The Mersey Gateway Project

Work is well underway on the Mersey Gateway Project, a major civil engineering scheme to build a new six-lane cable-stayed toll bridge over the River Mersey and a 9.2 kilometre road network connecting the new bridge to the main motorway network in the north west of England.

At a local level, the project will provide a much needed new link between the towns of Runcorn and Widnes and will relieve the congested and ageing Silver Jubilee Bridge.

The Mersey Gateway Project is one of the largest infrastructure initiatives in the UK and has been identified as one of the UK government’s Top 40 priority projects in the National Infrastructure Plan.

Mersey Gateway has also been recognised by KPMG as one of the ‘Top 100 infrastructure projects around the globe’.
The new bridge

The design of the new Mersey Gateway Bridge is a cable-stayed structure with three pylons. It will be 2.3km long with a river span of 1km. The main bridge deck will be made from reinforced concrete and the spans will be supported by steel cable stays attached to pylons rising up to between 80 and 125m above the river bed. Once open, the new bridge will carry up to six lanes of traffic and will have a speed limit of 60mph.

Costs and funding

Halton Borough Council has set up a new body, the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board Ltd, to deliver the project. It is working closely with the Merseylink consortium, which was appointed as the project company by the council and is responsible for the design, build, finance and operation of the bridge over the next 30 years.

Halton Borough Council and Merseylink have worked together to reduce the project budget by £250 million. The £1.86 billion lifetime cost includes the design, build, finance, operation and maintenance of the project through to 2044. The majority of the funding comes from the tolls paid by road users, but there is also a contribution from the UK Government.

Drop in to one of our free visitor centres

Two free Mersey Gateway visitor centres – at the Catalyst Museum in Widnes and at Runcorn Shopping Centre – and a special Environmental Trail at Wigg Island, have been set up to tell the story of Halton’s iconic new bridge. They are staffed by Mersey Gateway volunteers who are on hand to answer questions on everything from local history and heritage, environment and ecology, to the bridge construction.

In Widnes, our volunteers also host trips to the Catalyst centre’s rooftop observatory, where visitors can get a bird’s eye view of the construction work that is taking place in the estuary.

Tolling

Both the new bridge and the Silver Jubilee Bridge will be tolled when the new bridge opens in 2017. It will cost the same to cross either bridge.

Halton residents will be able to cross either bridge for free once they have registered. There will be no toll booths – both bridges will use an ‘open road tolling’ system where smart technology is used to keep traffic flowing along the route, capture vehicle details and ensure that all bridge users pay.

You can find out more about toll prices and discount options online at www.merseygateway.co.uk/tolls

The Merseylink Consortium was appointed by Halton Borough Council as the project company in 2014 on a 30-year contract to design, build, finance and operate the project. Its equity partners are Macquarie Capital Group Limited, BBGI, and FCC Construcción.

The construction joint venture is made up of Kier Infrastructure and Overseas Limited, Samsung C&T Corporation and FCC Construcción S.A. Sanef S.A. will deliver and operate the tolling solution for the consortium.
Benefits
The project will bring huge estimated benefits for people and businesses in Halton, the Liverpool city-region, Cheshire and across the north west.

Up to 1,000 people are working on site on the project at any one time, and during the first year of construction Merseylink issued contracts worth a total of £44 million to north west businesses. Looking at the wider picture, we are also seeing the early impact of the project with new investment coming to Halton on both sides of the river.

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

The projected long-term economic benefits include:

• 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.

The project will also mean major transport improvements, such as:

• reductions in some journey times of up to 10 minutes in peak periods,
• increase in journey time reliability and less congestion,
• 80% less traffic using the Silver Jubilee Bridge, freeing it up for use as a local bridge, and
• a major strategic new transport route linking the Liverpool city-region and the north west to the rest of the country.

It will also deliver social benefits to communities in and around Halton including:

• improvements to public transport facilities,
• improvements to walking and cycling facilities, and
• improved health as a result of reduced air pollution.

Timetable
The new bridge is scheduled to open in autumn 2017, but there are lots of milestones to reach along the way.

Spring 2014
Construction work started

Construction underway on the supporting pylons

Autumn 2015
Construction of the main bridge superstructure begins

Summer 2016
Installation of first cable stays to the new bridge

Artist’s rendering of the cable stays

Autumn 2017
Mersey Gateway Bridge scheduled to open

The new bridge as it crosses St Helens Canal in Widnes

Autumn 2017
Silver Jubilee Bridge closed for refurbishment

Spring/Summer 2018
Silver Jubilee Bridge scheduled to re-open
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 tolled – but it will be free for Halton residents, buses, cyclists and pedestrians.

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

When the new bridge opens it is planned to close Silver Jubilee Bridge for 6 to 12 months to undertake essential maintenance work that is being postponed to avoid traffic disruption. The SJB will remain open to cyclists and pedestrians throughout this closure.

Environment

Mersey Gateway is a ‘green’ project that is starting to bring major environmental benefits to the local area.

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

The Trust, which will also manage a new 28.5 hectare nature reserve alongside the bridge, is unique for a major construction project in the UK.
Find out what's going on 'down your street'

Log on to www.merseygateway.co.uk/downyourstreet to see what road works may affect you as you travel around Runcorn and Widnes. Our interactive maps display up to date traffic information and the images and artist impressions show how the finished route will look across our nine working areas.

Work will be taking place right across the area until the Mersey Gateway bridge opens in autumn 2017.

The route

- Ditton Junction
- Silver Jubilee Bridge northern approach
- Select Security Stadium
- Widnes Town Centre
- Widnes Loops
- Silver Jubilee Bridge (at Catalyst Museum)
- A533
- Runcorn Town Centre
- St Helen's Canal
- New River Crossing
- Widnes Visitor Centre
- The Mersey Gateway Bridge
- Wigg Island
- Wigg Island Environmental Trail
- Bridgewater
- Halton Brow to Halton Lea
- Weston Point Junction
- Runcorn Visitor Centre
- (at Runcorn Shopping Centre)
- A533 Central Expressway
- Halton Brow to Halton Lea
- M56 Junction 12
- To Chester & North Wales
- Lodge Lane
- M56 Junction 12
- To Manchester


SAVE SAVINGS DELIVERED through procurement £250 MILLION

4,640 NUMBER OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT JOBS the project is set to create

FREE TRAVEL ACROSS THE TWO BRIDGES for Halton residents

2017 MERSEY GATEWAY SCHEDULED TO OPEN