



## Mersey Gateway Project

### Vehicle Recovery Policy

#### Background

The Mersey Gateway is intended to deliver a number of objectives, and economic, transport and social benefits for the residents and businesses of Halton, which include: -

- Reductions in the cost of accidents of up to £39 million;
- Reductions in journey times of up to ten minutes in peak periods; and,
- Less congestion resulting in lower carbon emissions.

To ensure these transport benefits are delivered and sustained a regulatory framework has been created by the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board, in conjunction with the Secretary of State for Transport, which is set out in the *The River Mersey (Mersey Gateway Bridge) Order 2011* and the *Mersey Gateway Bridge Byelaws 2016*.

This regulatory framework has been created on the basis that: -

- Special consideration needs to be given to the operating environment of the Mersey Gateway, which is more akin to a motorway than a local authority road; and,
- In order to ensure the journey time benefits for motorists are maximised obstructions must be kept to a minimum, and where they occur they should be removed without undue delay.

As the operator of the Bridge, Merseylink have appointed an operations and maintenance contractor to undertake routine maintenance and network management activities on their behalf, which includes vehicle recovery and incident management.

#### Health and Safety Considerations

In giving full consideration to the safety of users of the Mersey Gateway and the need to ensure suitable plans are in place to deal with incidents, the following issues have been taken into account: -

- The speed limit
- The road geometry
- The requirement of the byelaws
- Uncontrolled risks of allowing third party breakdown cover;

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The road in the bridge area has a speed limit of 60 mph and although there is good visibility, which in theory would allow individuals to nominate their own recovery provider, this would result in varying response times and would create risks outside Merseylink's control. Based on these considerations, Merseylink has found it necessary to appoint their own recovery operator.

In appointing a recovery operator for the Mersey Gateway on behalf of Merseylink it has been possible to provide the following: -

- All recovery operations are undertaken in line with good practice, and specifically the National Highways Sector Scheme;
- A consistent (30 minute) response time is provided to all road users, regardless of time of day or day of the week;
- Road users who require recovery are taken to a nominated place of safety where a prescribed level of welfare facilities are provided;
- Fees charged for recovery are controlled, appropriate and in accordance with applicable legislation.

#### Fee for Recovery

In line with a number of similar river crossings it is necessary to charge for vehicle recovery in order to ensure the full cost of providing these services is recovered.

*The Removal, Storage and Disposal of Vehicles (Prescribed Sums and Charges) Regulations 2008* sets out the current charges in relation to vehicle removal authorised, by virtue of the *Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984*, in the *Mersey Gateway Bridge Byelaws 2016*.

To ensure fees for recovery are not left unpaid, and in line with similar operations including those undertaken for the police, all fees must be paid prior to a vehicle being released to its owner or person in charge of the same.

#### Specific Restrictions

In relation to vehicle recovery operations the *Mersey Gateway Bridge Byelaws 2016* specify that: -

- (15) No person shall except with the permission of an authorised person refuel any vehicle or undertake any repairs to a vehicle or change a tyre or wheel of a vehicle in the bridge area.
- (16) If the driver of a vehicle in the bridge area refused to move the vehicle when ordered to do so by an authorised person or if a vehicle in the bridge area is unable to proceed because of a breakdown it shall be lawful for it to be removed by an authorised person at the cost and expense of the owner or person in charge of the vehicle and no person shall obstruct any such authorised person in carrying out such removal. The vehicle will be removed to a location which is either: -

(1) the operational premises of the recovery company employed for this service, or

(2) other designated areas as specified by the Council or an authorised person; details of which will be available at [www.merseygateway.co.uk/byelaws](http://www.merseygateway.co.uk/byelaws).