

Mersey Gateway

For eleven years we guided the Mersey Gateway team with strategic communications support through three general elections, 10 planning applications, a public inquiry, three years of construction and the introduction of tolls.

“First class sensitive management of stakeholder interests. Timely and effective communications – the bedrock of our delivery strategy.”

David Parr, Chief Executive,
Mersey Gateway Crossings Board

The story

For more than two decades, Halton Council had been seeking funding to deliver a new bridge over the River Mersey. In October 2017 the new Mersey Gateway toll bridge opened. It now carries two million vehicles each month, meaning quicker, easier and more reliable journeys.

Their objectives

Initially, the council needed to engage with local people, businesses and regional influencers to secure funding and ensure planning permissions were based on socially acceptable designs.

Then it needed to engage with communities ahead of and during a mammoth three-and-a-half year construction programme that meant 10 kilometres of new road through busy local towns.

Finally, it needed to introduce a new tolling system to a community used to travelling across the river for free.

Our approach

Way back in 2006 we knew this was about playing the long game. We engaged with stakeholders at all levels and from all ends of the political spectrum.

Positive and pro-active media and community engagement and a clear focus on showcasing Mersey Gateway as a bridge to prosperity were at the heart of our campaign to secure funding and consult with local communities.

During construction an open and transparent approach was critical. We worked hand in hand with the council and Merseylink, the appointed contractor, to ensure a joint approach that engaged with communities on the ground and used a mix of technology and good old-fashioned listening and talking to people to communicate.

We created a new tolling brand – merseyflow – and began an information and registration campaign well ahead of the bridge opening. Explanatory animations and targeted digital advertising complemented on the ground activities.

The results

Funding and planning were secured in 2013.

42 months
of construction went smoothly with huge levels of interest and support

The bridge is now open, with traffic levels above those predicted and
96% of people
paying tolls on time

102,000 vehicles
registered before opening

184.5 million
media reach

70% of people
registered online