

**Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**  
**Report submitted by: Interim Executive Director for Environment**  
**Date: 9 December 2014**

## **Part I**

Electoral Divisions affected:  
Accrington North,  
Accrington South,  
Accrington West,  
Rossendale East,  
Rossendale North,  
Rossendale South,  
Rossendale West, and  
Whitworth

### **East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan** **East Lancashire Strategic Cycle Network Investment Programme** (Appendices 'A' and 'B' refer)

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#### **Executive Summary**

The adopted East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan commits the County Council to develop and implement a Strategic Cycle Network in East Lancashire. The masterplan identifies a number of potential links that could form part of this network, linking communities to employment and offering potential for tourism and recreation.

The Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan submitted to Government by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership at the end of March 2014 included a bid for £2.6m in 2015/16 from the Local Growth Fund (LGF) towards delivery of the strategic cycle network. In July, the Government announced that it would commit to this amount in full, with the proviso that the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and its partners (in this case the County Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council) commit a further £3.29m, making an investment of almost £5.9m in total.

In Lancashire, it is proposed to invest just over £5m in three routes: the 'Valley of Stone' in Rossendale, Accrington to Ramsbottom (National Cycle Network Route 6) and the Huncoat Greenway in Hyndburn. In tandem, Blackburn with Darwen Council will be investing £850,000 in its Weaver's Wheel project.

A proposed four year programme of works is set out at Appendix 'A' and a plan of the proposed cycle network is set out at Appendix 'B'.

This is deemed to be a Key decision and the provisions of Standing Order No 25 have been complied with.

### **Recommendations**

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked:

- i. To approve the four year programme as set out in Appendix 'A';
- ii. To agree the addition of a programme of works into the Environment Directorate's capital programme phased across the years 2014/15 to 2018/19, as detailed in the report, to deliver a strategic cycle network in East Lancashire and;
- iii. To authorise expenditure of up to £100,000 in 2014/15 to support scheme preparation work.

### **Background and Advice**

For cycling to become a widespread choice for travel, particularly for commuting, a good cycle network serving key centres and destinations is essential. It is also essential that the network is well-maintained and promoted appropriately. In general, as a mode of travel, cycling is an option for journeys of less than 30 minutes direction for a range of different purposes. It is cheap and convenient, with the added advantage that any facilities provided are available to enhance opportunities for leisure cycling.

Cycling provides a range of beneficial outcomes across different policy areas, for example, a reduction in the prevalence of a number of chronic medical conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, reduced congestion leading to improved air quality, reduced travel costs and increased economic output through reduced incidences in work absence through ill health. All these outcomes are achievable through increasing the number of people cycling.

The County Council is preparing a cycling strategy for consultation that will establish just what a 'good' cycle network should look like for a range of different users. It will also set out the specifications for Lancashire's strategic cycle network, including signage and maintenance. Once approved, discussions can start as to the links to be included and a marketing strategy developed to encourage its use.

Although there is work being done to improve and extend cycling facilities, the cycle network in East Lancashire is far from complete and does not provide adequate links between homes and places of work. It also does not necessarily give good access to visitors. The adopted East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan sets out proposals to develop a strategic cycle network serving key centres and

destinations across the area, one that everyone can use. Furthermore, ensuring that cycle facilities at train and bus stations are easily accessible and secure can help to encourage people to use a mix of bike, bus and train to undertake their journeys.

Different cyclists have very different needs, from fit and confident enthusiasts happy to cycle anywhere to the less fit and confident cyclists who want dedicated facilities and to know that routes are safe. Different journeys also have different requirements: commuters generally want a quick, convenient journey whereas leisure cyclists are likely to be more interested in a scenic route. The masterplan identifies a number of interventions that would link communities to employment and offer potential for tourism and recreation. Most districts in East Lancashire have cycling strategies in place through which it will be possible to identify further potential links for inclusion in the strategic cycle network and for more local travel.

The East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan commits the County Council to develop and implement a strategic cycle network in East Lancashire. The intention is to create a 'core' network of strategic routes supported by local feeder routes to ensure maximum accessibility. However, to date no single funding strategy exists to deliver the network.

Through the establishment of the Local Growth Fund (LGF), the Government has made available significant funding for local transport, amounting to £1.1bn in 2015/16 and with a commitment to maintain the overall LGF at a total of at least £2bn each year in the next Parliament. The LGF includes all local major transport scheme funding from 2015/16 together with a £200m top slice from the local authority integrated transport block. For 2015/16 only, the LGF includes a further £100m of capital through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund; however, funding in the LGF is not ring-fenced.

The Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan submitted to Government by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership at the end of March 2014 included a bid for £2.6m in 2015/16 from the LGF towards delivery of the strategic cycle network. In July, the Government announced that it would commit to this amount in full, with the proviso that the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and its partners (in this case the County Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council) commit a further £3.29m, making an investment of almost £5.9m in total.

The County Council has allocated £3m towards delivery of the Strategic Cycle Network in the East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan over the four year period 2014/15 to 2017/18. Appendix 'A' sets out a proposed headline investment programme to deliver a significant part of the East Lancashire Strategic Cycle Network. The programme comprises a total investment of just over £5m in three routes: the 'Valley of Stone' in Rossendale, Accrington to Ramsbottom (National Cycle Network Route 6) and the Huncoat Greenway in Hyndburn. All of these routes are referenced in the East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan and illustrated on the plan attached as Appendix 'B'. In tandem, Blackburn with Darwen Council will be investing £850,000 in its Weaver's Wheel project.

Individual projects will complement previous investment in cycling infrastructure to create a strategic network connecting Rossendale and Greater Manchester via both

the Irwell Valley and Whitworth (the Valley of Stone) and with the Burnley-Pendle Growth Corridor and Blackburn 'Wheel' via NCN Route 6 between Irwell Vale and Accrington (see map attached as Appendix 'B'). The programme also includes the missing sections of the Huncoat Greenway.

The County Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council will undertake further work as part of the development of a Strategic Outline Business Case for the East Lancashire Cycle Network to confirm that the project will deliver value for money and that it will deliver significant additional benefits in relation to its stated objectives. This is necessary in order to comply with the Accountability Framework of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and to secure the necessary approval to draw down grant funding through the Lancashire Growth Deal.

Each of the three routes has been divided into a number of sections based on their characteristics and/or land ownership and subjected to a risk assessment of the work necessary to implement each section to establish a current risk rating (Red, Amber, Green). In addition, the assessment has identified potential mitigation measures to reduce risks and their likely impact on that risk rating.

Based on this analysis, the following spend profile is proposed:

2014/15	£0.1m
2015/16	£2.0m (all LSTF)
2016/17	£0.8m
2017/18	£0.5m
<u>2018/19</u>	<u>£1.6m</u>
Total	£5.0m

In effect, delivery will now take place over four years. It will be a challenge to achieve the £2m LSTF capital spend in 2015/16 even with full mitigation of all risks; however, it should be possible to accelerate projects programmed for 2016/17 once further development work is complete.

The local contribution remains well in excess of that required by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Accountability Framework. Part of the County Council's capital contribution will therefore be available to fund scheme preparation work, including land / legal issues, design and Strategic Outline Business Case development. In order to deliver the programme, it will be necessary to commence scheme preparation work in 2014/15 and in advance of securing a funding approval decision from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership. The spend profile includes £100,000 of the County Council's contribution to that effect.

As a related exercise, in December 2013, the Department for Transport initiated a separate competitive bidding round for £78.5m of revenue funding for 2015/16 aimed at enhancing the benefits of LGF capital projects focused on sustainable travel. The County Council submitted a joint bid with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council for £1.829m towards 'Connecting East Lancashire', a package of measures to support the development of the East Lancashire Cycle Network and its interaction with other forms of sustainable transport and thereby contribute towards economic growth, reduced carbon emissions, improved health and other wider environmental

and social benefits. With a further £703,600 of revenue funding available through local contributions, the overall revenue budget is in excess of £2.5m.

On 11<sup>th</sup> July, the Department for Transport announced that it was awarding the two authorities the full bid amount. The County Council will receive circa £1.31m, with a further £260,000 allocated to joint projects with Blackburn with Darwen Council. The intention is to spend this funding across East Lancashire, not just in those areas benefitting from delivery of capital projects. It will be used in part to promote the Strategic Cycle Network as an alternative to the car for a range of journeys, including the network's potential to encourage tourism and recreation thereby contributing to supporting healthier lifestyles. This will also lay the foundation for future extensions of the network as and when future funding becomes available.

## **Consultations**

N/A.

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

## **Risk management**

A significant number of sections are on private land where the views of some landowners are currently unknown. Negotiating with private landowners can be a lengthy process and can impact upon delivery timescales. The need for, and commitment to use the County Council's compulsory purchase powers to create routes in certain circumstances will need considering at an early stage.

There is currently no agreed model or resources in place to address the ongoing maintenance requirements of the Strategic Cycle Network, a key issue to resolve when negotiating with landowners. With such a large investment in cycling infrastructure proposed, a commitment to maintenance is required to deliver the long term benefits of the network. This will be addressed through the County Council's cycling strategy.

## **Financial**

There is a risk that the project will fail to deliver high value for money (i.e. a benefit to cost ratio of 2 or greater). If this is the case, the project will need to demonstrate that it will deliver significant additional monetised or non-monetised benefits in relation to its stated objectives in order to secure £2.6m grant funding in 2015/16 through the Lancashire Growth Deal.

Should this grant funding not be forthcoming, the County Council will be unable to implement the programme set out in Appendix 'A' and further analysis will be necessary to determine which projects can be supported using the available masterplan funding. In this scenario, a further report will be submitted to the Cabinet Member before any work is commissioned. Nevertheless, in order to deliver the programme, it will be necessary to commit some financial resource to scheme preparation work in 2014/15 and in advance of securing a funding approval decision

from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership. The project spend profile includes £100,000 of the County Council's contribution to that effect.

### List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan	February 2014	Dave Colbert Environment Directorate 01772 534501
Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan: A Growth Deal for the Arc of Prosperity	March 2014	Kathryn Molloy Office of the Chief Executive 01772 538790

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A