



The Mersey Gateway Project

The Mersey Gateway Project is a major scheme to build a new six-lane toll bridge over the Mersey between the towns of Runcorn and Widnes that will relieve the congested and ageing Silver Jubilee Bridge.

The scheme has been approved by Government, which has committed up to £470 million of funding to support it.

The project also includes or facilitates:

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

The new bridge will:

- be over 70% funded by the private sector,
- mean an estimated 4,640 new jobs through direct employment, regeneration activity and inward investment,
- generate an estimated £61.9 million a year in Gross Value Added from the new jobs by 2030,
- cross the river around 1.5km to the east of the Silver Jubilee Bridge,
- be a tolled crossing with a speed limit of 60mph,
- have three lanes across the Mersey in each direction, and
- form the centrepiece of a new and improved high standard link road (9.5km long) connecting the national motorway network in north Cheshire with Merseyside.

Tolling

Motorists will pay a charge or a toll to cross either the new bridge or the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge.

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

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

New technology means it will not be necessary to build traditional toll booths at either side of the bridges, which will speed up traffic flow and minimise operating costs.

The project team has applied for planning permission to develop the scheme without toll booths. A decision on this is expected early in 2012.

*As of January 2012 it costs £1.50 for a one-way car journey through one of the Mersey Tunnels.

Timetable

Now that the Government has given the go-ahead to the project, the council is moving ahead with its plans to build the new bridge and redevelop the Silver Jubilee Bridge as quickly as possible.

The new bridge is scheduled to open in 2016, but before that happens, there are a number of important stepping stones along the way.

Spring 2012

Shortlist of bidders announced

Spring 2013

Preferred bidder announced

Autumn 2013

Final appointment confirmed

Autumn 2013

Construction work starts

Autumn 2016

Mersey Gateway Bridge scheduled to open

Costs and funding

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

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

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

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

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



An impression of the view of the new bridge from Halton Castle

Procurement

Halton Borough Council is going through a procurement process to identify a private sector partner to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the new crossing and the approach roads, which will include the installation and operation of tolling facilities on the Silver Jubilee Bridge. Our aim is to deliver the best value from the expected toll revenues.

Potential partners are being selected through an official European procurement process. They will be shortlisted on the basis of their technical capability and financial and economic standing and also on the basis that they have the appropriate experience, qualities and resources to undertake the project.

The thoroughness of the procurement process means the identity of Halton's private sector partner will not be known until 2013.

Objectives

The objectives of the project are to:

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

The new bridge

The draft bridge design is based on a cable-stay structure similar to the second Severn Crossing, but with three towers. It will be 2.3km long with a river span of 1km. The main bridge spans will be supported by cable stays attached to the towers rising up to a maximum of around 150m above the river bed.

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



The new bridge alongside the Silver Jubilee Bridge

Benefits

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

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

Economic benefits:

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

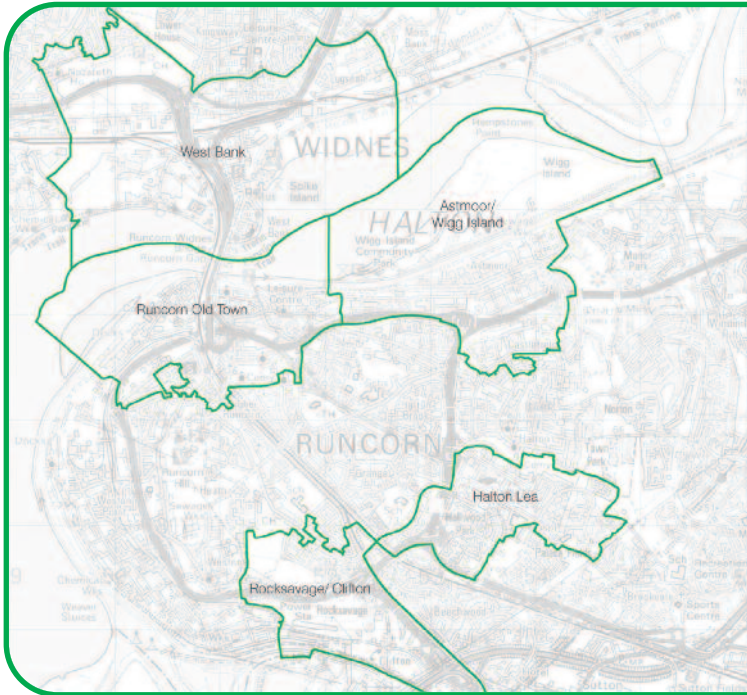
It will also support sustained growth at Liverpool Ports and Liverpool John Lennon Airport and improve business productivity throughout the Mersey corridor (known as agglomeration impacts).

Transport benefits:

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

Social benefits:

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



Regeneration areas

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

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



How the Silver Jubilee Bridge could look in the future

The Silver Jubilee Bridge

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

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

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

it will be free for buses, cycles and pedestrians.

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

Environmental

Mersey Gateway is a 'green' project that will bring major environmental benefits to the local area, including a new 28.5 hectare nature reserve around the bridge.

This new nature reserve will protect, manage and conserve the local environment over the next 30 years. A new charity, the Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust, has been created to deliver lasting benefits associated with the new bridge.

This is a visionary approach that will bring additional benefits to the Upper Mersey Estuary area.

Keep in touch

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