

**Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee**

Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 5 December 2023

Electoral Division affected:  
Accrington North;  
Accrington South;  
Accrington West &  
Oswaldtwistle Central;  
Brierfield & Nelson West;  
Burnley Central East;  
Burnley Central West;  
Burnley North East; Burnley  
Rural; Burnley South West;  
Burscough & Rufford; Great  
Harwood, Rishton &  
Clayton-le-Moors; Mid  
Rossendale; Nelson East;  
Oswaldtwistle; Padiham and  
Burnley West; Pendle  
Central; Pendle Hill; Pendle  
Rural; Rossendale East;  
Rossendale South;  
Rossendale West;  
Whitworth & Bacup;

**Corporate Priorities:**  
Supporting economic growth;

**Levelling Up East Lancashire: Creating Opportunities through Safer, Greener and Healthier Travel (Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale).**

(Appendices 'A', 'B', and 'C' refer)

Contact for further information:

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**Brief Summary**

This report provides further background to the Levelling Up Fund, the County Council's successful bid and next steps.

**Recommendation**

The Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the report and consider how local County Councillors can assist with resident engagement in the co-design process.



## Detail

### The Concept of Levelling Up

'Levelling Up' aims to reduce the imbalances, primarily economic, between areas and social groups across the UK without acting to the detriment of prosperous areas.

Economic differences have real implications: they affect people's lives through their pay, work opportunities, health, and life chances and tackling these economic differences and driving prosperity is part of levelling up.

The concept has recently been enshrined in law with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act receiving Royal Assent on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

### The Levelling Up Fund

In March 2021 the Government announced a £4.8 billion competitive Levelling Up Fund (LUF) to invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets. Funding is targeted towards places that are most in need of the type of investment the Fund provides, as measured by an Index of Priority Places that considers the following place characteristics:

- Need for economic recovery and growth.
- Need for improved transport connectivity.
- Need for regeneration.

The Lancashire districts identified as highest priority for funding, as measured by this Index, include Burnley, Chorley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Preston and Rossendale.

County Councils with transport powers were eligible to bid for up to £50 million of funding. As part of this process bidding authorities had to consult local Members of Parliament as part of their bid.

### Lancashire County Council's Bid Development

In July 2021 Cabinet approved;

- Development funding to cover design and business case-making costs in 2021/22, estimated at up to £1 million.
- A capital contribution of £5 million as local match funding to support the delivery following a funding bid.
- The priorities of inward investment, jobs, skills and tackling health inequalities, underpinned by local transport and access interventions, be the focus of the county council's bid to the Fund.

Consultants were commissioned using the County Council's Professional Technical Framework to carry out initial work to compile baseline evidence and undertake scheme identification and appraisal to inform the production of an Outline Business Case. This comprehensive optioneering process, detailed at Appendix 'A', concluded that the focus of the bid should be aimed at providing a range of transport-related improvements across four districts in East Lancashire: Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale. Being located next to each other, it was believed that the four neighbouring districts would stand the best chance of securing funding because



transport interconnectivity could be most easily demonstrated compared to an isolated district.

The evidence also showed that the bid should consist of three interrelated projects which will contribute towards delivering the Levelling Up Fund objectives and the County Council's aspirations. The bid will transform public realm and sustainable transport, encouraging mode shift, and thereby supporting access to jobs and opportunities and promoting health equality across four in-need districts of East Lancashire. The three interrelated themes are;

### **1. Safer, Greener and Healthier Streets (SGHS)**

These are public realm improvements to local neighbourhoods. They will be delivered in specific areas that meet Levelling Up criteria. They will be delivered in collaboration with the local community with a high degree of engagement, including co-design so that the proposals work for local residents. They aim to improve safety, give a sense of place, and make cycling and walking journeys more convenient. Appendix 'B' provides details of the type of proposals that will be included in the SGHS workstream and illustrates and describes the pallet of measures available to uplift these selected areas through major public realm works.

### **2. Walking and Cycling – 'Active Travel' Routes**

High quality cycling and walking schemes that link various leisure, employment and educational opportunities across East Lancashire will be delivered. The types of measures include wayfinding signage, shared use path signs, 3m wide two-way cycleways, toucan crossings, parallel crossings, footway widening and side road treatments.

### **3. Public Transport Improvements**

These include measures such as Real Time Passenger Information, bus priority improvements, mobility hubs and improved access at Accrington rail station.

## **Award Announcement and Progress to Date**

In January 2023 Lancashire County Council was awarded £49.6 million through Round 2 of the LUF bid process, subject to approval of a Full Business Case. This, together with the local funding contribution will create a funding envelope of £55 million for interventions in the East Lancashire districts named above.

Officers are in dialogue with the Department for Transport to try to ensure that the programme is delivered in line with the challenging deadline of March 2026. This includes trying to develop a method of assurance with the Department for Transport to reduce bureaucracy and the need to complete both an Outline and Full Business Case.

Although construction cannot commence until final approval is received from the Department of Transport (expected September 2024), significant progress has been made since the award announcement including;

#### **i. Scheme Identification**

This work has included data collection and analysis together with site visits across East Lancashire to review and identify potential SGHS, Active Travel routes and



assessing appropriate public transport initiatives. Further detail is provided at Appendix 'C'.

## **ii. Engagement with Members of Parliament, District Councils and Local Councillors**

Engagement with East Lancashire Members of Parliament and District Councils has continued through regular briefing sessions. East Lancashire County and Borough Councillors have also been updated. Progress will continue to be communicated through programme development and delivery. The East Lancashire Members of Parliament have offered their support in encouraging the Department of Transport to reduce bureaucracy in order to enable delivery on the ground. The key milestones for the project are detailed below.

## **iii. Involvement of Local Communities in Supporting and Influencing the Programme**

A comprehensive Communications and Engagement Plan has also been developed which is underpinned by the County Council values of 'supportive, innovative, respectful and collaborative'. Messaging and activity tailored to audiences will ensure authentic, meaningful, and useful engagement delivered clearly and simply to maximise participation. Early resident engagement/co-design is a core component for the Safer Greener, Healthier Streets and Active Travel projects. The Plan includes a comprehensive list of stakeholders including County and District Councillors, MPs, businesses, voluntary organisations, transport companies, community groups, residents, schools, and media. Messaging, channels and tactics are identified for each group, differing depending on the project. A particular focus will be on engaging with hard-to-reach communities to capture distributional impacts and support levelling up.

## **iv. Partnership Working arrangements.**

We are developing our proposals in partnership with;

- Burnley Borough Council – LUF Round 1: Town to Turf programme.
- Hyndburn Borough Council – LUF Round 2: Town Centre programme.
- Rossendale Borough Council – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Capital Regeneration Project.
- Pendle Borough Council – Nelson Town Deal Fund programme.
- Bus Service Improvement Plans (Lancashire and Blackburn).
- Local Cycling and Walking Plans.

All of the bid package components have been designed to complement existing ambitions and committed schemes, ensuring delivery of significant accessibility and connectivity improvements across East Lancashire.

## **Benefit Cost Ratio.**

The Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of the programme demonstrates 'high' value for money and a strong case for proposed projects. The risks to this include;

- Potential cost escalation due to construction inflation that has been mitigated by the inclusion of risk contingency in cost estimates.
- Lower than forecast behavioural responses to the proposed schemes, with minimal uptake of the new walking and cycling facilities. This can be mitigated by the co-design of improvements with local communities.



## **Expected Impacts**

The package of measures is seeking to tackle pre-existing challenges which have been brought into a sharper focus since the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. The challenges that the programme will help to tackle include;

- Barriers to economic growth and high levels of unemployment.
- High levels of deprivation.
- Social and health challenges.
- Environmental challenges.
- Gaps in the transport network.

The programme is also expected to positively impact a range of social economic and environment indicators including supporting regeneration and economic activity and improving health, wellbeing and quality of life.

## **Measuring Outputs and Outcomes**

A Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy has been developed based on Government guidance to ensure that core expected benefits drive the monitoring and evaluation process and metric selection for the overall programme and individual projects.

The main outputs and outcomes include achievement of scheme objectives, travel demand, travel times and reliability, impact on the economy, carbon reduction and value for money.

Each project will develop its own individual monitoring and evaluation plan aligned with the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy.

## **Trade Offs**

No trade-offs are expected. None of the interventions are expected to result in significant restrictions for motorists – rather there should be increased transport choice for residents, particularly for short journeys.

Once the detail designs have been completed it is possible that the cost of the proposals exceeds the financial envelope. If this is the case, schemes will be value engineered or phased to ensure the programme is delivered to available budget.

## **Sustaining Benefits**

The development and implementation of the programme relies heavily on input and support from numerous County Council services including Highways, Transport, Economic Development, Public Health, Asset Management, Design, Estates, Procurement, Finance and Legal services. Close working relationships with the four District Councils named above are also being developed. This support and cooperation is underpinned by an understanding and commitment to the Levelling Up principles that will help to embed this philosophy and sustain benefits in the future.



## Key Milestones.

Activity	Timescale
Stakeholder engagement and co-design workshops	November 2023 to March 2024
Preliminary designs and costings	January 2024
Proposed interim review by DfT	February 2024
Full Business Case submission (if required)	June 2024
DfT review and approval	June – September 2024
Construction Phase	October 2024 – March 2026
Commencement of monitoring and evaluation Phase	April 2026

## National Policy Context

The Prime Minister recently announced a review of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and 20mph limits by the Department for Transport (DfT).

From an outside perspective, measures often utilised in LTNs may have been expected by some to form some of the measures within the SGHS schemes across East Lancashire.

However, from detailed local site visits, we do not expect to include any of the more restrictive measures such as modal filters, street closures and speed reduction that are more indicative of traditional interventions in LTNs, and which have prompted the national review. Improvements in the selected SGHS areas will be public realm driven and developed in collaboration with the local community. We would expect this approach to improve local amenity and the local environment to be welcomed by residents.

## Appendices

Appendices 'A' to 'C' are attached to this report. For clarification they are summarised below and referenced at relevant points within this report.

Appendix	Title
Appendix 'A'	Levelling Up Fund Optioneering Process
Appendix 'B'	Safer, Greener Healthier Streets: Potential Interventions
Appendix 'C'	East Lancashire Levelling Up Proposals

## Consultations

A comprehensive Communications and Engagement Plan has also been developed. The Plan includes a comprehensive list of stakeholders including County and District Councillors, MPs, businesses, voluntary organisations, transport companies, community groups, residents, schools, and media.

Early resident engagement/co-design is a core component for the Safer Greener, Healthier Streets and Active Travel projects.



## Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### Risk management

#### Financial

- Impact of inflation mitigated through the inclusion of significant contingencies and value engineering of final proposals.
- Requirements for statutory utility diversions/amendments mitigated through topographical surveys and statutory utility searches to provide an early warning and ongoing engagement with utility providers.
- Cost overruns will be mitigated through value engineering, phasing of works and/or identifying additional funding sources excluding County Council borrowing.
- Programme delays due to material and resource shortages mitigated by resource planning and advanced materials specification and ordering within the programme.

#### Legal

It is anticipated that objections will be mitigated through co-design with local communities. Whether any land acquisition or rights acquisition will be required is not known and Legal Services will advise on relevant elements of the Projects. Legal advice may raise challenges and risks.

### Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

#### List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

