

**REPORT TO:** Mersey Gateway Executive Board

**DATE:** 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2010

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Environment and Economy

**SUBJECT:** The Campaign to support the case for funding Mersey Gateway.

**WARDS:** All

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 At the last meeting of the Mersey Gateway Executive Board on 13 June 2010 the Mersey Gateway Team were instructed to continue to seek the positive and proactive support of businesses, politicians, other partners, the media and the public for Mersey Gateway. The resulting evidence of widespread support across the region would bolster the case for the government to confirm its funding contribution for Mersey Gateway as part of the Spending Review to be undertaken this autumn. This report explains the action taken since June, leading to the submission of the case for funding Mersey Gateway now with government.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) The Mersey Gateway Team continues to seek the positive and proactive support of businesses, politicians, other partners, the media and the public for Mersey Gateway.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Following the suspension of the Council agreement with government to part fund Mersey Gateway, the Mersey Gateway Officer Project Board (OPB) instructed that the project team should give higher priority to its ongoing work with partners and supporters, in order to maintain the high profile nature of the project, and ensure that Ministers in the new coalition government are aware of the broad support for Mersey Gateway across the private and public sectors throughout the north west. As such, a proportion of the proposed budget for the 2010/2011 financial year was dedicated to these tasks. The project team are referring to this area of work as 'Campaign 2010.'
- 3.2 A number of interest groups were targeted and the focus of these tasks can be divided into the following areas:

### **3.9 Media:**

- 3.9.1 Following discussions with and briefings from the Mersey Gateway team, the Runcorn and Widnes Weekly news has set up its own campaign asking people to sign up to 'Back the Bridge.' As well as running regular articles highlighting the need for the new bridge, the paper encouraged members of the public to show their support for the project by either signing up online at [www.backthebridge.com](http://www.backthebridge.com) or through one of the Halton Direct Links. To date there have been a total of 2252 people signing up to support the project, which was also publicly backed by Derek Twigg MP and Graham Evans MP. These names and this demonstration of support have now been submitted to government by the paper as part of the Spending Review.
- 3.9.2 The Mersey Gateway breakfast briefing, which took place on 14<sup>th</sup> July, secured significant broadcast and print coverage on North West Tonight, BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio Merseyside, Liverpool Daily Post and Echo, Runcorn and Widnes Weekly News and Wire FM.
- 3.9.3 The project has achieved significant coverage in the professional, trade and financial media and on relevant major project/infrastructure websites. Planning, NCE, Infranews, Property Investor News, Surveyor, and Partnerships Bulletin, all ran positive coverage on the future of the project showcasing its broad support and the fact that submissions in its support were being made to government as part of the CSR process.
- 3.9.3 Coverage across the media has prominently featured quotes and support from private sector supporters such as the Stobart Group and Peel Ports.
- 3.9.4 The Financial Times has shown an interest in preparing a feature for the project that is expected to explore the innovative funding proposals. The project communication consultant DTW are liaising with the FT and any developments will be reported to members.

### **3.10 Public/Businesses:**

- 3.10.1 In support of the Weekly News 'Back the Bridge' Campaign, Liverpool John Lennon Airport circulated details of the campaign on its enews update to the 100,000 people on its mailing list. Other partners indicated they were keen to promote this campaign to staff and visitors and the project has cascaded materials to allow them to do this.
- 3.10.2 Businesses and other public sector supporters have been asked to show their support by writing to Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP. Letters were issued to potential supporters on Friday 25 June asking them to take action.
- 3.10.3 The project is so far aware of 8 organisations that have expressed their support in this way, namely:

- Mersey Maritime
- James Troop (Marine Engineers)
- Councillor Dave Austin
- Peel Airports
- Halton Conservatives
- Halton Chamber of Commerce
- BAM/Cintra – BAM Nuttall / Ferrovial Agroman Joint Venture
- Liverpool Superport Committee

3.10.4 Around 40 businesses and partner organisations attended the breakfast briefing event on 14 July. Follow-up letters and supporting materials have been issued to all supporters after this event, and a number of follow-up meetings were arranged, e.g. with Halton Chamber of Commerce and Liverpool Vision to cement relationships and support.

3.10.5 Liverpool Vision is consulting its partners before sending its response to government over the next two weeks.

### **3.11 Political Support:**

3.11.1 Both MPs within the borough, Graham Evans MP and Derek Twigg MP, have publicly reinstated their backing for the project. Derek Twigg MP and supporters also canvassed the general public in Widnes on the 7<sup>th</sup> August and was able to get over 500 signatures in support of the project.

3.11.2 All Cheshire and Merseyside MPs have been asked to show their support by writing to Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP and Rt Hon Danny Alexander MP. To date, we have received letters of support from the Leader and Portfolio holder for transport at Warrington Borough Council as well as a letter of support from Cheshire West and Chester.

3.11.3 To date we have received 1 response from a local MP, Luciana Berger, confirming she is supporting the campaign in this way. In addition to this, Halton MP Derek Twigg is continuing to ask questions and promote the campaign within parliament, and Hazel Blears MP and David Mowat MP both expressed support for the project during a parliamentary debate on the north west economy on Tuesday 20 July.

3.11.4 A briefing note has been provided for regional MPs giving them 'at a glance' details about the project.

3.11.5 The Transport Select Committee questioned Transport Secretary Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP about his plans and priorities on 26 July. Committee Chair Louise Ellman MP and John Leech MP were provided with project briefing notes ahead of this session.

- 3.11.6 Louise Ellman MP met with Steve Nicholson on 2 September specifically to get a briefing update on the Mersey Gateway project.
- 3.11.7 The project team is liaising with House of Commons All-Party Infrastructure Group with a view to delivering a briefing for it when it reconstitutes (likely to September 2010).
- 3.11.8 The project will again have a presence at all three party political conferences, which will provide a significant opportunity for the project team, with visible support from political figures from all parties within Halton and from neighbouring authorities, to showcase the project and stress its importance to ministers, MPs and officials from all parties.

### **3.12 Briefing Materials:**

- 3.12.1 A number of briefing and information documents have been created and distributed among supporters and other interested parties. These include updated project information leaflets and specific documents surrounding the case for the Mersey Gateway. These documents can be found in Appendix 1 attached.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The project is a key priority for the Council which will deliver benefits locally and across the wider region.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **5.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

The project is a key priority for the Council which will deliver benefits locally and across the wider region.

### **5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The project is a key priority for the Council which will deliver benefits locally and across the wider region.

### **5.3 A Healthy Halton**

The project is a key priority for the Council which will deliver benefits locally and across the wider region.

### **5.4 A Safer Halton**

The project is a key priority for the Council which will deliver benefits locally and across the wider region.

### **5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

The project is a key priority for the Council which will deliver benefits locally and across the wider region.

## **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 The focus on the publicity and communications including lobbying aspects has meant that some of the procurement preparation tasks have not been undertaken due to the decision to operate a constrained budget up to the announcement of the Spending Review next month.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 Mersey Gateway provides an opportunity to improve accessibility to services, education and employment for all.

## **8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
<b>Project Records</b>	<b>Mersey Gateway Project Office</b>	<b>Matthew Fearnhead</b>