

LTP4 Progress Review

Foreword

I am pleased to report the significant progress we are making on transformational transport projects in Warrington. The schemes set out in this summary have all been delivered or are well under way thanks to the new direction that the review of our transport strategy in 2019 gave us and which resulted in our new Local Transport Plan (4) being approved in December 2019.

Our Local Transport Plan 4 sets ambitious targets to deliver real change in Warrington, with a vision which is still relevant today, 4 years on.

Warrington will be a thriving, attractive, accessible, and well-connected place with popular, high-quality walking, cycling, and public transport networks supporting our carbon-neutral future.

We have made excellent progress on a range of programmes to support this ambition with our plans delivering:

- Real options for people to walk and cycle through our Active Travel infrastructure improvements,
- A major push to support bus journeys for everyone across our borough through increases in services, reducing fares and helping to speed up bus journeys and make them more reliable,
- Investment in cleaner vehicles on our roads through a transformational electric bus project and successful bids to roll out of electric charging facilities in our communities, and
- Continuing to make sure Warrington stays a key part of plans to reconnect the north of England with better rail services, and in doing so tap into our town's economic potential.

To deliver this programme of work we continue to be successful in bids for funding to government and other external sources, such as ZEBRA (electric buses) Active Travel Fund, BSIP grant for bus improvements or LEVI for electric vehicle charging. This requires our ongoing commitment to develop a pipeline of schemes and projects and we will continue to invest in these programmes moving forward.

But fundamental to securing this funding is having a strong policy background and a commitment to support all journeys in Warrington which our LTP4 gives us. We are expecting government to announce guidance in the coming year to ask all authorities to refresh and update its Local Transport Plan, and we look forward to doing this and continuing the success which LTP4 has helped us to deliver over the last 4 years.



Councillor Hans Mundry
Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member
Highways, Transportation and Public Realm



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

December 2023

STRATEGIC PRORITIES & KEY PROJECT DELIVERY

Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2

We were successful in obtaining support from the rail industry, government, and Transport for the North (TfN) for a stop to be confirmed in Warrington on the Northern Powerhouse Rail line. This was formalised in the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) which was published in November 2021.

More recently following the governments 'Network North' publication, we are now working to restate the case for a station stop at Warrington Bank Quay as part of the revised NPR proposals. Government has invited northern leaders to provide input on the future of NPR and we remain steadfast in the view there are very significant transport and economic arguments for a stop on NPR in Warrington town centre.

On HS2, whilst the removal of the Golborne Link from the HS2 Phase 2B Hybrid Bill by the government was welcomed by us, the announcement as part of 'Network North' of the abandonment of HS2 north of Birmingham has met with widespread concern by many. We are working with TfN and other councils in the north to ensure that critical north/south rail connectivity and capacity is not forgotten in future government plans, and the opportunity is not lost for good.



First and Last Mile Masterplan

Significant study work was undertaken shortly after the approval of LTP4 to develop a framework to improve transport accessibility into, out of and within the town centre. This work aimed to identify ways to make the town centre more accessible and support the sustainable regeneration of the town centre.



An impression of the First and Last Mile project on Sankey Street

The work has been enshrined within the Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and early delivery of measures identified in the masterplan will be first seen on Sankey Street later in 2024 funded by the town deal programme.



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Bus Priority and Mass Transit study

The bus priority mass transit study was undertaken to inform our short to medium term priorities for conventional bus network enhancements and a longer-term vision to develop a mass transit strategy. At the time the work was started, the governments **Bus Back Better** agenda had not emerged, but the work has since been fundamental to taking advantage of the new policy direction of the government. The work underpinned the submission of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), allowing us to demonstrate where measures to improve bus journey times would be most beneficial in supporting a growth in patronage and improvement of bus services.



The longer-term work to identify the future direction for Mass Transit was put on hold, both to concentrate resources on the Bus Back Better work and the development of the BSIP, but also to wait until the Local Plan has been confirmed and ensure it reflects the future land use pattern for the borough.

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

In response to the government's **Bus Back Better** agenda launched in 2021 we refocused our work on the Bus Priority Study to develop the submission of our Bus Service Improvement Plan in October 2021. We were delighted to be awarded over £16m for the delivery of our plan, with a combination of broadly £10m capital and £6m revenue up to March 2025. Further announcements and funding from government have allowed us to expand services locally and extend the national capped fare schemes for £2 single for adults with a local concession which means that all passengers under 19 pay only £1 single for journeys wholly within the Borough.



We are now working in partnership with all local bus operators to make significant improvements that will benefit existing passengers and encourage more people to choose the bus for their journeys. We have entered into an **Enhanced Partnership** agreement with operators, and we are setting out high standards for the future of buses, as identified in our BSIP consultation including:

- Cheaper fares
- More frequent, punctual services
- State-of-the-art vehicles, with the highest standards of quality and accessibility
- Faster and more reliable journeys
- A better on-board experience for passengers

The improvements are already bearing fruit, with a 10-15% increase in bus patronage for the second quarter of 2023/24 compared to the same period last year. We have also recently consulted on our bus priority improvement scheme on the A49 with works planned to start later in 2024.



All Electric Bus Fleet - Zebra Fund (Zero Emission Bus Regional Area)

Warrington was one of a handful of councils across the country to be successful in a funding bid submitted in late 2021 to the ZEBRA Fund to replace Warrington's Own Buses' entire fleet of diesel buses with new electric vehicles. With plans to replace 105 vehicles during 2024, it will give us one of the biggest electric bus fleets of any town or city in the UK to date.

The state-of-the-art Volvo BZL Electric bus provides clean, near-silent, comfortable and efficient public transport. It is built to a high safety standard and complies with the toughest restrictions on emissions and noise.



Our new buses will be housed and charged at our brand-new bus depot on Dallam Lane, delivered as part of our Town Deal programme. Our commitment to green energy will also see the buses charged by green electricity from our solar farm in Cirencester which supplies green energy to the grid.

Bus Shelter Renewal Programme

The towns bus shelters have undergone a major transformation over recent months with the signing of an agreement with Alight Media to deliver around 200 new shelters across the borough to replace the ageing shelters installed over 20 years ago.

The shelters include a mixture of digital and paper advertising panels at many locations creating an income stream for the council, with the ongoing repair and maintenance costs also covered within the contract, meaning no ongoing costs to the council.



WBC has also reached an agreement for the 55 shelters that we have installed since 2014 to be cleaned regularly as part of the arrangement meaning that we are saving money as well as attracting a new income stream.

A number of the shelters also benefit from green roofs (such as the one pictured), which provide a more sustainable solution. WBC also benefits from free advertising slots in the digital advertising panels.





Town Centre Travel Plan

A plan is now in place to support residents and visitors travelling in and around the town centre. The objective is to provide alternative transport options so people can live in the town centre without needing to own a car.

Funded by contributions from development agreements, a programme of incentives and supporting measures are now available covering options such as:

- Electric car club – 2 vehicles available in the Time Square MSCP
- Discounts for cycling equipment or public transport
- Cycle training
- Advice and information on travel options
- Bespoke travel guides for individual developments.



Support is ongoing at the moment for a number of developments and organisations such as the new Roebuck Plaza residential development and the University of Chester, located on the town centre.

Sustainable Transport Town Deal Programme

The Warrington Town Deal project includes a specific programme to deliver a range of sustainable transport improvements by March 2026. The measures are intended to improve accessibility by foot, cycle and for public transport.

Schemes already delivered include small scale footway enhancement in the town centre and an important section of the Trans Pennine Trail in Latchford between Greenhalls Avenue and London Road.



The procurement process for a community cycle hub and secure cycle shelter is well underway with both planned for delivery in early 2024.

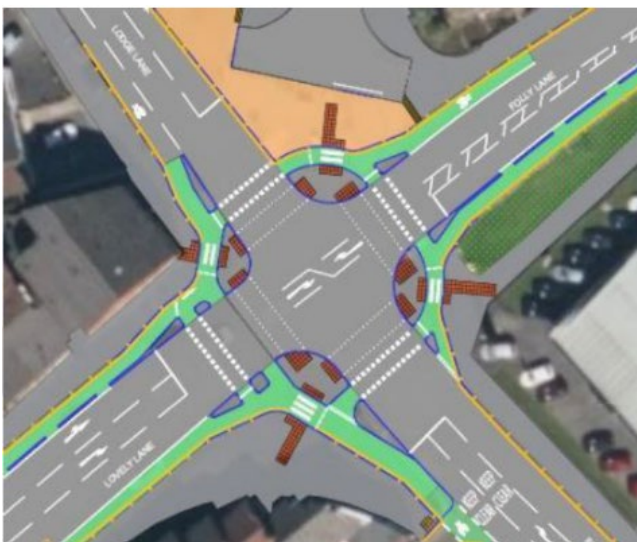
Development work continues on a range of other schemes including cycle links on Bewsey Road close to the town centre and on Kingsway Bridge and a corridor improvement scheme on Wilderspool causeway.



Active Travel Delivery and LCWIP

Our first Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan LCWIP was approved as part of LTP4 in late 2019. We were one of the first authorities in the country to develop our LCWIP which made us well placed to take advantage of funding opportunities the government indicated would be forthcoming through its 'Gear Change' strategy launched in 2020.

Our LCWIP sets out how the borough will be improved through a network of dedicated spaces for active travel by creating corridors to enable higher levels of walkable and cycleable trips to be made.



Since 2019 we have been developing plans for major corridor improvements and developing bids for whichever external funding opportunities have arisen over the past 2 to 3 years.

From the **Active Travel Fund**, which is now on its 4th tranche of DfT funding, we have been successful in securing funding at every bid stage.

This has allowed us to deliver schemes to reduce through traffic in the town centre, such as with the bus gate on Scotland Road, deliver pilot light segregation cycle schemes such as on Winwick Steet and very recently from ATF3 funding, construct our first CYCLOPs junction at the junction of Bewsey Road and Lovey Lane.



We have also been very successful in attracting external funding from **Sustrans** and have been able to deliver major upgrades of two sections of the Trans Pennine Trail in Lymm.

In late November 2023, we learnt that our **Levelling Up Round 2 bid, Warrington North – Reconnecting the Settlements** had been successful. This award includes around £7m funding to deliver walking and cycling improvements connecting the villages of Burtonwood, Winwick and Culcheth to the urban core of Warrington. The projects will be delivered by March 2026.



Electric Vehicle Strategy and Delivery

The Electric Vehicle Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2023, setting out a range of policies and objectives to support residents and businesses to transition to electric vehicles.

One of the key barriers was seen to be the availability of electric charging infrastructure, something which is particularly acute for residents who do not have off-street parking.

Throughout the development of the strategy the council has been actively looking to support roll out of chargers either through its own car park developments such as the Time Square MSCP and Warrington West station or through seeking government funding.

In the last 2 years the council has successfully delivered over 30 on street chargers from the government funded ORCS (On-street Residential Charge point Scheme) and been successful in a further bid to the Low Emission Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund from which we will receive nearly £700,000.

This funding will see us deliver a further 150 on street chargers and 4 charging hub sites in 2024, with further bids planned in the near future to support further roll outs.

Warrington electric vehicle strategy

December 2022



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