



Northumberland County Council

Ashington & Blyth Local Area Committee

Wednesday 14th February 2024

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRAMME AND HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE INVESTMENT IN U AND C ROADS AND FOOTWAYS PROGRAMME 2024-25

Report of Councillor(s) John Riddle, Cabinet Member for Improving Roads and Highways

Responsible Officer(s): Simon Neilson, Executive Director - Place and Regeneration

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the following key themes in the Corporate Plan for 2023-2026:

- 'Achieving Value for Money' - the proposed programme has been developed in accordance with Transport Asset Management Principles.
- 'Tackling inequalities' - the programme of improvements enhances accessibility for transport users
- 'Driving economic growth' - a well maintained and connected transport network supports economic growth

2. Purpose of report

This report sets out the details of the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways programmes for 2024-25 for consideration and comment by the Local Area Committee, prior to final approval of the programme by the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Improving our Roads and Highways.

3. Recommendations

Members of the Local Area Committee are asked to comment on the proposals, so that their comments can be considered in the finalisation of the LTP 2024-25 programme and the additional £4.45m Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways Programme to be carried out in 2024/25.

4. Key Issues

- 4.1 The Local Transport Plan grant allocation is determined for the Council by the Department of Transport (DfT). The draft LTP programme 2024/25 is based on a settlement from DfT of £26,256,124.
- 4.2 A sum of £62,500 of the overall allocation will be retained by the North East Joint Transport Committee to cover central transport costs of the Joint Transport Committee. A £26,193,624 Council Local Transport Plan programme has therefore been developed for 2024-25, consisting of improvements and maintenance schemes to address four key areas: Sustainable Transport; Safety; Roads; and Bridges, Structures & Landslips.
- 4.3 Appendix A to D sets out the details of the recommended LTP Programme for 2024-25.
- 4.4 The final LTP programme will need to be reviewed and refined as appropriate to reflect the actual level of funding received from DfT and following consideration of feedback from the LACs, before being finalised in late February 2024.
- 4.5 The Council is also intending to carry out an additional £4,450,000 “Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways” programme utilising Council capital funding. The programme for this investment has been developed to address the deterioration of the lower categories of the network following a comprehensive review of the needs of all our roads and footways. Appendix E sets out the detail of this recommended programme.
- 4.6 The funding for the programmes is subject to approval of the Council’s capital programme at the County Council meeting on 21st February 2024.

5. Background

LTP PROGRAMME 2024 - 25

The draft LTP programme 2024/25 is based on a settlement from DfT of £26,256,124, which reflects a current baseline allocation of 21,780,000 for maintenance, a further additional £2,768,000 funding for 2024/25 for maintenance and £1,708,124 for integrated transport improvements. A sum of £62,500 of the integrated transport allocation will be retained by the North East Joint Transport Committee to cover central transport costs of the Joint Transport Committee, leaving a funding allocation for the Council’s 2024/25 LTP programme of £26,193,624.

The £26,193,624 Local Transport Plan programme developed for 2024-25 consists of improvements and maintenance schemes to address four key areas: Sustainable Transport; Safety; Roads; and Bridges, Structures & Landslips, the details of the 2024/25 LTP programme are set out in Appendix A to D.

The summary of proposed expenditure in 2024-25 across scheme types is as follows :

Appendix	Scheme Type	Proposed Expenditure
A	Sustainable Transport	£1,932,000
B	Safety	£1,995,000
C	Roads	£18,700,624
D	Bridges, Structures and Landslips	£3,566,000
	Total Programme	£26,193,624

The LTP programme has been developed following a comprehensive review of the needs for the maintenance of the highway asset, identified road safety issues and potential improvement of the highway and transport network. Requests for improvements and maintenance received from the local community over time are recorded in the Directory of Requests database. County Council Members and Town and Parish Councils are provided with details of requests made from their own areas throughout the last year and they are asked to take these into account when considering their priorities for the programme.

Priorities for the 2024-25 programme were invited from County Council Members and Town and Parish Councils during summer 2023 and those put forward have been assessed against criteria from the Local Transport Plan and Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP). These are then combined with consideration of road safety improvement needs, based on accident statistics and other data sources, and the asset management needs of the overall highway network, based on inspections, condition data and the network hierarchy, to determine an overall programme of capital investment.

It should be noted that in some cases the budget allocations contained in the Appendices to this report are estimates only. At this stage it is the issue or problem that has been prioritised for inclusion in the programme and the design process will provide options for finding a solution. The assessment of options takes account of a number of factors including value for money and affordability. Costs will be firmed up as the proposals proceed through the design process.

It should also be noted that any schemes from the 2023-24 programme which are not completed by the end of the financial year will continue to be implemented in 2024-25 and are not detailed in this report.

A brief description of the types of highways and transport issues addressed by the LTP programme is set out below.

Priority for Integrated Transport is given to schemes that contribute to the achievements of the LTP objectives. The objectives reflect local needs and are related to North East Transport Plan (NETP) goals. The NETP is centred on connecting people to good employment opportunities, generating economic growth, while enabling the region and its people to move to healthier and greener more sustainable ways of travel.

The improvement part of the programme is aimed at creating improvements for all types of users of the highway network. The allocations are split between different types of proposals aimed at making improvements for sustainable transport, as well as improvements for vehicular users such as public transport and road users. The improvements are designed to make the highway environment more attractive to

pedestrians and cyclists, address areas of congestion and meet new and increased demands.

The Highway Capital Maintenance programme is split between different types of proposals aimed at maintaining the highway infrastructure by achieving objectives set out in the Council's Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP). Funds are allocated across the programme by applying a scoring process that has been developed following asset management principles in order to deliver the TAMP objectives.

The majority of the highway maintenance programme is aimed at addressing the structural decline of our roads as they form the largest part of our highway assets. We also take account of the needs of the other asset groups such as footways and cycleways, drainage, structures and traffic management assets. A risk based approach is used to determine priorities for maintenance and is based on priorities at a strategic level, transport network level and asset maintenance level.

It should be noted that proposed expenditure for Maintenance within the programme is £24,221,624 and for Integrated Transport is £1,972,000. These are generally in line with the expected allocations, but with Integrated Transport slightly exceeding the allocation and Maintenance expenditure set to balance this.

Sustainable Transport

Improvements for sustainable transport are a significant feature within the LTP programme. This year the draft LTP for 2024-25 has a specific allocation of £1,932,000 for sustainable transport as set out in Appendix A attached to this report.

This allocation includes £327,000 for schemes that provide improvements for sustainable transport including walking and cycling, as well as £1,605,000 for maintaining existing footpaths (rights of way), footways (along the side of the road) and cycleways (either part of the road or adjacent to it). The maintenance allocation includes a £200,000 contribution to a wider regeneration funded scheme to improve the cobbles at Bondgate Within in Alnwick.

Alongside these specific allocations, it should be noted that much of the Safety element of the programme in Appendix B will also contribute to ensuring that the highway environment is improved in a way that will encourage more walking and cycling.

It should be noted that the Council continues with its initiative to produce Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) in Northumberland's main towns. Focusing on the main towns will ensure that key employment sites, travel to work areas, school transport interchanges and significant new housing developments are all considered. It is anticipated that as the LCWIPs develop then they will become a key consideration in future when bidding for external funding, seeking developer contributions and allocating funds within future LTP programmes for cycling and walking schemes.

Major new cycleways are currently being implemented at Ponteland to Callerton, North Seaton Road Ashington, A193 south of Bondicar Terrace Blyth, Hexham to Corbridge, Bedlington and Blyth Town Centre to Bebside through funding streams including Active Travel Fund, Transforming Cities Fund, Levelling Up Fund and Energising Blyth.

It should be noted that a number of County Councillors and Town and Parish Councils put forward priorities for the introduction of new cycleways and footways which when assessed were considered to be beyond the funding scope that would be available

through the LTP capital programme. The details of these potential cycleways and footways have been captured separately and recorded so that they can also be considered should any other appropriate sources of external funding or bidding opportunities for such schemes become available.

The details of the draft LTP Sustainable Transport Programme of £1,932,000 for 2024-25 is set out in Appendix A, attached to this report.

Safety

An allocation of £1,995,000 has been made to improve safety on the highway network. Details of the programme are set out in Appendix B attached to this report.

£1,245,000 is aimed at reducing the number and severity of road traffic casualties, through a programme of local safety schemes. Funding available for safety improvements to High Risk Sites will be at an increased level of £600,000 compared to £400,000 in 2023-24. It also includes allocations of £200,000 for Rural Road Safety Improvements and £100,000 for Urban Road Safety Improvements.

£400,000 has been allocated to improve traffic management and traffic calming measures. Much of this funding will also create safer conditions where road safety concerns have been identified which will in turn encourage more walking and cycling.

A £350,000 allocation has been included to continue with the general refurbishment and renewal of existing signage and the replenishment of existing road markings. Both of these activities seek to improve the general safety for the highway user.

Roads

This section of the programme is the largest part of the programme with an allocation of £18,700,624 for maintenance of existing roads, including drainage, traffic lights and car park maintenance.

The programme is guided by the principles of effective asset management and is made up of £8,686,000 for named carriageway repair and drainage schemes (of which £3,135,000 is on major roads and the resilient road network and £5,551,000 on other local roads); £4,655,000 for surface dressing; £565,000 for micro surfacing and retexturing; and finally £4,794,624 of general refurbishment which includes drainage, traffic signals, car parks and footways as well as preparatory work for the next year's surface treatment programme.

A trial was carried out during summer 2023 which has indicated that an enhanced programme of planned structural patching would be beneficial to the condition and ride quality of the highway network. Programmes of structural patching are already carried out through the General Carriageway Refurbishment element of the LTP roads programme and Small Works element of the U and C Roads programme, but a further enhanced programme of structural patching will be considered utilising any further additional funding that is allocated to highway maintenance above the levels shown in this report.

The details of the draft Roads Programme for 2024-25 is set out in Appendix C attached to this report.

Bridges, Structures and Landslips

An allocation of £2,816,000 has been made for bridge maintenance. Again, effective asset management is the main driver. This includes a programme that also addresses the

maintenance backlog by providing bridge strengthening to a number of bridges as this continues to remain a key objective.

There is also an allocation of £750,000 for addressing landslips to enable stabilisation work as a cost effective approach to prevent the deterioration and potential loss of use of the network at critical locations throughout the County.

The details of the Bridges, Structures and Landslips Programme of £3,566,000 for 2024-25 is set out in Appendix D, attached to this report.

Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways

The “Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways” programme will provide repairs to those minor roads and footways already in poor condition, which will improve the overall condition of this network, building resilience and reducing long term costs. This will help to reduce the number of potholes that arise, improve condition and ride quality and minimise the need for future repairs in these areas. Identification and prioritisation of schemes has taken into account asset management principles in order to deliver Northumberland’s Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) objectives.

The programme to address deterioration across the lower categories of our network has been split into three packages of work:

- a. Carriageway Repairs which will address some of the worst sections of the minor road network, providing essential structural maintenance and resurfacing works over and above that already planned within the LTP.
- b. Footway Repairs to address some of the footways in the County’s towns and villages which are considered to be in the most urgent need of repair.
- c. Small Works to Minor Roads which will allow us to address those more discrete areas situated on the minor road network that are identified by the Area Teams to be in poor condition. Works will consist of smaller areas of resurfacing and structural patching

The details of the Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways Programme of £4,450,000 for 2024-25 is set out in Appendix E, attached to this report.

Next Steps

Following consideration by Local Area Committees at their meetings in February, any comments received will be considered and the final 2024-25 programmes for the Local Transport Plan and Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways will be prepared for consideration and approval by the Portfolio Holder for Improving our Roads and Highways and the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration.

Following agreement of the final programme, all County Council members and Town and Parish Councils who put forward priorities for the LTP programme will then be provided with further information regarding the outcome of the assessment of their submission and whether it has been possible to include their priority schemes within the programme this year.

6. **Implications**

Policy	The proposed programme is consistent with existing policies
Finance and value for money	The LTP Programme allocations are within the expected budget available for 2024-25
Legal	The LTP is delivered by the County Council using its powers and in fulfilment of its statutory duties as a Highways Authority, primarily under the provisions of the Highways Act 1980
Procurement	None
Human resources	None
Property	None
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - not required at this point As a key issue for Northumberland, the needs of those that are socially excluded have been taken into account in the development of this programme. Improvement to footways will improve accessibility for pedestrians and those with mobility issues
Risk assessment	The programme has been developed to minimise risks to the travelling public whether they are travelling on our roads or footways. Risks to the delivery of any individual scheme within the programme will be considered during scheme development. By managing risk at a scheme level, the risks to delivery of the overall programme will be controlled.
Crime and disorder	None
Customer considerations	The delivery of the programme will improve the highways and transport network in Northumberland for the benefit of the travelling public
Carbon reduction	Schemes to improve infrastructure for walking and cycling and road safety measures encourage more active travel.
Health and wellbeing	Schemes to encourage more active travel through improved infrastructure for walking and cycling, road safety measures and improvement to the condition of footways and roads all act to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our communities
Wards	(All Wards);

7. Background papers

Not applicable

8. Links to other key reports already published

Not Applicable

9. Author and Contact Details

Robin McCartney, Highways Infrastructure Manager.
Email: robin.mccartney@northumberland.gov.uk

David Laux, Head of Highways and Transport,
Email: david.laux@northumberland.gov.uk