

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 13 July 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Environment and Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: Transport Infrastructure Update

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on the improvements being made to the Borough's transport infrastructure and network, and to seek the Board's approval for the next set of transport related projects. The last comprehensive update to the Board was provided in June 2019
- 1.2 At the present time, central government transport policy is very much focussed on tackling climate change, decarbonising the transport network, promoting public transport, and encouraging modal shift to active travel means (such as cycling and walking, as the majority of private car journeys are less than 5km in distance). Funding for schemes reflects these national government policy drivers and is distributed competitively (against other local authorities) via bidding, but success is not guaranteed.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) Members approve the list of schemes in Appendix 1 to this report to be developed into deliverable schemes (including design and feasibility work, business case preparation, funding bids, and when appropriate, grant acceptance, and entry into the Council's Capital Programme);**
- 2) the Operational Director, Planning, Policy and Transport be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Urban Renewal, to take the necessary actions to ensure value for money through the appropriate procurement processes relating to the list of schemes (Appendix 1 and 2); and**
- 3) the Operational Director, Planning, Policy and Transport be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Urban Renewal, to take any other actions necessary to accept grant funding and enable timely delivery of the list of schemes (Appendix 1 and 2).**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Good transport links bring significant benefits to people, businesses, the environment, and the overall economy of the Borough. For example, good transport can: help people access jobs; help shape greener and healthier places; attract new firms and investment; and unlock new development sites for business and housing.
- 3.2 Halton has natural advantages in its geographical location and excellent transport links. The Council continues to invest in a comprehensive programme of infrastructure projects with the objective of providing safe, efficient, and effective transport systems to facilitate sustainable growth.
- 3.3 These schemes also meet the Council's wider policy objectives of reducing congestion, reducing road casualties, efficient freight movement, providing access to opportunities, improving health and well-being, air quality improvement, and tackling climate change.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Halton's adopted Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) sets out the statutory context for investment in infrastructure to 2025/6. In association with the 22 'Primary Transport Strategies' contained in LTP3 there are a number of major schemes and improvement projects covering road, rail, bus, cycling and walking.
- 4.2 The major schemes (identified in Chapter 10 (page 192) of the LTP3) are now complete. Chapter 11 (Implementation Options, page 200) sets out further schemes across all modes of transport. Many of these schemes have been delivered.
- 4.3 Following adoption of LTP3, there have been a number of changes to the way transport strategy and funding is administered. In 2015 the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR CA) was created. New priorities exist in the form of Transport for the North, Northern Powerhouse Rail and High Speed 2. The Combined Authority is addressing these through an emerging Local Transport Plan 4.
- 4.4 The CRSTS (City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement) is now the primary source of funding for transport interventions. Department for Transport funding is now directed to the LCR CA and redistributed to the local councils. This means that funding that was previously dedicated to Halton now forms part of a City Region investment strategy. It is therefore imperative that Halton's future transport interventions are closely scrutinised on the basis of benefits and deliverability in the context of the City Region, rather than solely at a Borough level. However, it is also imperative that schemes are developed to an advanced stage of design and appraisal to ensure funding success.

4.5 Appendix 1 contains the list of schemes that form Halton's 'transport pipeline'.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council has lead and delivered on a number of major transport interventions. Some of the highlights are set out in the paragraphs below.

5.2 Highways

The Council is responsible for the maintenance of a £2.3 billion asset in the Highway network comprising of 606 km of roads, 838 km of footway, 141 highway bridges and 85 other structures. All have to be maintained, requiring a complex annual asset management based programme (see Appendix 2).

5.3 Silver Jubilee Bridge

The SJB is having new LED architectural floodlighting installed. The SJB will have further painting work completed below the deck this year; the steelwork of the bridge requires constant maintenance to protect this listed structure and key crossing over the Mersey.

5.4 East Runcorn Connectivity

The East Runcorn Connectivity (ERC) project comprises a set of schemes to enable the Local Plan growth identified at East Runcorn including; A56 Major Maintenance, Daresbury Expressway (A558) widening; Active Travel links; Whitehouse Access Link; E-mobility; and Alternative Energy. The ERC project is in Year 3 of its business case development, with the first of the Full Business Cases (A56) to be submitted to in autumn of this year. The other business cases of the ERC are being developed. Ongoing work includes: geo-technical surveys; preliminary design, stakeholder consultation, master planning, and active travel link design. The project supports not only the growth identified in the Local Plan, and the resilience of the East Runcorn area, but also the wider borough priorities of health and well-being (active travel), transport decarbonisation (e-mobility and sustainable travel links).

5.5 Runcorn Town Deal

The Runcorn Town Centre connectivity project seeks to improve sustainable links with a section of High Street acting as an enabler to the wider town centre regeneration scheme. The scheme will deliver an improved public realm with a segregated cycle path compliant with LTN/120 guidance.

5.6 Electric Vehicle Charging Points

A second funding application has been submitted for 28 charge points (14 units) in residential areas (Ashridge Street, Beechers, Mersey Road, Runcorn, Thomas Street Car Park, Wharford Lane). This application builds on the existing public network that has already been deployed and consists of 29 on-street charges and a further 8 in public car parks and spaces.

5.7 Network Models

It is necessary to keep the Borough's highway network models up to date to allow for accurate traffic analysis to be undertaken and understand the impact of new developments and proposed infrastructure options on the operation of the network. Work to update both the Mersey Gateway traffic model, and the local element of the LCR model, are ongoing to ensure they can be used as evidence to support future scheme bids.

5.8 Traffic Management & Road Safety

Pressure to improve traffic flow, reduce energy use and improve environmental benefits has driven investment in Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). All traffic signals have now been upgraded to LED. This provides energy and maintenance savings.

5.9 Over recent years there has been a programme to convert the lamps in the street lights to LEDs. To date, 85% of Halton's 20,000 street lights have been changed to LED. Typical overall energy savings of the schemes that have been installed to date, resulted in an energy reduction of around 70%.

5.10 In terms of road safety, the Community Speed Watch initiative is now active at 25 sites across Halton. The Council has carried out risk assessments at all sites, provided PPE and road signage, and worked closely with Cheshire Police. New mobile camera sites have been installed at a number of locations, including Wilmere Lane, Derby Road, and Moorfield Road, and the speed camera on A562 Speke Road has been recommissioned. A new speed activated 'SLOW DOWN' sign has been installed at A5080 Cronton Lane, together with improvements to carriageway at puffin crossing. In addition, new speed indication devices (SiDs) have been commissioned in response to requests.

5.11 A series of physical safety improvements have been carried out across the Borough, for example, improvements to road markings and layouts as part of a road casualty reduction programme at over 20 locations. Improvements to aid pedestrian movements at over a dozen school sites have been completed, and as a consequence, Child KSIs are at a record low. Pedestrian crossing points around Chorleys Lane roundabout (Moorfield Road), a pedestrian refuge island on Prescott Road to enhance safety for pedestrians, and junction improvements at Halton Road to improve visibility for vehicles emerging from side roads, and improvements to pedestrian crossing facilities at Windmill Hill Avenue East have all been implemented. A small road improvement scheme has been ordered for Mersey Road, West Bank. A scheme is planned for Hough Green Road (new 30mph limit, and refuge island near playing fields in response to local concerns) and Picow Farm Road. Both these sites have seen fatal collisions in recent years.

5.12 The Road Safety Team are delivering national and local road safety strategies. Engagement with schools is excellent and pop-up bollards that

keep footways clear of parked vehicles have proved both effective and popular with schools. School Crossing Patrols continue to provide an effective way to enhance safety of children at our busiest school sites and are very popular with children and parents.

5.13 During 2022-2023 there were 1550 Bikeability training sessions delivered to children aged 3 – 12. These sessions are split into: Balanceability; Learn to Ride; to Level 1; Level 2; and Level 3. The breakdown is as follows:

- 239 pre-school reception year 1 received Balanceability
- 394 Year 2 pupils received Learn to ride;
- 182 Year 3& 4 received Level 1
- 728 Year 5 & 6 pupils received Level 2 (learning to ride on the road learning emergency stop, overtaking a parked car, turning left / right out of a junction)
- 7 Year 6 pupils received Level 3 (riding on complex roads)

Cycling & Walking

5.14 Halton has approximately 74km of public rights of way (including 71km of footpath and 3km of bridleways). Appendix 2 of this report sets out the most recent schemes undertaken to extend and link this network (set out under 'sustainable transport schemes').

5.15 An interconnected cycle network now exists that allows cycle / active travel within and beyond the borough. For example the new cycleway over the SJB connects into the Trans-Pennine Trail (running east / west), and extends north to Prescott and St Helens. On the Runcorn side, there are links from SJB onto the Bridgewater Canal, and also along the busway through Astmoor. These routes connect into the bridleway at Moore and also along Keckwick Lane to join the A56 cycleway into Warrington.

5.16 Since 2020, investment has been made in the Runcorn busway to provide a car free route for cyclists that connects to key locations, such as Halton Lea, the local centres, and schools.

5.17 The new cycle link between Dukesfield and Runcorn Station opened at the end of June, providing direct access to the rail station and bus hub at RSQ, together with onward connections into the wider active travel network.

5.18 Rail

Runcorn East is having improved facilities funded by Transport for Wales, this work will include signage, ticket machines, cycle storage and improved waiting areas. Further access improvements are planned for both Hough Green and Widnes Stations, but are funding dependent.

5.19 Bus

The Combined Authority is undertaking a consultation on how buses should be run, with an option to undertake bus franchising to reform bus

services. The consultation runs until 3rd August, and further details can be found online:

- <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/movingbusesforward/>
- <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/movingbusesforward/consultation-events/>

5.20 The £2 fare cap remains in place for the time being, it is currently funded from the BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) funding received from Government. Operators are reporting an upturn in patronage as a result of this reduced fare.

5.21 'Green Bus Routes' are in development across the City Region, these routes seek to use clean technology buses, such as hydrogen. The 79C corridor is being considered that travels to Halton. This route goes from Liverpool to Murdishaw (via Wavertree, Belle Vale, Widnes, Runcorn town centre, Halton Lea and Murdishaw). In conjunction with this, bus priority improvements are planned at a number of traffic signalled junctions to improve journey times.

5.22 A total of 30 new bus shelters were installed across the Borough during the 2022/23 financial year, and 4 bus stops were upgraded to Equalities Act 2010 standards, which includes installing higher kerbs to provide level access to board buses.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 Access to funding for large projects will remain a challenge. The cost of programme development to individual local authorities is increasing due to the competitive nature of funding opportunities and the level of subscription (i.e. the number of bids submitted from across the LCR). It is clear that Halton requires a 'pipeline' of schemes, with feasibility, appraisal, and business cases in place, to allow access to funding and swift delivery. Appendix 1 identifies this scheme pipeline.

6.2 Scheme development requires a range of unique skills in the form of engineering design, cost assessment and quantity surveying, land acquisition knowledge, contract management, niche appraisals (Webtag), funding and bid formulation. In-house staff no longer have all the required skills and consultants are relied upon to provide bespoke input. This has implications for time and cost in programme development.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 Transport networks should be ubiquitous and open for everyone. Each scheme is appraised separately to ensure it provides equality of access for all users.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Investment in public transport and active travel is fundamental to tackling climate change. A significant amount of carbon emissions and air pollution arises from the use of internal combustion engines (ICE) as a travel choice. Many of these journeys are over short distances (less than 5km). The initiatives set out in this report ensure that people in Halton have a realistic choice in the way they travel, and that alternatives to the private ICE car are available.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The report provides an overview of existing and future transport infrastructure projects. Further details on the proposed financing of future pipeline projects will be presented to the Executive Board as projects are developed.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
LTP3 (Adopted) https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/TransportPolicy.aspx	Municipal Building	Alasdair Cross
LTP4 (Emerging) https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/transport/ltp-4-consultation/	Municipal Building	Alasdair Cross

APPENDIX 1 - FUTURE TRANSPORT NETWORK PIPELINE

NAME OF SCHEME	BENEFITS	DESCRIPTION
Runcorn Station Building	Improved public transport interchange; catalyst for area regeneration	Following the completion of Phase 1, Phase 2 seeks to provide a new Station building subject to securing funding which will provide new ticketing, waiting, rest room and kiosk facilities.
Wilmere Lane Slips (Highways England)	Address current congestion issues	Seeks to explore options to alleviate congestion at the M62 J7 area
Hough Green and Widnes Stations	Safe and compliant access to the stations. Encourages use.	The east bound platform at Hough Green station is only accessible via a steep flight of steps. For disabled users alighting here, the only way off the platform is across the lines. Widnes station is accessed on the east bound platform by a bridge and a non-compliant ramp, the ramp is currently too steep for use by wheelchair users and does not have any rest areas
Spike Island Access Bridge	Maintenance and improvement	Mersey Gateway funded replacement of old timber bridge. Scheme will provide access for maintenance vehicles to Spike Island, together with improved access for pedestrians and cyclists and additional connection to the Trans-Pennine Trail.
Ditton / Halebank Road Bridge	Improved access	As recognised in the LTP3, this scheme seeks options to improve traffic movements in this area, to support inclusive growth through improved access to job opportunities, as well as helping to sustain existing residential communities. Options must compliment the Halton Curve and potential reopening of Ditton Station to improve connectivity in the 3MG / Ditton / wider 'Speke Approaches' growth corridor.
Daresbury A558 Dualling	Reducing congestion; improving access to Enterprise Zone & development sites in the East Runcorn.	As recognised in the LTP3 The Daresbury Expressway (A558) is single carriageway from Pitts Heath Lane to Innovation Way, this scheme proposes to investigate the options into dualling this section to complete the network.
Whitehouse Enabling Infrastructure	East Runcorn Opportunities; reducing	Feasibility work to understand future options to service the Whitehouse Industrial Estate and route HGV traffic away from Preston Brook Village.

	traffic impacts e.g. HGV routes	
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan – LCWIP	Development of Local Cycle Walking Infrastructure Plan	It is a requirement for Halton to establish its own LCWIP which will identify and prioritise a future programme for active travel (cycling and walking) across the borough. This strategy will provide the blueprint for future cycle and walking investment which is LTN/120 compliant.
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan – LCWIP	Car free routes; health promotion; improved connectivity; sustainable transport; access to employment and housing areas	The first phase of work has already been completed.
Runcorn Busway		The scheme addresses challenges for cyclists to access areas of employment across Runcorn into Daresbury. The challenge is to have as much of the route traffic free as possible and for the large part this is achievable.
Runcorn Employment Links		Improved cycle and walking facilities between Runcorn Stations, Runcorn Town Centre and Runcorn Shopping City, Halton Brow and other key destinations
Widnes Town Centre links		To improve sustainable links around Widnes Town Centre to local neighbourhoods.
3MG Employment links		Cycling and walking improvements to complement Halton Curve and potential for reopening Ditton Station e.g. Ditton Bridge to Newstead Road. Improves the sustainability and connectivity of the 3MG Ditton Corridor and wider 'Speke Approaches' growth corridor - supporting more balanced growth by improving access to job opportunities as well as helping to sustain and grow residential communities.
Trans-Pennine Trail		Surface upgrade and route improvements to this national coast to coast cycle route
North Widnes Active Travel Links		Improved sustainable travel routes and links in the north Widnes area

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	Reduced emissions, reducing health inequalities, climate change	Local Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy which will identify and prioritise a future EV charging network across the borough. This work will support any future funding applications to deliver a network of EV chargers across the Borough. Delivery and installation of charge points in accordance with the EV Strategy.
Decarbonising Council Fleet	Reduced emissions, reducing health inequalities	Where appropriate changing fleet vehicles to EV / Hybrid to reduce carbon footprint of Council owned vehicles
Halton Bus Routes	Car free routes; health promotion; improved connectivity, addressing transport inequalities, Supporting growth.	Implementation of green bus corridors Introduce the final and missing part of the network which would include Manor Park, Sandymoor and Daresbury (East Runcorn). -Introduction of bus gates -prioritised routes -improved bus waiting areas -realtime information
Park and Ride Facilities	Car free routes; health promotion; improved connectivity, addressing transport inequalities, Supporting growth.	Reducing reliance on car for inter district travel. Explore potential locations within Halton.
Borough wide Transport Network Maintenance & Improvement Schemes / Funding	Protection and improvement of existing network assets and new connections to the network	Under current funding arrangements, the Dept for Transport and Combined Authority distribute funding to individual local authorities for the maintenance and improvement of the transport network. An example is the Local Transport Capital Funding Block (Pot Hole Fund), whereby funding is provided for pot hole repairs. The timing and value of these funds can vary, however it is imperative that funding is invested in the network as soon as practically possible. It is therefore expedient to have delegated authority to accept and spend grant funding of this nature.
Safety Cameras	Improved road safety	Installation of a new red light / speed on green camera on Widnes Gyratory to improve safety and junction capacity by preventing red light jumping leading to vehicles blocking lanes for other traffic. Capital funding is provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner. Replacement of the vandalised camera on Speke Road with smart pole mounted equipment

APPENDIX 2 – Current Schemes

MAJOR SCHEMES

Category	Scheme	Construction	Fund	Value
Rail	Runcorn East Station Improvements	Jun-Oct 23	Transport for Wales	
Improvements to be made include signage, ticket machines, cycle storage and improved waiting areas				
Rail	Runcorn Station Quarter Phase 2	Ongoing	CRSTS	£15m
The 2 nd phase of the RSQ project will now look to transform the station building, develop an Enterprise hub for Creative and Digital businesses.				

Category	Scheme	Construction	Fund	Value
Silver Jubilee Bridge	Floodlighting & Maintenance:	Mar-Jul 2023	MGCB / CRSTS	£1.3m
Installation and commissioning of the new lighting system is due to be completed by July 2023.				
Silver Jubilee Bridge	Deck steelwork	Sept 2023	CRSTS	£2.276m
SJB deck steelwork maintenance painting L12-L18 (CRSTS) – Scape Feasibility Report estimate £2.276m, planned site start September 2023				
Structures	Refurbishment	2023/24	CRSTS	£250k
Halton Lea busway viaducts refurbishment and joint replacement (CRSTS) – working estimate £250k, construction 2023/24.				

Category	Scheme	Construction	Fund	Value
Widnes Loops	West Bank Waterloo Rd Slip			
Permanent junction into West Bank substantially complete. Awaiting for land compulsory purchase to complete the left turn slip road on to Waterloo Road.				
Bridge Replacement	A533 / M56 overbridge, Preston Brook	Completed	National Highways	
New road bridge over the M56 and demolition of the old bridge				

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL SCHEMES

Category	Scheme	Construction	Fund	Value
ST	Dukesfield / RSQ Station Link	Completed June 23	CR STS	
Improved walking and cycling link connecting to Waterloo Bridge and bus hub				
ST	Busway Halton Lea to Murdishaw	Completed June 23	Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 (ATF2)	£2.13m
Includes school streets funding dropped crossing improvements on routes approaching schools				
ST	Busway Murdishaw to Whitehouse and Norton	2023/24	Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 (ATF3)	£3m
ST	Busway Norton-Castlefields/Halton Lea	In Design	CR STS	
Busway Norton-Castlefields/Halton Lea from April 2024. Design currently underway using development funding. Construction due to start in Spring 2024 subject to funding being secured.				

ST	Widnes Town Centre	Mar 24	Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 (ATF4)	£120k
Improvement to footway widths on North Albert Road				
ST	Design Work		Capability Revenue Fund or Capability and Ambition fund (tranche 2)	
Design work on further improvements to seek funding under ATF or CR STS: Capability Revenue - Wilmere Lane Birchfield Gardens to borough boundary Capability revenue - Norton-Murdishaw-Whitehouse detailed design Monitoring equipment Halton LCWIP North Widnes Active Travel Links design development				
ST	PROW Bridge/Structure/Boardwalk renewals	2022-2023	Various	£200k+
Renewal of Small bridges and boardwalk structures on public rights of way network using state of the art composite materials to ensure longer life and less future intervention				

OTHER SCHEMES

Category	Scheme	Construction	Fund	Value
Elec Vehicles	EV Chargers	2024	Grant	
A funding application has been submitted for 28 charge points (14 units) in residential areas (Ashridge Street, Beechers, Mersey Road, Runcorn, Thomas Street Car Park, Wharford Lane).				
Junction Improvement	Northwich Road, Murdishaw		HBC	
Investigatory works including feasibility scheme design to relieve congestion at peak times at Murdishaw Avenue				
Flood Risk	Programme		HBC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S19 Flood and Water Management Act 2010 investigations • Flood Risk Assessments related to planning applications • Local Flood Risk Management Strategy review • Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment review • SAB development Suds supplemental planning document. • Keckwick Brook outfall responsibilities mapping. • Bowers Brook access improvements to enable screen cleaning • Eastgate Lane ditch flood alleviation. • Glastonbury close Parkland surface water alleviation • A558 Daresbury Expressway underpass raised walkway • Reservoir Act inspections and maintenance 				

Planned Maintenance: Carriageway Resurfacing Programme 23/24:

(HMB & Revenue) (Note that the planned maintenance programme is weather / contractor capacity / funding dependent and the need to undertake priority scheme such as emergency repair can require change to programme)

Carriageway Resurfacing Locations:

- Prescot Road - railway bridge to Heath Road
- Penn Lane Runcorn
- Victoria Road Widnes
- Caldwell Road Widnes

Preventative Maintenance Locations:

Weston Point Expressway, Ditton Junction. Silver Jubilee Bridge approaches, Halegate Road, Latham Avenue

Planned Maintenance: Footway Reconstruction Programme

South Lane, Picow Street Runcorn, Castlefields Ave East Runcorn, Lapwing Grove Runcorn, Stone Barn Lane Runcorn, Stockham Close / Stockham Lane, Poplar Close Runcorn, Castlefields Avenue North Runcorn, Derby Road, WIDNES, Palace Fields Avenue, RUNCORN, Castlefields Avenue East, RUNCORN Ashbourne Avenue Estate, RUNCORN, Grangemoor, RUNCORN, Ridgeway, RUNCORN Mayfair Grove, WIDNES, Halton Brook Avenue Runcorn, Mond Rd Widnes, Astmoor Rd Runcorn, Castlefields Ave South Runcorn, St Michaels Rd Widnes, Manor Rd Widnes, Fiddler Ferry Rd, Bridgewater Expressway, Slip on from Palacefields, Clifton Interchange, Cronton Lane, Dans Rd

Preventative Maintenance:

Liverpool Road, Leigh Avenue, Highfield Road, Ditchfield Road, Liverpool Road, Brookvale, Beechwood.

Section 278

Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 allows a developer to carry out works to the public highway. This is generally where planning permission has been granted for a development that requires improvements to, or changes to, public highways. This works require agreement and monitoring by the Highways Authority.

Daresbury Redrow A558
Daresbury Redrow A56
Manor Farm Road
Picow Farm Road
Derby Road

Section 38

Section 38 of the Highways Act 1980 allows a developer to offer new roads within a development site for adoption by the Highway Authority. This requires a legal agreement and monitoring by the Highway Authority. Current sites include:

- Sandymoor Bloor / Vistry
- Derby Road
- Warrington Road
- Daresbury Park
- Halton Road
- Tanhouse Lane