**LEP STRATEGY PROGRAMME BOARD – AGENDA ITEM 4**

Subject: Business Case Development Fund Proposals

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1. **Report Summary** 
   1. At its meeting on 20 March 2019 the LEP Board agreed to allocate £400,000 per year for three years towards studies/business case development to allow the sub region to respond quickly to invitations from government departments to bid for funding. The call for projects for the 2021/22 financial year has been significantly widened beyond the more traditional transport submissions, particularly in response to Government widening the requirements of some of their funding streams to cover community-based projects and involve local MPs.
   2. At its meeting on 25 February 2021 the Strategy Programme Board approved funding for the three schemes out of the 2021/22 which require local contributions to match Government funding:
      1. £20,000 contribution to the Middlewich Railway Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case Development (total estimated cost £110,000 – local authority contributions of £20,000 each from CWaC and CEC plus DfT funding of £50k bid for from the Restoring Your Railways Fund);
      2. £5,556 contribution to Beeston Station Feasibility Study (total estimated cost £66,667 - DfT funding of £50k already secured subject to local contributions); and
      3. £50,000 contribution to Bank Quay Gateway Housing Pathfinder - Initial Due Diligence, Scoping and Feasibility Work (total estimated cost £170,000 – Homes England funding of £70,000 already secured together with £50,000 from Warrington Council).
   3. At its meeting on 14 May 2021 the Strategy Programme Board approved a further £25,000 contribution to developing the business case for setting up a C&W Institute of Technology. Descriptions of the schemes which have been allocated funding are set out in Appendix A.

Allocating the £300,000 available

* 1. This leaves approximately £300,000 still to be allocated. The total cost of the contributions sought by the bids received is just under £1 million and therefore significantly exceeds the £300,000 available. This report sets out the process undertaken for assessing and prioritising the bids and sets out the recommendations for the schemes to be funded.
  2. The non-transport schemes have been considered by either the Sub-Regional Housing Board or the Enterprise Zone Board as appropriate. The recommended schemes reflect the comments and/or priorities of the sub-committees. The Local Transport Body (LTB) is considering the recommendations for transport schemes at its meeting on 25 June. The recommendations in this paper have been based around those in the LTB paper. Any changes to those recommendations by LTB will be reported to Strategy Programme Board at the meeting.

Potential Further Funding

* 1. £26,000 of funding was allocated in principle by the Strategy Programme Board last financial year to the A51/A500 scheme, however this was unable to be taken forward due to lack of matched funding available from Cheshire East Council. The scheme has been re-submitted this year with match funding being available from both Cheshire West & Chester and Cheshire East Councils but with a lower ask of £16,666, but the scheme doesn’t score as highly as some of the of the other schemes it has been assessed again this year. Following discussions there is potential for the LEP to increase the amount available to £50,000 which would enable the next highest scoring scheme on the list (Northwich Wider Town Centre Masterplan) to be funded. It is not currently possible for the LEP to provide funding beyond this point due to uncertainty over income. However, this can be revisited later in the year once the level of income becomes clearer.

1. **Recommendations** 
   1. The Strategy Programme Board is recommended to fund the following contributions out of the £300,000 budget available in the 2020/21 budget:
      * 1. £20,000 towards the Ellesmere Port Industrial Area Masterplan work
        2. £25,000 towards the Warrington Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
        3. £40,000 towards the Chester City Centre Package
        4. £50,000 towards the Warrington Last Mile – Town Centre Masterplan
        5. £50,000 towards the Crewe Town Centre
        6. £50,000 towards the Crewe Transport Delivery Plan - Feasibility Assessment
        7. £30,000 towards the Mid Cheshire Line Study
        8. £30,000 towards the Ellesmere Port Town Centre
   2. The Board is also recommended to agree a £50,000 contribution to the Northwich Wider Town Centre Masterplan using a combination of £26,000 not spent last year, the £5,000 remaining after taking account of the schemes set out in section 2.1 above, and a £19,000 top-up from the LEP.
   3. Finally, the Board is recommended to agree that the following schemes be endorsed in the priority order set out below should any additional funding become available this financial year:
      * 1. A51/A500 Corridor Study (£16,666 contribution sought)
        2. Bollin Valley Way – Feasibility Study (£10,000 contribution sought)
        3. Macclesfield Station HS2 Ready Phase 1 (£50,000 contribution sought)
        4. Hooton – Helsby Grip 3 rail study (£70,000 contribution sought)
        5. Macclesfield Town Centre (£50,000 contribution sought)
        6. Crewe Town Centre (£50,000 contribution sought)
        7. M6 Junction 20 (£50,000 contribution sought)
        8. Middlewich Southern Link OBC (£167,000 contribution sought)
        9. Winsford Station Quarter (£25,000 contribution sought)
        10. A50 Corridor Study (£25,000 contribution sought)
        11. Macclesfield Market Hall Transformation (£50,000 contribution sought)
        12. Macclesfield Outdoor Hospitality (£50,000 contribution sought)
        13. Mid-Cheshire Waterways (£30,000 contribution sought)
2. **Background** 
   1. At its meeting on 20 March the LEP Board agreed to allocate £400,000 per year for three years towards studies/business case development to allow the sub region to respond quickly to invitations from government departments to bid for funding. The funding is intended to undertake studies or develop business cases which develop interventions that support the Local Industrial Strategy and drive improvements in economic productivity.

Government Funding Available

* 1. Due to the uncertainties around covid the Government decided to only announce a 1-year CSR covering the 2021/22 financial year. The government wants to use infrastructure to unite and level up the UK, deliver a stronger Union, thriving regions, cities living up to their full potential and revitalised towns and communities. To deliver this, the government has set up the following funding streams which are relevant to C&W:
     1. £5 billion to support UK-wide gigabit broadband roll-out, a Shared Rural Network extending 4G mobile coverage to 95% of the UK, and £250 million to ensure resilient and secure digital networks;
     2. £5 billion over this parliament for buses and cycling; and
     3. A new £4 billion cross-departmental Levelling Up Fund that will invest in local infrastructure in England (which will attract funding for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the usual way). Creating regional powerhouses, making cities the engines of growth and revitalising towns
     4. Backing new green growth clusters in traditional industrial areas, with carbon capture and storage, offshore wind, port infrastructure and low carbon hydrogen;
     5. Bringing jobs, investment and prosperity to some of the most deprived communities across the UK through the freeports programme;
     6. Revitalising over 100 town centres and high streets through the Towns Fund; and
     7. Restoring many of the rail services lost through the Beeching cuts of the 1960s.

Determining Priorities

* 1. To secure the maximum outcomes for the financial contribution the Strategy Programme Board previously agreed that projects should contribute to and be assessed against the following criteria:
     1. Strategic fit of the proposal against sub-regional strategies and priorities;
     2. The degree to which the study/business case has routes which have a good chance of securing government/3rd party funding for delivery;
     3. The amount of funding towards the study/business case development by scheme promoters; and
     4. The degree to which the study/business case is likely to deliver a scheme which offers good value for money
  2. In terms of strategic fit the Board also agreed that proposals will be considered in terms of their contribution to the following:
     1. spatial priorities (Science Corridor, MDA, Constellation, Warrington New City)
     2. thematic priorities (transport, skills/education, energy, quality of place, digital, housing, science/innovation)
     3. emerging Local Industrial Strategy priorities:
        1. raising productivity and focusing on competitive advantage (build the super strengths, address sector underperformance, develop supply chain innovation and foster cross-sector collaboration)
        2. building resilience in the economy (create a more dynamic business base, use digital to innovate, diversify investment in research and development, expand international links)
        3. increasing earnings power of every resident (improve progression in work, develop an education system which meets labour demand, encourage entry level positions, including apprenticeships) o leading the clean growth grand challenge
        4. enabled by strategic investments in infrastructure and place
  3. Subsequently the Board has agreed that the assessment of projects should also consider whether they reflect Government priorities, their potential to attract funding for delivery, and their contribution to the draft recovery plan. This reflects an increased emphasis from both the Government and the LEP on securing sustainable, healthy and inclusive growth.

Projects Already Allocated Funding for 2021/22

* 1. The Strategy Programme Board, at its meeting on 12 February 2021, agreed funding contributions for three schemes which require local contributions to match Government funding:
     1. £20,000 contribution to the Middlewich Railway Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case Development (total estimated cost £110,000 – local authority contributions of £20,000 each from CWaC and CEC plus DfT funding of £50k bid for from the Restoring Your Railways Fund);
     2. £5,556 contribution to Beeston Station Feasibility Study (total estimated cost £66,667 - DfT funding of £50k already secured subject to local contributions); and
     3. £50,000 contribution to Bank Quay Gateway Housing Pathfinder - Initial Due Diligence, Scoping and Feasibility Work (total estimated cost £170,000 – Homes England funding of £70,000 already secured together with £50,000 from Warrington Council).
  2. At it’s meeting on 14 May 2021 the Board agreed to provide a further £25,000 contribution to developing the business case for setting up a C&W Institute of Technology.
  3. These projects were approved because there were time-sensitive funding opportunities open to them. Descriptions of the projects is set out in Appendix A

1. **Prioritising Bids**
   1. There remains approximately £300,000 of funding still to be allocated. Twenty-two bids have been received for contributions to studies or business case development. The cost of the contributions totals nearly £1 million and therefore significantly exceed the £300,000 available.
   2. To assist with the process of prioritisation LEP officers developed a simple framework appraisal process. Bids have been assessed in terms of five criteria:
      1. Strategic fit – the extent to which bids fit with the LEP’s strategic priorities
      2. Impact – the likely level of outputs/impact that the project will deliver
      3. Timescale for delivery – the anticipated timescales for the project to be delivered
      4. Match funding/leverage – the level and proportion of match funding provided by the applicant
      5. Identified funding opportunity – whether there is an identified funding opportunity available for the project to bid into
   3. The non-transport schemes have been considered by either the Sub-Regional Housing Board or the Enterprise Zone Board as appropriate. The recommended schemes are in line with the comments and/or priorities of the sub-committees. The Local Transport Body (LTB) is considering the recommendations for transport schemes at its meeting on 25 June. The recommendations in this paper have been based around those in the LTB paper. Any changes to those recommendations by LTB will be reported to Strategy Programme Board at the meeting.
   4. A simple High (3 points), Medium (2 points), Low (1 point) scoring has been applied to the bids against the criteria above. Ranking was then undertaken on the basis of highest scores first. Where schemes score the same, ranking has been based on lowest to highest in terms of level of contribution sought so as to support more schemes. The schemes are set out in Table 1.

Proposed Allocation of the £300,000 Available

* 1. On the basis of the above scoring the projects can be prioritised within the approximately £300,000 available as follows:
     + 1. £20,000 towards the Ellesmere Port Industrial Area Masterplan work
       2. £25,000 towards the Warrington Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
       3. £40,000 towards the Chester City Centre Package
       4. £50,000 towards the Warrington Last Mile – Town Centre Masterplan
       5. £50,000 towards the Crewe Town Centre
       6. £50,000 towards the Crewe Transport Delivery Plan - Feasibility Assessment
       7. £30,000 towards the Mid Cheshire Line Study
       8. £30,000 towards the Ellesmere Port Town Centre

Potential Further Funding

* 1. £26,000 of funding was allocated in principle by the Strategy Programme Board last financial year to the A51/A500 scheme, however this was unable to be taken forward due to lack of matched funding available from Cheshire East Council. The scheme has been re-submitted this year with match funding being available from both Cheshire West & Chester and Cheshire East Councils but with a lower ask of £16,666, but the scheme doesn’t score as highly as some of the of the other schemes it has been assessed again this year. Following discussions there is potential for the LEP to increase the amount available to £50,000 which would enable the next highest scoring scheme on the list (Northwich Wider Town Centre Masterplan) to be funded. It is not currently possible for the LEP to provide funding beyond this point at the moment due to uncertainty over income. However, this can be revisited later in the year once the level of income becomes clearer.
  2. For the remaining schemes it is recommended that they be endorsed in the priority order set out in Table 1 should any additional funding become available this financial year.
  3. Descriptions of the schemes are set out in Appendix B.

Table 1



**Appendix A – Schemes Already Approved for Funding Contributions for 2021/22**

**Middlewich Railway Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case Development**

* 1. The proposal is to further assess the options for the re-opening of the Middlewich railway line to passenger services and assess the potential for new stations at Middlewich and Gadbrook Park, alongside improving passenger services along the Mid Cheshire railway line. Initial work, jointly funded by the LEP, Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council concluded that the reopening of the railway line has a strong strategic case but the indicative service pattern that was considered required significant government subsidy and didn’t offer good value for money. This proposal is to undertake additional work to identify options that offer better value for money/require lower subsidies. Discussions are on-going with DfT about funding contributions the Department for Transport’s Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund.
  2. The work would cover the following components:
     1. Strategic Case – improvement of evidence base for housing, employment and deprivation
     2. Scheme Development – more in-depth assessment of infrastructure requirements, including a GRIP2 Report and formal Network Rail endorsement of infrastructure proposals. This will include consideration of Digital Railway.
     3. Scheme Development – further development of operating strategy, including routes, pathing, timetables & diagrams and wider impacts
     4. Economic Case – Demand Forecasting, including a transformational exogenous growth scenario and use of NoRMS to derive a patronage
     5. Economic Case – Development of Uncertainty Log and Sensitivity Testing
     6. Economic / Financial Case – refinement of CapEx and OpEx costs using updated information sourced above
     7. Economic Case – Appraisal and write-up
     8. Management Case – Stakeholder Engagement – a further round of engagement with Network Rail and TOCs will be undertaken.
     9. Management Case – Delivery Programme will be developed
     10. SOBC drafting and resubmission (including Commercial and Management Cases)
  3. Total project cost is estimated at £110,000 with a DfT contribution of £50,000 and contributions of £20,000 each from Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire and Warrington LEP.

**Beeston Station Feasibility Study**

* 1. This project comprises the preparation of a business case and outline station design to support the reopening of Beeston Castle and Tarporley Station. The application was in support of part of the local contribution required release the £50,000 already committed by the Department of Transport.
  2. The proposed station’s site lies about 2.4 kilometres south of the fast-growing township of Tarporley on the Crewe to Chester section of the North Wales Mainline which is reputedly the longest stretch of mainline railway in England without a station.
  3. Reopening the station, which was closed in 1966 as part of the Beeching cuts has been a long-held ambition of the local community in mid Cheshire, with many petitions and campaigns over the years. We believe that the rapidly increasing population of the township of Tarporley and of the surrounding villages, up over 8.73% in the seven years between the 2011 census and 2018 alone, and consequent increasing congestion on the A51 trunk road which connects Crewe to Chester, means that it is not only feasible to reopen the station, but essential if the area is to continue to develop both in residential provision and commercially.
  4. In particular, it should be noted that reopening the station would not only connect a community chronically underserved by public transport to the railway network and provide an alternative to private modes of transport on a congested route, but also that there has been strong and sustained support for this project over many years, with no local groups voicing any form of opposition.
  5. In addition to the transport benefits, wider socio-economic gains will be delivered. The station will support economic and job growth by connecting the area to the employment centres of Manchester, Chester, Liverpool, and Stoke. It will provide the infrastructure required to support the continuing and significant increase in housing development in the area, boost local economic growth by providing quality public transport access for those wishing to visit mid-Cheshire’s tourist attractions, and deliver a lower-carbon environmentally sustainable transport alternative for the people of Mid-Cheshire.
  6. Finally, the project is credible and deliverable, with no detrimental impacts on the existing railway, either during construction or operation.
  7. Principal funding of £50,000 towards the cost of the development of the business case and outline design has been secured from The Department for Transport. This funding is dependent on a ‘local’ contribution of £16,667 of which the promoters seeking £5,556 each from Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire and Warrington LEP.

**Bank Quay Gateway Housing Pathfinder - Initial Due Diligence, Scoping and Feasibility Work**

* 1. The proposal is to undertake Technical Due Diligence and Master Planning work on the Bank Quay Gateway Area, This will include:-
     1. Desk Top study for contamination and GI
     2. Highway and transport requirements need to be understood
     3. Initial appraisal
     4. EIA Screening – site is over 5 hectares
     5. Network Rail requirements and restrictions
  2. The majority of this will be paid for by Homes England Funding, which has been confirmed. with a contribution from WBC and C&WLEP. There is a requirement by HE to have spent this grant by the end of their financial year (31st March).
  3. Following this work a joint instruction will be issued by Warrington Borough Council and C&WLEP for the Feasibility and Marketing Report, this will be either procured through the HE Framework or via the Councils Chest, both of which will involve a level of competition in line with procurement regulations.
  4. The project comprises a cluster of prominent urban sites adjacent to the River Mersey, Bank Quay rail station and a key gateway to the Town Centre – making up a single large Town Centre development area. The site is high density, predominantly residential with ancillary ground floor uses, overlooking the river front, a small park and waterfront promenades. As part of the proposed HS2 and NPR schemes Bank Quay rail station, with its direct links to London, Scotland and the rest of the UK this scheme will form a part of the Warrington national rail hub vision and will be significant in raising the profile and image of Warrington Town Centre as a place to live, do business, visit and enjoy.
  5. The scheme enables the pedestrian linkage of the Town Centre with Centre Park business area to the South – thereby enables wider pedestrian connectivity.
  6. The area is currently occupied by vacant sites, underused sites and down grade uses. Part is occupied by Network Warrington’s Bus Depot – which has been agreed will be relocated. The Council owns the donor site for the relocated bus depot. The new bus depot will enable the proposed transformation of Network Warrington’s buses to a fully electric fleet – giving this proposal much wider sustainability / decarbonisation benefits.
  7. Total project cost is estimated at £170,000 with a Homes England contribution of £70,000 and contributions of £50,000 from Warrington Council and £50,000 from Cheshire and Warrington LEP.

**Institute of Technology**

* 1. This request for funding was to enable preparation of the business case for stage 2 of the application to the Department for Education to create a Cheshire and Warrington Institute of Technology (IoT). The IoT is a key component of the Skills Strategy and would increase level 4/5 skills in digital and other priority areas, creating pathways from lower-level qualifications and enabling progression to degree level and beyond, involving employers from design to delivery as well as governance, and embedding Higher Education research into employer planning and future scoping. The development of the business case will help to unlock up to £20m of government funding for site remodelling and equipment. It is anticipated that the business case would be completed around June for submission to Government.
  2. There are 13 bids going into the final stage for the £120 million of funding announced by education secretary Gavin Williamson at the Conservative Party conference two years ago. A total of 15 bids were received in stage 1 of the process. Of those, 13 applicants have been invited to progress to stage 2 which will “test the viability, feasibility and deliverability of proposals in more detail”. They will be whittled down to eight winners later this year.
  3. The cost of preparing the stage 2 business case is estimated at £50,000 and a contribution of £25,000 was agreed from the LEP’s business case fund. The proposal was endorsed by the Employers’ Skills Board.

**Appendix B – Scheme Descriptions**

**Housing Pathfinder Projects**

Crewe Town Centre

Due diligence to assess the feasibility and capacity of a number of potential housing sites within Crewe Town Centre that could deliver significant new homes that can support economic growth in the sub-region aligned with the greater connectivity that HS2 will deliver. Key opportunity areas include Phoenix Park, an existing leisure scheme that could be redeveloped for residential uses, sites around Oak Street and Delamere, the Mill Street corridor which connects the town centre with the railway station and the area around the new HS2 Hub Station. Scope of works includes market analysis, identification of development constraints, site capacity assessment and options testing, which would provide the basis for a business case that can be submitted to Homes England’s SHIF.

Ellesmere Port Town Centre

Due diligence to determine the optimum route to unlocking a number of catalytic sites in the Council’s ownership that could deliver 200+ new homes in Crewe Town Centre. In addition, further residential development could come forward if there is a consolidation/reconfiguration of the existing town centre retail. This is a key element in the strategy to deliver the regeneration of Ellesmere Port town centre. The due diligence to be funded includes high level feasibility assessment to determine any development constraints, capacity testing of key sites, work to support land assembly of Coronation Road and the identification of development and delivery options, which would enable the development of a business case that can be submitted to Homes England’s SHIF.

Macclesfield Town Centre

Feasibility and options study on private sector owned sites in Macclesfield town centre, to be undertaken in parallel to a feasibility and options study on public owned car parks that has recently been commissioned by CEC. Scope of works to incorporate identification of potential development sites/parcels in private ownership, investigation of ownership/title, feasibility to assess suitability for residential development, review of potential delivery options. The study will provide an evidence base on which to formulate our strategic approach to development within the centre of Macclesfield, capturing both Council and private development opportunities to formulate a strategic plan for the area and enable the development of business cases for further Homes England Funding.

**Place-Based Non-Transport Schemes**

Crewe Town Centre

Study to reimagine the future of vacant retail spaces and their role in supporting the town’s offer in the short, medium and longer term and encouraging property owners to ensure that their assets complement regeneration activity.

Macclesfield Outdoor Hospitality

Feasibility study to explore options and delivery mechanisms for providing outdoor hospitality space in Macclesfield town centre to support the hospitality sector to survive and the town centre to thrive if social distancing is required long-term.

Macclesfield Market Hall Transformation

Feasibility study to develop reimagine the Market Hall as a vibrant, energetic, curated centre of activity, including developing the vision, building survey and feasibility study to establish clear budget requirements and operational model and a business case developed to support funding bids.

Macclesfield Station HS2 Ready Phase 1

Options appraisal and feasibility study to develop the vision and business case for an enhanced station to coincide with the arrival of HS2 services, developed in association with Avanti and Network Rail in order to improve the perception of a key gateway for the town

Chester City Centre Package

A series of feasibility studies for preparing five case business cases, site survey works and site preparation to deliver a refreshed One City Plan.

Ellesmere Port Industrial Area

LEP funding sought to support a wider range of OBC development for ongoing delivery of the EPIA work in priority areas and potential bid to government for a significant capital funding bid.

Northwich Wider Town Centre Masterplan

Expansion of the Weaver Sq masterplan to establish key areas of focus, constraints and opportunities before moving onto more detailed masterplanning including a revised public realm strategy focussing on creation of better linkages between Weaver Sq and Baron’s Quay, waterside and Memorial park as well as the potential creation of a ‘cultural corridor’ area between Northwich Library and The Plaza.

Winsford Station Quarter

Feasibility study to determine technical feasibility and financial viability of a district heating network for the Station Quarter site. The study will provide an appraisal of which particular technology options may be most suitable for a district heating solution and an overview of key design principles.

**Transport Schemes**

*Cheshire East Schemes*

1. Crewe Transport Delivery Plan - Feasibility Assessment

Connectivity within Crewe is poor, affected by a series of constraints/pinch points created by the legacy road network including the number of railway bridges. This contributes to traffic congestion and severance, affecting the town's economic performance and the health and well-being of our communities. Movement between key attractors to the town (in particular Grand Junction and the Station) and into the town centre is also deterring linked trips.

The initial future High St Fund bid included a new pedestrian crossing at Earle St, however following assessment and reduced contributions of funding form the Government this new crossing has been removed.

The purpose of this project is to work with Network Rail, Crewe Town Board and Cheshire East Council to identify a strategic network plan that will support regeneration and growth in the town, including any new viable rail crossings, and build robust business cases that have strong BCRs and are in line with the Treasury Green Book assessments.

1. Bollin Valley Way – Feasibility Study

The Bollin Valley Way (BVW) will provide a high quality route for active travel, linking key economic assets between Macclesfield and Warrington. The proposal aims to capitalise on the natural features and topography of the Bollin Valley to create a traffic-free East-West strategic route for walking and cycling that is consistent with the standards of the National Cycle Network. Whilst the overall route is 32miles, there is clear scope, in cooperation with landowners and stakeholders, to develop a phased delivery programme.

This study will achieve the following outcomes:

* Provide a coherent strategic overview of the opportunity, linked to economic growth, employment and visitor economy priorities.
* Prepare a design Feasibility Study for the route, identifying design constraints, route standards, connectivity, user requirements.
* Assess likely levels of demand and route utilisation
* Preliminary cost estimates to prepare a programme budget.
* Assess the opportunities and constraints affecting early delivery of the programme, leading to a robust initial programme for delivery
* Identify and engage with all key stakeholder to identify their perspectives on the proposal, to complete stakeholder mapping and prepare an Engagement Plan
* Prepare a high level funding strategy for the programme
* Outline Business Case for the project

1. A50 Corridor Study

A study of the A50 corridor between Arclid in the south to Mere in the north that addresses Holmes Chapel and also Knutsford strategic traffic issues. The study would be significant piece of work involving surveys and the development of a strategic transport model to assess the different highways options, from minor and major upgrades to existing infrastructure up to bypass options.

*Cheshire West and Chester Schemes*

1. Hooton – Helsby Grip 3 rail study

This study builds upon the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for transport enhancements in the Hooton-Ellesmere Port-Helsby corridor.

Network Rail are in the process of introducing a new project lifecycle framework called PACE “Project Acceleration in a Controlled Environment” which will ultimately replace GRIP.

The SOBC strongly demonstrates that the rail scheme is required to ensure current problems on the transport network do not jeopardise the future economic growth and prosperity of the area, by:

* Significantly enhancing connectivity between Ellesmere Port and Helsby, Frodsham, Runcorn / Warrington / Manchester and Liverpool South Parkway;
* Providing the opportunity to improve accessibility to local communities, industry and jobs, the tourism sector and new developments in the corridor, by facilitating an alternative, more sustainable, travel choice to car; and
* Supporting sustained transformational and inclusive economic growth within the corridor, across the region, north of England and more broadly the wider UK economy.

The Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP) constitutes a series of project stages controlled by a series of stage-gates. Scheme business cases are the key inputs to informing these stage-gates. The SOBC informs the ‘Decision to Develop’ stage, demonstrating a clear case for intervention. A rail-based service enhancement provides the opportunity to significantly improve connectivity within the local area corridor, as well as between the area corridor and key neighbouring regional centres such as Merseyside and Greater Manchester.

The SOBC demonstrates that a BCR of over 1.5 is achievable for those options involving the extension of Merseyrail Electrics services to Helsby, thus demonstrating ‘medium value for money’. In terms of affordability, shuttle options can be delivered for less than £5m, whilst the Merseyrail Electrics options require a little more investment up-front (circa £20m). However, it is worth noting that the analysis is suggesting that the Merseyrail Electrics options would then require very little (if any) additional subsidy to operate.

The key function of the SOBC is to inform the RNEP ‘Decision to Develop’, placing the scheme on the government’s RNEP process and seeking authority and funding to proceed to the ‘Develop’ stage. In considering the ‘next steps’ – the ‘Develop’ stage within RNEP – there will be a requirement to consider the following core activities, which have been discussed in more detail across the Commercial and Management Cases:

* Further development of the option specifications, including timetable development, and working closely with the relevant TOCs such as Northern and Merseyrail Electrics;
* Engineering design through to GRIP 3 equivalent and production of the Option Selection Report;
* Demand forecasting modelling and scheme appraisal.
* Stakeholder and initial public consultation to inform the option selection process;
* Option selection process – identification of a preferred option; and
* Production of the Outline Business Case (OBC).

It is anticipated that the Decision to Develop process may re-define how the options are specified for taking forward into the Develop stage.

*Warrington Schemes*

1. Warrington Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Warrington’s Local Transport Plan (LTP4) includes an ambitious target to more than treble cycling and walking over the next 20 years with a modal shift away from the car. The main delivery vehicle to enable this is the Warrington Local Cycling and Walking infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which has identified several key corridors for improvement. A significant piece of work, funded by the LEP and WBC has developed three of the key corridors concepts into deliverable transformational schemes. This bid is for the next phase of this work.

A key theme of the LTP is to create an attractive, high standard, user-friendly environment for walking and cycling trips. To take this forward, the Council has developed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) in line with government guidance. This sets out an aspirational core network of walking and cycling routes made up of:

* Primary Routes - high quality integrated corridors that radiate out from the town centre hub that use, or follow, the main arterial transport routes
* Neighbourhood routes - continuous routes segregated from traffic
* Greenways - well maintained traffic free routes through open spaces and parks

Of these types of routes, it is the Primary Routes which will require most investigation because of the need to provide full separation from traffic and the likely need to re-allocate roadspace, remodel junctions and provide priority over side roads. These primary routes are the most transformational part of the proposed network and the greatest potential to drive modal shift towards cycling.

The importance of this emerging network is emphasised by it links to the aims and objectives of the draft Local Plan which contains a very clear vision for sustainable growth over the next 15-20 years. The strategic traffic modelling carried out to support the Local Plan assumed a transformed cycling and walking network would be delivered via the LCWIP, and as such is a core element of the planned long term transport network to support the borough future prosperity.

The study, currently nearing completion, examined three of these Primary Route corridors and developed them to a pre delivery stage. Deliverables included a SOBC for each corridor and preliminary design drawings.

Phase 2 of the LCWIP corridor work will be in two parts:

* 1. Detailed design work of some of the key junctions and links identified within the Phase 1 work and which have been identified as critical in improving cycle network connectivity; and
  2. A corridor study of an additional LCWIP primary route (the A57 Manchester Road corridor) which would provide a business case and preliminary drawings.

1. Warrington Last Mile – Town Centre Masterplan

A Transport Masterplan has been developed for the Warrington Last Mile Project, jointly funded by the LEP and WBC. This has the aim of providing high quality and fit for purpose transport infrastructure to make walking, cycling and public transport the obvious way to get to, from and through Warrington town centre. This bid is for the next phase of this work.

Improving the ‘last mile’ of journeys into the town centre for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users has been identified as a priority in order to provide a high quality and fit for purpose transport infrastructure that will make walking, cycling and public transport the obvious way to get to, from, and through

Warrington town centre.

Work to identify a transport masterplan for the town centre, jointly funded by the LEP and Warrington Borough Council, is nearing completion. This masterplan includes the following elements.

* Identifying the traffic displacement opportunity provided by the Warrington Western Link scheme which has been awarded Programme Entry as part of the governments Large Local Major scheme programme.
* Identifying the need - policy and audits of existing access into/out of the town centre.
* Identifying air quality, noise and other environmental issues
* Identifying constraints and transport conditions
* Considering the need and opportunity to improve access to the two main rail stations in the town centre
* A town Centre cordon model to understand impact of traffic redistribution and test the impact of options on network performance
* Providing a passive provision for a future Warrington mass transit network

The key output from the study is a multi-modal Transport Masterplan to support the Warrington Means Business strategy. This includes concept designs for the key corridors, junctions and other locations around the town centre “collar”.

Now, in Phase 2 of the First and Last Mile project, we will be undertaking the more detailed study work that is required to take the proposals forward. This will deliver a business case for specific schemes identified in the Phase 1 Masterplan, and the development of an Outline Business Case for one or more specific scheme(s). Candidate schemes include A49/Church Street junction where the proposals are to improve access for walking, cycling and public transport.

1. M6 Junction 20 Study

Within the timescales of Warrington’s emerging Local Plan, a new urban

extension is expected to be delivered in south east Warrington through the

release of Green Belt land. This urban extension will connect to the strategic road network at junction 20 of the M6. This junction is in need of improvement to mitigate current congestion and support future development. The development will also include an employment site comprising large scale distribution, logistics, industrial uses and offices, benefiting from its accessibility to the motorway network.

The study will identify preferred improvement options for this junction on

the Strategic Road Network. Infrastructure improvements are required to improve existing congestion and facilitate multi-modal access to the urban extension.

The proposed study will allow further design and development work be carried out as part of the process of developing of a full business case for improvements at the M6 Junction 20.

Ongoing discussion with Highways England have confirmed that there are existing pressures on M6 Junction 20. A comparison of the AM and PM journey times with the inter peak was undertaken for selected routes through the junction. The results show journey times are up to 52% longer during the AM peak (07:30-08:30) compared with the inter peak (10:00-12:00) and up to 45% more during the PM peak (16:15-17:15).

Any study work is expected to managed and procured by Warrington Borough Council, but in partnership with Highways England.

*Sub-Regional Schemes*

1. Mid Cheshire Line Study

The Mid Cheshire Line Study would be a joint study commissioned by Transport for Greater Manchester (lead authority), Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C), Cheshire East Council (CEC), and Cheshire and Warrington LEP (C&WLEP). It would be managed by a steering group consisting additional to the above of Trafford Council, Stockport Council, Transport for the North, Network Rail, Northern Trains, Transport for Wales, and the DfT.

The objectives for this study are to identify improvements which can deliver an increase in passenger train frequency and improve journey times on the Mid Cheshire line that aligns with wider aspirations for the corridor. The study would comprise two stages:

Stage 1 (Identification of Options) will comprise the following tasks:

* Baseline Review – An understanding of the current operations and markets for rail both in terms of freight and passenger services based on existing data. The purpose of this stage is to capture the particular nature of passenger and freight flows to, from and on the corridor so as to ensure these are reflected in the modelled service specifications.
* Problem Statement/Constraint identification - Consultants to identify the constraints that are notionally preventing passenger service frequency and journey time aspirations for the Mid-Cheshire line between Stockport and Chester (exclusive), and to draw up a long list of potential interventions to help achieve these objectives. This will include liaising with Network Rail and TOCs to explore the extent and impact of operational issues such as concerns around level crossing usage, as identified in previous and ongoing work.
* Intervention development – Quantification of the impacts of long listed interventions in terms of journey time improvements, capacity, safety, high level performance impacts, outline cost, policy fit, risk for funding, etc.
* Package Testing - identification of the minimum net cost combination of interventions that would be required in order to deliver service improvement specifications.

Stage 2 (Strategic Review) of the study will be expected to consider interactions between the outputs of Stage 1 and other associated schemes. This will include a case by case analysis and narrative of how Stage 1 outputs and other workstreams integrate. The purpose of this stage is to understand where potential opportunities and conflicts between the shorter term objectives set out in Stage 1 and longer term ambitions may lie, as well as capturing an as full as possible range of potential schemes across the full corridor.

These schemes include (but are not limited to):

* Middlewich line reopening
* New Stations between Altrincham and Stockport
* Tram-Train Pathfinder South (Manchester to Hale via Timperley and Altrincham)
* Metrolink T2 Western Leg extension
* Airport heavy rail Western Link
* Metro / Tram-Train (Stockport to Manchester Airport and Airport-West/South West)
* Additional freight (including HS2 construction traffic) using Mid Cheshire line

1. A51/A500 Corridor Study

A study to consider options to tackle capacity constraints and network resilience along the A51 corridor between the M6 in Crewe and A55 in Chester. The scheme will also help to address severance amongst communities along the route while unlocking growth along the route. The work will provide an evidence base for future business case development.

The A51 is a key strategic corridor linking the M6 to North Wales and Ireland and is a key transport corridor for freight movements as well as business and commercial related travel.

The proposal is to commission an A51 Corridor Study in order to gather robust evidence and make the case for internal and external investment in transport enhancements along the strategic road corridor that crosses both boroughs of Cheshire West and Cheshire East.

The work supports partners such as the Department for Transport, Transport for the North, the Constellation Partnership, Mersey Dee Alliance, Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership. It will continue to deliver the shared objectives and corporate policies of both Cheshire West & Chester and Cheshire East Council by delivering growth in housing, employment and retail.

Potential opportunities include -

* Improving connectivity on both sides of the border with Cheshire West & Chester and Cheshire East, enabling improved access to new and emerging development sites, including: Deeside and Ellesmere Port Enterprise Zones, HS2 Railway Hub, Crewe High Growth City and central Chester.
* Addressing access requirements for current (and potentially longer term) Local Plan allocations.
* Addressing key congestion pinch point along the corridor.
* Resolving congestion and air quality issues along the corridor, while improving journey time reliability.
* Improving access and connectivity to key urban centres and railway stations.
* Improving opportunities for using sustainable transport.
* Addressing stretches prone to destabilisation.

Work will be undertaken as part of a joint partnership bringing together Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire East Council, Cheshire and Warrington LEP along with the support from Transport for the North, Department for Transport and Highways England.

1. Middlewich Southern Link Outline Business Case

Southern Bypass connecting the Middlewich Eastern Bypass to the A530, including an upgrade to Clive Green Lane. Overall aim is to improve east/west connection across the study area, with particular focus on connections to the M6 from Winsford and Middlewich. Delivery of Outline Business Case for submission to programme entry will be managed jointly by CEC and CW&C. The delivery of the scheme will be managed by CEC and CW&C under NEC4 contact on a Design and Build contract.