



A bridge to **prosperity**

The Mersey Gateway Project is a major project to build a new toll bridge over the River Mersey in the Borough of Halton, between the towns of Runcorn and Widnes.

The project team is aiming to secure planning approval from government before the summer.

Moving forward

There is no doubt that Mersey Gateway is a significant project requiring capital investment of around £600m. Halton Borough Council, supported by its partners north and south of the Mersey, has taken the initiative in recognizing that delivering the project through a tolling strategy is the only practicable investment option. The local empowerment that funding through tolling invites has now received widespread support across Halton and the region – as evidenced in the low key public inquiry held last summer. The current funding proposals, which are being reviewed by new Ministers, would result in the public sector meeting less than a third of the project cost, with the remainder being funded by the users of the crossing through the tolls paid.

This high value for money approach is vital in the context of managing the national budget deficit and securing a good deal for the public purse. Tolling also helps the Council to manage future traffic levels resulting in an overall reduction in carbon emissions. The funding package also allows the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge to be modified to give priority to public transport, cycling and walking, all of which are compromised by the current congested conditions. Mersey Gateway has developed into a sustainable solution to an acute problem.

The Mersey Gateway Project is vital for the north west and has cross party support across the region.

We must take this chance – doing nothing is not an option.



David Parr
Chief Executive
Halton Borough Council



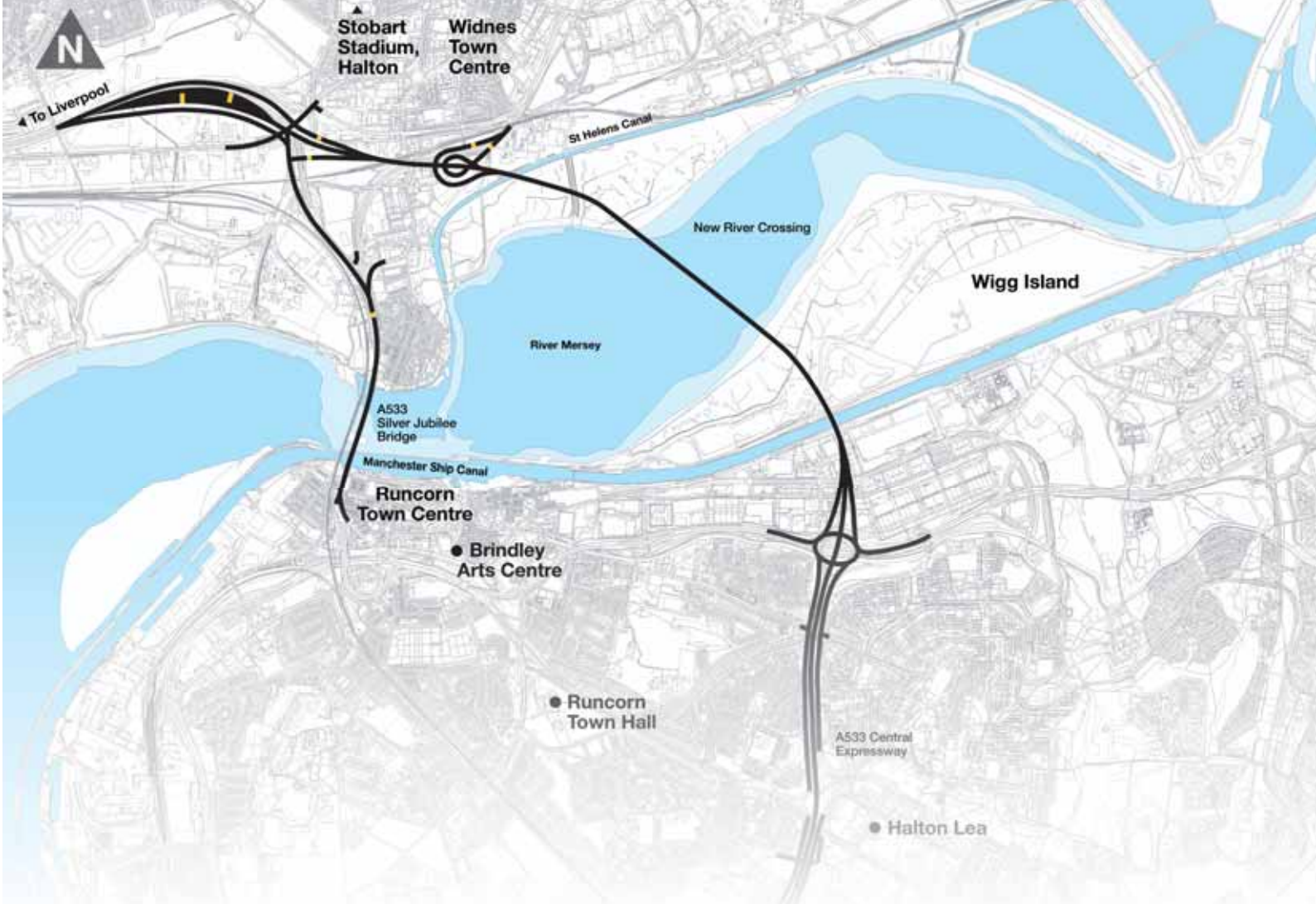
Regional importance

The current river crossing in Halton – the Silver Jubilee Bridge – is a major infrastructure and access route for people and businesses travelling across the north west and between the region and north Wales.

The route carries over 80,000 vehicles every working day and the bridge and approach roads have been improved to their maximum. Traffic demand regularly exceeds the capacity of Silver Jubilee Bridge and routine maintenance works often result in gridlock conditions over a wide area of the regions road network. Only 20% of traffic crossing the bridge starts and finishes its journey within Halton highlighting the SJB's position as a crucial transport gateway for the Liverpool city-region and north Cheshire. For several years this vital regional link has been under intense pressure and the call for a new crossing has near unanimous support across the region's community and local government.

Strategic initiatives to support sustainable economic growth across the sub-region all identify weaknesses in connectivity, in particular insufficient capacity in the road network around Halton.





The Mersey Gateway Project will transform road transport by relieving the SJB bottleneck with a modern high standard crossing that will be congestion free for the next forty years and more. Establishing reliable and reduced journey times in this strategic corridor is essential to encourage continued investment and regeneration across the wider region. The Mersey Gateway Project is a unique opportunity to provide a kick-start to the stalled regional economy and deliver transport, economic and social benefits across the north west.

The Council and our partners are bringing forward regeneration initiatives anticipating the delivery of Mersey Gateway and building on the emerging knowledge based industries in Daresbury, and south Liverpool, linked to the Liverpool Super Port and motorway corridor between Manchester and Liverpool Airports. Economic recovery with inadequate infrastructure seems a forlorn prospect.

In addition to the new bridge, the project includes or facilitates:

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



Benefits

The project will bring huge benefits for people and businesses across the north west. This includes:

- Increased journey time reliability
- Increased network resilience and civil contingencies
- A major strategic new transport route linking the Liverpool city-region and the north west to the rest of the country
- 4,640 new jobs across the region
- Generation of an estimated £61.9million a year in Gross Value Added from the new jobs by 2030.

It will also support sustained growth at Liverpool Ports and Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

Tolling

Under the project proposals, both the new bridge and the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge will be subject to tolls/charges. The exact toll/charge levels are still to be determined but they are likely to be similar to the cost of travelling through one of the Mersey Tunnels.

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



The project is backed by:



Further information



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