



Northumberland County Council

ASHINGTON AND BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

11 NOVEMBER 2020

Local Transport Plan 2020/21 - Capital Programme Update

Report of Interim Executive Director - Rick O'Farrell

Cabinet Member: Councillor Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council

Purpose of report

This report provides an update on progress with the delivery of the approved Local Transport Plan programme for 2020/21.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members consider the update provided in the report.

Link to Corporate Plan

Living - "We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for"

Enjoying - "We want you to love where you live"

'Connecting - We want you to have access to things you need'

Key issues

1. The LTP programme for 2020-21 of £18.591m was approved on the 2nd April 2020.
2. The County Council has also made an additional capital investment of £15m for highway maintenance of U and C roads and footways across 2020/21 and 2021/22. An initial programme for £10m of this funding was approved for 2020/21 on 9th April 2020 as the first phase of the £15m programme.
3. During the Summer the Council has also received an additional £11.421m in capital grant funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) for 20/21. The funding is primarily for highway maintenance. This allocation incorporates the £0.900m Pothole Fund grant which had already been expected and included within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. An initial programme for £9.086m of this funding as the first phase of the £11.421m programme was approved on 20th August 2020. Further programmes to allocate the remaining

£2.335m will be the subject of further decision reports in due course. This will take account of any further issues or urgent needs as they are identified

4. In February 2020 the DfT confirmed that the County Council was successful in the Challenge Fund 2B bidding competition. £3.7m has been awarded by the DfT towards an overall £4.8m Steel Bridge Refurbishment Programme. This will allow the refurbishment of eight large steel bridges across the County.
5. This report provides an update on the progress made with the delivery of these Capital Programmes, taking into account the effects the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown has had on operational matters.

Progress in Capital Programme Delivery

6. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in some delays to the delivery of the programme. On the delivery side, all capital works were suspended during April and May, with the focus on ensuring emergency and reactive repairs could be safely undertaken under Covid-19 conditions, with some highways staff also undertaking alternative duties assisting the Council's overall response to the pandemic. Safe working methods and any necessary adaptation/changes to plant and equipment used were then developed for capital projects to satisfy the necessary Health and Safety requirements relating to maintaining social distancing and to keep both the workforce and public safe. This allowed some capital programmes such as surface dressing to commence at the start of June, but as processes and trials had to be undertaken across the range of capital activities the overall programmes were not fully recommenced until the end of June. Since then a full operational programme has been undertaken, with the necessary measures in relation to Covid-19 causing minor reductions in efficiency.
7. In terms of design and other office-based staff, all staff have been working remotely since the start of the lockdown. Initially there were problems with ability to access all systems effectively from home, but these were quickly resolved and after the first few weeks the systems have worked well allowing staff to work effectively and efficiently from home, albeit with some reduction in overall efficiency inherent in project teams not being located together.
8. In relation to road maintenance, in excess of 40 miles of road are to be resurfaced through the capital programme this year. As of end of September in excess of 12 miles have been resurfaced in the three months since June, with 52 of the 168 road projects completed. The remaining schemes are programmed to be substantially completed through the remainder of the financial year subject to no severe adverse weather conditions. Programmes of general maintenance refurbishment works including patching, drainage and road markings to discrete road lengths are also progressing in line with planned activity through the area offices.
9. A substantial £3.7m preventative road surface treatment programme has also been undertaken during the summer months, adding much needed resilience to vulnerable sections of the road network. The annual surface dressing programme commenced on 1st June 2020, three weeks behind schedule. Despite this delay and unseasonal wet weather experienced during August the programme was completed in mid - September. This programme has improved the condition and

overall safety of almost 48 miles of rural roads. The first phase of the micro-surfacing programme which is undertaken on more urban roads was carried out earlier in the summer, refurbishing approximately 6 miles of urban roads and a second phase is taking place from late September for two weeks treating a further 4 miles.

10. The introduction of the additional £9.086m maintenance programme in late August resulted in the in-year programme being amended, with the opportunity taken to extend or enhance schemes already in the current years LTP programme and which were due to be undertaken on the ground over the next few months. Allocating some of this additional funding to enable these existing schemes to be extended offered excellent value for money and has allowed improved levels of maintenance to be secured and prevents a need to return to these areas at significantly increased costs in future years. There were also some schemes where following design the initial budget allocations had been found to be insufficient and additional funding was allocated in order to carry out the scheme in line with expected outcomes. In addition, funding was allocated to a number of improvement schemes that have arisen in year, allowing them to be addressed during 2020/21. Further funding was also allocated to enhance the area-based patching and refurbishment works including an enhanced programme of drainage maintenance.
11. A capital programme of maintenance improvements to our footway and cycling networks is also underway, with 34 identified locations countywide set to undergo improvements during the Autumn/Winter months. Significant improvements for cyclists have been provided in Cramlington with the implementation of a comprehensive waymarking scheme for the various routes around the town. Works are also currently underway to replace Kirkhaugh footbridge, an important bridge in the walking network which crosses the River South Tyne. The original four span footbridge suffered severe damage from flooding following storms in September and October 2018. The new footbridge at Kirkhaugh is due to be completed by late October 2020.
12. A number of bridges projects have recently been completed. Works at Felton bridge to refurbish the parapets are now complete. Hetton bridge masonry arch strengthening and refurbishment works was temporarily suspended due to Covid-19 but recommenced and was completed during early July 2020. Further structures projects are at the detailed design stage and due to commence shortly. The Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent has been granted by Historic England allowing us to begin the initial phase of major refurbishment works to Berwick Old Bridge starting October 2020. Harnham Hill and Slateford bridges are also set to be repaired during the final quarter of this year. Whilst not part of the LTP programme it should also be noted that the major scheme to repair and conserve the historic Union Chain Bridge has now commenced, with the 200-year-old structure being shut for the next 15 months with no access at any time to vehicles, foot passengers and cyclists while contractors Spencer Group undertake its complete refurbishment.
13. Design work is currently underway on the Steel Bridge Refurbishment programme following the successful DfT Challenge Fund bid award in February 2020 and preparations are underway for procurement of specialist painting contractors with works expected to commence in early 2021 on the eight steel bridges which are to

be painted.

14. Landslip repair projects have recently been completed at Homers Lane, Warden and Mitford Road, Morpeth. Wylam to Ovingham river bank landslip works commenced in September 2020 and is due to be completed in November 2020.
15. Work is also currently underway with specialist geotechnical design consultants to develop a long-term solution to the cracking and movement in the road at Todstead on the B6344 Weldon Bridge to Rothbury road. The site is in a very difficult location close to the river and located within the Coquet Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest. Preparations are underway to carry out detailed ground investigation. It is intended that detailed design work on possible solutions will start as soon as this ground investigation information is available and this would be coupled with engagement with specialist contractors who will help inform what can be done at this location. Once the design work is completed, we will have a full understanding of what options are available and a decision on how best to proceed will be made.
16. Road safety remains a high priority and so far, since April 2020, highway improvements have been implemented to improve safety for pedestrians. For example, a new puffin crossing has been installed on South Road in Prudhoe on a route to school, and junction alterations on Stead Lane in Bedlington have included a safer crossing facility at the junction with Glassey Terrace. New footways have been provided on Station Road in Embleton so that pedestrians no longer have to walk in the road. Work continues to progress on many planned improvements for pedestrians across the county, including new footways, pedestrian crossings and bus stop access improvements.
17. In addition, High Risk Sites schemes have also been completed at A1167 Loaning Meadows, Berwick and B1342 bend at Waren Lea, Bamburgh. A further eight schemes have been issued for programming and work continues on the remaining ten High Risk sites schemes. Seven of the Rural Road Safety schemes have been fully completed across the county, with a further five issued for programming with a further 18 schemes in design.
18. 20mph limits at schools have been fully introduced at four locations, with a further eight being issued for programming for delivery on site. In total 40 schemes are being developed through processes of initial design and for further discussion with Councillors or Town / Parish Council's, with a view to construction being carried out later this financial year and in the first few months of 2021/22. A variety of Traffic Regulation Orders have also been introduced at 35 various locations throughout the County to improve road safety.
19. In addition to the above works, highways teams have also over the last six months carried out the major improvements to Callerton Lane in Ponteland required for the new Ponteland Schools and Leisure project, which have also incorporated Environment Agency improvements to surface water drainage to reduce flood risk.
20. Overall, despite delays caused by the initial lockdown and some loss of efficiency due to the working methods required for Covid-19 to keep the workforce and public safe, the capital programme is progressing well. Staff and managers have

performed extremely well in adapting to the new working environments necessary in relation to the pandemic, whilst often also having to take on additional responsibilities as part of the Council's response to the pandemic. This has included supporting the delivery of food parcels to vulnerable members of the community, implementing a range of measures and enhanced social distancing signage within our town centres to support their safe reopening and assisting in the identification and establishment of mobile and local Covid-19 testing sites. Some delay and loss of efficiency with the LTP programme has been inevitable during this period, but the project teams are continuing to work to carry out programmes as quickly as possible and where appropriate continue seeking mobilisation of additional resources to assist design and delivery activities.

Implications

Policy	The programme is consistent with existing policies
Finance and value for money	Programme allocations are within the overall budget available for 2020/21.
Legal	None
Procurement	Not applicable
Human Resources	None
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	The needs for those that are socially excluded have been taken into account whilst developing this programme.
Risk Assessment	Risks to the delivery of any individual scheme within the programme will be considered during scheme development. By managing the risk at scheme level risk to the delivery of the programme will be controlled.
Crime & Disorder	The implications of Section 17, Crime and Disorder Act 1998 have been considered whilst developing this programme, there are no perceived adverse effects.
Customer Consideration	The delivery of the programme will improve the highway and transport network in Northumberland for the benefit of the travelling public.

Carbon reduction	Consideration is provided to using products based on their sustainable performance in use and opportunities for reuse and recycling at the end of life. For example Warm Mix Asphalts are being utilised which allow manufacturing and laying of asphalt at lower temperatures, thereby using less energy and delivering meaningful carbon savings, without compromising performance.
Wards	All

Background papers:

Delegated Decision Report – LTP 2020/21 Approved Programme
Delegated Decision Report – Highway Maintenance Investment Programme 2020/21
Delegated Decision Report – Allocation of Additional Highway Maintenance Capital Funding for 2020/21 from the Department for Transport.

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full name of officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	N/A
Relevant Executive Director	Rick O'Farrell
Chief Executive	N/A
Portfolio Holder(s)	Glen Sanderson

Author and Contact Details

David Laux – Head of Technical Services
david.laux@northumberland.gov.uk