

Brief note about public meeting on 8 April 2009 organised by Runcorn residents

The residents had informed all councillors about the meeting and there were two present together with a group of officers from the "Mersey Gateway" team who answered questions and explained the effect of the Council plans on the Central Expressway.

The Runcorn residents at the meeting were mainly concerned about the effects of the extra traffic (an increase of 140% was mentioned) on the Central Expressway. Concerns included air quality and road changes (including removing trees, converting the hard shoulder to traffic lanes, taking more land at some points, and alteration to junctions).

It was suggested by the residents that signage to direct traffic to instead use the Daresbury Expressway and the Weston Point Expressway would help. But one of the councillors who was present said that this had already been considered by the Council and it had been decided that even if they did this it would make little difference as it was now the "sat nav age" and drivers would use the shortest route whatever the signs said.

The residents main concern is the location of the crossing and the approaches, but there were a few mentions of tolls at the Residents meeting -

- In answer to a question about the level of tolls and what the residents' discounts would be, one councillor present said that "no one can tell you". Reference was made to the new bridge being a PFI scheme and it was suggested that the Council would have to discuss the issue of discounts with the contractor. The councillor appeared to say that the existing bridge was different as the bridge was already paid for and that if there was a toll put on the existing bridge then Halton would be the only local authority where you had to pay to get from one side to the other. The councillor was then asked if he was implying that residents would continue to be able to cross the existing bridge without paying a toll. The councillor said that he was not implying that.
- One resident pointed out that if the tolls were at the same level as the Mersey Tunnels then he and his family would be paying tolls of well over £1,000 a year to get to work and that they would move away from Runcorn.
- Another resident suggested that Halton Council would not improve roads heading east as they did not want Runcorn people heading towards Warrington to avoid the tolls.
- There were also complaints about Runcorn residents having to pay a toll to access various public facilities in Widnes.

The new web site of the Residents - <http://merseycrossing.webs.com/>