



Mersey Gateway Executive Board

**Thursday, 15 November 2007 3.00 p.m.
Marketing Suite, Municipal Building**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David W R'.

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Tony McDermott (Chairman)	Labour
Councillor Mike Wharton	Labour
Councillor Rob Polhill	Labour

*Please contact Lynn Derbyshire on 0151 471 7389 or e-mail
lynn.derbyshire@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Thursday, 24 January 2008*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. MINUTES	1 - 5
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST	
<p>Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal or personal and prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda no later than when that item is reached and (subject to certain exceptions in the Code of Conduct for Members) to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.</p>	
3. RESULTS OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION	6 - 73

PART II

**ITEMS CONTAINING "EXEMPT" INFORMATION FALLING
WITHIN SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT
1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO
INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

In this case the Board has a discretion to exclude the press and public but, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it is RECOMMENDED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

4. FINANCING ADVANCED LAND PURCHASE	74 - 78
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

MERSEY GATEWAY EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Mersey Gateway Executive Board on Monday, 18 June 2007 in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors: McDermott (Chairman), Polhill and Wharton.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Redhead

Absence declared on Council business: (none)

Officers present: D Parr, S Eccles, M Noone, S Nicholson, D Tregea, S Eccles, M. Winstanley and L Derbyshire.

Also In Attendance: Councillor Findon

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

MGEB1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2007, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

MGEB2 MERSEY GATEWAY

The Board considered a report of the Mersey Gateway Project Director which outlined the progress made in the delivery of Mersey Gateway since the meeting of the Mersey Gateway Executive Board in October 2006.

The report gave an update on the delivery and resources and project structure and the liaison with the Department for Transport.

The Board was advised that the project plan had been adjusted to include an extensive public consultation exercise (Agenda item two). The additional activity, combined with the increased costs associated with the greater workload required to deliver the traffic model, would require an increase in the budget profile for the current financial year. The increase was being managed by recovering cost from later years and more details on this matter were outlined in Agenda item five.

Action

RESOLVED: That the progress made towards delivering the Mersey Gateway be noted.

MGEB3 MERSEY GATEWAY PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which sought approval to proceed with the proposed public consultation exercise for Mersey Gateway based on the draft Reference Design.

The Board was advised that subject to approval, consultation would commence immediately. The consultation period would be three months and would involve the following:-

- The notification of all directly affected landowners;
- The provision of a scheme consultation leaflet (a draft attached at Appendix 1 to the report);
- A series of manned exhibitions at various locations during early to mid July 2007; and
- A virtual model of the Mersey Gateway Bridge and surrounding areas would be shared with the public and partners as part of the consultation process.

Arising from the discussions, the following comments were noted:-

- The numerous benefits that Mersey Gateway would provide to the Borough such as new job and business opportunities, fewer traffic jams, safer routes for cyclists and pedestrians, reduced air pollution and a chance to build new homes, shops offices and leisure facilities;
- The timescale and benefits of the public consultation process. It was also noted that a newsletter would be circulated throughout the Borough in the near future outlining the consultation process; and
- It was suggested that a programme outlining the project's key milestones be circulated to all Members of the Board.

Strategic Director
-Environment

Strategic Director
- Environment

RESOLVED: That the Mersey Gateway Executive Board agree that the proposed public consultation exercise, based on the draft Reference Design for the Mersey

Gateway scheme, commence as planned.

MGEB4 PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND PROCUREMENT

The Board considered a report of the Mersey Gateway Project Director which sought the authority to modify the project management arrangements by establishing an Officer Project Board (OPB) with specific delegated authority to oversee the delivery of the project to:

- 1) authorise the continuing liaison with the Mersey Crossing Group as a principle means for engaging with key local authority partners, government institutions and private sector interests; and
- 2) to note that the project team resources had been extended with the appointment of GVA Grimley, as planning consultants and with the re-appointment of DTW/Politics International as communications consultants.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:-

- the significant role and value of the Mersey Crossing Group was noted. The importance of continued stakeholder engagement and support was also noted;
- that a report on the project be presented to the Council meeting on 18th July 2007 for consideration; and
- that progress on the project could be circulated in the Members Information Bulletin and the Leaders Briefing on a monthly basis.

Chief Executive

Strategic Director
-Environment

RESOLVED: That

Strategic Director
- Environment

- (1) the scheme of delegation for the Mersey Gateway Officer Project Board be approved;
- (2) the partnering arrangements with the Mersey Gateway Officer Group be maintained throughout the project delivery be approved;
- (3) the project team has been bolstered with the appointment of GVA Grimley as planning consultants for Mersey Gateway and as

planning policy advisor on matters connected with Mersey Gateway, and with the re-appointment of DTW/Politics International as communication consultants be noted; and

- (4) a report on the project be presented to the 18th July 2007 meeting of the Council for consideration.

MGEB5 GOVERNMENT POLICY ISSUES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which provided a summary of the recent land-use planning and local transport policy statements by Government that may impact on the delivery of Mersey Gateway.

RESOLVED: That the developments with Government Policy and the potential impact on the delivery of Mersey Gateway be noted.

MGEB6 FINANCE AND PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which sought agreement to the revised expenditure profile and the adjusted programme for Mersey Gateway. The changes were necessary to accommodate the decision to undertake public consultation and the outcome of discussions with the Department of Transport (DfT) confirming that the method of procurement is likely to be based on a conventional Private Finance Initiative Procedure.

The Board was advised that the project's budget forecast had been estimated at £14m being the median of a range of £12m - £17m. The Board was further advised that on present estimates, it was anticipated that the project can be delivered within this budget range, although it may be challenging to bring the budget in at £14m. Further budget reports would be provided periodically, advising on the budget and where appropriate measures were required to keep the budget within the identified range.

Strategic Director
- Environment

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the revised project expenditure profile for development cost be approved;
- (2) the adjusted programme of key milestone events be approved; and

- (3) the work required to develop spatial policy in the Mersey Gateway corridor is not covered in the current Environment Department budget, and the spending priorities within the department were under review be noted.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information will be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100(1) and paragraph 3 and Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

MGEB7 INVESTIGATION: LAND ACQUISITION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which sought authority to commence an investigation into how to secure the resources required to finance the acquisition of land by negotiation, where land interests could be purchased in advance of the Mersey Gateway Compulsory Order (CPC) procedure.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the proposed investigation be undertaken into financial risk and best value options for acquiring land in advance of the compulsory purchase procedure; and
- (2) the results emerging from this investigation be reported to the Council' Executive Sub Committee for consideration, including the granting of authority to implement any advanced land acquisition recommendations.

Strategic Director
- Environment

MINUTES ISSUED: 20th June 2007

CALL IN: 27th June 2007

Any matter decided by the Mersey Gateway Executive Board may be called in no later that 27th June 2007

Meeting ended at 10.45 am

REPORT TO: Mersey Gateway Executive Board

DATE: 15th November 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Environment

SUBJECT: The Results of Public Consultation for Mersey Gateway

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of the substantive issues raised in the comments received in the recent pre-planning application public consultation exercise, and to advise how the project team intend to respond to these issues. The agreed response will form part of the published report on the result of public consultation.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve

- (1) the project response to the issues raised in the comments received; and
- (2) the report on the Results of Public Consultation is published at the earliest opportunity.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Mersey Gateway project held a 14 week pre-planning application consultation from 18th June to 21st September 2007. The purpose of the consultation exercise was to give regional stakeholders and the general public an opportunity to comment on the draft scheme that was expected to form the proposals to be taken forward for planning approval early next year. The Mersey Gateway Executive Board (MGEB) gave approval for the public consultation to be launched at their meeting on 18th June 2007.

3.2 The effectiveness and the results of consultation have now been assessed by the Mersey Gateway project team with the specialist assistance of MVA Consultants, who have analysed the comments made in the responses received. The results of consultation can now be reported. The Public Consultation Report is attached at Appendix 1 and has three parts:-

- Part I, Consultation Process
- Part II, Factual Results of Consultation; and
- Part III, The Interpretative Report covering the outcomes of the consultation process and how they will influence the project as it moves towards the submission of a planning application.

- 3.3 To advise all interested parties, particularly those who responded with comments, it is proposed to publish a leaflet summarising the consultation results, together with the three part consultation report. A copy of the leaflet and the completed consultation report are attached to this report.
- 3.4 The consultation exercise has raised awareness across the Borough of the proposed scheme and has consolidated the general understanding of how the project would be delivered through tolling arrangements agreed with the Government. The comments received have been extensive and have contributed significantly to the refinement of the proposed scheme in a number of areas. The substantive issues raised in comments are reported below, alongside the extent to which the project will be influenced by the issues raised. The proposed response of the project team is presented in italics for each of the substantive issues raised.

4.0 POLICY, RESOURCE AND OTHER ISSUES

Regional Stakeholders

- 4.1 Around 700 organisations and institutions were consulted on the draft proposals. The key parties are closely involved with the project through the Mersey Crossing Group and through routine contact with the project team. As such, the overall vote of support for the project was as expected.

The project team will continue to keep regional stakeholders advised of progress and in particular will work with the regulating authorities to ensure that their requirements are met in the planning application to be submitted next Spring.

Affected Landowners

- 4.2 The Reference Design exhibited at public consultation would not require any occupied residential property to be acquired. The scheme would however have a direct impact on commercial property and several business premises in South Widnes and at Astmoor in Runcorn, and some of these properties are expected to be acquired. This impact gave rise to comments raising issues about relocations, advanced purchase, compulsory purchase and possible job losses.

The project team will write to all who either own or lease the property affected by Mersey Gateway to determine how to minimise the impact of the scheme on their business. Where acquisition cannot be avoided, consideration will be given to the timing of any purchase and the prospects for relocation.

Tolling

- 4.3 Whilst the principle of a new crossing of the Mersey was well received, the matter of charging tolls was the most common issue raised by the public. It was also the first of the two closed questions in the questionnaire that offered a range of options for a toll discount scheme.

The tolling strategy will be developed further and will take into account the comments received and the results of a new investigation into the feasibility of using Open Road Tolling technology instead of toll barriers. Open road tolling may offer more flexibility in terms of practicable toll discount schemes. However it will not be until the concession agreement has been finalised in 2010/11 that the exact level of discount can be determined. Sensitivity tests in the traffic model can be used to assess the impacts of potential tolling options.

Use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge after the opening of the Mersey Gateway

- 4.4 The consultation was the first occasion where we asked the public how best to utilise Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB), once it is relieved of through traffic. The comments received however suggest that the question had been linked by some respondents to a concern over tolling SJB.

Around 80% of traffic is expected to transfer to the new bridge.

In Widnes, the new Mersey Gateway route would replace or sever the existing SJB connecting roads. The much lighter traffic flow on the reinstated connecting roads in Widnes would enable a lower standard design with more scope to provide local access for businesses and residents. The opportunities created for South Widnes are being investigated, and improvements will be published for consultation next year.

Similar opportunities exist in Runcorn, particularly in the Old Town which is blighted by the elevated viaducts and slip roads connecting the Expressway network to SJB. The “de-linking” of SJB in Runcorn will still form part of the Mersey Gateway project, but the preferred de-linking scheme will be developed alongside the considerations of more widespread improvements to the Old Town.

The comments received demonstrate substantive support for improved facilities for cycling, walking and public transport. A transport strategy for SJB is now being developed that is expected to be embraced in the development of the Local Transport Plan for the Borough.

Traffic Impact on the Central Expressway

- 4.5 The Mersey Gateway will involve the re-routing of traffic on existing roads, in particular the Runcorn Expressways. The consultation plans indicated a 160% increase in traffic along the Central Expressway, and

views were expressed by local residents about increased traffic noise, air pollution and depreciation in property values.

The Reference Design is now being reviewed to ensure that the design can cope with the traffic increase along the existing sections of the Central Expressway that will form part of the Mersey Gateway route. The design review will also look to include noise mitigation such as noise barriers, where they are effective in preventing noise increase due to the higher traffic flow.

Where the new works interfere with existing landscaping, the scheme will include new planting and landscaping to ensure that the corridor is reinstated at least to its current standard.

Possible New M56 Junction (J11A)

- 4.6 Proposals for a new motorway junction on the M56 between existing Junctions 11 and 12 on the M56 were first made public in Halton's Local Transport Plan produced in 2000. The case for a new junction at this location is reinforced by the changes in traffic resulting from Mersey Gateway. The public consultation information did not include any specific proposals for a new junction, but the plans did indicate a potential site for Junction 11A and informed the public that options were being discussed with the Highways Agency. Comments were received querying the nature of the improvements, and possible traffic impact that a new junction could induce. In particular, Preston Brook Parish Council were interested in the possible traffic relief that a new junction on the M56 could bring to the A56 through the village. Conversely, Sutton Parish Council in Vale Royal, Cheshire were concerned that a new junction on the M56 could induce more traffic on the A56 through Sutton Weaver and lead to adverse environmental impact.

The project team will complete the discussions and investigations with the Highways Agency in relation to the deliverability of this new junction. A decision on the principle to include Junction 11A in the scheme will be made by the end of 2007. Further consultation is likely to take place if a decision is taken to include a new junction on the M56 as part of the Mersey Gateway project.

Ecological Impacts

- 4.7 A small number of comments related to ecological impact, in particular where the scheme crosses Wigg Island. These public views add to the more weighty considerations related to the impact on the Estuary, which have been under investigation for several years in consultation with the Environmental Agencies and the Mersey Conservator.

The scheme will include mitigation or compensatory measures that redress any loss of habitat and local amenity. Details will be reported in

the Environmental Statement that will be published to support the planning application next Spring.

5.0 KEY RISKS

- 5.1 The project team will be expected to deliver in line with the responses given in the published information.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 The new Mersey Crossing will improve accessibility to services, education and employment for all.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 7.1 Files maintained by the Mersey Gateway project team and by the Highways and Transportation Department.



Mersey Gateway Pre-Planning Application Public Consultation

Part III, Interpretive Report on the Public Consultation Process

Halton Borough Council
The Mersey Gateway Team
Environment Directorate
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MERSEY GATEWAY PRE-PLANNING APPLICATION PUBLIC CONSULTATION

PART III, INTERPRETIVE RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0.1 The Mersey Gateway project held a 14 week pre-planning application public consultation running from 18th June to 21st September 2007.

1.0.2 This report is the third part of a report that covers the detail of the Mersey Gateway Pre-Planning Application Public Consultation exercise. This report (Part III) specifically covers the outcomes of the consultation process and explains how the views expressed will influence the project as it moves towards the submission of a planning application. The other two parts of the consultation report are:

- Part I, Consultation Process;
- Part II, Factual Results of Consultation.

2.0 IMPACT UPON THE SCHEME DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Outline of Consultation Issues

2.1.1 The key issues emerging from the consultation process are as follows, (for further details refer to Part II, Factual Results of Consultation):

- Support for the scheme
- Tolling
- Use of Silver Jubilee Bridge after the opening of the Mersey Gateway;
- Traffic impact upon the Central Expressway
- Impact upon commercial units
- Impact of a possible new M56 Junction (J11A).

The issues stated above are not listed in order of importance nor in the number of consultation responses that they generated.

2.1.2 Other specific issues were raised, some of which may have only been by a small minority of respondents but nonetheless are of relevance to scheme development, these include:

- Traffic impacts:
 - a) M56 J11
 - b) M56 J12
 - c) Weston Expressway
 - d) Widnes Town Centre
 - e) Ditton Junction
 - f) Widnes Loops
- Ecological impacts
- Design issues:

- a) De-linking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge
- b) Choice of route
- c) Location of toll plazas
- d) Impact on the golf course and nearby housing
- e) Layout of Astmoor Junction
- f) Impact on Public Rights of Way

Each of these issues is described in sections 2.2 to 2.10 with the response or action that the project team will take to address where necessary given in italics.

2.2 Support for the Scheme

2.2.1 The principle of a new crossing of the Mersey in Halton has been generally well accepted, with many respondents seeing a need for the scheme. A total of 243 respondents expressed unreserved support for the scheme whilst 93 stated general support but with concern about specific issues.

2.2.2 Expressions of support for the scheme were particularly evident from institutions, private sector organisations and local authorities that were consulted as they have a stakeholder interest in the project. Only one wider stakeholder response expressed concern over the case for Mersey Gateway. The response demonstrates the continued support that Mersey Gateway receives across the Liverpool City Region and north Cheshire.

2.2.3 *Continue to promote the scheme in an active and positive manner in accordance with the Mersey Gateway Communication Strategy and Stakeholder Management Plan and take on board any suggestions for improving communications.*

2.2.4 *Also continue to actively liaise with Stakeholders, this is of particular importance when such Stakeholders have a regulatory role.*

2.3 Tolling

2.3.1 Whilst the principle of a new crossing of the Mersey was well received, the matter of charging tolls was the most common issue raised by the public. It was also the first of the two closed questions in the questionnaire that offered a range of options to choose from which were as follows, (respondents being able to choose a maximum of two options):

- Same rate for all users;
- Discounts for regular users;
- Discounts for local people;
- Discounts for Silver Jubilee Bridge users;
- Discounts for off peak users;

- Other (please add).
- 2.3.2 The preference in comments received was for “Discounts for local people” with “Discounts for regular users” being the next preferred choice. By far the least favoured option was “Same rate for all users”. Many respondents gave an additional response (“Other” in the questionnaire) that there should not be any toll due to concerns relating to affordability and potential division of the Borough.
- 2.3.3 *Develop the tolling strategy alongside the procurement of the project to determine how to maximise the opportunity for local discounts to be delivered. The work will include looking at international experience with similar tolling schemes and will explore the case for deploying a range of potential tolling technology (including open road tolling where charging is automatic and not controlled by toll barriers). The information to be produced to support the planning application will provide the results of the investigation but the precise nature of discounts will be determined later through a procurement competition with private sector bidders.*
- 2.3.4 *Also consider public transport, walking and cycling improvements to provide alternatives for some local journeys. Silver Jubilee Bridge is expected to carry only 20 per cent of the current traffic and the project includes proposals to modify the existing carriageway across the bridge to provide facilities for cycling and walking. In addition the project will now include a public transport strategy to improve connections to Runcorn Station and to investigate more attractive bus services across Silver Jubilee Bridge. The Council has also launched a regeneration study that will look at the opportunities presented by the Mersey Gateway Project (see 2.4 below).*

2.4 Use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge after the opening of the Mersey Gateway

- 2.4.1 The second of the two closed questions in the questionnaire related to how the Silver Jubilee Bridge would be used after the opening of the Mersey Gateway. The options given in the question were as follows with a maximum choice of two options:
- Retained as it is;
 - Introduce priority bus lanes;
 - Introduce cycle lanes;
 - Provide more frequent buses across the bridge;
 - Improve pedestrian facilities.
- 2.4.2 The most popular choice was “Retain as it is”, with 60% of respondents giving this view. It is a surprising response and it is possible that this partly reflects a desire for the SJB not to be tolled. However the results also show a substantive interest in using SJB for improving sustainable transport choices. Around 25% of respondents chose “Introduce cycle lanes”, 25%



chose "Improve pedestrian facilities" and 19% chose "Introduce bus priority lanes".

- 2.4.3 *There is clear support for the proposals to improve public transport and to introduce attractive facilities for cycling and walking across SJB but the expressed doubt over the de-linking of SJB requires further investigation. The northern approach roads to SJB (in south Widnes) will be severed by the new Mersey Crossing Route and some alteration and reinstatement to these SJB connecting roads is unavoidable. The reinstatement of the approach roads will be undertaken to allow improved access for local development, most of which suffers from severance due to the current high standard of approach roads crossing West Bank. Hence, to the north of the river the reinstatement of approach roads that cater for local access instead of through traffic will form part of the Mersey Gateway scheme to be presented for formal planning approval next spring. To the south of the river the de-linking of approach roads in Runcorn Old Town are an optional consideration. Considerable opportunity exists however to integrate the regeneration of Runcorn Old Town with the modification of the approach roads to SJB. In view of the ambiguity of the response it is proposed that the de-linking of the SJB on the Runcorn side will not be included in the Mersey Gateway planning application, but will form part of the currently evolving Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy. This will ensure that the de-linking is consistent with the regeneration proposals in Runcorn. The Regeneration Strategy will be available for consultation in early 2008 and complete in summer 2008. Once determined the de-linking will form part of the Mersey Gateway scheme to be taken forward to construction.*

2.5 Traffic Impact on the Central Expressway

- 2.5.1 The Mersey Gateway will involve the re-routing of traffic on existing roads, in particular the Runcorn Expressways. The consultation plans indicated a 160% increase in traffic along the Central Expressway, and views were expressed by local residents about increased traffic noise, air pollution and depreciation in property values.

- 2.5.2 *The scheme will now be extended to investigate the traffic and environmental impacts along the Central Expressway. Early work suggests that the existing junctions will require improvement works to cater for the increase in traffic and that new environmental barriers will be effective in reducing noise. The scheme taken forward to the planning application stage will include these additional works.*

2.6 Impact on Commercial Units

- 2.6.1 Whilst no residential property will be directly affected by the proposals (i.e. property needing to be acquired to allow the construction of the scheme), commercial units would be directly affected in South Widnes and at Astmoor

in Runcorn. This gave rise to issues being raised about relocations, advanced purchase, CPO and possible job losses.

2.6.2 *The Council aims to minimise the disruption and loss of jobs to local businesses. To achieve this all businesses and land owners affected by the scheme will be invited to discuss how to mitigate these effects. Options to consider will include the timescale to acquire and potentially relocate businesses, expansion plans and blight. The aim is to make progress with negotiations with landowners prior to proceeding to purchase property using compulsory powers.*

2.7 Possible New M56 Junction (J11A)

2.7.1 Proposals for a new motorway junction on the M56 between existing junctions 11 and 12 on the M56 were first made public in Halton's Local Transport Plan produced in 2000. Whilst a new M56 junction is not currently part of the Mersey Gateway scheme, there is some potential for its inclusion at some later date. Discussions are underway with the Highways Agency and the Department for Transport. No draft designs are available at this stage and hence the consultation leaflet did not detail any proposals but described an "area of potential M56 motorway improvements". Given the uncertainty we expected the comments received querying the nature of the improvements, and possible traffic impact that a new junction could induce. In particular Preston Brook Parish Council were interested in the possible traffic relief that a new junction on the M56 could bring to the A56 through the village. Conversely Sutton Parish Council in Vale Royal, Cheshire, were concerned that a new junction on the M56 could induce more traffic on the A56 through Sutton Weaver and lead to adverse environmental impact.

2.7.2 *Discussions with the Highways Agency and the Department for Transport will continue with the aim of reaching agreement in relation to the desirability and deliverability of this new junction. A decision on the principle to include J11A in the scheme will be made by the end of 2007. Further consultation will be required if we decide to include this in the scheme.*

2.8 Other Traffic Impacts

2.8.1 Comments were made concerning a possible increase in traffic at M56 J11.

2.8.2 *Improvements to M56 J11 are not part of the scheme, extra capacity will be made available at M56 J12.*

2.8.3 M56 J12 currently has capacity problems during peak hours and the scheme details improvements that will provide extra capacity. There were some comments in relation to current and future traffic levels and the proposed junction alterations.

- 2.8.4 *On the opening of the MG traffic levels are expected to initially fall at J12 but will increase above pre-opening levels during the design period. This has been taken account of in the design but needs to be confirmed by the traffic model.*
- 2.8.5 Generally favourable comments were received in relation to the decrease in traffic on the Weston Expressway.
- 2.8.6 *Comments have been noted.*
- 2.8.7 The traffic flow drawing indicating traffic flow changes in Widnes Centre to be generally neutral with the exception of a 50% increase on Moore Lane. This generated some concerns about increased traffic flows and associated noise levels.
- 2.8.8 *It is unlikely that there will be any significant increases in traffic in Widnes Town Centre due to traffic diversions onto other routes. The figure shown may have been shown in error but will be investigated and a revision made if necessary.*
- 2.8.9 Ditton Interchange is being altered from a roundabout junction to a signal controlled junction. Comments were received in relation to increased traffic levels generated by the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park and how traffic from Widnes would access the tolling facilities.
- 2.8.10 *The junction has been designed to accommodate this.*
- 2.8.11 Widnes Loops attracted some comment in particular the proportions of traffic that headed east on the Widnes side of the crossing and the junction priorities. The toll plaza onto the MG affected an electricity sub station.
- 2.8.12 *Investigate the possibility of amending the layout to avoid the sub station.*
- 2.9 Ecological Impacts**
- 2.9.1 There have been a few comments in relation to ecological impact, in particular where the scheme crosses Wigg Island.
- 2.9.2 *Possible mitigation or compensatory measures to be considered in the scheme.*
- 2.10 Design Issues**
- 2.10.1 The road layout in Runcorn Old Town generated a degree of comment in the event of de-linking taking place. Favourable comments were received relating to the removal of the slip from Weston Point Expressway to the SJB as this could help enable the reopening of the flight of locks from the Bridgewater Canal to the Manchester Ship Canal.

- 2.10.2 *The Runcorn de-linking strategy needs to be determined in line with the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (see para 2.4).*
- 2.10.3 Some concern was expressed by the Acting Mersey Conservator in regard to the impact of bridge piers on the river hydrology.
- 2.10.4 *The detailed hydrodynamics studies carried out to date shows that the impact on river flow will not be significant.*
- 2.10.5 A few comments were received in relation to choice of route with some respondents stating that the route should be downstream of the existing crossing and to a lesser extent that it should be further towards Warrington where the river is narrower.
- 2.10.6 *Studies into the choice of route were carried out up to 2003 when the preferred route was chosen by the Council with the support of the Mersey Crossing Group. The choice of route was based on the best overall option taking into account all significant potential benefits and impacts.*
- 2.10.7 Location of the toll plazas generated a degree of comment, in particular why they were sited on the Widnes side of the river.
- 2.10.8 *The toll plazas were situated on the Widnes side as this was the optimum location that minimises environmental impact.*
- 2.10.9 There were some adverse comments about the impact on the golf course, in particular the reason for its current closure. There was also some comment about the possible impact upon housing to the north of the golf course.
- 2.10.10 *The golf course was closed as a precautionary measure after the discovery of contaminants close to the surface some years in advance of the reference design indicating the main toll plaza taking land from the golf course. Replacement additional land has been identified that could accommodate a reconfigured 18 hole course.*
- 2.10.11 *The impact upon the housing alongside the closed golf course should be neutral as the scheme does not encroach closer than at present, the environmental assessment should demonstrate this.*
- 2.10.12 Some clarification was needed as to the layout of Astmoor Junction. Also some comments were received concerning the impact upon properties where alterations were being made.
- 2.10.13 *Include as part of Central Expressway mitigation measures in the EIA.*
- 2.10.14 There were some queries in regards to the impact of the Widnes Loops Junction on the public right of way that currently crosses this area.



2.10.15 *Determine status of public right of way and accommodate.*

3.0 Feedback of Information to the Public

3.1 This report will be made available to the public and any enquiries should be directed to the Mersey Gateway team.

3.2 A leaflet summarising the consultation process and the outcomes has been produced and is attached as an Appendix. The leaflet will be distributed to all households and businesses in Halton along with Stakeholders following its approval by the Mersey Gateway Executive Board on the 15th November.

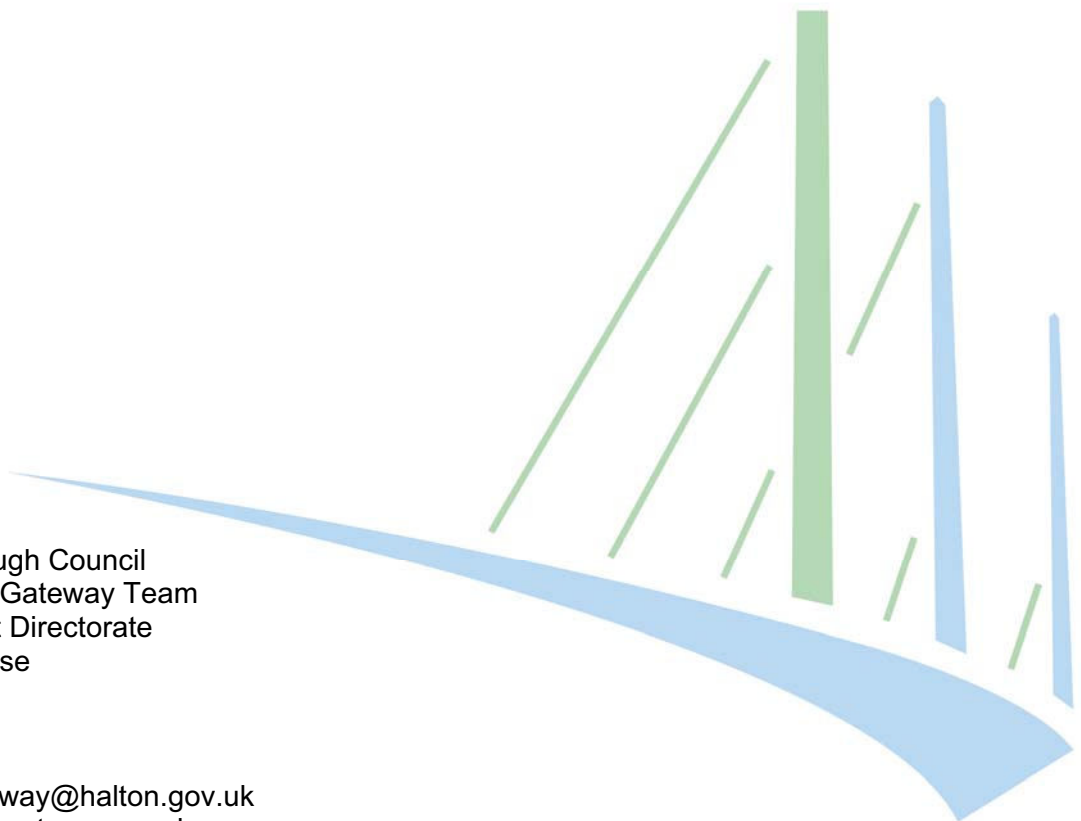


Mersey Gateway Pre-Planning Application Public Consultation

Part I, The Public Consultation Process

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**MERSEY GATEWAY PRE-PLANNING APPLICATION PUBLIC
CONSULTATION**

PART I, THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0.1 The Mersey Gateway project held a 14 week pre-planning application consultation, running from 18th June to 21st September 2007. During this time, it held a number of specific consultation activities detailed in Section 2.

1.0.2 This report is the first part of a report that covers the detail of the Mersey Gateway Pre-Planning Application Public Consultation exercise. This report (Part I) specifically covers the consultation process. The other two parts are:

- Part II, Factual Results of Consultation and
- Part III, Interpretive Results of Consultation.

1.0.3 Other reports associated with this consultation exercise include:

- The Mersey Gateway Communications Strategy (April 2007) which outlines how the project will seek to consult with its wide range of stakeholders throughout the project; and
- The Stakeholder Management Plan (November 2007), that followed on from the Communications Strategy details how stakeholder engagement will be implemented.

1.0.4 This consultation served a number of purposes which were to:

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

All consultation conformed to Halton Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

1.0.5 The following is a summary of the activities that took place during the consultation period:

- Leaflets and questionnaires delivered to each of the 56,000 households and businesses in Halton;
- 15 exhibitions throughout the Borough;
- Editorial in Council publications – Inside Halton/Halton Today/In Touch;
- Mersey Gateway/Halton Borough Council websites;
- Letters to directly affected stakeholders;
- Letters to general stakeholders;
- Information campaign in local media;
- Monthly e-newsletter;
- Briefing events for local/regional businesses and groups;
- Formal letters to all statutory consultees;
- Leaflets and questionnaires sent to local and regional MP's, MEP's, Council leaders and Chief Executives;
- Gateway newsletter; and
- Postal/phone/text feedback system.

2.0 DETAILS OF THE CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

2.1 Pre-Consultation, up to 17th June 2007

- 2.1.1 In October 2006, all affected landowners were contacted advising them of the progress of the Mersey Gateway project and the possible impact of the scheme upon them (including those potentially affected by the new M56 motorway access). These landowners were identified as being affected by the scheme as it was then. The scheme design has however changed to a minor degree subsequently.
- 2.1.2 In December 2006, landowners were again written to in connection with the Phase 6 Ground Investigation (further additional landowners were also written to in March and April 2007). This also included some landowners who were on the periphery of the scheme, but not directly affected by it other than the requirement to carry out a borehole on their land.
- 2.1.3 A Consultation Action Plan was drawn up in March 2007 that initiated the work required for the consultation exercise. This can be found on Collaborator.
- 2.1.4 An informal evening briefing event was held on 7th June 2007 at Halton Stadium for the benefit of all Halton Borough Council Members.

- 2.1.5 A presentation was given to Liverpool Airport Transport Forum on 1st June 2007, and the Mersey Estuary Forum on 14th June 2007 – refer also to Section 2.5.
- 2.1.6 During this period, routine enquiries from landowners, businesses and the general public were dealt with on a day-to-day basis.

2.2 Consultation Launch, 18th June 2007

The Mersey Gateway Executive Board of 18th June 2007 approved the scheme for public consultation, based upon the then current reference design. The period of consultation was to last until 21st September 2007.

- 2.2.1 Immediately following Mersey Gateway Executive Board approval of the scheme for consultation, a press launch was held at the Catalyst Museum in Widnes, where presentations were given to the press. Consultation leaflets and questionnaires were available for the launch – refer to Appendix A.
- 2.2.2 During early June, a number of articles appeared in the Halton and Liverpool press. These are included in Appendix B – refer also to Section 2.6, Media Coverage.

2.3 Initial Contact with Stakeholders by Letter and Leaflet

- 2.3.1 Information was posted to directly affected landowners and leaseholders on 19th June 2007. The information supplied to them included:
- A letter that described the consultation process and the possible impact of the scheme upon them;
 - A plan of the scheme in proximity of the landholding in question;
 - A consultation leaflet;
 - A questionnaire;
 - A pre-paid envelope for return information; and
 - A form requesting details of ownership, leases and tenancies.
- 2.3.2 Whilst the vast majority of landowners were contacted at that time, there were a small minority where ownership details were then unknown. The current land referencing exercise will assist in gaining this information.
- 2.3.3 During the latter part of June 2007, copies of the consultation leaflet, questionnaire and pre-paid envelope were delivered to most households and business premises in the Borough. The remaining

addresses in the Parishes of Moore and Daresbury had leaflets, questionnaires and envelopes delivered during July 2007.

2.3.4 In early July 2007, wider stakeholders at a local, regional and national level were also contacted by a letter that enclosed a consultation leaflet, questionnaire and envelope. It was however anticipated that the majority of these stakeholders would respond using their own notepaper. A total of 747 such stakeholders were contacted.

2.3.5 The consultation leaflet gave the basic information, but also advised how further information could be obtained and views put forward, this included:

- In person at exhibitions;
- By telephone;
- On-line;
- By freepost return of questionnaire;
- By e-mail; and
- By text.

The following Sections 2.4 - 2.11 detail how further information could be obtained and views given.

2.4 Public Consultation Exhibitions

2.4.1 Details of the consultation times and venues were advertised using the consultation leaflet, posters and the local press. These were held at 13 various locations within the Borough between 4th and 21st July 2007. The dates were chosen to avoid the school holiday period. A summary of these events is given in the table below.

Date	Venue	Time
04/07/2007*	Halton Stadium	12:00-20:00
05/07/2007*	The Brindley	12:00-20:00
06/07/2007	Halton Lea	10:00-16:00
07/07/2007	Halton Lea	10:00-14:00
09/07/2007	Halton Direct Link, Widnes	09:00-17:00
10/07/2007	Halton Direct Link, Widnes	09:00-16:00
12/07/2007*	Halton Stadium	10:00-20:00
13/07/2007	Greenoaks, Widnes	10:00-16:00
14/07/2007	Greenoaks, Widnes	10:00-14:00
16/07/2007	Direct Link, Runcorn Old Town	09:00-17:00
17/07/2007	Direct Link, Runcorn Old Town	09:00-17:00
18/07/2007*	The Brindley	14:00-20:00
21/07/2007*	Halton Stadium	10:00-14:00
Total	13 Venues	87 Hours

*after the date denotes a full exhibition

2.4.2 Due to the late delivery of leaflets to Moore and Daresbury, it was decided to hold two additional full consultation exhibitions in September to avoid the school holiday period. These were:

- 04/09/2007 Daresbury Innovation Centre 12:00-18:00; and
- 06/09/2007 Moore Primary School 14:30-20:00.

This gives a total of 15 venues, with a total of 98.5 hours of manned exhibition time.

2.4.3 At the full exhibitions, detailed 1:2500 scale plans were on display, along with regeneration and environmental information. The main display stand was also in place and plans were available on tables to assist with detailed queries. An animation of the South Widnes and North Runcorn areas with the new crossing in place was shown on a TV screen. Also a “walk through” 3D computer model was available for the public to view the proposals from any location or height. Staff were on hand to answer queries and record details of views given on a form that would be treated in the same way as a questionnaire response.

2.4.4 At other exhibitions where space was more restricted, the main stand was in place and the 1:2500 scale plans were available if required.

The exhibition attendances are detailed in the table below.

Date	Venue	Attendance
04/07/2007	Halton Stadium	55
05/07/2007	The Brindley	149 (plus 30 school children)
06/07/2007	Halton Lea	135
07/07/2007	Halton Lea	133
09/07/2007	Halton Direct Link, Widnes	49
10/07/2007	Halton Direct Link, Widnes	29
12/07/2007	Halton Stadium	52
13/07/2007	Greenoaks, Widnes	312
14/07/2007	Greenoaks, Widnes	330
16/07/2007	Halton Direct Link, Runcorn Old Town	40
17/07/2007	Halton Direct Link, Runcorn Old Town	37
18/07/2007	The Brindley	92
21/07/2007	Halton Stadium	26
04/09/2007	Daresbury Innovation Centre	58
06/09/2007	Moore Primary School	19
Total		1,546

- 2.4.5 The Town Centre exhibitions at Greenoaks and Halton Lea were successful in informing and gaining the views of members of the public who may not have made a specific journey to attend an exhibition at Halton Stadium or The Brindley. The Greenoaks exhibitions were attended by a significant number of people who lived in Warrington but chose to shop in Widnes.
- 2.4.6 Whilst attendance levels were lower at Halton Stadium and The Brindley, the duration of attendance was significantly longer with people asking questions in greater detail.
- 2.4.7 The exhibitions at Widnes and Runcorn Old Town Halton Direct Links were visited by a mixture of people passing by on other business and specific visits. These exhibitions were generally quieter than the others.
- 2.4.8 The Daresbury exhibition had a number of visits from residents of Preston Brook as the Parish Council had publicised this and the Moore exhibition in a newsletter.
- 2.4.9 The Moore exhibition had low attendance but included a visit from a member of Moore Parish Council.
- 2.4.10 An unmanned exhibition was held at the offices of the Liverpool Daily Post during the period 9th July to 13th July 2007. A full set of display boards was used at this venue.
- 2.4.11 An unmanned exhibition using the main stand and a leaflet dispenser was in place at Liverpool John Lennon Airport between 27th July and 31st August 2007.
- 2.4.12 An exhibition at Spike Island in September 2007 included much of the Mersey Gateway exhibition materials and was attended by over 70 people.

2.5 Presentations

- 2.5.1 Presentations have taken place to a number of stakeholders including:
- Merseytravel Integrated Transport Forum, 13th July 2007;
 - Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership, 17th July 2007;
 - Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, Ports and Transport Forum, 18th July 2007;
 - Construction for Merseyside, 20th July 2007;
 - Merseyside Transport, Health and Environment Forum, 25th July 2007;

- Stakeholders involved in the Social Impact Assessment, w/b 10th September 2007;
- Federation of Small Businesses, 10th October 2007; and
- Mersey Crossing Group and Breakfast Briefing, 15th October 2007.

These presentations were well received.

In addition to these presentations, two others were given in June 2007 prior to the launch of consultation – refer to Section 2.1.

2.6 Media Coverage

2.6.1 Media coverage was secured in the following outlets:

- BBC North West;
- Granada;
- BBC Radio Merseyside;
- Wire FM;
- Liverpool Echo;
- Liverpool Post;
- Runcorn & Widnes World;
- Runcorn & Widnes Weekly News;
- Planning;
- Surveyor;
- Local Transport Today;
- Architect, Builder, Contractor & Developer; and
- Liverpool Chamber of Commerce Magazine.

2.7 Newsletters

2.7.1 The following newsletters were used to provide information on the proposals:

- The Mersey Gateway e-newsletter;
- In Touch (HBC internal magazine);
- Inside Halton (HBC magazine distributed to all households in Halton);
- The Gateway (Mersey Gateway stakeholder leaflet);
- Liverpool John Lennon Airport newsletter;
- Liverpool Chamber of Commerce magazine; and
- NWDA newsletter.

2.8 Website

- 2.8.1 The Mersey Gateway website has been updated for the purposes of consultation. In addition to providing more detailed information, the website also provided a means of feedback with an electronic questionnaire in the same format as the hard copy of the questionnaire contained within the consultation leaflet.

2.9 Telephone Contact

- 2.9.1 The consultation brochure contained a telephone number for the Halton Borough Council Call Centre that was manned 24 hours per day. The Call Centre staff had been briefed with the question and answer briefing to hand. More detailed enquiries were passed through to the Mersey Gateway Team.

2.10 E-mail

- 2.10.1 The consultation leaflet gave details of the Mersey Gateway e-mail address. The e-mail address was also available through the Mersey Gateway and Halton Borough Council websites.

2.11 Text

- 2.11.1 A texting facility was also set up at the telephone Call Centre, and details were given in the consultation leaflet.

3.0 RECORDING OF RESPONSES AND ENQUIRIES

- 3.0.1 The most common means of giving views on the scheme was the questionnaire sent out with the consultation leaflet with over 3,000 responses received by post (refer also to Part II, Factual Results of Consultation). These were all typed and recorded electronically. Also the original questionnaire was electronically scanned. In a very small minority of cases, a degree of censorship was necessary where comments were made that could be viewed as offensive and were unrelated to the scheme. In several replies, a request was made for further information. This information was generally provided by e-mail where an e-mail address was given, otherwise a response was posted.

In addition to the above, over 200 questionnaires were received electronically.

- 3.0.2 Where comments were received that related to a directly affected property by any means of communication, these were copied to the

relevant land file. For each affected landholding, a separate file was set up.

- 3.0.3 There were over 200 questionnaires filled in by staff at the exhibitions where a visitor wished to give a point of view. These are being recorded in the same manner as the leaflet questionnaires.
- 3.0.4 Telephone responses were initially received by the Call Centre, but callers who needed more detail were passed onto the Mersey Gateway Team where full details of the call were recorded. Telephone enquiries processed by the Mersey Gateway Team were added to the database of responses.
- 3.0.5 A total of 78 e-mails were received with many requiring a response. All e-mails were added to the database of responses.
- 3.0.6 Only 2 texts were received despite being advertised in the consultation leaflet.
- 3.0.7 A total of 30 responses were received from wider stakeholders.





Mersey Gateway Pre-Planning Application Public Consultation

Part II, Factual Report on the Public Consultation

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A Consultation Sheet

B Questionnaire

Summary

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

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

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

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

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

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

1.2 Background

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

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

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

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

1.3 Report Structure

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

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

2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This report considers the feedback gathered from the public consultation with local stakeholders, wider stakeholders, as well as the wider travelling public.
- 2.1.2 As stated in the Mersey Gateway Consultation Action Plan (March 2007), the consultation period comprised a number of activities:

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

2.2 Data Collection

- 2.2.1 The responses from the questionnaire formed the main source of data for the analysis; 3271 questionnaires were returned (3069 postal and 202 online).
- 2.2.2 Further data came from ad hoc emails which had been sent to Halton Borough Council by members of the public. In total, 78 emails were included in the analysis. Whilst some of these focused on specific questions, others were concerned with broader topics relating to the scheme and its impact on the local area.
- 2.2.3 The exhibitions produced 208 public consultation sheets.
- 2.2.4 A small number of telephone enquiries (29), and 30 letters from stakeholders, formed the final data source for this analysis.
- 2.2.5 As such, feedback from the public took a variety of forms, including:

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

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

2.3 Analysis Techniques

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

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

3 Findings: Stakeholders

3.1 Introduction

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

3.2 Types of stakeholder

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

Table 3.1 Profile of Stakeholders

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

3.3 Overall perceptions of the scheme

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

Table 3.2 Perceptions of the scheme

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

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

3.4 Support for the scheme

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

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

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

"We strongly support this major regional infrastructure project."

"We support the development of this scheme."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.5 Questions about the scheme

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.6 Opposition to the scheme

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

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

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

4 Findings: General Public

4.1 Introduction

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

4.2 Approaches to Tolling

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

Table 4.1 Preferred approach to toll discounts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3 Redeveloping the Silver Jubilee Bridge

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.4 Open comments on the Mersey Gateway Proposals

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

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

Table 4.3 Thematic breakdown of open comments by communication method

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

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

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

Table 4.4 Thematic breakdown of open comments

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

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

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

Table 4.5 Concern about specific geographical areas

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

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

Tolling

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

Table 4.6 Thematic breakdown of comments about the tolling regime

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

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

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

"Why should local people have to pay to cross the bridge?"

"Tolling local people to use the bridge is out of order."

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

"People living in Runcorn and Widnes should be able to use the SJB free."

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

"Local people should have badge/permit to cross for free. We should not have to pay."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Are any of the London bridges tolled?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Silver Jubilee Bridge should remain free for locals."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Design/construction of scheme

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Support for the scheme

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

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

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

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

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

"Please start building the new bridge quickly!"

"Proceed as soon as possible."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Great idea that will regenerate the area."

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

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

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

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

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

Traffic concerns/increased congestion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Environmental impact

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wildlife concerns

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

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

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

Support Mersey Gateway scheme but have some concerns

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Social segregation

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

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

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

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

Disillusioned with the scheme

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

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

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

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

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

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

Project Communication

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Other

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

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

Local Business

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

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

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

House Prices

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

Policy

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

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

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

Job Losses

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

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

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

Construction Force

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

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

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

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

5 Summary of Findings

5.1 Introduction

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

Design and location of the scheme

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

Construction and operation of the Mersey Gateway

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

5.2 Overall

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

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



The Mersey Gateway Project



Consultation feedback

Over the summer we asked for your views on our plans for the Mersey Gateway project. This leaflet includes details of what you said and what we are planning to do in response.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who responded formally to the consultation and to the hundreds of you who attended our exhibitions. We are very grateful for each and every one of your contributions.

Your views will help us to shape the Mersey Gateway planning application, which is due to be submitted in early 2008.

I know that many of you are keen to hear the finer details about our proposals and, while work is progressing to plan, I have to make it clear that this is an extremely large and complex project and details like exact toll levels cannot be confirmed for some time. What I can assure you is that we have listened to your views and concerns and our commitment is to prioritise discounts on tolls for local people.

Finally, I hope that you will continue to support us in our efforts to deliver the Mersey Gateway and the many benefits it will bring to Halton.

Cllr Tony McDermott MBE
Leader, Halton Borough Council

Why we consulted

This summer's consultation programme was designed to give residents, businesses and organisations from across Halton, and the wider north west region, an opportunity to give their views on the Mersey Gateway project.

Specifically, it intended to:

- inform and help shape the planning and other applications, which will be submitted in early 2008
- inform you of our plans and proposed timetable of activity
- inform people at the earliest appropriate opportunity of proposals that could affect them directly
- seek your views and opinions on our proposals, particularly on those aspects of the project which are still flexible.

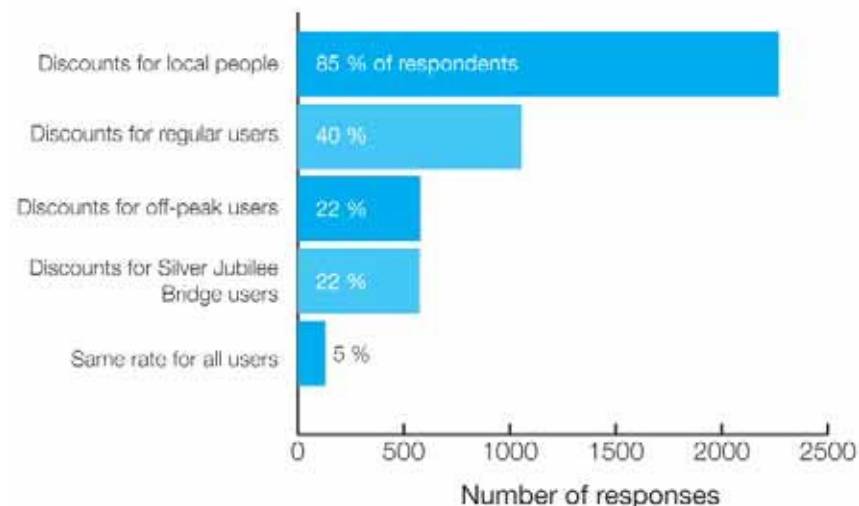
What you told us

We received over 3,500 responses to the consultation. Contributions came from throughout Halton and across the north west and included local people, businesses, local and regional authorities and special interest groups.

We asked two specific questions as part of the consultation. The questions and the responses we received are shown to the right.

We asked: *Both bridges will be tolled. We are currently investigating options for discounts for different people crossing the bridges. Which approach would you prefer to see adopted? Please tick a maximum of two options.*

- Same rate for all users
- Discounts for local people
- Discounts for off-peak users
- Discounts for regular users
- Discounts for Silver Jubilee Bridge users
- Other (please add)



We wanted to know your views on which groups should have priority when it comes to discounts. The most popular option was for discounts for local people, an option the project team and Halton Borough Council will now prioritise. It is too early to rule out other options such as discounts for regular users, but we will ensure that priority for discounts is given to local residents.

A number of 'other' options were suggested by respondents. A summary of these is given below.

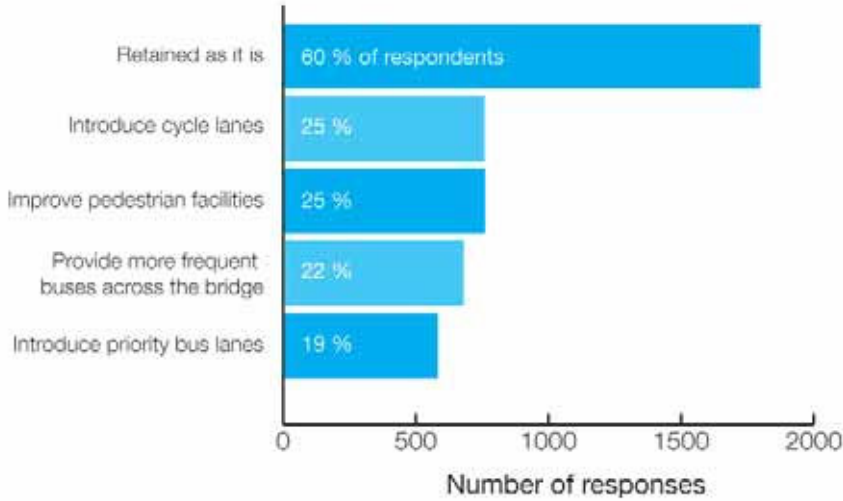
Summary of 'other' responses	Number of responses
No toll	733
Discounts for disabled or elderly users	124
Discounts for specific types of vehicle, e.g. taxi	38
Limited charging plans, e.g. car sharing	23
Discounts for Halton businesses	15
Restrictions for HGVs on Silver Jubilee Bridge	11

A significant number of people expressed a preference for 'no tolls'. This was not given as a choice in the questionnaire because it is not an option for the project. The government will not fund the whole project and tolling is the only way we can deliver the Mersey Gateway. A free to use Silver Jubilee Bridge alongside the Mersey Gateway would not address the congestion issues or enable the project as a whole to be achieved.

Redevelopment of the Silver Jubilee Bridge maximum benefit of local people

We asked: *The Silver Jubilee Bridge will be redeveloped as a bridge for local users as part of the project. How would you like to see the Silver Jubilee Bridge changed for the maximum benefit of local people? Please tick a maximum of two options.*

- Retained as it is*
- Introduce cycle lanes*
- Introduce priority bus lanes*
- Improve pedestrian facilities*
- Introduce priority bus lanes*
- Provide more frequent buses across the bridge*



The most popular response was to leave the Silver Jubilee Bridge as it is. We believe this partly reflects a desire for it not to be tolled, which is not an option available in our funding agreement with the government.

The comments received demonstrate a range of support for modifying the Silver Jubilee Bridge when it would be carrying about 20% of the current traffic flow. The new Mersey Gateway bridge will enable these modifications to be taken forward as part of the overall project.

The redesign of the approach roads on the Runcorn side of the Silver Jubilee Bridge will be planned alongside other improvements in the town. This work will take into account the comments we received in the Mersey Gateway consultation. Halton Borough Council will be inviting your views on these plans early in 2008.

In Widnes, the roads linking the town to the existing bridge will be remodelled to open up areas for new development and better link roads to both bridges. The council is also looking at wider improvements the Mersey Gateway can deliver for South Widnes.

Other comments

We also asked you for any other comments you would like to be taken into account before the planning application is submitted early in 2008.

The most frequent area for further comment was that of tolling, which was highlighted by 41% of all respondents. This reflects the fact that this was the number one issue for many people across the borough.

Others used this section to reinforce their support for the scheme and comment on issues like its design and construction, concerns over traffic congestion and environmental impacts. Almost one third of respondents made no further comments.



What happens next?

The project team is now busy working on areas highlighted in the consultation programme to ensure that the views and concerns of local people and stakeholders are reflected as far as possible in the final Mersey Gateway planning application.

This will be submitted in early 2008. This is the next stage in the process that will lead to construction starting in 2011 and the new bridge opening to traffic in 2014.

There are four key areas relating to the consultation where the project team is working to finalise its proposals. These are:

Tolling

Your issue:

While the scheme benefits from widespread support, many people are concerned about paying tolls and in particular paying tolls to cross the Silver Jubilee Bridge. As well as whether it would be affordable, there were also concerns expressed that a tolled crossing would divide the borough.

Our action:

We understand this view, but tolling both bridges is the only way we can deliver the new crossing, relieve the Silver Jubilee Bridge and bring about much needed environmental benefits to the borough.

The project team is now committed to the principle of prioritising discounts for local people.

The funding agreement with government includes a significant sum to subsidise toll revenue, which will help to keep toll charges down. The current proposal assumes that tolls will be equivalent to the Mersey Tunnel charges. It is not practical to confirm what the exact toll levels will be until 2010 or 2011 as this is when we will be negotiating with potential private sector contractors and funders.



Central Expressway

Your issue:

A number of you were concerned about the increase in traffic that the Mersey Gateway will mean for the Central Expressway in Runcorn. Local residents in particular were concerned about increased traffic noise, air pollution and any effect on property values.

Our action:

We have already asked our engineering consultants, Gifford, to look at how measures like noise barriers and landscaping could be used to reduce the effects of increased traffic. They expect to complete this work by early 2008.

Possible new M56 junction (11A)

Your issue:

The consultation leaflet described an 'area of potential M56 motorway improvements', but did not detail what these could be. Local residents, motorists and parish councils in Halton and Cheshire were interested in how this new junction could impact on local traffic flows.

Our action:

While a new M56 junction near Preston Brook is not currently part of the Mersey Gateway scheme, it could be included in the future. We have reflected the views of local groups in our discussion with the Highways Agency and a decision on whether to include Junction 11A in the Mersey Gateway scheme will be made by the end of 2007. If it is included, we will ensure that everyone who expressed an interest in this area is given the opportunity to make their views known during future discussions.

Impact on businesses and jobs

Your issue:

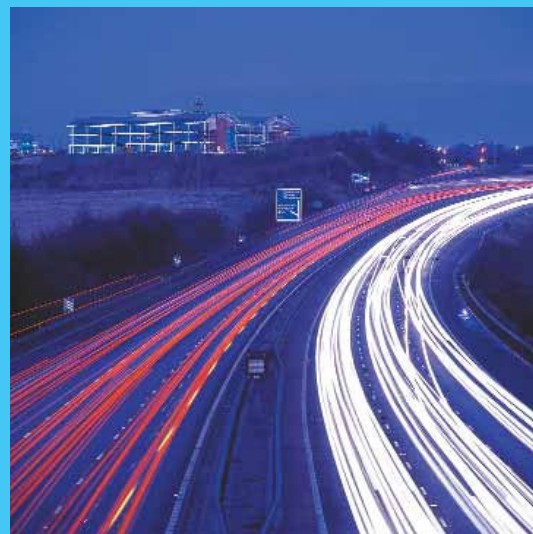
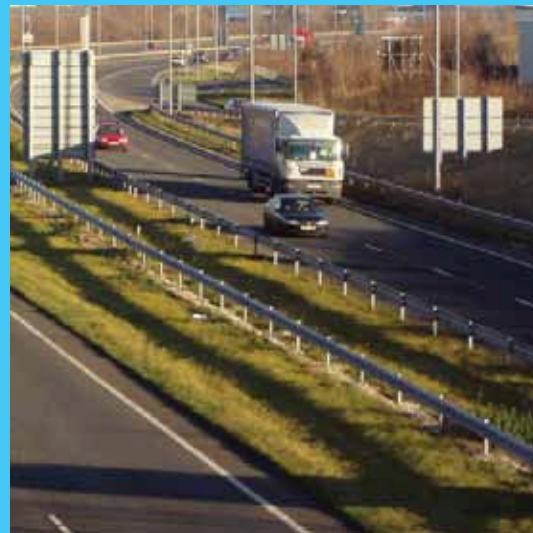
Although there are no occupied homes directly affected by the proposals, the route does affect a number of business premises in South Widnes and at Astmoor in Runcorn. Those businesses affected have raised concerns about relocation, advanced purchase of their land, Compulsory Purchase Orders and possible job losses.

Our action:

We believe the Mersey Gateway will enable the creation of hundreds of new jobs and be crucial to the long term success of businesses in Halton and the wider region.

However, we are in regular contact with all businesses on the route, and will be working closely with them to mitigate effects and, where appropriate, to purchase properties and arrange relocations at a time that minimises disruption.

More details of advance purchase arrangements will be available by early 2008.



What is the Mersey Gateway?

The Mersey Gateway is a £390 million project that would provide a new bridge over the River Mersey between the towns of Runcorn and Widnes. The project includes making changes to the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge to improve facilities for public transport, walking and cycling.

The Mersey Gateway would transform the borough of Halton, improve the lives of local people and create new opportunities for business and investment in Halton, Cheshire, the Liverpool city-region, the north west and beyond.

The new Mersey Gateway Bridge would:

- cross the river around 1.5 kilometres to the east of the Silver Jubilee Bridge
- be a tolled crossing
- have three lanes across the Mersey in each direction
- link the Central Expressway in Runcorn with the Widnes Eastern Relief Road and Speke Road.

The need for a new bridge

The key benefits will be:

- the direct creation of new, permanent jobs
- new opportunities for local and regional businesses
- fewer traffic jams, making journeys faster and more reliable
- opportunities for better public transport links across the river
- increased economic performance across the region
- creation of additional new commercial floorspace
- a catalyst for the development of new homes, shops, offices and leisure facilities
- better links between Halton, the north west and the rest of the country
- a new landmark attraction raising the profile of Halton across the country and around the world



The route

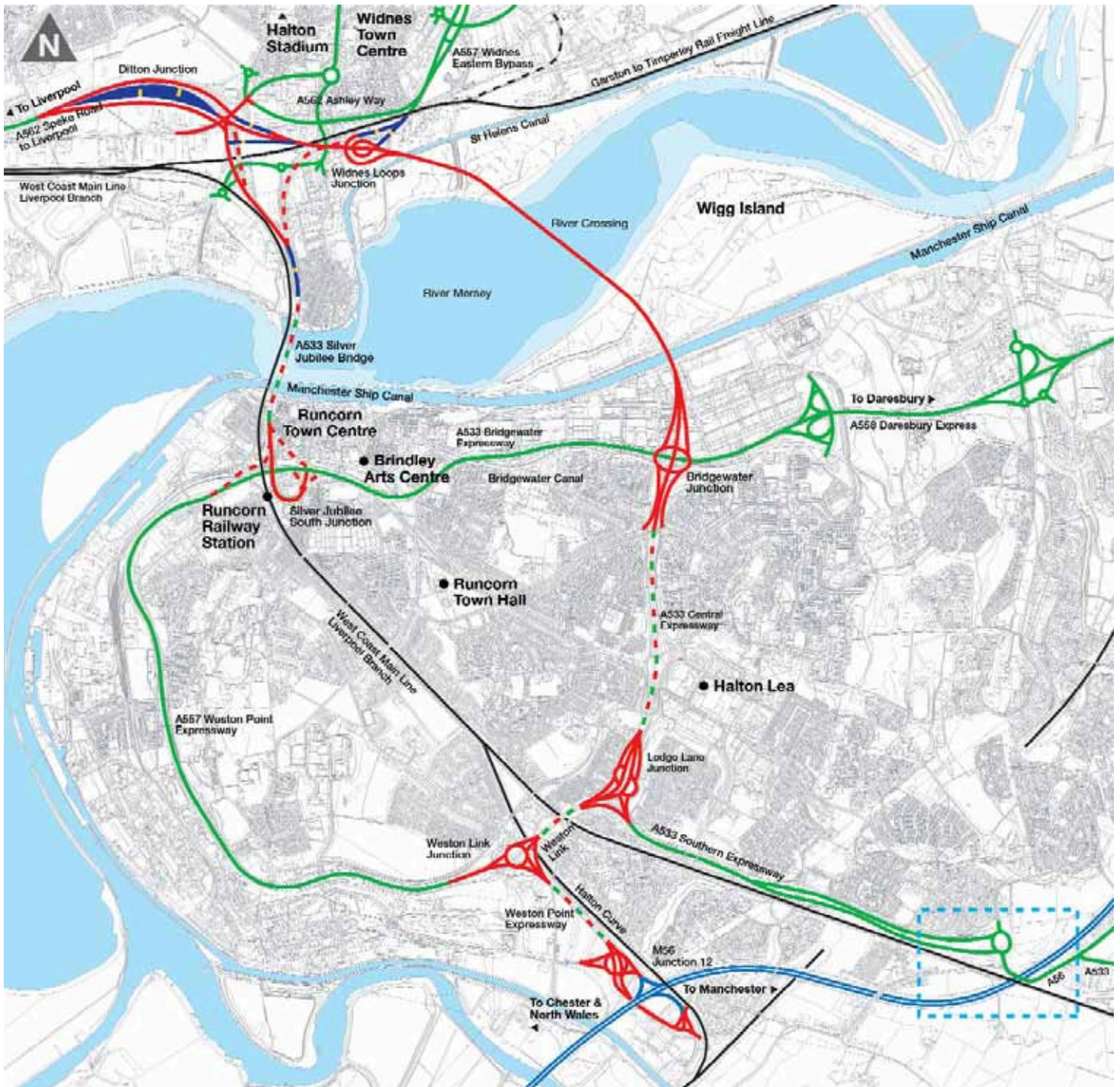
It will run from the Central Expressway in Runcorn to the Widnes Eastern Relief Road and Speke Road, crossing the river and canals around 1.5km east of the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

As well as building the new bridge, the project also involves making extensive changes and improvements to the road network in Widnes and Runcorn to channel traffic over the new crossing and away from the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

The route has been carefully chosen to ensure that it offers the best overall solution, taking into account the potential benefits and environmental effects of the scheme.

Key

- New roads
- - - Improved roads
- Existing major roads
- M56 motorway
- Railway lines
- - - Disused railway lines
- Tolling plaza
- Tolling booths
- - - Silver Jubilee Bridge delinking
- - - Area of possible new M56 junction



How we consulted

The Mersey Gateway project held a 14-week consultation running from 18th June – 21st September 2007.

During this time we asked residents, businesses and organisations across the region for their view on the project in a wide range of different ways. This included:

- delivering leaflets and questionnaires to every household and business in Halton
- 15 exhibitions running for a total of almost 100 hours at locations across the borough
- information in local and regional newspapers and on television and radio
- a new website – www.merseygateway.co.uk and e-newsletter to keep people updated
- articles in Halton Borough Council's publication *Inside Halton*
- a 24-hour call centre answering phone queries about the project
- briefing events for local and regional businesses and groups
- letters to directly affected businesses and other stakeholders
- leaflets and questionnaires sent to local and regional MPs, MEPs, council leaders and chief executives.

All contributions were recorded and independently analysed.

The results and key findings were then looked at in even greater detail so we could ensure the issues raised are reflected in the planning application.

To find out more:

Copies of the full consultation reports and other details about the project are available online at www.merseygateway.co.uk.

Alternatively, if you would like to find out more about the project, please contact us by phone – call Halton Borough Council 24 hours a day on 0151 907 8300.

Or, to sign up for our regular e-newsletter, please email mersey.gateway@halton.gov.uk and write 'enews' in the subject box.

If you need this information in a different format such as large print, audio tape, Braille or another language, please call 0151 907 8300.

About us

The Mersey Gateway Project team is a dedicated unit set up within Halton Borough Council.

The project is supported by the Mersey Crossing Group, which is made up of representatives from regional government, other local authorities and businesses from across the region.



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted