Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport  
Report submitted by: Interim Executive Director for Environment  
Date: 10 October 2014

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:  
Fylde South, Fylde West,  
Lytham, St Annes South, and  
St Annes North

South Fylde Line Rail Connectivity Study - SINTROPER

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Executive Summary

The County Council has recently become a partner in the European SINTROPER (Sustainable Integrated Tram-based Transport Options for Peripheral European Regions) project. SINTROPER was originally a five-year transnational cooperation project with the aim of enhancing local and regional transport provision to, from and within five peripheral regions in North West Europe, including the Fylde Coast. The project (renamed SINTROPER PLUS) with additional funding has been extended by the European Commission to 31st October 2015.

The emerging Fylde Coast Highways and Transport Masterplan has identified that the South Fylde line remains a key weakness in the Fylde Coast public transport system.

It is proposed through the SINTROPER PLUS project to undertake a study with the following remit:

- The outcomes that could be achieved through targeted rail-based investment in the South Fylde Line (SFL) corridor;
- Capturing wider economic and social benefits of transport investment beyond those addressed within standard British Cost/Benefit methodology;
- The possible role of innovative lower-cost technologies in contributing to viable solutions that address evidence based failings with the existing rail network.

Undertaking this study will allow the County Council with its partners to consider viable solutions to the key transport, social and economic issues identified in the emerging Masterplan.
The proposed budget for the study is £174,461. Confirmed contributions are £10,000 from Blackpool Council and £84,461 from the European Commission SINTROPHER budget.

Authority is sought to contribute £80,000 to the cost of the work as match funding from the Environment Directorate's revenue budget.

The study work will be undertaken by the County Council's partnering consultancy Jacobs and led by County Council officers.

**Recommendation**

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to give approval to contribute £80,000 to the cost of the study as match funding from within from the Environment Directorate's revenue budget.

**Background and Advice**

The County Council has recently become a partner in the European SINTROPHER (Sustainable Integrated Tram-based Transport Options for Peripheral European Regions) project. SINTROPHER was originally a five-year transnational cooperation project with the aim of enhancing local and regional transport provision to, from and within five peripheral regions in North West Europe, including the Fylde Coast. The project (SINTROPHER PLUS) with additional funding has been extended by the European Commission to 31 October 2015.

SINTROPHER has to date had four specific objectives:

- Promote the best possible, cost effective technology-based solutions;
- Assess the appraisal procedure for regional tram systems and improve the business case development process;
- Achieve high-quality, seamless interchange between regional tram systems and regional rail and air hubs;
- Promote and market the benefits of regional tram-based systems to users and stakeholders.

The Lead Partner for the SINTROPHER Plus project is University College London with Blackpool Council being the other UK Regional Partner. Other Regional Partners are: West Flanders (Belgium), Statsregio Arnhem Nijmegen (Netherlands), Universtat Kassel and North Hesse (Germany) and the EuroDistrict Saar-Moselle (France/Germany).
In conjunction with Blackpool Council and SINTROKER Plus, it is proposed to undertake a study, the South Fylde Connectivity Study, which will look into the following principal areas:

- The outcomes that could be achieved through targeted rail-based investment in the South Fylde Line (SFL) corridor;

- Capturing wider economic and social benefits of transport investment beyond those addressed within standard British cost/benefit methodology;

- The possible role of innovative lower-cost technologies in contributing to viable solutions that address evidence based failings with the existing rail network.

The proposed study area includes Central and South Blackpool, Blackpool Airport, St Annes, Lytham, Kirkham and the Warton Enterprise Zone.

The study would be undertaken in three phases:

Phase 1 – Evidence Base and Conditional Output Statements

This phase would develop an evidence base that would underpin targeted proposals to enhance the rail/tramway serving the study area with the goal of maximising economic, regeneration and transport returns as well as overcoming access barriers. Phase 1 would provide a set of agreed conditional output statements, from which specific options could be developed and appraised.

Phase 2 – Option Appraisal

A range of options would be considered. Each option would be considered in terms of: value for money; connectivity and economic growth, commercial sustainability and broader transport benefit.

Phase 3 – Costing and Appraisal of preferred option(s)

Assuming that a suitable option arises out of phases 1 and 2, phase 3 would take this option to the Network Rail GRIP2 (Guide to Railway Investment Process) stage, which would require significant engineering, costing and operational analysis. A full transport business case including an assessment of wider economic benefits would be necessary to progress further.

Fylde Coast Masterplan

The Fylde Coast Highways and Transport Masterplan is currently being prepared as a draft for consultation. It has been developed in cooperation with Blackpool Council and covers Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre. The emerging Masterplan has identified three key issues that will need to be addressed going forward. These are:

- Connecting the Fylde Coast
How the Fylde Coast connects in future to other areas, particularly to the remainder of the County and neighbouring growth areas, to make sure that its people, economy and housing markets are more integrated to areas of opportunity and that visitors find it easy to get to the whole of the Fylde Coast.

- **Travel within the Fylde Coast**

How the links between the area's towns and these towns and the major employment and housing areas, both present and proposed, should be provided and enhanced in the future.

- **Local Travel**

How to ensure that everyone, regardless of background or location, can get to the services and opportunities that they need, including education, employment, leisure and health facilities.

The emerging Masterplan identifies the heavy rail and tramway systems as having a crucial role in all three of the above. They can help make access to areas of economic growth easy, help unlock new employment and housing sites, help make it easy for visitors to access the Fylde Coast and reduce pressure on the road network.

The Fylde Coast has benefited or is about to benefit from some significant investment in its public transport infrastructure. The upgrade of the Blackpool Tramway which runs between Starr Gate in the South and Fleetwood in the North was completed in April 2012 at a cost of £101 million. The line between Preston and Blackpool North is scheduled for electrification by March 2017, including associated upgrades to track and signalling. A planned extension of the Blackpool Tramway between Talbot Square and Blackpool North Station, developed and appraised through SINTROPHER, has received approval from Transport for Lancashire, subject to acceptance of a full business case demonstrating high value for money, and is likely to be implemented around 2018 at a cost of about £18.2 million.

However, the emerging Masterplan also identifies that the South Fylde line remains a key weakness in the Fylde Coast public transport system. Specific weaknesses identified include:

- Poor interchange between the South Fylde Line and the Tramway leading to a loss of connectivity along the Fylde Coast, including central Blackpool.
- Poor quality and ageing rolling stock.
- Low frequencies compared to Blackpool North.
- Unreliability with frequent cancellations.
- Relatively poor connectivity to external areas of economic growth such as Preston or Manchester, including Manchester Airport.
- Poor quality passenger facilities at most stations.
- Some overcrowding, particularly during the summer months.

The South Fylde Area Rail Connectivity Study and any options arising from it have the potential to form a flagship project of the Masterplan.
It is proposed to conduct phase 1 and 2 within the SINTROPER project and time frame i.e. for completion by the end of June 2015. This would mean that the County Council will be able to access funding from the EU SINTROPER budget.

A price for phase 1 and 2 has been sought from Jacobs, the County Council's partnering consultant for highways and transportation matters. The cost for phase 1 and 2 is £163,980. Blackpool Council has agreed to contribute £10,000 towards the study and grants from SINTROPER of £84,461 secured. The balance of £80,000 would need to be met through the Environment Directorate's revenue budget. It should be noted that the exact contribution from the European Union may vary slightly due to exchange rate fluctuations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Costs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackpool Council</td>
<td>Study (Jacobs) £163,980.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lancashire County Council</td>
<td>Travel £2,100.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>SINTROPER grants</td>
<td>Audit/Admin/Publicity £8,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£174,080.00</td>
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An exact cost for phase 3 is not known at this stage as it would depend on the preferred option to be taken forward. However, an estimate of between £200,000 and £250,000 has been suggested. Consideration will have to be given as to possible funding mechanisms for this phase of work at the appropriate time.

Consultations

N/A.

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

The SINTROPER project has been extended by the European Commission for a further twelve months until October 2015 with a requirement that all project work is completed by the end of June 2015. In order to achieve this timescale it will be necessary for an immediate start. If this proves not to be possible it is unlikely that the County Council will be able to access European funding to take forward this aspect of the emerging Fylde Coast Highways and Transportation Masterplan.

Equality and Diversity

None

Legal

None
Financial

The cost to the County Council will be approximately £80,000. This can be contained within the Environment Directorate's overall revenue budgets for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

List of Background Papers

Nil

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A