

## **Exeter Transport Strategy**

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

***Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.***

**Recommendation: It is recommended that:**

- (a) Progress on the first 5 years of the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 Exeter Transport Strategy is noted.**
- (b) HATOC receives an update on an annual basis following the Transport Strategy Working Group's annual forum with Members and local groups interested in transport.**

### **1. Summary**

This paper sets out the County Council's progress with delivering the Exeter Transport Strategy as outlined in the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 and explains the changing financial landscape, which has a bearing on future transportation investment in the city. The report also outlines how it is proposed to work with local partners and other interested parties in the future, which is consistent with the recommendations agreed at Exeter City Council's Scrutiny Committee (Community).

### **2. Background/Introduction**

County Council officers attended a question and answer session in March 2015 as part of Exeter City Council's Scrutiny Committee (Community). This followed some representations from community groups (Exeter Civic Society, Transition Town Exeter and the Campaign for South West Exeter Smarter Travel), which raised concerns about the future challenges of growth in and around the city and the pressures it would put on the city's highway network.

At the meeting, it was explained that despite growing numbers of dwellings there had not been the equivalent increase in traffic volumes; however, it was acknowledged that speeds across the network were reducing in the peak periods.

A similar debate was held at Exeter HATOC in April 2015 and, at a further ECC Scrutiny Committee (Community), a process was agreed whereby progress with implementing the County Council's transport strategy would be monitored and evaluated. Also a mechanism was created to enable interested transport groups to contribute and help develop new ideas to address the future growth challenges.

### **3. Local Transport Plan**

During the Scrutiny Committees, it was explained that a transportation strategy for the city exists, which is directly linked to the Core Strategy infrastructure delivery plan. In particular, it was stressed that the County Council is only 5 years into a 15-year Local Transport Plan and that a number of the significant interventions would be delivered over the next 12-18 months. In this respect, a number of the benefits of these initiatives were yet to be realised.

The key elements of the Exeter Transport Strategy is set out in the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 and has the following key objectives:

- Improve access to the city
- Enable and support smarter travel
- Deliver the east of Exeter Development and major developments within Exeter
- Protect Exeter as a Gateway

Appendix I sets out the encouraging progress that has been made across all of these aims. There nevertheless remain a number of significant initiatives to be delivered in the coming years, which should have a positive impact in influencing peoples' travel mode and travel behaviour for trips into or across the city.

#### **4. Transport Infrastructure Plan**

Funding from a number of Government departments have been pooled so that all non-maintenance capital funding from Government for transport schemes will in future be delivered through the Growth Deal process (managed by Local Enterprise Partnerships). This is why the County Council's Local Transport Plan allocation has been cut substantially from £10m in 2010 to £6.2m in 2012-15 and to £3.6m in 2015/16 and for the next 3 years.

The reduction in funding has meant that we have had to prioritise schemes that align well with the aims and objectives of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). What limited funds remain with LTP are being used for forward design and match funding of Growth Deal schemes, which leaves little opportunity for delivery of smaller scale, local schemes, including walking and cycling initiatives.

The Transport Infrastructure Plan reflects this shift in the way capital funding is allocated to local authorities and sets out the planned investment in transport infrastructure across Devon covering the period 2014 to 2030. It is complementary to the Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 and the detailed infrastructure delivery plans, which have been produced to support development as set out in Local Plans/Core Strategies.

#### **5. Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal opportunities**

Since 2014 there have been 2 rounds of Growth Deal funding and to date, Devon County Council has secured £8.3m to deliver the following schemes within Exeter (additional funds have been secured for the rest of the county):

- Bridge Road outbound widening
- Upgrade to A379 Sandy Park junction
- Marsh Barton Rail Station

The above schemes are scheduled to commence this financial year.

Expressions of Interest for Growth Deal round 3 are currently being considered for the funding period 2017/18 to 2020. Devon County Council has proposed the Park and Ride scheme for the A30/A377 junction and a package to fund Exeter Cycle Routes, both currently subject to public consultation. Early indications suggest approximately £40m Growth Deal funding will be allocated across a range of projects (including non-transport schemes) and split between the 4 local authorities within the LEP area. This further underlines the challenges ahead with the limited amount of capital funding that is available for significant transport schemes and the need to be realistic about what interventions may be affordable.

## **6. Engagement with Partners and interested transport groups**

Exeter City Council's Scrutiny Committee (Community) firstly agreed the setting up of a Transport Strategy Working Group involving officers from Exeter City Council, Devon County Council, representatives from Stagecoach South West, First Great Western and other specialisms, as appropriate. Secondly, it agreed that following its first meeting and annually thereafter to host a forum to engage with Members and local transport interest groups. The minutes will be circulated to Exeter City Council's Scrutiny Committee (Economy) and Exeter HATOC. It is recommended that following this, on an annual basis a report is presented to HATOC for discussion as the relevant forum for highways and transportation matters.

## **7. Financial Considerations**

Recognising the limited funding directly available to the County Council, in recent years the County Council has demonstrated a strong track record (relative to other authorities in the UK) in securing a range of funding to deliver critical highway improvements, rail infrastructure and walking and cycling routes. In Exeter, this has included securing funding via the Department for Transport's Local Pinchpoint Fund (Tithebarn Link Road), Local Sustainable Transport Fund (Exeter Central Forecourt) and New Stations Fund (Newcourt Station); the Department for Communities and Local Government's Regional Growth Fund (advanced works for Bridge Road), and providing the design and business case for the Highways Agency's Pinchpoint Fund (Junction 30 improvements).

It is recognised that new funding initiatives and opportunities are likely to be created by changes in Government policy in the period to 2030. Indeed, Highways England's Housing and Growth Fund and Cycling Fund have recently been announced and the County Council is working closely with Highways England to identify potential schemes. By having a Transport Infrastructure Plan in place we will continue to be proactive in developing a pipeline of schemes and be in a position to take advantage of funding opportunities as and when they arise.

We will also need to continue to work closely with Exeter City Council to ensure that critical Growth Deal match funding using Community Infrastructure Levy is identified and committed to at an early stage of developing future schemes.

## **8. Legal Considerations**

There are no specific legal considerations relevant to this report.

## **9. Risk Management Considerations**

The future infrastructure priorities will be planned to minimise risks to delivery by making prudent assumptions about funding, consultation and technical risks associated with individual schemes.

Each individual scheme is regularly assessed for risks at its different stages of design and construction with appropriate mitigation measures introduced where possible. Individual scheme reports to Cabinet and HATOC will include information on relevant risks.

## 10. Conclusion

The approach to funding transport infrastructure has changed substantially over the last couple of years, with the aim of enabling greater decision making as part of the Local Enterprise Partnership-managed Growth Deal process. These changes, along with substantially reducing budgets and the introduction of Community Infrastructure Levy have significant implications for the future delivery of transport schemes.

The County Council has had to adapt to these changes by focusing its limited Local Transport Plan resources on forward design and match-funding schemes which have strong links to the economic growth of the city. This has nevertheless seen continued successful delivery of key elements of the Exeter Transport Strategy. Indeed, the Local Transport Plan remains a key and relevant strategy document as it was prepared to help mitigate the impacts of housing and job-related traffic and to complement the growth aspirations set out in Exeter City Council's Core Strategy. It is also well aligned with the Local Enterprise Partnership's key objectives of housing and jobs delivery.

The proposals set out in the recommendations in respect of the Transport Strategy Working Group provide an opportunity for better engagement with interested transport groups and increased involvement of communities in future decision-making on transportation initiatives.

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### **Electoral Divisions: All in Exeter**

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
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Nil

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sc/cr/Exeter transport strategy  
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Progress on Exeter Transport Strategy in Devon & Torbay Local Transport Plan 2011-2026

LTP Theme	Proposal	Progress
<b>Improve Access to the City Centre</b>	Improve comfort, journey reliability and cost of rail travel – lobbying.	Peninsula Rail Task Force has been formed to lobby the Government for a more resilient and reliable network; faster journey times and better connectivity, and sufficient capacity and comfort – it is due to submit a 20 year plan in Summer 2016.
	Develop a new P&R to the west of the city.	Pre-application discussions and exhibitions for site at A30/A377 interchange being held in July 2015. Planning application due by end of 2015/16.
	Deliver hierarchy of cycle connections between key locations.	Cycle consultation currently in progress on 3 strategic routes, connecting Monkerton, Pinhoe and Newcourt developments into city centre. Designs for SW Exeter A379 bridge have been produced.
	Complete Exe Estuary cycle route.	Completed.
	Improve the walking environment.	Removal of traffic on Sidwell Street and narrowing of New North Road to simplify crossings for highest volumes of ped movements. Designs being progressed for Queen St to St David's with improvements at Clock Tower.
	Improve bus journey times with a particular focus on the city centre.	Removal of traffic from Sidwell Street has reduced delays to over 1,000 buses a day travelling through the city centre.
	Improve parking enforcement.	There has been increased highway enforcement on the radial corridors since the enforcement was taken 'in-house' in 2014.
	Develop a traffic management strategy focused on key corridors into city.	Since 2014, funding has been used to support expansion of residents parking schemes. Future demands on the on-street parking account may limit what may be delivered in future. Multi-modal interventions planned will help manage increased demand for travel into the city centre by offering high quality alternatives to the car.
	Further development of cycle network – increasing number of high quality segregated routes.	See above comment on hierarchy of cycle connections.
	Develop branded high quality bus system including: Smartcard/Real time passenger info/Enhanced bus priority on new routes/additional P&R capacity to North West of Exeter/well designed bus station.	Upgraded Real Time information system to be introduced in 2015/16, initially being provided through Smartphones and the internet. Some on-street information displays being installed this summer and real time linked bus priority at traffic signals is to follow. Park and Change is being investigated on routes north of the city. Bus Station proposals to be delivered by developers – DCC are engaged in these discussions with the developer and ECC.
Investigate locations for freight consolidation centres.	No progress.	

	Deliver the Devon Metro project.	Central Forecourt enhancements delivered. 3 new stations in Exeter area are either complete, under construction or due to start in 2015/16 with timetabling approved to accommodate all new stops. First Great Western new franchise until at least 2019 will deliver improvements to comfort, quality, capacity and increased frequency on certain lines.
	Investigate potential of 'park and plug' facilities at P&R sites.	No progress.
<b>Deliver East of Exeter development</b>	Delivery of key access roads.	Clyst Honiton Bypass, Junction 29 completed. Tithebarn Link Road due for completion in July 2015.
	Develop long term area wide travel plan with parking charges.	Limited occupations but individual travel plans exist. With significant reductions in revenue budget, there is limited scope to take this forward for the foreseeable future.
	Develop high quality bus and cycle connections.	Off road cycle routes delivered between Redhayes Bridge and Cranbrook. Improved cycle link to Exeter Airport delivered. Bus priority lanes delivered on old A30 and at Jct 29. Designs being progressed for bus priority through Monkerton development to Pinhoe Road.
	Assist in delivery of [Cranbrook] rail station.	Construction of station in progress. Due for completion in 2015/16.
<b>Deliver Major Developments within Exeter</b>	Develop an area wide travel plan and consider charging for car park.	No progress although LSTF access to employment programme and TravelDevon grant programme has engaged with numerous employers across the city to incentivise travel by sustainable modes.
	Enhance walking and cycling links between city centre and development areas.	Linked to segregated cycle route proposals – see Improve Access to City Centre text.
	Review the traffic management of key junctions.	Bus priority measures to be considered as part of Real Time Passenger Information roll-out and reviews of Countess Wear roundabout and Moor Lane roundabout will follow completion of Bridge Road widening and Tithebarn Link Road schemes.
	Create new stations at Newcourt, Monkerton and Marsh Barton.	Newcourt compete. Marsh Barton due to commence in 2015/16. Monkerton GRIP 2 study complete but is a longer term aspiration (beyond plan period).
	Improve rail frequency to Cranbrook, Honiton, Axminster and Exmouth.	Network Rail studies ongoing investigating increasing the frequency on Exeter to Waterloo line. No current plans for Exmouth branchline.
	Free up road capacity on Ring Road – Alphington Cross – Bridge Road.	Western Way works complete. Marsh Barton Road to Alphington Cross complete. Bridge Road widening scheme tenders out – scheduled to be on site in early 2016.
<b>Enable and Support Smarter Travel</b>	Improve access to education and training by working in partnership with University of Exeter/Schools etc.	Partnership work ongoing in 2015/16 with University of Exeter, Exeter College, Secondary and Primary Schools. Over 10,000 students engaged annually through LSTF Access to Education programme. On site facilities delivered, e.g. cycle parking alongside educational, awareness raising/behavioural programmes.

	Support continued programme of Travel Planning with retail, leisure, schools and employers.	LSTF programme providing information, improving local bus services, providing skills training and events to support and inspire people working / living in the city.
	Raise awareness, maintain high safety standards by using high quality design in all transport schemes.	Walking and Cycling programme and LSTF/TravelDevon work has helped contribute to this. Ongoing work to further embrace latest designs/innovations in sustainable travel design of new schemes.
	Support expansion of car clubs.	Continued growth across the city building on success but also being funded through development.
	Support continued provision of transport schemes for people with disabilities.	London Inn Square enhancements and Exeter Central Library public realm schemes have effectively engaged with disability groups to incorporate design feedback/suggestions in the final scheme.
<b>Protect Exeter as a Gateway</b>	Support low cost improvements to trunk road network.	Junction 30 SB off slip widening scheme design and business case submitted by DCC in partnership with Highways Agency. Scheme delivered during 2014/15.
	Work with train operators to improve connections to London and rest of UK and support electrification of mainline.	Peninsula Rail Task Force lobbying and studies as part of 20 year plan is ongoing and FGW/SWT franchise processes due to deliver improved journey times, quality, capacity and comfort. 20 year plan to be submitted by Summer 2016.
	Improve arrival experience at key transport interchanges.	Central Station Forecourt improvements complete. Engaged on bus station redevelopment. Discussions ongoing with Exeter Airport re forecourt improvements and with FGW re St David's Station.
	Support improvements to strategic road network with managed motorway scheme around Exeter.	Not justified currently – no progress being made currently.