

**Subject:** Local Transport Plan 3

**Status:** For Publication

**Report to:** Council

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> October 2010

**Report of:** Chief Executive

**Portfolio**

**Holder:** Regeneration

**Key Decision:** No

Forward Plan

General Exception

Special Urgency

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1. To inform members of a submission to Lancashire County Council on Rossendale's priorities for the next Local Transport Plan.

**2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

2.1. The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:-

- Delivering quality Services to our customers
- Delivering regeneration across the Borough
- Encouraging healthy and respectful communities
- Keeping our Borough clean, green and safe
- Promoting the Borough
- Providing value for money services

**3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS**

3.1. All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

3.2. The ability of the Council to deliver it's transport priorities are dependent on prioritisation by Lancashire County Council and the level of government funding made available.

**4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS**

4.1 Local Transport Plans are prepared by each Highway Authority and set out their proposals for transport investment. The existing Local Transport Plan runs from 2006-11 and Lancashire County Council is currently consulting on its successor, to be known as LTP3. This will be slightly different from its

predecessor as it will set out a long term vision together with a short term (3 year) implementation plan. It will be prepared jointly with Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool Council's.

- 4.2 Lancashire County Council has met with all Borough Councils within its area. The focus of these meeting has been identifying some of the principal issues facing the area and how transport can help address these. It was evident from the discussions that delivery of schemes is likely to be highly constrained because of the current state of the public finances.
- 4.3 The County Council expects to publish an initial draft of LTP3 in October for comment with adoption programmed in March 2011.
- 4.4 The following paragraphs set out the text of the submission made by this authority to the LTP3 team:

Rossendale Borough Council has sought, as requested by Lancashire County Council, to identify the key broad strategic issues for the area and then relate these to transport issues. The priorities reflect and build on the key issues set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Core Strategy for Rossendale. These are set out below:

*Access to Manchester and Gateway role for Pennine Lancashire*

The A56/M66 corridor performs a strategic economic role in linking not only Rossendale but the whole of Pennine Lancashire to the M60 and the main M62 corridor. The Borough thus acts as a key "gateway" and entrance point to the east of the county.

Rossendale, in particular the area around Rawtenstall and Haslingden, has benefited greatly from the links to Greater Manchester with people drawn into the area because of the high quality environment and relatively cheap house prices. 47% of the population work outside the Borough, with wage levels of external employees significantly higher (approximately 20%) than those living and working in Rossendale. Commuting employees also have higher skill levels than those working locally. The greatest numbers of external flows are to Bury and Rochdale; a significant number also travel north to Burnley. Over 800 people each day travel to the centre of Manchester. Over 3 000 people also commute into Rossendale from neighbouring areas.

The links to Manchester City Region are important not only for jobs but also for a wide range of other services including Higher Education, Higher order retail and leisure. Of all the Pennine Lancashire authorities, Rossendale is unique in having such a strong relationship to the Greater Manchester area.

Increasing levels of traffic congestion on the M66 as well as on the approaches to city

and town centres are having an increasing effect on journey time reliability and length. This is projected to get worse over the next 15 years affecting not only car-borne travellers but also bus journeys. The reliability of the X40-44 group of services is becoming increasingly problematic due to this. Rossendale Borough Council would welcome working with Lancashire County Council and other partners on plans to improve journey times and reliability on these routes. The Council would also support measures to improve bus access into Bury town centre and Rochdale, including extending the existing 464 service to Kingsway Business Park. Rochdale's long term aspiration to extend Metrolink to Whitworth is also supported.

The East Lancashire Railway represents an under-used asset in the Borough. The economic value of the railway as a tourism asset is acknowledged and the Council is working with partners to maximize this. In addition, the authority is working closely with partners in Greater Manchester, including the Integrated Transport Authority, Bury and Rochdale to examine the potential for re-opening the line for commuter purposes. This has the potential to facilitate a 35 minute journey into Manchester City Centre from Rawtenstall as well as connect with Bury and Rochdale. Re-instatement of the link for public non-tourist services would also raise the profile of the Borough and facilitate further economic growth. It is also identified as a key action (Ask 6) in the Pennine Lancashire Multi Area Agreement. **Realising the potential of the East Lancashire Railway, including associated Park and Ride, is the Council's highest transport priority for the whole LTP3 period. This recognises that the scheme will be delivered over the medium-long term period and relies on the commitment of GMITA to take it forward.**

#### *Regeneration of Town Centres*

The three main town centres in the Borough are Rawtenstall, Bacup and Haslingden. Each of these has significant regeneration issues. These include:

Rawtenstall – The Valley Centre and the area around it are suffering from the decline of the 1960's shopping precinct. Equally the existing bus station is dated, peripheral and not "fit for purpose". Bank Street, in contrast, is a considerable asset with attractive townscape and a good range of independent retailers. Links to the Railway Station and the west of the town suffer from severance caused by the dual carriageway St Mary's Way/gyratory. There are significant traffic congestion problems around the Gyratory/Bacup Road and backing up Burnley Road in peak hour which causes localised air quality issues.

Bacup - Bacup is described by English Heritage as one of the best preserved mill towns in England and has many attractive stone-built buildings. Unfortunately, there has been a lack of investment and a loss of facilities that combined with socio-economic difficulties has resulted in the town suffering decline. Various townscape initiatives, including the Pennine Lancashire Squares competition, have yet to deliver lasting change.

Haslingden – Haslingden has a large number of small independent shops but has witnessed a considerable decline in the variety of goods sold and an increase in vacancy levels. There is a substantial BME population with relatively high levels of deprivation living close to the town centre. Like Rawtenstall there has been recent preliminary work undertaken to identify public realm improvements but this has not yet obtained funding.

The Council has commissioned BDP to lead a multi-disciplinary study into the future of Rawtenstall Town Centre, especially around the Valley Centre. The future of the Bus Station will be a key element within the study. **Rossendale Borough Council considers the provision of a high quality bus facility in Rawtenstall to be its highest immediate priority for delivery within the first LTP3 implementation period.** The Council would also wish to see County Council support for a range of measures that will enhance bus priority, manage congestion and parking, improve public realm and enhance air quality as a part of a package of measures for Rawtenstall.

In Bacup the Council welcomes the recent measures to provide enhanced bus facilities in the town as part of the renewal of the River Irwell culvert. It would wish to see additional public realm improvements in the town centre, in particular in the roundabout/square area outside the Library.

Within Haslingden the priority will be to enhance the public realm, particularly along Deardengate. This should reflect the historic character but also take into account parking and loading issues.

### *Tourism*

Rossendale has one of the lowest levels of tourist employment in Lancashire but has prioritised this as an area where it would wish to see significant growth. A recent Tourism Study commissioned from BE Group has identified a number of measures to facilitate this.

The Borough already has a number of tourism assets. As well as the East Lancashire Railway sites such as Helmshore Mills also attract a considerable number of visitors. However the areas principal tourism asset is its offer for outdoor/active sports. The ski slope near Rossendale has drawn visitors for a number of years while recent innovations such as the off-road cycling facility at Lee Quarry and Cragg Quarry and the Waterskiing centre at Cowm Quarry attract an increasing number of visitors. The Pennine Bridleway runs through the area while the Rossendale Way and the largest Public Rights of Way network in Lancashire attract many users. Altogether these active sports facilities are being marketed as “Adrenaline Gateway”.

One element of building on the tourism asset is to provide enhanced transport measures. There is a notable growth in cyclist use of the A681 corridor especially in evenings and weekends and including on pavements. A Study is currently being

undertaken for Pennine Lancashire Authorities to examine the potential to for cycling in the area, including linking Lee Quarry with other facilities in Gisburn Forest. Rossendale Borough Council would welcome any improvements in cycle facilities but in particular would support a high quality route on the whole corridor between Bacup and Rawtenstall. This would not only support leisure cycling but also those cycling to work and Travel Planning in the A681 corridor.

The Council would also welcome targeted improvements to enhance the Public Rights of Way network, a considerable amount of which is currently in poor condition. This would be complementary to work being carried out locally and at Pennine Lancashire level to enhance “Green Infrastructure” networks. As well as enhancing access investment in such facilities has substantial health and climate change benefits.

#### *Perceived peripherality of the Bacup/Stacksteads area*

Bacup is situated at the head of three valleys, just under five miles from Rawtenstall via the A681. However at peak times this journey often takes well over twenty minutes, primarily due to congestion caused by school traffic in Stacksteads and Waterfoot. The built up, winding nature of the route and the 30mph speed limit, plus the lack of major facilities such as a supermarket, creates a sense of isolation among many of local population. Lack of access to further education facilities contributes to local skills levels. Overall the area has the worst IMD scores in the Borough. The additional journey time also puts off potential commuters from moving into the area.

It is accepted that there are no easy solutions to improving the A681 corridor. However the Council would welcome any improvements that would facilitate faster, more reliable journeys including the promotion of Travel Planning.

Bacup is only five miles from Todmorden in West Yorkshire but links are relatively poorly developed. Todmorden provides a good railhead to Rochdale and Manchester as well as east to Halifax, Bradford and Leeds. Rossendale Borough Council would strongly support greater partnership with WYPTE, Northern Rail and Rossendale Bus to promote new marketing and through ticketing options. This proposal was also strongly supported by a recent Tourism Study commissioned by the Council. Overall such an initiative would not only help existing residents but could help attract new residents to the area.

#### *Social exclusion*

Parts of Rossendale have significant problems with social exclusion and access to services. This is particularly prevalent in Bacup, Stacksteads and in some of the villages such as Weir and is compounded by poor broadband access in some areas. Mental health issues, low skills, low wages and limited bus services off the main corridors especially at evenings and weekends are also issues. The nearest Accident and Emergency Services are in Blackburn and Oldham. Affordability concerns are a major concern for some families which limits their travel horizons.

Rossendale Borough Council recognise that subsidies for bus services are a scarce resource and would like to see priority given to those areas most in need. We would welcome involvement in Accessibility Planning exercises that identify such areas. The Council would also welcome any innovative approaches to service provision by the County Council as a whole, not just in the realm of transport. Thus further involvement of the community and voluntary sector in transport would be welcomed while in education the delivery of a Vocational Training Facility in Bacup is high up the Council's list of priorities. Targeted assistance for the growing elderly population, including provision of transport services suited their need would also be supported.

*Climate change*

Rossendale is a relatively poor performer using National Indicators for climate change such as NI186 and NI188. One contributing factor to this is high levels of car use and the Council is keen to see reductions in CO2 and PM10 emissions. High levels of NOX emissions are found at Bacup Road/Gyratory in Rawtenstall and at the Tesco Haslingden mini roundabout with the Council currently concluding research into the need for Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's) in these areas.

Reductions in road traffic and associated emissions would support the Council's own Environment Strategy and be complementary to the internal Travel Plan.

**5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1. The County Council is currently prioritising where and how it should focus its transport spending after 2011. The submission by Rossendale Borough Council is intended to influence this process. Officers and key members will continue to engage with the County Council to ensure that Rossendale's interests are not overlooked in the development of LTP3.

**6. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 6.1. That members note the Report.

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**Background Papers**

Document	Place of Inspection
LTP3 timetable	One Stop Shop