



Northumberland

County Council

COMMITTEE: NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

DATE: 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

TITLE OF REPORT: **Local Transport Plan Update**

Report of Interim Executive Director - Rick O'Farrell

Cabinet Member: Councillor John Riddle, Local Services

Purpose of report

This report provides an update on the Local Transport Plan (LTP) programme 21/22 and the preparation for the 22/23 programme.

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 2021-22 of £25.671m was approved on the 17th March 2021. This was an increased programme compared to the £19.015m draft programme consulted on with Local Area Councils in February 2021 and followed confirmation from DfT in February of the capital allocations for 21/22.
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 on 9th April 2020. The second phase of the programme for £5m was approved on 17th March 2021.
3. Good progress is being made on delivery of these programmes. Preparations have also begun for the development of the 2022/23 LTP capital programme.

- It should be noted that the North East Joint Transport Committee as Local Transport Authority for the seven North East councils has recently published the North East Transport Plan 2021-2035 and this will replace the Northumberland Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 as the overarching policy document for transport.

Background

LTP Programme 21/22

- A draft LTP programme of £19.015m was consulted on with Local Area Councils in February 2021. At that stage there was uncertainty regarding the capital allocations from DfT for 21/22 and therefore a prudent view was taken regarding the likely funding available based on previous years base allocations so that the programme consulted upon would not have to be cut back if DfT allocations were lower than expected.
- In February 2021 DfT confirmed the capital allocations for 2021/22 and Northumberland received 23.426m. This was combined with an unallocated sum of £2.335m received as a portion of additional funding received from DfT mid-year in 2020 which had been carried forward to give overall funding available of £25.761m.
- An LTP capital programme for 2021-22 of £25.761m was approved on the 17th March 2021. A contingency sum of 0.880m has been allowed within the programme, with the remaining £24.873m being allocated to projects and programmes as follows.

Appendix	Scheme Type	Proposed Expenditure
A	Walking and Cycling	£1,525,000
B	Safety	£2,345,000
C	Roads	£16,980,000
D	Bridges, Structures and Landslips	£4,023,000
	Contingency	£887,624
	Total Programme	£25,760,624

The detail of the programme can be seen at Appendices A-D of this report.

- It should be noted that the DfT funding allocation for 21/22 was greater than the base LTP allocations received in recent years, which for 20/21 was £18.592m. However, during 20/21 DfT allocated a further £11.421m of capital funding mid-year, giving a total allocation in 20/21 of £30.013m. Therefore, allocations for 21/22 are greater than previous years base allocations but less than the total funding received in 21/22.

Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways

9. An initial programme for £10m of the County Council's additional capital investment of £15m for highway maintenance of U and C roads and footways was approved on 9th April 2020. The second phase of this programme for £5m was approved on 17th March 2021. The funding is specifically targeted towards addressing the decline in the County's minor roads and footways. The draft second phase programme was consulted on with Local Area Council's in February 2021 and has been allocated to projects and programmes as follows.

Appendix	Category	Proposed Allocations
E	Rural Road Refurbishment	£2,330,000
F	Residential Road Refurbishment	£1,305,000
G	Small Works	£700,000
H	Footway Refurbishment	£665,000
	Programme Total	£5,000,000

The detail of the programme can be seen at Appendices E-H of this report.

Delivery of Programmes

10. In delivering the LTP programmes for 20/21 and 21/22 and the U and C Road and Footways programme, operations have had to be conducted under the requirements and impacts of Covid-19. Safe working methods and any necessary adaptation/changes to plant and equipment used have been implemented. This has inevitably caused minor reductions in efficiency with added impacts from absences for those staff affected by covid, shielding or needing to self-isolate due to close contacts. Design and other office-based staff have been working remotely throughout the period. 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. 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.
11. Despite the above, delivery of programmes has progressed well. Some schemes from the 20/21 LTP programme and first phase of the U and C Road and Footways programme have been carried forward into 21/22 and will be delivered concurrent with the 21/22 programmes.
12. In relation to road maintenance, in excess of 33 miles of road are to be resurfaced through the capital programme this year. As of end of July in excess of 8 miles have been resurfaced, with 19 of the 91 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.

13. A substantial £4.150m preventative road surface treatment programme was carried out during the summer months, adding much needed resilience to vulnerable sections of the road network. The annual surface dressing programme commenced in May and is expected to be completed slightly behind programme in early September. This being due to manpower issues relating to a surge in Covid - 19 self-isolation cases and also some unseasonal summer weather. This programme is set to improve the condition and overall safety of almost 54 miles of rural roads. The micro-surfacing programme which is undertaken on more urban roads was substantially completed in July 2021, refurbishing approximately 8 miles of urban roads.
14. A capital programme of maintenance improvements to our footway and cycling networks is also underway, with 18 identified locations countywide set to undergo improvements during the Autumn/Winter months. Programmes of general maintenance refurbishment works to discrete lengths of the footway and cycleway networks are also progressing in line with planned activity through the area offices.
15. Phase 1 of Berwick Old Bridge is now complete, works included the installation of a waterproofing slab and repairs to the stonework accessible from the bridge deck. Preventing water from entering the bridge from above will greatly improve the durability of this historically significant landmark for the long term. Future phases will target the masonry to the underside of the bridge.
16. Works to Fens Burn bridge has been completed, removing the structure from the strengthening list with minimal disruption by keeping the U9027 road open to the public throughout the works. Concrete repairs have been carried out to the underside of the strategically important Kitty Brewster bridge on the A189 Spine Road. Works to repair the joints will follow that will prevent water from entering the bridge in the future. The waterproofing of Klondyke Underbridge on the A189 has been completed in a compressed programme during the school summer holidays to minimise traffic delays.
17. Whilst not part of the LTP programme it should also be noted that the major works to conserve the 200-year-old Union Chain Bridge are ongoing. The chains and deck have been completely taken down so that the elements can be refurbished or replaced as required. Works to create new anchorages at each end have commenced, with the north and south anchorage blocks being cast.
18. Design work for the Steel Bridge Refurbishment programme is now at an advanced stage. The civil engineering and enabling works with works expected to commence imminently on the eight steel bridges which are to be painted, with painting contracts to follow in the coming months.
19. The Landslip programme has seen the completion of Monkridge Hall repair works on the A696. Preparatory design work is complete for the B6319 East of Brokenheugh, B6352 Reedsford Retaining Wall and U7018 The Knar with the

works programmed for delivery in the next quarter. The design of Hareshaw Burn Bellingham is nearing completion for delivery later in the year.

20. The detailed geotechnical work, required for the development of a long-term solution to the cracking and movement in the road at Todstead on the B6344 Weldon Bridge to Rothbury Road is progressing well. A major ground investigation has been undertaken. A comprehensive assessment of the geological conditions is currently taking place, boreholes have been drilled to relieve pressure from artesian water and monitoring equipment installed. Detailed analysis is now taking place allowing us to consider the design options and most effective solution for implementation.
21. Road safety remains a high priority and a number of highway improvements have been implemented since April 2021 to improve safety for all road users. Examples include traffic calming and road safety measures introduced on the A1147 at Stakeford / Bomarsund and at Newbiggin Road / North Seaton Road in Ashington in response to serious accidents. In addition, road safety improvements have been completed at Ratcliffe Road in Haydon Bridge.
22. High Risk Sites road safety schemes have also been completed at the A189 Three Horse Shoes Roundabout, the A197 / B1337 Whorral Bank Roundabout and on the B1331 at Stead Lane Bedlington. In addition, two route action safety schemes have been completed on the A68 between Bellshiel Burnfoot and Bagraw, and on the A696 between Raechester and Dean House. A further six schemes have been issued for programming and work continues on the remaining High-Risk sites and Route Action Safety schemes. Seven of the Rural Road Safety schemes have been fully completed, with a further two issued for programming and a further 18 schemes in design. Two of the Urban Road Safety schemes have been fully completed, and a further 8 schemes in design. Finally, three Urgent Safety Schemes have been completed following requests from Northumbria Police.
23. Work continues to progress on many planned improvements for pedestrians and cyclists across the county, including new footways, pedestrian/toucan crossings and bus stop access improvements, with key schemes issued for construction including the new Pegasus crossing on the A190 The Avenue near Seaton Delaval and the A1167 near the Leisure Centre in Berwick.
24. 20mph limits at schools have been fully introduced at five new locations, with a further seven being issued for programming for delivery on site. A further 20 schemes are currently 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. We are continuing to work through the programme to provide 20mph schemes at all schools where it is feasible to do so and further scheme designs will start later in this financial year.

25. School Street Schemes have been introduced at New Delaval Primary, Newsham Primary and Hareside Primary schools and on Moorhouse Lane in Ashington (Thomas Bewick Campus and St Aidan's Primary School). We are currently looking at new schemes for Cental Primary Upper School in Ashington, New Hartley Primary, Seghill Primary and Seaton Sluice Middle Schools, while we anticipate more schools to express an interest in this initiative in the new school year.
26. A variety of Traffic Regulation Orders have also been introduced at over 40 various locations throughout the County to improve road safety.

Development of 2022/23 LTP Capital Programme

27. Preparations have commenced for the development of the 2022/23 capital programme. In July letters were sent to all County Councillors and Town and Parish Councils asking them to identify their top three highways and transport priority issues for their Ward or Parish area, so that they can be considered in the prioritisation process for inclusion in the LTP Programme for 2022/23. Along with these letters information was provided on requests that have been logged on our Directory of Requests in each of these areas over the last year. Feedback was also provided to those who had submitted priorities for the 2021/22 programme on the outcome regarding their submitted priorities.
28. The letters requested that priorities be submitted by 8th October. Once priorities are received, they will be logged and assessed. Once assessed the relative ranking of the priorities submitted in each area are discussed as part of the annual Member LTP workshop. The priorities received and their assessment will then be considered alongside other information regarding the condition of the highways asset, road casualty information, traffic issues and existing ongoing programmes to identify a draft programme for discussion with the Portfolio Holder. The agreed draft programme will then be shared for comment with Local Area Council's at their February 2022 meeting before approval of the final programme prior to the start of the 2022/23 financial year.
29. It should be noted that overall funding available through the DfT LTP allocation for improvement schemes (rather than maintenance schemes) is relatively limited at approximately £1.7m each year across the County. Whilst further funding is being made available specifically for walking and cycling, this tends to be for large, segregated cycle schemes. Given the funding allocation available, unfortunately not all priorities put forward are able to be included in programmes. Improvement schemes are currently assessed based on the following criteria:-
- a) Support Economic Growth
 - b) Reduce Carbon Emissions
 - c) Promote Equality of Opportunity
 - d) Contribute to Better Safety, Security and Health

e) Improve Quality of Life and a Healthy Natural Environment

North East Transport Plan

30. Since the creation of Combined Authorities, the North East Joint Transport Committee has become the Local Transport Authority for the seven North East councils with the statutory responsibilities to produce the Local Transport Plan policy documents. The North East Joint Transport Committee has recently published the North East Transport Plan 2021-2035 (<https://www.transportnortheast.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AST004-Transport-Plan-A4-v53clean-Ben-v2.pdf>) and this will replace the Northumberland Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 as the overarching policy document for transport. The requirements and proposals of the new plan will be considered going forward to see if any change in the prioritisation process for the Council's Local Transport Plan capital programme are needed.

Implications

Policy	The programme is consistent with existing policies
Finance and value for money	Programme allocations are within the overall budgets available .
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 when developing programmes.
Risk Assessment	Risks to the delivery of any individual scheme within the programmes are 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 the programmes, there are no perceived adverse effects.
Customer Consideration	The delivery of the programmes 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 – Local Transport Plan Programme 2021-22 and Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads And Footways Programme 2021-22

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)	John Riddle

Author and Contact Details

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