

# Statement to Parliament: Mersey Gateway transport

The government supports investment in the transport network given the benefits it provides to the economy. That is why we are providing substantial funding for the Mersey Gateway Bridge scheme in Halton.

In addition, the government is delivering a number of transport improvements in and around Halton. These include:

- the Halton Curve which will enable passenger services from North Wales and West Cheshire to directly access Liverpool city centre and Liverpool John Lennon airport
- Warrington Waterfront transport infrastructure scheme, a package of highway investment, including a bridge over the River Mersey, which opens up commercial land and alleviates congestion to the south of Warrington town centre
- the Omega J8 (M62) Highway Improvements to support the rapid and significant expansion of the Omega employment site now employing over 5,000 people
- access Improvements to Knowsley Industrial Park and A5300 Knowsley Expressway improvements, highway investments to support access to one of the major employment sites in Liverpool city region

As part of the Department for Transport's [Road Investment Strategy](#), Highways England (HE) will deliver the M56 J11a scheme to provide a new junction with the Mersey Gateway Bridge which will support the Daresbury Enterprise Zone, key to the knowledge economy in the north-west.

In 2015 the government announced it would look at the feasibility of extending Mersey Gateway bridge toll discounts to residents of Cheshire West & Chester and Warrington. The department has undertaken detailed work and evaluated options for how this could happen, what the costs would be and what this would do to the contracts already signed by Halton Borough Council to deliver the scheme and the tolling infrastructure.

The feasibility work, considered the legal position and the costs to the taxpayer and concluded that free tolling will not be extended beyond Halton Borough Council.

The government has already provided £86 million to Halton to develop the scheme, to pay for land and to deal with land contamination. Once the scheme opens, the government will also be providing a further substantial contribution of £288 million to help fund both the cost of the bridge and also to increase the funds available to enable residents of Halton to use the bridge for free.

It is government policy that users of estuarial crossings should help pay for the benefits they receive. The Mersey Gateway is no different. As is the case

with the Dartford Crossings, an exception is to be made for residents of Halton given that the existing Silver Jubilee Crossing is the only road link between the two halves of the borough. Other users will have a range of frequent user discounts available to them to use a crossing that will deliver considerable congestion and journey time improvements to boost the region's economy.

In evaluating the options open to the government we have considered a number of issues. On the legal side, the feasibility work showed there would be a significant risk of a successful legal challenge to a decision to extend free tolling to some local Councils and not others. On the cost side extending free tolling to only a handful of local Councils would still be at a substantial cost to the taxpayer. An extension of user discounts to not just Cheshire West & Chester and Warrington, as originally suggested, but also to the other 3 authorities that neighbour Halton (Knowsley, Liverpool City Council and St Helens), would be at an estimated cost of £604 million to the public purse. If, as is the case with Halton, the cost was to be split between the government and local authorities, £377 million would fall to the 5 local Councils. For all these reasons we have taken the decision not to extend free tolling beyond Halton.

The Mersey Gateway Bridge is on target for opening in autumn 2017 which is a great testimony to the hard work that all parties including Halton Borough Council have put into this scheme.

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## **Research and analysis: Study of over-consuming household cold appliances**

Cold appliances account for approximately 10.5 TWh of electricity consumption in England.

Previous studies by government indicated that a significant number of cold appliances consume much more electricity than expected, however, the sample was small.

The study was undertaken to investigate the proportion of cold appliances that over-consume. It estimates the amount of extra electricity consumed and the impact on bills, in order to help consumers understand how they can minimise costs. The study also examines the causes of over-consumption and makes design and operational recommendations for minimising this. Finally, the study also includes analysis of the electricity consumption of a small sample of appliances sent for recycling.

This study investigates the reasons and comprises 4 reports:

1. Study of over-consuming household appliances – this monitors around 1000

domestic cold appliances

2. Supplementary report 1: Literature review
3. Supplementary report 2: Energy consumption of cold appliances sent for recycling – an assessment of the electricity consumption of 100 appliances sent for recycling
4. Supplementary report 3: Inspection of 100 appliances due for recycling – an assessment of the potential for reconditioning appliances sent for recycling.

Data monitored for the study will be made available on the [UK Data Archive](#).

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## [Green Party announces anti-nuclear Copeland by-election candidate](#)



24 January 2017

The Green Party has selected Jack Lenox as its Copeland by-election candidate, opposing nuclear power and instead offering a safe energy future with increased investment in renewables.

The announcement from the Greens comes just one day after Labour said its candidate, Gillian Troughton, has been “quite clear of her support for the nuclear industry, no ifs and no buts”. [1]

Jack will also be campaigning for Britain to maintain a close relationship with Europe and to stop the creeping marketisation of the NHS, as well as vowing action to protect West Cumbrian homes from flooding.

Jack has lived in Copeland for four years and works as a software engineer. An active member of the community, Jack performs with and serves on the committee of the Keswick Amateur Operatic Society. In 2015, he helped organise the first web conference in Cumbria, bringing industry experts from across the world to Keswick.

Jack said:

“I’m delighted the Green Party has selected me to contest this by-election. Copeland has borne the brunt of Government funding cuts and healthcare is facing stark challenges – West Cumberland Hospital’s maternity and A&E departments are under threat. The constituency will also suffer if Theresa May rips the UK out of the single market and turns our country into a corporate tax haven.

“Copeland comprises some of the most deprived parts of the UK, it suffered severe flooding during the storms of last winter, and its constituents are

forced to deal with continuous price hikes and cutbacks to public transport services. On top of all this, an ill-conceived new nuclear power plant is due to be built at Sellafield, the site of the UK's worst ever nuclear disaster.

"The Green Party is the only party with truly progressive solutions to the issues Copeland faces. It's a privilege and an honour to represent the Greens as a beacon of hope during this turbulent period in British politics."

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"Jack is giving people in Copeland the chance to vote for a candidate who opposes nuclear power, believes in Britain having a close relationship with Europe and fights for a truly public NHS. No other party is able to offer voters this clarity on the big issues facing the area. In a time of divisive politics and high levels of distrust, Jack will make an excellent Green Party candidate and we're proud to have him."

**Notes:**

1. <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2687914/labours-by-election-fight-to-hold-constituency-dominated-by-sellafield-nuclear-power-station-is-being-bankrolled-by-an-anti-nuclear-energy-firm/>

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## [Xi pushes poverty alleviation](#)



Chinese President Xi Jinping talks with villagers and local cadre at the home of villager Xu Haicheng in Desheng Village, Xiaoertai Township of Zhangbei County in north China's Hebei Province, on Jan. 24, 2017. Xi Tuesday pushed for increased efforts on poverty alleviation during an inspection tour to the city of Zhangjiakou. [Photo/Xinhua]

President Xi Jinping Tuesday pushed for increased efforts on poverty alleviation.

He stressed the importance of precision in the battle against poverty, saying that poverty alleviation should focus on targeted people and industries, and use the right tools to produce results.

Xi made the remarks during a tour of the city of Zhangjiakou in northern China's Hebei Province, where he inspected an impoverished village, visiting and chatting with poor families, discussing how they could shake off poverty.

"Fighting poverty is the fundamental task in building an all-round moderately prosperous society," Xi said.

He called for more efforts to help the poor develop industries that could grow in a sustainable manner, set up sustainable mechanisms for poverty alleviation, and create ways for them to achieve prosperity.

Poverty relief is high on China's 2016-2020 agenda, and the government has vowed to lift everybody out of poverty by 2020. By the end of 2015, China still had 55.75 million people living in poverty.

Since the start of the reform and opening-up in 1978, China's economic boom has helped lift more than 700 million people out of poverty.

“Poverty alleviation is getting more and more difficult as it progresses to the end,” Xi said.



Chinese President Xi Jinping (C) walks with grassroots cadre at the home of villager Xu Haicheng in Desheng Village, Xiaoertai Township of Zhangbei County in north China’s Hebei Province, on Jan. 24, 2017. Xi Tuesday pushed for increased efforts on poverty alleviation during an inspection tour to the city of Zhangjiakou.[Photo/Xinhua]

He stressed the importance of making sure every poor family had a program for increasing income and every poor person had a way of casting off poverty.

The president pointed to relocation as an important supplementary approach in fighting poverty and highlighted the role of ecological compensation, which would not only help improve the ecological environment but also boost incomes.

Stressing the importance of education in poverty alleviation, Xi said, “Making sure children of impoverished families enjoy access to high-quality education is a fundamental solution to poverty.”

During the tour, Xi also inspected a dairy company in Zhangjiakou, where he urged for more efforts to create a globally competitive dairy industry with safe, high-quality products.

He said that the most rigorous standards, the strictest regulation, the harshest punishment and the most serious mechanism of accountability should be adopted to ensure food safety.

Xi also listened to local officials briefing on the local economy at a meeting, where he said cutting excessive production capacity in the iron and steel sector was crucial for Hebei, a major steel producing province, to improve its industrial structure and create new growth engines.

Xi called for efforts to ensure outdated production capacity was eliminated and “zombie enterprises” phased out.

During the tour, Xi also urged for efforts to make the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games a “remarkable, extraordinary, excellent” event.

The Zhangjiakou site of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games is the best natural ski area in northern China.

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## [News story: PHE calls for greater high blood pressure awareness](#)

With only half the adult population knowing their blood pressure, Public Health England (PHE) is encouraging all adults over the age of 40 to get it tested as part of the NHS Health Check, a simple measure that could save their life. If found to be at risk, high blood pressure can be managed and reduced by making simple lifestyle changes.

PHE’s [latest edition of Health matters](#) – a resource for local authorities and health professionals – which has been launched today (24 January 2017) outlines the actions that can be taken to combat high blood pressure.

Often dubbed the ‘silent killer’, as it rarely causes symptoms, high blood pressure affects more than 1 in 4 people in England and was responsible for around 75,000 deaths in 2015.

Evidence summarised in Health matters shows:

- the NHS Health Check helps diagnose a new case of high blood pressure in every 27 checks
- despite being largely preventable, diseases caused by high blood pressure cost the NHS over £2.1 billion a year
- if the population as a whole reduced their average blood pressure by 5mmHg this could save the NHS, social care, and local authorities £850 million on health and social care costs
- £120 million in savings could also be achieved just by increasing the number of adults who have high blood pressure diagnosed by 15%
- over 10 million people, aged 40 to 74, have been invited for an NHS Health Check since it launched in 2013 but just under half (46%) actually took the offer up

Professor Kevin Fenton, Director of Health and Wellbeing at PHE, said:

It is a serious problem when a disease that is largely preventable, like high blood pressure, is one of the leading causes of premature death and ill-health in the country.

We all memorise important numbers in our lives, whether it's our PIN and telephone numbers or the latest football scores. Knowing your blood pressure number is an easy step to take that has the potential to save your life.

GP Dr Matt Kearney, NHS England's National Clinical Director for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention, said:

High blood pressure is currently placing an unnecessary, heavy burden on the NHS. Earlier detection and improved treatment of high blood pressure would have a big impact in preventing heart attacks and strokes, and would save large amounts of money in health and social care.

Catherine Kelly, British Heart Foundation (BHF) Director of Prevention, Survival and Support, said:

5.5 million people in the UK are living with undiagnosed high blood pressure which puts them at a much higher risk of suffering a potentially deadly heart attack or stroke. For a condition which is so easily detected and managed, this figure is simply unacceptable and we need an urgent improvement in the number of people diagnosed with this silent killer.

As well as funding £25 million of research into high blood pressure over the past 5 years, the BHF is also working alongside partners on a range of innovative projects which enable individuals and health care professionals to better prevent, diagnose and treat high blood pressure.

High blood pressure, and its effects such as heart disease, stroke and vascular dementia, can be improved or prevented by making simple lifestyle changes. These include maintaining a healthy weight, having an active lifestyle, reducing your salt, saturated fat and alcohol intake, and knowing your blood pressure numbers.

PHE has a number of tools to help people lead a healthier lifestyle such as the new free [Be Food Smart app](#) by Change4Life. This shows how much salt, saturated fat and sugar is in the food and drink they consume, making it easier to choose low salt and saturated fat options.

PHE's [One You quiz](#) is an easy way to assess your current lifestyle, including diet, physical activity, smoking, and alcohol consumption, and receive free personalised information, apps and tools to help prevent or improve high blood pressure and achieve a healthier you.

People over the age of 30 years old are also encouraged to access the NHS Choices and BHF [heart age tool](#), which will provide users with a heart age plus advice about improving your heart health.