

COUNCILLORS PASS NEW MERSEY GATEWAY TOLLS ORDER

Halton councillors met tonight and passed a new Order setting out the tolls and other matters for the Mersey Gateway. Before the meeting Halton Council said that the purpose of the new Order was to make changes that would allow more users to have free travel. Before the meeting the group Scrap Mersey Tolls had contacted all the councillors to give them some 'facts and comments' about the real purpose of the Order.

The councillors passed the new Order unanimously. About twenty anti toll campaigners lobbied beforehand and tried to attend the meeting, but though it was a public meeting only five members of the public were allowed in. Not that they missed much as there was no debate and the meeting was over in minutes.

After the lobby John McGoldrick from Scrap Mersey Tolls said "This was a chance for the councillors to throw the tolls issue back at the Government but they fluffed it and in effect voted to support the continuation of the Mersey toll barrier with all its negative effects."

"The meeting was another example of how undemocratic anything to do with tolls is. All but five of us were refused admission to a meeting which is supposed to be open to anyone. It would be interesting to know what councillors had been told before the meeting as it seems that the real decisions had already been taken behind closed doors. There was no discussion at tonight's brief meeting and even councillors who told us that they opposed tolls voted for the new Tolls Order."

"The Council have said the proposed changes were to benefit drivers but there is almost no one that would benefit from the changes. The real purpose of the Order is to try and comply with the law. The actions of the Council in rushing through the new Tolls Order is the best proof possible that the Information Penalty Tribunal adjudicator was correct when he ruled in the case of Miss C that "Both the Penalty Charge Notice and liability for the crossing charge must be cancelled. There is nothing to pay. There has been a procedural impropriety on the part of the Charging Authority."

"The Council have asked for a review of that decision, and there will be a public hearing in Runcorn on 8th May. We do not know what will be decided then and how the new Tolls Order might affect the future situation. But the current situation is clear, the tolls and penalties are illegal, instead of trying to beat the law the Council should admit it got it wrong, suspend the tolls and immediately return all the tolls and penalty income that it has received since the bridge opened. We have suggested that for the moment drivers who use the bridge should still pay the tolls, but at the same time they should demand that the Council pay back all the tolls, penalties and costs."

"Once the toll tax gatherers have dug in it is as difficult to remove them as leeches, but we urge everyone to complain to their MP about the Mersey tolls and to sign our petition calling for all tolls to be scrapped."

Ends

Notes.

Doc that we sent to Halton councillors before the Tolls Order meeting-

<http://www.notolls.org.uk/smtpdfs/GatewaySomeFactsAndCommentsForHaltonCouncillors18%20Apr2018.pdf>

Agenda for 18 April 2018 Halton Council meeting-

<http://councillors.halton.gov.uk/ielistDocuments.aspx?CId=316&MID=7115#AI38284>

Our 8 April 2018 press release after we learnt of the ruling that tolls were illegal-

<http://www.notolls.org.uk/smtpdfs/SMTPR8Apr2018-MerseyGateway%20tolls%20may%20be%20illegal.pdf>

Traffic Penalty Tribunal statement which appeared on their website the afternoon of Friday 6th April 2018-

<https://www.trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk/mersey-gateway-bridge-statement/>

The eight page decision of the Tribunal on the 16th February 2018-

<https://www.trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk/docs/Decision-XM00480-1712.pdf>

Our press release of 10th October 2017 about the tolls being illegal-

<http://www.notolls.org.uk/smtpdfs/SMTPR20171010-GatewayTolls%20regime%20may%20start%20this%20weekend-ScrapMerseyTolls%20say%20that%20this%20would%20be%20illegal.pdf>

Our petition to get all Mersey tolls scrapped-

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/scrap-mersey-tolls>