the Government so the Government should pay for it."

7.5.53 Several respondents highlighted the effect that congestion was having on their businesses and jobs, not only through lost hours, but also stress.

"We've lost quite a few contractors in the last couple of months because they are losing time and getting across to Runcorn you know. The stress of it you know and it's all because of the bridge."

"It's not only the companies that are losing money. We have refused overtime from work as well because of the bridge."

"I'd rather do the overtime for a better standard of living, but I refused the overtime so that I don't have to cross that bridge."

"We've had to get two drivers now to go across that bridge in a day because the one that's usually out goes out half full and the other one is half full."

"So you have to pay two people to do one job."
7.5.54 Respondents were asked if they had considered walking or cycling across the Silver Jubilee Bridge in order to avoid congestion. Some respondents had done in the past, but all agreed that it wasn't practical or desirable to do so.

"I've cycled over."

"I have walked over the bridge loads of times."

"I wouldn't."

"Not many people would."

"I'm scared of heights."

"I actually ran over when my car broke down. I was quite hot when I got over here but I made it. I was frightened to stay on the bridge. If you do break down the breakdown facility is quite bad isn't it on the bridge as well."

"It depends who you're talking too, it wouldn't be impossible in my case as I have to travel 12 and a half miles, six of which is in Runcorn and six of which is through Widnes and St Helens. So it's not practical."

"I might cycle, if it was safe."

7.5.55 One respondent suggested that a train station in Widnes with trains to Runcorn would be a good way of reducing the number of cars crossing the bridge. Several agreed with this and felt that it may considerably reduce congestion on the bridge.

"There's another alternative as well. If people didn't have to use cars or vehicles or anything to get over the bridge, say they put a station on the Widnes side just to get to Runcorn."

"Yes a train station. The amount of people that might just take the train to get to Runcorn."

"Office workers coming from Widnes into Runcorn old town, would it ease any of the congestion just for the Widnes people who just have to work in Runcorn to get from A to B?"

7.5.56 However, some felt that this would not necessarily work for people travelling to and from work, but agreed that when crossing for leisure purposes, that they may consider using a train.

"......for pleasure if you didn't have to use your car you could jump on the train and get from Widnes to Runcorn. I'd jump on a train."

"I would."

"Just for pleasure. Leave the car at home."

7.5.57 Others however were not keen on the idea as they felt that people prefer to use their own cars for convenience.

"No if people have a car they want to use their car. They don't want to be going on the train because they're paying their tax and everything. That's a luxury when you can get into your car in the morning."

"Get out of the cold and the rain."
"That's it you don't want to be standing around waiting for the train or the bus."

7.5.58 Respondents in both groups highlighted that part of the reason for such a high volume of car-use in the area was due to poor public transport provision. They stressed how they did not think that public transport was adequate and until such times that it was, people in the area would continue to rely on their cars.

"We don't live on a bus route. Even though there's a bus garage three blocks down we don't actually live on a bus route."

"So you either rely on your car or that's it."

"No, if it's reliable and a better service then of course everyone would consider using public transport - but it is not."

7.5.59 Another suggestion from respondents to reduce car levels on the bridge was to introduce car sharing, perhaps designating a car pool lane on the bridge. They also felt that tolling would be more acceptable to people if it was split between several passengers in a car, rather than just one driver.

"How many people do you see one person in a car back and forward to work every day?"

"Yes well car sharing. They reckon on some of these tolls if some of these people were car sharing."

7.5.60 Several respondents felt that tolling should only be introduced at certain times of the day, when the bridge is most congested, for example in rush hour.

"The rush hour."

7.5.61 Others felt that this would slow traffic down even further, and therefore suggested that it would be better to toll the bridge outside of the rush hour, whereas others felt that a toll should just be implemented 24 hours or not at all.

"If they have it in the rush hour every car has got to stop then and every car wants to go so you’re stopped in traffic then."

"That will just cause more congestion, as people will be clambering to get over there before it comes into effect."

"Maybe it's the wrong way round."

"Don't want to be worried about having to pay a toll in the rush hour."

"Through the day maybe or whatever."

"If you're going to toll it, then toll it, 24/7 don't you?"

7.5.62 Respondents found it difficult to say how tolling would affect the number of journeys that they make, as they felt that this was dependent on the cost and reason for needing to cross the river.

"It would depend on the amount, exactly how much the toll is going to be?"

"And how much you need to get across there."
"I was just going to say if I was forced to make the crossing, I was suppose to go across, then I would have to pay I would have no choice. I would have to do it to get to work."

7.6 Impact of tolling a New Mersey Crossing

7.6.1 Respondents were asked to consider what effects they would expect paying a toll to have on them and their families. Some felt it was difficult to judge without knowing the exact level of the toll.

"It all depends on how much the toll is like. If it comes down to at all times, this—how much the toll will actually be before you can say how much it is going to affect you and your family."

7.6.2 Some felt that charging one pound per day may be acceptable, whereas others, particularly those who went over the bridge several times a day, thought that even this was too much.

"It depends what it costs at the end of the day doesn’t it. If it’s only a £1 then it wouldn’t be that much. But £5."

"Why can’t they stick to pence instead of pounds? 25p."

"If you’ve got to go over five times then it’s only £1.25 a day do you know what I mean."

"I’ve been over a very very small bridge in Lymm and actually I paid 20p to go over that."

7.6.3 The majority felt that due to the frequency that the most people in the area cross the bridge, charging less than a pound would be more appropriate.

"It’s only pence then isn’t it not pounds."

"Well people would use it a lot more then. You would get a lot more revenue over that period of time a year or whatever."

"There are people using it every day."

"I use it twice a day, five days a week so it is going to increase my living costs."

"His wife has to use it, it is double. Because there is no saying he can go to work at the same time as his wife, so £60 for him, £60 for his wife just on a five day week, that £120 a week."

7.6.4 Those on low income were expected to be affected financially, influencing their mobility.

"It would have a lot on me I’ll be honest. I’m a working single parent so if you were to say £5 to go over the bridge. I’d think my God that’s two days petrol for me. I will be honest with you it would be a real lot."

"You wouldn’t go places because you couldn’t afford it."

"A lot of people wouldn’t be able to afford to go and see their families."

7.6.5 One respondent highlighted that although she does not agree with the idea of tolling, she may occasionally pay if it meant crossing the river quicker.
“It’s hard though isn’t it because some days you just need to go over don’t you and if I’ve got my little boy in the back whose three kicking and screaming, you just think oh God I’ll pay just to get across. Not that you’d agree with it, but.”

7.6.6 The group also considered the effect that tolling may have on people using other forms of transport, as they expected it to result in an increase in bus and taxi fares.

“My wife gets the bus over to Widnes every morning as well, so it will end up with bus fares increased as well.”

“Taxi drivers and things are going to go up, bus fares are going to go up.”

7.6.7 Respondents felt that paying a toll would have a negative effect on certain groups, such as the elderly and disabled, and they did not think that these groups should be required to pay.

“Pensioners and people like that shouldn’t have to pay. They should have a pass anyway.”

“Yes they have a pass on the bus. If you are eligible for that then you should go free.”

“Yes. And disabled.”

“I think there is a lot of old people, whose only family is in Liverpool, because they have younger daughters and all that. I think a lot of them are going to end up very lonely and scared because their families will just say - I’m out of work I can’t afford the toll. And she’s stuck here in a little flat on her own.”

7.6.8 Respondents also considered the effect that tolling would have on students in the area, and how public transport was already inadequate, without the added burden of a toll.

“The School Leavers and that if they’re getting £50 a week or whatever they get and then they’ve got to pay that out they won’t go. The won’t do it.”

“We have the Students at the College and they have courses obviously in Widnes and Runcorn. Now if they live in Widnes they have to come over to Runcorn and if they live in Runcorn they have to come over to Widnes and then they have to go back in the afternoon for a different course of what they’re doing. There’s only one bus route at the moment that runs from Runcorn Circle back to the College here but there’s nothing to bring them back to Widnes and Runcorn for them.”

“They limit the mileage. If you live in Widnes and your main course is at Widnes you don’t get a bus pass. There’s been a lot of people stopped doing courses this year because of all the messing about.”

“A lot of them have got to buy the bus pass and then pay the toll as well it’s a lot of money for students isn’t it.”

“You’ll also find as well the bus fares will go up to counter the toll.”

7.6.9 It was suggested that a discount card could be introduced for those who work locally and have to cross the bridge for work purposes. Some respondents however still felt that this was not practical as it would require going out of their way each week in order to obtain a card.
"Just a minute, just going into a bit more, how would you do that? If people are working from say, 9 to 6 on a weekday or they are on shifts or what have you. How are they supposed to get the discount card, how would you work that? Would they have to go and get it from a certain outlet?"

"You would have to go through the Council wouldn't you?"

"You would still have to find time to come out and do that as well as working, do you understand what I mean?"

7.6.10 Some respondents again refused to be drawn into discussing the possibility of paying a toll, maintaining that they did not think it was fair as they already contributed enough through Council Tax.

"I know I keep going back to the Council Tax, but I do think that should be enough to cover whatever in your area, the Borough that you come from. I think regardless of whether you pay at all or not you'll still find that your Council Tax will increase. They'll increase it purposely in line with the bridge."

"I pay full Council Tax and I pay the full Rent but I pay £57 a month and it's a lot. You'll find a massive increase in that just to cover this bridge and still pay a toll as well."

7.6.11 Respondents were asked to consider if they would still be able to access all of the services that they need if a toll was introduced, but again they felt that this was dependent on exactly how much was to be charged.

"Depends how much the toll is."

"It all comes down to money at the end of the day."

7.6.12 Respondents indicated that introducing a toll on both bridges was likely to change shopping and leisure patterns in the area, as many would shop in places that did not necessitate crossing the bridge.

"I'd go to Cheshire Oaks, if I new I had to pay a toll on that bridge, you know, for shopping and things like that."

"I think so because I'd normally go into town, into Liverpool to go shopping over the weekend and like I said before, I'd got to Cheshire Oaks or Ellesmere Port. I don't like sitting in queues and it is much easier for me so in answer to your question, Yeah, I certainly would."

"You are not going to go into Liverpool, you are going to use Liverpool as the last resort."

"Well I used to go to Prescott and that for my shopping, but I don't know, I will just go to Warrington."

7.6.13 Some also felt that they would be less likely to go and visit family and friends if it meant they had to pay to cross the river.

"They can come to us. So they have the problem now, I am not going to visit them if it will cost you £3 to go over that bridge."

7.6.14 Respondents discussed the effect that tolling may have on employment opportunities in the area. One respondent highlighted how the congestion on the
bridge has already made them think twice about taking a new job because of the difficulty in getting to work.

"Yes I've not gone for a job. When you go for a job you think oh God I need to cross that bridge. So you look at Warrington and it's only twenty minutes isn't it but you think do I want to go there you know."

7.6.15 Respondents also highlighted how road-based businesses need to travel across the bridge so frequently each day that it would be very expensive.

"Our business he has a fleet of twenty vans that go into Widnes every day."

7.6.16 However, another respondent argued that paying a toll may ease congestion and therefore be economically advantageous to local businesses.

"But then, not that I agree with the toll, but then if the business relies on getting back and fore if they are going to get over the bridge quicker they might get some more work do you know. So for some bigger businesses they might benefit from it really. If it depends on how much money they earn, how many times they are going to get across the bridge in one day they're going to make more money aren't they."

7.6.17 The majority of respondents thought that businesses may leave the area due to the effect that the toll would have on them and their customers.

"Then we have got the local businesses and everything else. I bet if they have got to pay for that toll, and everything else, they are not just going to stay in that area."

7.6.18 Respondents also felt that this would be applicable to new businesses, as they could not imagine that new businesses would want to locate to an area where a toll had been introduced, therefore further threatening the future economy of the Borough.

"They are not going to come are they? They are going to go to Liverpool or Warrington or somewhere like that because they are going to turn around and say I'm not going there because it is going to cost me so much year for the toll."

7.6.19 Respondents were worried that tolling a bridge may cause people to remain on one side for work and leisure purposes, therefore creating a barrier.

"Put a barrier, put a physical barrier between here and Liverpool."

7.6.20 Several respondents were concerned about the possible effects on existing traffic flow that would be caused during the construction of a new bridge.

"It's not just that, it's whilst they are building it. It's like the Thelwell viaduct, when they were building it we had three years of a nightmare. Now they are actually only repairing the bridge at the minute, but for a good twelve months of upheaval on the basis of this, how long will we be suffering for this new bridge?"

7.6.21 Despite all of their reservations, respondents were pleased to see that the traffic problems in their area were finally being taken into account and solutions being sought.

"It is good that they are trying to come up with a solution, cause it's been a long time coming."
7.6.22 Respondents were asked if they had any further comments they would like to make about tolling the new bridge or about the new bridge in general. Respondents felt that up until now little had been done to publicise the New Mersey Crossing and stressed that they would like to see more information informing local people about the project.

"Would you publicise exactly where it's going to be, which roads it's going to be on?"

"I think the people here we would like to see some sort of publication of when it is going to be built and what roads it is going to use."

"It hasn't been publicised very well."

7.6.23 Several felt that information about the crossing had been purposely kept from residents as the majority of local people are against the idea of tolling and there would be a strong local feeling if it was introduced.

"I think that is because there is going to be an absolute outcry, because I think it will be tolled, the way the council tax goes up yearly. You can't pass the cost onto everybody because not everybody uses the bridge. I would say the majority do. But then I would also say that if you are going to toll it it has to be the same for everyone because if you start getting all these 'oh, well I have got to because I have got to get to hospital'."

7.6.24 One respondent suggested that perhaps only tolling one way would be a fairer system for people, such as is done on the Severn Bridge.

"Would there be a consideration that they would only toll one way? Like the Severn Bridge crossing?"

7.6.25 Others felt that any form of tolling was always going to cause congestion, and that this could be seen from the effects of the Mersey Tunnel toll.

"You would have to toll back and forward wouldn't you? It is still going to cause congestion. I mean, you go to the Mersey Tunnel up in the morning, and they have like fifty years experience of getting cars into that tunnel, and it doesn't take an awful lot there for everything to build up."

7.6.26 Several respondents felt that there was always going to be an element of congestion in the area, as they felt that the road infrastructure surrounding the bridge was as much to blame for the problems.

"And if anything was to go wrong, you know, so we are still going to have the same problems - you are still going to have congestion. The whole infrastructure around the bridge doesn't seem to be right anyway."

7.6.27 Some felt that using each bridge for different traffic directions may help this and create a better flow of traffic in the area.

"At one point I think they were gonna have two bridges, one going that way and the other going the other way. I think that's what we should do."

"That was the beauty of the Thelwel Viaduct, the fact that you can use as a contra flow, problems with one bridge, you can use the other."

"I think if they are going to toll it maybe use one bridge to go one way and one the other, and that way if you are only going one way, then you pay one toll, you
can guarantee you will only pay on toll, you know what I mean? And then if you are coming back the other way, well it is just nothing you can do about it.”

7.7 Scenarios

7.7.1 Respondents were asked to rank bridge scenarios in order of preference. They were instructed to allocate ‘1’ to their most preferred option and ‘5’ to their least preferred. Table 7.1 shows the mean ranking values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Mean Rank Score Group 5</th>
<th>Mean Rank Score Group 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not build a new bridge (however, road works will increase on the current bridge)</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and both bridges toll free</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge with restricted use (e.g. public transport, walking/cycling only) of the Silver Jubilee Bridge</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and toll both bridges</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.7.2 Some of the reasons respondents gave for their choices are given below.

"Building a bridge. Both bridges toll free.....It might ease the congestion.”

"Build the new bridge and both bridges toll free....as I said before people are paying enough.”

"My preferred one is to build the new bridge and then toll the new bridge. Because I think you've got to get some money back. It's still expensive to keep the two bridges. A couple of years down the line there could be something wrong with them.”

"First option build the new bridge and have them both toll free. That would be in an ideal world wouldn't it? And my least preferred, don't build the new bridge.”

"Number one, build the new bridge. Both bridges toll free....I think we pay enough in road taxes and things like that. And the last option number five is do not build a new bridge.”

"Build a new bridge and both bridges toll free is my most preferred one and the last one is build a new bridge and toll both. I'd rather just have the one bridge than pay for two bridges. My reason for that is because with that bridge that we use now we manage even with the roadworks and even though it's congested. So I'd rather have one bridge with no toll.”

"I've got both free as my first option and my last one is do not build a new bridge. We definitely need another bridge.”
8  Businesses

8.1  Introduction

8.1.1  Respondents in these groups represented businesses based in Runcorn and Widnes situated close to the Silver Jubilee Bridge. Respondents represented both small and larger businesses.

8.2  Details of Businesses

8.2.1  Details of the businesses represented are listed below.

**Group 7 - Runcorn**

- Local timber yard
- Floor sales unit
- Plumbing supplies
- Building maintenance firm
- Flooring sales company
- Security consultancy
- Motor accessories shop

**Group 8 – Widnes**

- Clothing company
- Carpet shop
- Motor sales company
- Security sales
- Public House
- Gift shop

8.3  Use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge

8.3.1  All the businesses represented relied heavily on the use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge. The majority of respondents also highlighted that they use the bridge frequently and their staff rely on it.

"We use it for deliveries to the public and trade, and we also have some staff who work for us who use it."

"Our staff use it, not so much deliveries over but goods coming in, they come from over the bridge."

"My business uses the bridge everyday. We have deliveries going out, deliveries coming in. Staff living in Widnes."

"We go over every day, except Saturday, we have had to stop deliveries on Saturdays because it’s [traffic congestion] ridiculous."
"I’m back and to over the bridge all day long. And a lot of the lads who work for us are as well."

"A lot of our work is done every single day going back and forth over the bridge several times. And our customer side is too, as fifty percent of our business is done in Runcorn. So fifty percent of our customers cross that bridge everyday."

"We make about fifty journeys a day across the bridge. And also, fifty percent of my staff live on the other side of the river."

8.3.2 A couple of respondents highlighted how on occasions, when travelling to destinations further afield, they sometimes use routes that mean they avoid crossing the bridge. However, in the main, journeys do require crossing the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

"We cover central and eastern Liverpool, Warrington, St Helens, Northwich, Runcorn and Frodsham. So if we are going through to Warrington or Northwich we will use the Manchester Ship Canal crossing. That’s not frequent though, the main use is the Runcorn Bridge."

8.3.3 Journeys are made across the bridge to reach both local destinations and those further afield. As well as the journeys made by the businesses represented, respondents also highlighted how their suppliers often use the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

"We go into Liverpool a lot, Liverpool, Widnes, St Helens."

"You’ve got Penkhurst, Liverpool, St Helens, just different places like that."

"They (suppliers) come from Widnes, Liverpool, we’ve got a lot of suppliers coming the Wigan way, but I’m not sure which way the come."

8.3.4 Everyone had encountered problems with traffic congestion when trying to cross the bridge. Those who relied most on the bridge highlighted how it not only affected their business in terms of making deliveries, but it also meant that staff were often held up, or frustrated due to the delays.

"I’ve got staff who live in Widnes that travel back and forth. We also have to go over to do a lot of our work, so we are back and to over the bridge all day long, so it really affects us when the bridge is slowing down."

"It upsets everybody when they are going home and they know they are going to hit a tailback. That makes it a bit of a downer."

"It doesn’t affect us much in terms of deliveries, cause it’s just our suppliers coming in, but it affects the staff."

8.3.5 Traffic congestion on the bridge can frequently cause staff employed on the opposite side of the river to where they live to be late for work. Respondents stated that even a supposedly short journey can take much longer than expected due to traffic on and around the bridge.

"Sometimes they come in late because of the bridge."

"It should be a ten minute drive, but it often takes them three quarters of an hour."
8.3.6 One respondent highlighted how this can result in his business suffering as often they are left short staffed at certain times of the day.

"It affects the business cause it means you could be short handed for an hour or so."

8.3.7 Respondents revealed that traffic on the bridge was so bad, that it was actually putting people off using their businesses.

"Widnes is one of the main areas where we rely on getting business from, and we don't get as much these days cause of the traffic."

"It effects the business, cause customers say that they will just go elsewhere, cause they won't come across the bridge."

"Quite a lot say that, they would rather go somewhere else and pay the extra cost, than lose time and go across the bridge."

"I find I do that in my personal life as well. Sometimes I fancy going to Liverpool and I think I can't be bothered, I'll do it another time."

"That's what your customers think, I'll stay local instead, as it's too much hassle."

8.3.8 Although respondents felt that traffic levels on the bridge were always high, they were worst during rush hour.

"It's normally first thing in the morning."

"Mainly the peak hours."

"If you can't get over that bridge by about seven, quarter past seven, then you'll be queuing for a good twenty minutes, half and hour, to get across."

"The problems with the Silver Jubilee Bridge are rush hour in the morning people going to work, and people coming home from work on a night time. It's great when the kids are on school holidays, cause you can have an extra ten minutes in bed. You fly over it."

8.3.9 Respondents also highlighted how accidents or road-works on the bridge could further aggravate traffic congestion.

"It only needs one little bump, one little accident, and the bridge is just wiped out for hours."

"If somebody breaks down, and they can do, they always break down, just on the bridge, there is no pull off, there is one little pull off and that's it. You get a wagon stuck on there, and that's it."

"I think the most annoying part of it is like now when there are road works on it, I don't know anywhere else in the country as bad as this. The whole place just seems to come to a stand still."

8.3.10 Respondents felt that traffic levels on the bridge were increasing every year, and that problems were therefore getting worse. They felt that when the Silver Jubilee Bridge first opened the traffic was free flowing, but an increase in the number of journeys people make and the number of car owners meant that the bridge was becoming more congested each year.
"It's definitely getting worse."

"It has got worse."

"At one time it was always free flowing."

"When it was first built it wasn’t catering for a lot of traffic."

"More people are driving in general too, kids at 17 are passing their driving test and getting a car straight away."

### 8.4 Views on the proposed New Mersey Crossing

#### 8.4.1

Respondents were aware of the proposals for the new Mersey crossing. Some were vaguely aware of the selected route, through reading local newspaper articles.

"Only what you see in the paper, that it is supposed to be coming across, a bit further down, across the widest stretch of the river."

"It's still going to link up with the Liverpool Road."

"I think it's a great idea, the new crossing."

#### 8.4.2

Everyone agreed that the introduction of a new Mersey crossing would help to alleviate congestion in the area.

"It's got to, I would have thought."

"Congestion wise it will yes, definitely."

"I agree totally with the concept of having a new bridge, cause the congestion on that thing is horrendous."

#### 8.4.3

Respondents felt that introducing a new bridge to the area would also be beneficial to their businesses (providing it was toll free) as it was likely to encourage more people to the area.

"It's going to entice more people to come back and forth to Runcorn. At the moment, word gets a round about the bridge and people won't even come this way, they just avoid the area."

"I'm hoping that when they do build a new bridge, that they will still keep that one, so there are two bridges, cause I think any bridge will be an attraction for customers to come over this way."

"I think it would increase it because I think more people from the other side would shop with us. Cause I know for a fact that at the moment there are customers that won't go over that bridge, especially at the weekend, so they are obviously shopping elsewhere. I've got another shop in Chester, and I know that there are customers from Runcorn shopping at our Chester shop, rather than come what should be a two minute journey over the bridge."

#### 8.4.4

Respondents discussed the possibility of introducing restricted access on the bridges. They suggested several ways in which the two bridges could be used, including using one only for cars, or restricting one to local use.
"I’ve wondered, with them having two bridges, are they going to have one specifically for car use only, and the other for commercial vans, or are they going to have one going one way, and the other going the other way?"

"I think it would be a good idea for the existing bridge to stay as cars, and the heavy vehicles could come the other way, cause that would probably taken them nearer to their destination anyway, that might be a better route for them."

"Maybe they could have one bridge for the local traffic, just going to Runcorn and Widnes, and then one bridge for those going further a field, such as to Liverpool, could they do that?"

"I think they should link up together, so if there was a problem you could use either, and still get to your same destination."

8.5 General thoughts on tolling

8.5.1 Respondents had mixed views on the concept of road user charging. Some felt that it wasn’t acceptable, as they believed that motorists already contributed towards the roads through payment of road tax. Others however felt that it was acceptable in certain circumstances, for example, providing that a free alternative route was available.

"I’m sick to the teeth of it, we are taxed to the hilt as far as running of vehicle fleets are concerned. We run 14 vehicles. We are taxed through our back teeth through fuel, road tax. We are now looking down the barrel of another tax, and I don’t think for one minute that me sitting here tonight will make one bit of difference."

"We’re already paying the road tax and the rest of it, they are saying that if you want that road to be made better, then you have to pay again for it."

"As far as tolling is concerned, you are not going to get many people that will turn round and say yeah it’s a great idea. Nobody is going to turn round and say what a great idea, it’s another business cost that we could do without."

"This country, its tax, tax, tax."

"I’ve got mixed opinions on it, cause I thought the road tax paid for the up-keep of the roads."

"My opinion is that I’m not against tolling at all, as long as there was an alternative route. So if tolling makes it a faster way to get somewhere, and there are two bridges, one that is bigger and faster, one that is older and slower, then its ok. If people want to pay to go faster, then that’s ok."

8.5.2 Respondents were asked what they felt would be an acceptable level of toll to pay to cross the River Mersey. Some felt that charging no more than one pound would be acceptable, but others felt that even this would be too much for those who frequently use the bridge.

"I’d say not in excess of a pound."

"Your daily business, well that’s fair enough, say a quid."

"It depends on how many times you will use the bridge, if it’s once a day a pound, two pounds not so bad, but if you are going back and to, that’s going to add up."

New Mersey Crossing Tolling Feasibility Study – Focus Groups
"If it's like the tunnel it will be £1.20."

"For the sake of a pound, if I was only going over once I'd use it, but anymore and I'd say no."

8.5.3 One respondent did not believe that it would be likely that a toll of around one pound would be charged for larger vehicles to cross the river, and highlighted how in other areas it was actually a lot more expensive than this.

"The bridge at Bristol is seven quid to cross it. The Humber Bridge is about three or four quid. We are not going to get away here with £1.20."

8.5.4 Those whose businesses do not involve the use of larger vehicles were in favour of seeing heavier vehicles charged a higher amount as they felt that it was fair due to the size and weight of the vehicles.

"The thing with the tunnel in Liverpool, motorbikes pay a different amount, and vans do, I think the heavier the vehicle, the more wear it is on the bridge, so they should pay more."

8.5.5 One respondent was reluctant to even suggest what he felt would be an acceptable toll level, as he felt there was no saying that once a toll was introduced at one level, that it would not then be vastly increased.

"That doesn't really matter, cause once they have made that decision to put a toll on there, they can up that price whenever they want. It's irrelevant once they know they are going to put a toll on there. It could start off with 10p, but within a year it could be a pound."

8.5.6 Respondents considered the different possibilities in tolling the bridges. Some felt that just tolling one bridge would be a possible idea, as it would bring in revenue but still mean that there is a toll-free route for motorists to take. Others however felt that the option of just tolling one bridge would not be considered as it would result in everyone using the toll-free bridge to avoid having to pay.

"If they are thinking about tolling, they should just toll the old bridge, cause the newer bridge will be bigger and can take more traffic, and that would get used more than the older bridge, and I think that would be better to have that one as the toll bridge."

"From the Council point of view, they would probably prefer to have the one taking the most traffic as the toll bridge, cause it will take more money for building the bridge."

"But the older bridge will need more money spending on it for maintenance."

"They won't toll one bridge, cause all it will do is put the congestion on the other one."

8.5.7 Respondents were aware of the frequency of which many local residents and businesses cross the existing bridge, and therefore the impact that paying a toll may possibly have on them. Due to this, respondents felt that local businesses and residents should either be exempt from paying a toll, or qualify for a discount.

"If you are going to toll it, you should toll it just for people who use it once in a while, and maybe give big businesses who use it discounts, or even like a card or a pass, where you don't have to pay a toll."
"I’d prefer to see a ten mile radius drawn around the bridge, and some kind of tagging system being applied to those vehicles, they do that for the Dartford River crossing, and those vehicles, the local businesses and local vehicles are exempt. And vehicles from out of town are charged."

"A fairness zone, don’t punish the local people. Hammer the people that come from outside."

"They should do a fast tag for local businesses and residents where they perhaps paid less or if they didn’t exceed so may it would be free perhaps."

"I’d say local people (should be exempt), cause we’re the ones who suffer most with the bridge as it is now, cause like people in Liverpool and St Helens, they can all use the M62 to get to places, it depends on what way they go, they don’t always use the bridge, whereas people in Runcorn or Widnes, we always do."

"It really affects us the most, and we’ve had the disruption the most, so maybe we should get some sort of bonus card."

"I’m not against tolling, but I would say if there are two bridges there, you are going to be thinking of tolling one of them, so people who actually live there and worked here, or the other way, those ones should still be able to get back and to free. Charging people to come back and to from work seems a bit hard on them."

"If it couldn’t be free, it should at least be discounted."

8.5.8 Some respondents suggested that just tolling at specific times of the day, such as rush hour, would be an effective way in which a toll could be introduced.

"That’s a good idea."

"Especially in rush hour."

8.5.9 Others however felt that it would be more sensible to toll outside of rush hours, as otherwise it would mean tolling those who use the bridge most often, which would be unfair.

"Peak hours, but then again, that’s unfair on people going back and forth to work isn’t it."

"That’s when it should be free, at peak times, cause that’s the people who have to cross it on a regular basis."

8.5.10 Respondents were asked whether or not they would find the introduction of a toll acceptable, if it was the only way in which a new bridge could be built. Those representing businesses in Runcorn were fairly accepting of the idea, as they felt that it was vital that a new bridge was built.

"Honestly, yes, because we do need that new bridge."

"You’d have to get on with it really wouldn’t you?"

"It’s ok as long as the other bridge wasn’t tolled as well."

"They have to build a bridge no matter what, it’s impossible not to build a bridge cause eventually this town will just get gridlocked and everyone will desert it."

"We’ll become like a little island won’t we."

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8.5.11 Respondents representing businesses in Widnes however were far less in favour, and some even suggested that they would prefer not to have a new crossing if it was to be tolled.

"Yes, but I really would prefer it not to be."

"I wouldn't have the new bridge."

"If they built and tolled them I wouldn't use the bridges out of principle. I'd go from my house, down the M56 over the Thelwall and up the M62. I'd use it for business, but personally I wouldn't."

8.5.12 All respondents felt that tolling both bridges would be unacceptable as they felt that it was only fair to give people the option of taking a toll free route.

"I'd say that is out of order."

8.5.13 Respondents were asked to consider what impact building a new bridge would have in general on the area. Those from businesses in Runcorn felt that a new un-tolled bridge, or tolled bridge with a free option, would have a huge impact on the area, as the improvement in road networks would attract more business. They felt that currently new businesses were probably deterred from locating in the area due to existing traffic problems.

"I think it will increase the businesses to be honest."

"I think it would encourage people to set up business here."

"I think the way it is now is probably discouraging businesses from setting up, not just here in Runcorn, but in Widnes and any other area that might be surrounded by the bridge."

"It's all to do with easier access and motorways and things isn't it. But here, you can be stranded."

8.5.14 Respondents were asked what effect tolling both bridges would have on businesses and residents in the area. Some respondents representing businesses in Runcorn felt that businesses in the area would probably be able to cope with the additional costs, and that it would probably have a greater impact on residents.

"The businesses can pass the cost on can't they, but it would probably annoy residents."

"It will have a bigger impact on residents."

"I don't think that would make a difference to businesses. I think as long as they have plenty of good access roads they will be fine."

8.5.15 Those who frequently crossed the bridge were worried about the amount they would have to pay, whilst those whose suppliers used the bridge were concerned that suppliers would increase costs to cover the toll.

"If you had a fleet of wagons that were using the bridge it would cost you a fortune. If you had more than one vehicle, it would cost more, and put people out of business."

"Our suppliers, who have loads of vehicles, would have to put up their costs to cover that."
"If it gets tolled, the prices we're charged by our suppliers would go up. Oil prices rises have just kicked currier prices up something like five percent."

"The retail we do is on a Saturday morning, and I think the Runcorn lot won't come over the bridge, they won't pay, they'll stay away. Our Frodsham customers won't come, definitely, so it will cost us money."

Several respondents in Widnes felt that a toll would have massive financial implications for their businesses, and one respondent highlighted how it would mean that his company would have to change the way in which they work.

"It's going to have a big effect. I don't know the amount, but I've worked it out as about £500 a week. Loss in revenue from customers, I would guess about sixty grand a year."

"It would cause me considerable pain, and it would affect my prices."

"I have to go to places in Runcorn to go to meetings. If I had to go to three meetings in one day, it's going to add up."

"I think we would have to change the way we work at the moment, at the moment we can put in the diary, Runcorn-Widnes, Runcorn-Widnes all day, but if we were charged each time, we'd have to change that. Normally, wherever the job is, we'd go and do it, but we'd have to change the way we work. Cause otherwise it would cost too much."

Respondents were asked what they felt would happen to local employees if a toll was introduced. Some felt that employees would look for alternative routes to take where possible to avoid paying, whereas others felt that people may even look for new jobs that did not necessitate crossing the river.

"If I didn't have an alternative, I'd definitely change my job, or change my route or something."

"People who live there and work on the other side would have to wouldn't they, if they didn't like it they'd change their job."

"I would (change my job)."

"It depends, you could pay the toll but you'd have to put that cost to your customers."

"I would imagine that they would look for work where they didn't have to cross the bridge."

Some respondents felt that employers were likely to be more selective about employing staff who live on certain sides of the river, as they will be less likely to want staff who have to cross the bridge every day. One respondent highlighted that this is already the situation at their business.

"Say twenty of your staff are from Runcorn, they are going to by mithering for a pay rise, because its costing them an extra say thirty forty quid to get to work. So then, you're looking at actually alienating your employment. You'll say oh we can only really employ people from this side of the water."

"It will restrict the employment catchment area, because people from Runcorn will not want to travel over that bridge and pay a toll. And I'm not going to pay them the extra."
"We try to recruit locally if we can, cause it's much easier."

8.5.19 Several respondents felt that even with the introduction of a new bridge, placing a toll on it would mean that traffic is not likely to speed up in the area as people would have to slow down as they approach and pay at toll booths.

"Your traffic would still have to slow down, so you're not going to have a free flowing."

"I wouldn't want my drivers sat in queues waiting to pay a toll. That's the most precious thing to me, time."

8.5.20 Respondents were asked if they would consider talking alternative routes to avoid having to pay a toll. For most, this was not a valid option.

"I couldn't, we have no choice."

8.5.21 One respondent suggested that if a new crossing was built, then it would be a good idea to ensure that there is an adequate route for public transport to take, as he felt that more and more people would switch to using public transport.

"Could they not build the new bridge, with the idea of having public transport on a separate part of it, cause I think in the future people will probably be forced to use public transport more, cause the roads are so bad."

8.5.22 However, no one felt that they would use public transport to avoid paying the toll unless the local bus service was vastly improved.

"No, I rely on my car too much."

"If you do a big shop you don't wanna carry it on to the bus do you."

"No, you might get a fad in the summer, thinking oh this is great in the sunshine, but in winter you wouldn't want to."

"There is a bus service now but it's not good enough, it doesn't go to the right amount of places."

"Everyone uses their car."

"We've got one lad who comes on their bike."

"If it was a good service for getting people back and forth from work, I'm sure a lot of people would consider it, rather than pay a toll."

8.5.23 One respondent highlighted how frustrating he found it that on the current bridge taxis and private buses were allowed to use the public transport lane.

"There is a bus lane on the bridge, but I can never understand why it's legal only for public transport buses, so why does every empty taxi and every private bus company use it? They are only a business like us."

"A couple of my mates are taxi drivers, so whenever we do anything at the weekend we jump in their cars! Cause on a Saturday or Sunday when the traffic is that bad, you get straight through."
8.6 Impact of tolling a New Mersey Crossing

8.6.1 Respondents felt that if a toll was introduced, the biggest impact would be to local residents who had to use the bridge daily for work. One respondent also suggested that it may impact on local schools as parents may be more selective about where they send their children if they have to pay to cross the river.

"The residents that have to travel back and to, to work."

"Tell you who else it will have a big impact on, schools. How many parents would let their kids go to school in Widnes or Liverpool if they live in Runcorn, if they were paying that everyday, they’d soon find an alternative secondary school?"

8.6.2 Respondents highlighted how currently they have altered shopping patterns so that they avoid crossing the bridge where possible. However, some highlighted that they would use the bridge more for leisure purposes if congestion was improved, others however felt that people were probably used to shopping in certain areas and unlikely to change their shopping habits.

"I used to (shop the other side) but don’t bother now cause of the traffic."

"It’s cause of the inconvenience."

"I’d use it more then if congestion improved."

"The thing is people form habits very easily, so if you are used to shopping on one side, they’ll be used to that. It would be hard to switch back. People get into a habit they like."

8.6.3 Some respondents thought that a toll would restrict the number of journeys that local people make, irrelevant of whether or not the traffic flow was better.

"I think you’d loose the general trips, like when you go over to browse round shops, or garden centres."

"People will only go if they have a very specific reason."

"If people are already fifty-fifty about going, if there is a toll, they will just think, oh, we’ll stay over here."

8.6.4 Everyone agreed that without the introduction of a new bridge, Runcorn and Widnes would rapidly decline in the next ten years, some even predicting that businesses would pull out of the area.

"It would be chaos."

"I’d say it would go the other way, with more businesses pulling out of the area. I think they probably tolerate it now cause there is talk of a new bridge, and it’s probably giving them hope that something is going to come along, but if it was ever said there was definitely not going to be a new bridge I think a lot would leave."

"The old town is declining now, I mean, I don’t know if that is anything to do with the bridge."

8.6.5 Respondents were asked what they felt would happen in the area if a new bridge was built and both bridges tolled. Respondents from businesses in Runcorn were
generally positive, and felt that the whole area would benefit from the improved transport network.

"I still think it would be a bit of a boom town."

"I think it would flourish."

"I think it would be better cause people in Runcorn and Widnes would have to pay but at least they can get across."

"They are thinking of putting a new water front on both sides, which will encourage more people into the area, and if they do that they will have to build a new bridge, its inevitable that a new bridge will need to go there."

8.6.6 Some of those from Widnes however did not agree, and felt that it may even result in businesses pulling out of the area.

"It will have an incredible impact on the area, it will cost everybody money."

"I think big businesses will pull out."

"It will not prosper the area at all, people won’t suddenly start coming here to do business, because it’s easier to get here. That won’t happen."

8.7 Scenarios

8.7.1 Respondents were asked to rank bridge scenarios in order of preference. They were instructed to allocate ‘1’ to their most preferred option and ‘5’ to their least preferred. Table 8.1 shows the mean ranking values.

Table 8.1  Mean Rank Values – Groups 7 & 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Mean Rank Score Group 7</th>
<th>Mean Rank Score Group 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not build a new bridge (however, road works will increase on the current bridge)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and both bridges toll free</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge with restricted use (e.g. public transport, walking/cycling only) of the Silver Jubilee Bridge</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and toll both bridges</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.7.2 Almost all respondents would prefer to see a new bridge built, and both bridges being toll free.

8.7.3 Most respondents highlighted that building and tolling the new bridge only would be their second choice.

"It’s giving people freedom of choice isn’t it?"

"The local people would use the existing one to go to work, whereas strangers passing through would be guided into going on the new toll one."

"My second choice was to just toll one of them, cause it’s the lesser of two evils."
8.7.4 The least preferred option amongst the majority of respondents would be to not build a new bridge. Most felt that this was not an option as a new bridge was necessary for the future prosperity of the area.
9   Key Findings

9.1   Introduction

9.1.1 Detailed below is a summary of the key findings of this research.

9.2   The Silver Jubilee Bridge

9.2.1 All respondents frequently use the Silver Jubilee Bridge, many on a daily basis but all at least once a week.

"I live in Widnes and work in Runcorn and use it every day to get to work."

"My business uses the bridge every day. We have deliveries going out, deliveries coming in. Staff living in Widnes."

9.2.2 Respondents make trips across the bridge for social, leisure and work purposes. The vast majority of respondents cross the bridge by car, a very small number use public transport.

"Work, shopping, leisure, every reason that you can think of."

"In the car."

"There isn't a good bus service over there."

"Public transport for me."

9.2.3 Problems with congestion on the bridge are a major concern, especially for the business representatives as it has a financial impact on their company. Residents are less likely to visit family and friends across the river as journey time is so unreliable.

"I was on that bridge yesterday for half an hour trying to get to Runcorn, cause of the traffic."

"I've got staff who live in Widnes that travel back and forth. We also have to go over to do a lot of our work, so we are back and to over the bridge all day long, so it really affects us when the bridge is slowing down."

"Widnes is one of the main areas where we rely on getting business from, and we don't get as much these days cause of the traffic."

"Well, the state of the bridge now, my son rings me up and says I am not going over that bridge. He just turns round and comes off at the turn off to Widnes and he has to go back to Speke, because of the tailbacks. At a weekend. It is at weekends isn't it that you can go visit them."

9.2.4 The Silver Jubilee is considered by most people to be their only option to cross the river as it is the most direct route and alternative routes are also congested.

"If I am going to Preston or Chorley to see relations, rather than going over the viaduct at Warrington, which is problematic at the moment its easier to go over the bridge and on to the M62."

"....Widnes is gridlocked, and now Warrington is getting that way, cause everyone is trying to get round Warrington."
9.3 The New Mersey Crossing

9.3.1 All respondents had heard about the New Mersey Crossing; however there was a great deal of confusion regarding where it was to be built.

"I have seen a couple of layouts in the town centres."

"I hear that it’s right over by Fiddlers Ferry."

"haven’t got a clue [where it will be]."

9.3.2 There was strong feeling that a new bridge is necessary and that building it should be seen as a priority. Business representatives, particularly those based in Widnes, stated that the bridge is vital to the economy of the area.

"I think it’s a great idea, the new crossing."

"I agree totally with the concept of having a new bridge, cause the congestion on that thing is horrendous."

"I’m hoping that when they do build a new bridge, that they will still keep that one, so there are two bridges, cause I think any bridge will be an attraction for customers to come over this way."

9.3.3 A new crossing is expected to increase the number of journeys that people make across the river. Respondents stated that they would make spontaneous trips, something that the current problems often prevented them from doing. A new bridge was also expected to increase employment opportunities and be beneficial to the economy of the Borough.

"I would probably use it a bit more if it was easier to get over."

"I’d use it more then if congestion improved."

"Yeah (I’d make more trips), cause it wouldn’t put you off as much as it does now."

"You have to plan for it at the moment don’t you."

"I think it [the area] would flourish."

9.3.4 The need to ensure that feeder roads are designed properly and that they are able to cope with the projected volume of traffic was emphasised.

"The biggest problem you’ve got, it’s alright plonking a bridge there. How do you get to it? On A roads so that means you’ve got to have a massive road system built."

9.4 Opinions of Tolling

9.4.1 The majority of respondents are not in favour of any form of road user charging as they believe that motorists in the UK are already charged for use of roads through road tax and tax on petrol. Some respondents thought tolling is acceptable on routes that people do not have to travel frequently or where there is a toll-free alternative.

"We already pay enough in rates and road tax."
“It’s taken off us in three ways then, you pay on your petrol, you pay on your rates, and your road tax.”

“It’s okay for people who do long distance travel down all the way to London and down the M6.”

“As a one of charge every now and again.”

“My opinion is that I’m not against tolling at all, as long as there was an alternative route. So if tolling makes it a faster way to get somewhere, and there are two bridges, one that is bigger and faster, one that is older and slower, then its ok. If people want to pay to go faster, then that’s ok.”

9.4.2 Not surprisingly, ideally respondents would prefer the new bridge to be toll-free. A significant number of respondents felt very strongly about this, insisting that they already pay Road Tax and high levels of Council Tax and should not have to pay additional charges to cross from one area of their Borough to another. Many respondents were of the opinion that the Council Tax they have paid already should cover the costs of building a new bridge.

“We’re paying our Council Tax and everything anyway here, so we are contributing to it, so why charge us double.”

“We’re already paying the road tax and the rest of it, they are saying that if you want that road to be made better, then you have to pay again for it.”

“Well I don’t agree with the charges at all.”

“If you can get it for free then bonus, but I just can’t see it being done without it [the toll] and I think you’ve got to be realistic.”

9.4.3 If tolling was introduced, initially many respondents thought that only the new bridge should be tolled. However, it was recognised that the majority of people would continue to use the Silver Jubilee Bridge and hence the traffic problems would remain. Respondents discussed free use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge for Halton residents and businesses, through the use of a pass. However, there were concerns about the practicalities of this and the fact that if people had to show passes it would slow traffic once again. Respondents thought that as technology progressed some sort of electronic tag for registered users could be introduced.

“[toll] Just the new one.”

“[I heard they are going to charge them to go onto the new one and if that’s the case it won’t solve the problem of the other bridge. They’ll just go over that one for free rather than go over the new one and pay.”

“If they could work out a system but not penalising the residents of Halton because we are the ones that use the bridge regularly. If they could have some kind of scheme. Whether they put in those sensors on the cars.”

“I’d prefer to see a ten mile radius drawn around the bridge, and some kind of tagging system being applied to those vehicles, they do that for the Dartford River crossing, and those vehicles, the local businesses and local vehicles are exempt. And vehicles from out of town are charged.”

“Presumably we’d be slowed down even more, to pay the tolls.”
"Then still be queues there, especially if they go back to two lanes, and two lanes on the other bridge, with toll booths, it's gonna be was than what it is."

"You'd have to have something that electronically does it not a sign in the window because you'd get some wise guy with doctor in his windscreen you know. It would have to be done electronically. "So put your registration in and then they can just go across when they want and automatically they are just let through."

Respondents were particularly sensitive about paying a toll on the Silver Jubilee Bridge as it is currently toll free. However it was accepted that there would be practical problems with only tolling the new bridge and, even with road modifications, traffic would use local roads to access the Silver Jubilee Bridge and hence avoid paying a toll. They were also concerned about the practicalities of restricting use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

"If you toll them both you'd probably have a near riot on in Runcorn."

"You can't charge people for something you've had for free for so long."

"If you toll one and not the other one people are definitely going to go for the one that's not tolled."

"Maybe they could have one bridge for the local traffic, just going to Runcorn and Widnes, and then one bridge for those going further afield, such as to Liverpool, could they do that?"

"I think they should link up together, so if there was a problem you could use either, and still get to your same destination."

When respondents were asked to rank (in order of preference) the scenarios, 'building a new bridge and both bridges being toll-free' was not surprisingly the most preferred and 'not building the new crossing' the least preferred. The order of preference for all scenarios is shown in Table 9.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>Rank Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and both bridges toll free</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge with restricted use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the new bridge and toll both bridges</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not build a new bridge</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some respondents believe that tolling the bridge may encourage people to use public transport. However there needs to be an improvement in public transport provision for this to be an effective alternative, in particular respondents mentioned the need for good train links on both sides of the river and a reliable bus service. The current road network on the approaches to the bridge is not thought to offer an easy/comfortable route for cyclists or pedestrians; therefore very few respondents were positive about walking or cycling on the Silver Jubilee Bridge increasing.

"I mean, if it was good enough now, how many people would actually use it to go to Widnes and therefore it would reduce the amount of traffic that was going over
it. Public transport is not going to solve even this problem or any other problem unless it is convenient for everyone to use it.”

“If public transport was good enough, then we’d use it”

“If you are going to put public transport on, it has to be more convenient for the people to use it than to use their car.”

“They could always put a station on the other side of the bridge so that we could get a train one side of the water to the other.”

“Could go by train couldn’t you. But there’s no station on the other side of Bridge Street to hop on and hop off is there.”

“It’s not a place to walk really, for anyone.”

“I think it’s a bit dodgy walking or cycling over that bridge, I don’t think you’d do it.”

“I might cycle, if it was safe.”

9.5 Tolling Impacts

9.5.1 Many of the residents thought that there would be a major negative impact on the local community. They expressed concerns that it would increase the alienation between the two communities of Runcorn and Widnes, with residents only seeking work on their side of the Borough. In addition, where currently residents travel across the river for social, leisure and shopping purposes they stated that they would look for alternative venues/locations. For reasons such as visiting family and friends, respondents stated that they would make fewer trips if they had to pay a toll and would no longer just drop in to see people but only visit when they had made firm arrangements. This was expected to have particular impact on vulnerable groups, like the disabled and elderly.

“We’d go back to being them and us, in history its always been Runcorn and Widnes, we’re just beginning to come together again…..you don’t pay to get from one side of the borough to another.”

“Say twenty of your staff are from Runcorn, they are going to by mithering for a pay rise, because its costing them an extra say thirty forty quid to get to work. So then, you’re looking at actually alienating your employment. You’ll say oh we can only really employ people from this side of the water.”

“It will restrict the employment catchment area, because people from Runcorn will not want to travel over that bridge and pay a toll. And I’m not going to pay them the extra.”

“The cinema, you’d go to Warrington instead.”

“If there was a choice between paying to go to Widnes to go shopping to a smaller shopping centre, or go to Warrington, then you’d go to Warrington.”

“I’d go to Cheshire Oaks, if I new I had to pay a toll on that bridge, you know, for shopping and things like that.”

“I think so because I’d normally go into town, into Liverpool to go shopping over the weekend and like I said before, I’d got to Cheshire Oaks or Ellesmere Port. I
don’t like sitting in queues and it is much easier for me so in answer to your question, Yeah, I certainly would.”

“I think there is a lot of old people, whose only family is in Liverpool, because they have younger daughters and all that. I think a lot of them are going to end up very lonely and scared because their families will just say - I’m out of work I can’t afford the toll. And she’s stuck here in a little flat on her own.”

9.5.2 There was a split in opinion of business representatives, with some expressing concerns that the effects would be so high they would go out of business. However, others thought that a free flowing tolled bridge would be more economically advantageous than the current situation. The business representatives in Widnes thought that the impact of a toll would be greater than those in Runcorn. This was due to the need of Widnes businesses to cross the river more frequently. They were also concerned that tolling the new bridge would decrease the available labour pool (particularly semi-skilled) as people living in Cheshire, North Wales and other areas would not be willing to pay a toll on a daily basis.

“If you had a fleet of wagons that were using the bridge it would cost you a fortune. If you had more than one vehicle, it would cost more, and put people out of business.”

“Our suppliers, who have loads of vehicles, would have to put up their costs to cover that.”

“I think it would encourage people to set up business here.”

“People who live there and work on the other side would have to [leave their job] wouldn’t they, if they didn’t like it they’d change their job.”

“I would imagine they would look for work where they didn’t have to cross the bridge.”

9.5.3 Both residents and businesses respondents were of the opinion that tolling the new bridge would discourage new businesses from locating in Halton.

“They are not going to come are they? They are going to go to Liverpool or Warrington or somewhere like that because they are going to turn around and say I’m not going there because it is going to cost me so much year for the toll.”

9.5.4 There were also concerns that tolling the new crossing would cause congestion and hence negate the benefits of a new bridge.

9.6 Tolling Levels and Concessions

9.6.1 Respondents were not keen on discussing acceptable toll levels as many were not willing to consider the idea of tolling the bridge. However, when encouraged, most felt that the toll level should be around one pound and that if it was much higher it would discourage local residents from travelling across Halton. Equality with the toll on the Mersey Tunnels was also mentioned.

“£1 return. Then I might consider it, but your journey there and your journey back and you think £5 a week, maybe.”

“I certainly wouldn’t mind paying a pound return if it is just for pleasure, but when you have got to do it every day.”
"Locals should be using it and free, or a pound a day return, no more."

"...so you are looking at a similar sort of thing, aren't you [as the tunnel], I don't know, they may start at a cheaper rate, but you're still looking at a couple of quid a day aren't you."

9.6.2 Respondents were concerned that, although initially low toll levels may be introduced, they would be increased as people became reliant on the crossing and got used to paying the toll.

"Everyone agrees yes we'll have a toll. There's nothing to stop them putting that toll up then is there once it's started."

9.6.3 Respondents thought that local residents and businesses should not have to take the full impact of a toll; they suggested either the use of cheap weekly passes, daily fixed fees (for frequent business users) or even full exemption.

"If they come up with a scheme which I think has worked on one of the other bridges, I can't remember whether it is Preston, or one of the other toll bridges around, that if you live within certain postcode areas around it is actually free, and you have passes, so that it is for the people who travel from outside who pay for it. People such as us, who commute, then it wouldn't be a charge."

"We're only a small firm. Like I said earlier we have to cross the bridge maybe ten twenty times a day, so if we have to pay a fixed toll say £2, that could be £40 a day. So rather than just pay £2 or whatever every time we go, could we pay just one fee.

"Pay once a day but have a daily pass or whatever."

9.6.4 Respondents also suggested the use of concessions for the elderly, disabled, students and emergency service workers.

"I think they've got to be realistic and know that Halton isn't a place with a lot of money. There are a lot of council estates and a lot of single parent families and the like and students. There's a big college in Widnes and you've got to be realistic."

"These are two students like they said so they would constantly use that bridge going over and coming back home again, so let's face it we all know that students get next to nothing whatsoever. So they would be penalised you know so what are they getting? They're going to pay out again just to go over."

"So what would you do if it's an elderly person wanted to get to Halton Hospital you know and hasn't got the money to get across."

"It's the same for the unemployed isn't it?"

9.6.5 Respondents stressed that if any concessions were introduced a tolling system would need to be in place that allowed free-flowing traffic otherwise the benefits of a new bridge would be negated.

9.7 Summary

9.7.1 Respondents, both residents and businesses agreed that a new crossing was needed for the future affluence of the area. However, many felt that the only way a new crossing would help the area would be if it was toll free. Respondents resented the idea of paying to cross the river. However, the majority were
prepared to see a toll introduced on the new bridge if it was the only way to fund the building.

9.7.2 When presented with future scenarios, the least preferred was not building a new bridge and the most preferred was building a new bridge and both bridges to be toll free.
Appendix A

Recruitment Quotas
Appendix A

New Mersey Crossing Discussion Groups - Group 1

Focus Group Details: MON 5TH JULY, 18:15, RUNCORN TOWN HALL

Ward: MINIMUM 1 RIVERSIDE, 1 MERSEY, 1 CASTLEFIELDS AND 1 HALTON BROOK

Use of the Bridge: ALL AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK

Gender: MINIMUM 3 MALE AND 3 FEMALE

Age: MINIMUM 3 GROUP 1 AND 3 GROUP 2

Social Class: NO QUOTA. Please code SEG for our records

New Mersey Crossing Discussion Groups - Group 2

Focus Group Details: MON 5TH JULY, 18:15, RUNCORN TOWN HALL

Ward: ALL MUST LIVE IN HALTON, BUT NOT RIVERSIDE, MERSEY, CASTLEFIELDS OR HALTON BROOK WARDS. MINIMUM 3 FROM WARDS IN THE NORTH (WIDNES) AND 3 FROM WARDS IN THE SOUTH (RUNCORN)

Use of the Bridge: ALL AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK

Income: ALL MUST HAVE A HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF LESS THAN £20,000.

Gender: MINIMUM 3 MALE AND 3 FEMALE

Age: MINIMUM 3 GROUP 1 AND 3 GROUP 2

Social Class: NO QUOTA. Please code SEG for our records

New Mersey Crossing Discussion Groups - Group 3

Focus Group Details: TUES 6TH JULY, 16:00, HALTON STADIUM

Ward: ANY WARD IN HALTON

Use of the Bridge: ALL AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK

Gender: MINIMUM 3 MALE AND 3 FEMALE

Age: ALL MUST BE AGED OVER 60 OR HAVE A DISABILITY. MINIMUM 3 AGED OVER 60 AND 3 WITH DISABILITY [SOME WILL CLASSIFY AS BOTH].

Social Class: NO QUOTA. Please code SEG for our records
New Mersey Crossing Discussion Groups - Group 4

Focus Group Details: MON 5TH JULY, 20:00, RUNCORN TOWN HALL.

Ward: ALL HALTON RESIDENTS, NOT FROM RIVERSIDE, HALTON BROOK, MERSEY OR CASTLEFIELDS WARDS.

Use of the Bridge: ALL AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK

Gender: MINIMUM 3 MALE AND 3 FEMALE

Age: MINIMUM 3 GROUP 1 AND 3 GROUP 2

Social Class: NO QUOTA. Please code SEG for our records

New Mersey Crossing Discussion Groups - Group 5

Focus Group Details: THURS 8TH JULY, 18:30, RUNCORN TOWN HALL.

Location of employment: ALL RUNCORN, MAY BE PART-TIME OR FULL-TIME. (Respondents may live outside of Halton)

Use of the Bridge: COMMUTE TO WORK AT LEAST 3 TIMES A WEEK

Gender: MINIMUM 3 MALE AND 3 FEMALE

Age: MINIMUM 3 GROUP 1 AND 3 GROUP 2

Social Class: NO QUOTA. Please code SEG for our records

New Mersey Crossing Discussion Groups - Group 6

Focus Group Details: MONDAY 5TH JULY, 20:00, RUNCORN TOWN HALL.

Location of employment: ALL WIDNES, MAY BE PART-TIME OR FULL-TIME. (Respondents may live outside of Halton)

Use of the Bridge: COMMUTE TO WORK AT LEAST 3 TIMES A WEEK

Gender: MINIMUM 3 MALE AND 3 FEMALE

Age: MINIMUM 3 GROUP 1 AND 3 GROUP 2

Social Class: NO QUOTA. Please code SEG for our records

New Mersey Crossing Discussion Groups - Group 7

Focus Group Details: THURSDAY 8TH JULY, 18:00, RUNCORN TOWN HALL.

Location of Business: ALL BUSINESSES BASED IN RUNCORN CLOSE TO THE SILVER JUBILEE BRIDGE (eg MERSEY, HEATH, GRANGE, HATON BROOK, CASTLEFIELD WARDS)

Type of Business: MINIMUM OF 3 DISTRIBUTION/DELIVERY/TRANSPORT BUSINESSES AND 3 COMMERCIAL SHOPS.
New Mersey Crossing Discussion Groups - Group 8

Focus Group Details:  TUESDAY 6TH JULY, 18:00, HALTON STADIUM.

Location of Business:  ALL BUSINESSES BASED IN WIDNES CLOSE TO THE SILVER JUBILEE BRIDGE (eg HALE, DITTON, RIVERSIDE, HALTON AND KINGSWAY WARDS)

Type of Business:  MINIMUM OF 3 DISTRIBUTION/DELIVERY/TRANSPORT BUSINESSES AND 3 COMMERCIAL SHOPS.
Appendix B
Discussion Guide
Appendix B

New Mersey Crossing Tolling Feasibility – Draft Discussion Guide

Group Location

Date & Time

Moderator

Number of respondents

Introduction 5 mins

Good evening/afternoon, firstly I’d like to thank you all for coming this evening/afternoon and agreeing to help with this research. My name is …… and I work for MVA an independent research consultancy. We are conducting research regarding the feasibility of tolling the New Mersey Crossing on behalf of Gifford and Partners Ltd’s engineering consultancy who have been commissioned by Halton Borough Council.

This discussion will be tape-recorded in order to aid analysis. However, be reassured that the research is being conducted in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society and the Data Protection Act. This means that everything you say here this evening is confidential and will not be attributed to you personally.

The purpose of a discussion group is to get your views on topics that we are interested in. Therefore there are no right or wrong answers, everyone’s view is valid. If you have a different opinion to someone else please let me know otherwise I may think that you are agreeing with them.

Now I would like you to introduce yourselves to the group, just stating your first name, what you do and where you live. [WRITE IN FIRST NAMES ON TABLE PLAN]
1. Use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge 10 mins

Why do you cross the River Mersey? [PROMPT: education, leisure, employment, health, social, access Motorway]

Do you always use the Silver Jubilee Bridge to cross the River?

How frequently do you cross the River Mersey?

Where are you travelling to and from when you cross the River? [including where they live]

How do you cross the Silver Jubilee Bridge, what mode of transport do you use?

Do you have any problems crossing the bridge? [PROBE: time of day, day of week etc.]

2. Views on the proposed New Mersey Crossing 10 mins

What do you know about the new crossing?

Do you think the proposed new bridge will help traffic congestion in Halton? In what way?

Do you think it will encourage you to make more trips? What sorts of trips?

Do you think it will encourage other people to make more trips? Why? What sort of trips?

3. Tolling - General 15 mins

What are your opinions of road user charging? [EXAMPLE: tolling]

Do you think they are effective? In what situations?

Would you be willing to pay a toll to cross the River Mersey?

If the introduction of a toll was the only way to fund a new crossing would you find it acceptable?

What would you expect the effect of a toll to be on the number of journeys you would make? [PROBE: less or more]

If you weren’t willing to pay would you use an alternative route? If so, which route? Or would you use Public Transport?

[IF SILVER JUBILEE BRIDGE USED AS AN ALTERNATIVE] - What if the Silver Jubilee Bridge was also tolled?

4. Tolling - Specific 15 mins

If tolling is introduced, do you think that only the New Bridge should be tolled, only the Silver Jubilee Bridge or both?

What do you think would happen if only one of the bridges was tolled?

What do you think is an acceptable toll level? Up to how much would you be willing to pay to cross the Mersey?

Would you be willing to walk/cycle over the bridge to avoid paying a toll?
Who do you think if anyone should be excluded from paying a toll? [PROMPT: Residents, Local Businesses, Elderly]

Do you think there should be any special fares etc.? If so, what? [PROMPT: Regular users discount, Local Residents/Businesses discount]

Do you think that the toll should only apply to certain times of the day/days of the week? [PROMPT: only during peak hours, free after 19:00, free on Sundays etc.]

5. Tolling Trade-off Game 10 mins

[EACH RESPONDENT WILL INDIVIDUALLY RANK THE FOLLOWING SCENERIOS]

Please read through each of the scenarios I have given you. I now want you to put them in order of preference, so put a number 1 next to the one you would most like to see happening and a number 2 next to your next preferred option. You will therefore put the number 6 next to your least preferred option.

- Do not build a new bridge (roadworks will increase on current bridge)
- Build the new bridge and both bridges toll free
- Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge
- Build the new bridge and only toll the new bridge with restricted use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge
- Build the new bridge and toll both bridges

[ASK RESPONDENTS TO SHARE THEIR TOP TWO OPTIONS WITH THE GROUP]

Why did you chose that option as your most preferred? What was your least preferred option? Why?

6. Tolling - Expected effects 15 mins

How do you think paying a toll would affect you? Your family? Businesses in Halton?

Would it change/disrupt your daily living and movement patterns?

Would you still be able to access services and facilities across the Mersey if tolls were implemented? Would you access services and facilities as frequently? What about social or leisure facilities? Shopping facilities?

What about visiting family and friends, would it affect this?

What about other people? Do you think it would impact upon them? In what way? [PROMPT: Elderly, Disabled, Chronically Sick, Young People]

Do you think it will affect employment opportunities? Who for?

What about the economic impact? Do you think it will affect shops and other businesses? In what way? Why?

7. Wrap-up
Is there anything else you would like to say about tolling of the new bridge or about the new bridge in general?

Thank you all for your time, the discussion has been very informative and the findings will help ensure that local opinions are considered when decisions are made.