

Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Report submitted by: Interim Executive Director for Environment
Date: 18 March 2015

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
All in Lancaster

Publication of the Draft District of Lancaster Highways and Transport Masterplan for Consultation Purposes

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

Hazel Walton, 01772 534618, Environment Directorate,

hazel.walton@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

The 2012/13-14/15 Implementation Plan to Lancashire's Local Transport Plan programmes the preparation of a series of highways and transport masterplans to cover the county. These masterplans will provide the basis for determining future transport investment priorities for the County Council.

Changes to the way transport infrastructure is funded will come into effect from 2015/16. From that time, the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) will be responsible for a multi-million pound budget devolved from the Department for Transport. This creates for the first time the opportunity to integrate key economic and transport priorities and plans. The LEP will be responsible for the review and approval of individual major scheme business cases and ensuring effective delivery of the programme.

The fifth and final masterplan to be produced covers Lancaster district. The masterplan identifies problems, gaps and opportunities on the highways and public transport systems serving Lancaster and how they impact on the area's economy. It also shows how major investment secured through the initial Growth Deal negotiated with central government will bring significant benefits to the area.

The completion of the Heysham to M6 link road is one of the largest road construction projects currently managed by a local authority in England. At a cost of £128.62 million, it will directly connect the Heysham and Morecambe peninsula to a reconfigured Junction 34 of the M6. The link is expected to open to traffic in summer 2016, when it will fundamentally change traffic patterns in the district, with huge implications for how we can realise our ambitions for transport and travel in the district.

Building on the complementary measures required on the opening of the link road, the masterplan goes further to propose that Lancaster City Centre should ultimately have only limited through traffic, with no gyratory system and no barriers to sustainable travel. Park and Ride/Cycle sites at M6 Junctions 33 and 34, a rapid transit service between South Lancaster and Heysham via Lancaster city centre and Morecambe and district wide cycling and ultra-low emission vehicles strategies would all be enabled by the proposed relocation of Junction 33.

Morecambe Place-shaping would help to enable the Morecambe Area Action Plan, as will better rail connectivity between Morecambe and Lancaster. We will also investigate how better connectivity around Morecambe Bay can be achieved.

Carnforth would see an improved town centre, with better roads and public spaces. We will also look to see how northbound rail connectivity can be improved.

The final component of the masterplan concerns rural transport. We will work to maintain rural public transport and work to providing provision that meets the specific needs of residents and businesses in the rural area. As part of this, we will look at how rail connectivity can be improved and how we can make travel in the rural area as sustainable as possible, always acknowledging that the car will have a significant role to play.

This consultation masterplan represents the beginning of a programme of infrastructure delivery to serve Lancaster over the next 15 to 20 years and beyond.

A public consultation is proposed, lasting from 23rd March to 7th May 2015. During the consultation, the County Council will be identifying and writing to key stakeholders, including district, town and parish councils, and local MPs, to invite comments on the proposals, placing press releases in the area, leafleting at transport hubs, town halls and libraries, and approaching major employers to raise awareness with as wide a population as we can. Given the level of interest there is likely to be in the masterplan, we also propose to hold public events to ensure that those who wish to can speak to an officer directly.

Then, in order to obtain the best chance of delivery, we must get these improvements 'ready to roll' as soon as we can, so that we can take all opportunities to get funding for schemes that are ready to deliver. That will mean committing time and funding 'upfront' to working up these ideas and preparing the economic case for them.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to approve the publication of the draft Highways and Transport Master Plan for the District of Lancaster, presented at 'Appendix A', for public consultation purposes.

This decision should be implemented immediately for the purposes of Standing Order 34(3) as any delay could adversely affect the execution of the County Council's responsibilities. The reason for this is the requirement to print the consultation document externally in readiness for commencement of consultation.

Background and Advice

The 2012/13-14/15 Implementation Plan to Lancashire's Local Transport Plan prioritises the preparation of a series of highways and transport masterplans to cover the county. These masterplans will provide the basis for determining future transport investment priorities for the County Council and, moving forward, support the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership in seeking a further Growth Deal. They form an important part of developing a transport evidence base to inform future highway and transport planning and investment priorities.

The masterplanning exercise identifies problems, gaps and opportunities on the highways and public transport systems serving Lancashire and how they impact on the county's economy. The intention is that the masterplans will provide a much more pro-active role for the County Council as highway authority and local transport authority in forward planning, and the improvements they identify will be a key influence on future patterns of development, at a strategic and local level, set out in local plans covering Lancashire.

Completion of this work will also assist the Council in working with other transport infrastructure and service providers including the Highways Agency, Network Rail, train and bus operating companies and neighbouring local authorities to improve transport across Lancashire and between Lancashire and the rest of the UK and beyond.

Future funding allocations from central government will be increasingly devolved to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which covers the local authority areas of Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool. It is therefore vital that there is one coherent highways and transport strategy for the LEP area, rooted in approved and adopted strategies and plans and so Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool Councils are cooperating with the County Council to produce this strategy.

The completion of the Heysham to M6 link road is one of the largest road construction projects currently managed by a local authority in England. At a cost of £128.62 million, it will directly connect the Heysham and Morecambe peninsula to a reconfigured Junction 34 of the M6. The link is expected to open to traffic in summer 2016, when it will fundamentally change traffic patterns in the district, with huge implications for how we can realise our ambitions for transport and travel in the district.

The draft Lancaster masterplan set out in Appendix 'A' therefore presents a programme of infrastructure delivery and further work, setting out a vision for travel and transport across the district that builds on the legacy of the completed link road.

The consultation will look to achieve a consensus on the appropriateness of this vision and the options that can be developed to achieve it.

The vision presented in the masterplan therefore focuses on how best to deliver effective solutions to the following core issues that are pivotal to the way in which the transport network will operate in the future:

- Congestion in Lancaster (especially around the gyratory systems), Galgate and Carnforth
- Delays to public transport, especially in Lancaster city centre
- Barriers to pedestrian and cycle movement in Lancaster and Morecambe
- Road Safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists
- Road safety concerns for children and young people
- Environmental issues, especially relating to air quality
- Rail connections are not as good as they should be
- Ultra Low Emission Vehicles are not well catered for
- Rural residents and businesses struggle without cars

Our Vision is that in 2031:

In the City of Lancaster, the centre is a vibrant and successful core to the district, with no air quality issues, no gyratory congestion and so no barriers to sustainable travel. Pedestrians and cyclists can move around easily and freely, through safe and attractive public spaces. This is because the centre is largely free of traffic. There's no more through traffic so there are only vehicles that have to be there and most of these are ultra low emission.

Away from the city centre, the residential roads, old and new, are quiet as traffic no longer rat runs trying to escape the gyratory. Walking and cycling are now the norm for many local journeys and car clubs mean that there is far less need to own a car. Ultra low emission cars are now commonplace as charging is straightforward wherever the car is kept, on or off road.

Without the gyratory to contend with, public transport is also more reliable and new links to South Lancaster mean that the University has been able to expand and maintain its prestigious reputation. Those who work in the area almost all commute by sustainable modes such as the rapid transit or leave their cars at the Park and Ride.

Morecambe is blossoming again, a revitalised town where everyone can get to where they want to go easily on foot or by bike and where the amazing promenade gives way seamlessly to an attractive and strong commercial centre. The town is now a 'must visit' attraction on the Lancashire Coast and Morecambe Bay tourist trails.

In Heysham, the old village, like Morecambe, is a key tourist destination now readily accessible without a car. South Heysham and the Port, however, are now a thriving focal point for industry, with the completed link road providing superb access to the motorway network, complemented by improved access by public transport and by cycle.

Carnforth is an important service centre for the north of the district, with shared spaces making the centre a much more attractive place to visit. The improved rail links have also made the town far more significant to visitors and the station is now integral to the town centre.

Galgate is a quiet village, no longer straddling the city's main link to the motorway.

Getting between the towns and further afield has also changed beyond recognition.

The rail network now provides high quality, fast services to and from Morecambe and rail travel around the Bay is now straightforward. Many more passengers now use the Bentham line as well. Part of this is because the public spaces around the stations are now attractive and it is easy to walk and cycle to the stations or to leave an electric car on charge.

Public transport is now reliable because buses aren't held up in the city centre, so they are used extensively for travel between the city centre and other main urban areas. The rapid transit service that links Morecambe to South Lancaster via the city centre is particularly popular as are the two Park and Ride sites, not least because these services use ultra-low emission vehicles which are quieter and smoother than conventional buses.

The network for non-motorised traffic is now comprehensive. For those who want direct routes, the roads are much quieter and safer, with dedicated provision for cyclists on the main radial routes in the district. For those who don't want to go on the roads, there are dedicated links for all users between the main urban centres with quiet routes linking to them.

This network also links the district to its neighbours to north and south through the long distance trails that bring a significant number of visitors to the district to explore the coast, the canal and the Lune.

How do we make it happen?

The opening of the completed Heysham to the M6 Link Road is due in late summer 2016.

Before this point, we will have to have published our **Lancaster City Action Plan**, setting out how we will manage traffic in the city centre once the Link Road is open. This Action Plan will include the short, medium and long term projects that will be needed to put in place for our final vision for the City of Lancaster.

Underpinning the Action Plan will be work, carried out in 2015/16, to understand just how we can make the city centre work effectively for sustainable transport in the long term. This work will allow us to look at how sustainable transport can be developed in stages that align with funding opportunities.

We will carry out feasibility studies for rail and public transport and set out how they might be accommodated on a redesigned city centre network and with a relocated M6 Junction 33, but until we have accurate information on how the traffic has changed

with the opening of the Link Road, we cannot say with certainty that our plans will be viable or cost effective.

The Action Plan will therefore also need to set out the timetable for the further work needed to finalise all our options and consult on the detailed plans, likely to be in autumn 2018.

However, the opening of the Link Road does allow us to start the process of changing how traffic is routed around the district and therefore to how city centre transport functions. These are the short term measures in the Action Plan.

Key to this will be the positioning of the **Caton Road Gateway** as the principal gateway into the city for traffic from the M6, from both north and south. This will allow us to capitalise on the Link Road and draw traffic into a heavily managed approach to the city centre. This approach management has four strands:

- **Park and Ride/Cycle provision at M6 Junction 34**
- **HGV restrictions**
- **Improvements for local journeys on the A6 south of the city and**
- **Reprioritise the highway network**

Managing the approaches to the city centre will allow us to implement our medium term measures and begin the process of **Lancaster city centre place-shaping**, which will include reconfiguring the gyratory system and providing a better environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Link Road will reduce traffic around the main city centre gyratory by up to 10%. Whilst this is not a huge reduction, coupled with managing Lancaster's approaches, it does offer the opportunity to begin the process of freeing the city centre from congestion.

It must be remembered however, that at this stage, the city centre will still need to accommodate through traffic and this must be allowed for in any scheme brought forward in these early years. For this reason, we propose to change how the gyratory works but we do not propose any major, expensive changes to the roads and public spaces that we are not sure will still be needed once we can remove through traffic completely.

This is as far as we can go in the City of Lancaster without a relocated M6 Junction33. The junction would enable the removal of through traffic and make sustainable modes of travel sufficiently viable to attract a significant shift to them. Without removing through traffic, the city centre will remain dominated by traffic, although to a lesser extent than now. There will also be no possibility of providing truly world class public transport as the city centre roads will not have the spare capacity to give over to the public transport priority that such systems need.

In the longer term, the **relocation of M6 junction 33** is critical to removing through traffic from the city centre, allowing a rapid transit service to be effective.

A direct connection to the motorway for South Lancaster would give reliable motorway access for both residents and businesses, removing the need for traffic to travel through the city centre and also removing much of the traffic from Galgate.

To reduce car journeys into South Lancaster from the motorway, we will put in place a **South Lancaster Park and Ride/Cycle** facility as part of the reconfigured junction.

As well as acting as a Park and Ride for South Lancaster, the Park and Ride facility would also potentially form the southern terminus of a rapid transit service, giving both a rapid park and ride service into the city centre and beyond as well as providing an increased market for the service.

The **Lancaster Reach - rapid transit service** will link South Lancaster effectively to Heysham. This is an urgent need and whilst we wish to encourage cycling as much as possible, not everyone can cycle or wants to cycle all the time, particularly over longer distances. The city therefore needs a high speed, direct public transport link along the core corridor once traffic in the city centre allows; there are currently a number of options for the service and the extent to which new infrastructure is needed will be determined as the scheme progresses.

Running in parallel to the Lancaster City Action Plan are two further programmes of work that will both inform and benefit from the reconfiguration of the gyratory and our place-shaping work in the city centre.

- **Lancaster Links – an integrated multi-use/cycling network for the district**

Lancaster Links will provide a comprehensive travel network for non-motorised travel.

- Strategic Routes will connect key destinations, typically between the main centres (South Lancaster, Lancaster, Morecambe, Heysham, Carnforth, and Hornby/Wray).

The first of these new Strategic Routes will be the **Heysham to Lancaster Greenway Route**.

- Local Links will allow the short journeys in the local community to take place.

- **Ultra Low Lancaster - a district wide Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) Strategy**

To complement our proposals for better public transport and cycling/multiuser networks, we want to make Lancaster an exemplar of why ULEVs must also be a core part of any local transport strategy. Whilst ULEVs may not reduce traffic numbers, they will be vital in reducing the emissions from the residual traffic in the city centre.

Our **Morecambe Place-shaping** programme will focus on that highways and transport element to put in place the fundamental changes needed to make the vision of the Morecambe Area Action Plan a reality.

The first strand of the programme is the seafront. The seafront is Morecambe's unique selling point and how the seafront works must reflect that. It must first and foremost be a place to enjoy the views, a place predominantly for people not vehicles. We will therefore work with the City Council and other stakeholders to put in place definite proposals for how the promenade will be developed as a shared space.

How the seafront links to the town centre and how the town centre can be reinvigorated to be at the heart of a reinvented Morecambe is the second strand of the place-shaping programme.

We will therefore work with the City Council and other partners to develop a comprehensive town centre place shaping programme that supports and links to the development of the seafront and which will include:

- Enhancing the town's natural gateways to give as fitting sense of arrival for all modes.
- Managing how vehicles reach the town centre, including how they are signed and where they park.
- Making sure parking provision is fit for purpose, with high quality pedestrian and cycle links into the town centre and on to the seafront.
- Ensuring that coaches have high quality drop off/pick up points and that goods servicing is managed to ensure that it is efficient for business without compromising pedestrian routes and areas.
- Connecting the seafront and neighbouring areas to the town centre by clearly signed, attractive direct routes.
- Key routes for pedestrians and cyclists through high quality public spaces which look attractive and feel safe to be in, both during the day and in the evenings, with well-maintained and lit roads and footways that tie in to wider pedestrian and cycle routes.
- Better facilities for public transport, both bus and rail, with proper interchange between the two and good links into the town centre and the seafront.

Morecambe's external connectivity is also vital to the place-shaping programme. Whilst road connections will be first class once the link road opens, other connections by rail, bus and cycling will not be. This is particularly important given that Morecambe does not have high car ownership, particularly in more deprived areas where, in the absence of a car, access to education, employment and healthcare can be an issue.

- We will therefore commission a **Morecambe Rail Connectivity Study** to set out the evidence and business case for improvements.
- We also need to consider what benefits **Improving Bay Connectivity** would bring for Morecambe, for the district of Lancaster and for the county as a whole.

We will therefore work with our partners, including Cumbria County Council, Lancaster City Council, South Lakeland District Council and Barrow Borough Council to establish what the evidence is for improving connections around the Bay so that the whole Bay area benefits.

In **Heysham**, we also need to ensure that the local network fully supports the new Link road and allows vehicles, especially HGVs, to, where possible, access the A583 without travelling through our communities

To this end, we will review the highway network around the South Heysham area and put in place a programme of measures to ensure that HGV traffic is using the network appropriately and can reach the A683 quickly and conveniently in order to reach the M6 regardless of whether intending to travel north or south.

Like so many small rural towns, **Carnforth** is becoming more reliant on the visitor economy, particularly given its proximity to so many outstanding natural landscapes.

We therefore propose to pursue a programme of pedestrian and traffic improvements to the centre of Carnforth, focussing on Market Street, with a view to creating a space which, whilst allowing traffic to flow, is far more user friendly for those on foot or on bicycle. As well as making the shopping area itself more attractive, it will help to ensure that people feel comfortable travelling by more sustainable modes.

These changes will complement both the cycle and electric vehicle strategies for the district and make Carnforth a hub for rail interchange.

At **Carnforth Railway Station**, we feel strongly that improved northbound connectivity is highly desirable and that we should take a strong lead in seeking such an improvement, including engaging with the tendering processes due to start shortly to ensure good services to the existing platforms.

Once we know what decision has been taken on housing and we have a clear picture of how services at Carnforth have been affected by the changes over the next few years, we will carry out a study that will provide us with evidence of what Carnforth station and the services from it need to achieve to support the economy of the district.

There have also been long standing aspirations to develop better linkages between Carnforth and both Barrow and South Lakeland to exploit the economic potential of growth at the Sellafield (Moorside) Nuclear Power Station and at GlaxoSmithKline site at Ulverston. The north of Lancaster district could provide a residential base to some of the workers employed on these sites and so could add further impetus to enhancing connectivity at and services through Carnforth.

Maintaining rural connections will require an integrated approach across all modes of transport to make rural travel as sustainable as possible in the future.

Work set out in other masterplan areas will provide evidence on where the need for intervention is greatest and we will extend this work to include the district of Lancaster. In line with likely future funding requirements, the study will focus on where the

greatest benefits can be achieved by using public money to maintain access to services.

One of the most important questions this work will inform is what genuine long term alternatives to conventional public transport, that will be sustainable into the future, might look like. Providing public transport to sparse rural areas is a problem in many other areas of the UK and in many other countries worldwide; we need to understand whether their solutions could be applicable in Lancashire and in particular in the rural areas of Lancaster District.

Rail stations provide a potential local transport resource. However, that presupposes that the rail service itself is adequate to support regular use, particularly by commuters. Passenger numbers suggest the **Bentham Line between Carnforth and North Yorkshire** needs improvement

In conjunction with other work proposed in this masterplan, particularly related to cycling and to ULEVs, we will look at how the Bentham Line could be made more viable, initially focussing on the role Wennington can play as a transport hub by reviewing facilities particularly for cycling and for ULEVs.

We will also engage with our rail industry partners, the Community Rail Partnership and North Yorkshire County Council to consider the implications of new development on the line and therefore how the line and the services on it can be improved in the future, including feeding into the North of England Route Study to ensure the line's future.

This consultation masterplan represents the beginning of a programme of infrastructure delivery to serve Lancaster over the next 15 to 20 years and beyond.

A public consultation is proposed, lasting from 23rd March to 7th May 2015. During the consultation, the County Council will be identifying and writing to key stakeholders, including district, town and parish councils, and local MPs, to invite comments on the proposals, placing press releases in the area, leafleting at transport hubs, town halls and libraries, and approaching major employers to raise awareness with as wide a population as we can. Given the level of interest there is likely to be in the masterplan, we also propose to hold public events to ensure that those who wish to can speak to an officer directly.

Then, in order to obtain the best chance of delivery, we must get these improvements 'ready to roll' as soon as we can, so that we can take all opportunities to get funding for schemes that are ready to deliver. That will mean committing time and funding 'upfront' to working up these ideas and preparing the economic case for them.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

This is a consultation exercise which will inform final proposals to be (in part) funded out of the County Council's capital programme and programmed in the Local Transport Plan.

Risk management

The risks are outlined in the report.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Lancashire Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan for 2012/13-2014/15	August 2012	Marcus Hudson, Environment, (01772) 530696
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		