

MEETING OF THE BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB) – THURSDAY 7 MARCH 2024

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Item 4: Update on the approach to developing aspirations for prioritised strategic transport infrastructure schemes across Berkshire

Purpose of Report

1. To update Members on the work carried out in developing a prioritised pipeline of strategic transport infrastructure schemes that will demonstrate the ongoing need for transport investments in Berkshire and help maximise the levels of funding secured by our local authorities and their strategic partners.

Background

2. At the meeting on 9th November 2023 BLTB agreed to the establishment of the appropriate officer and partner structures and workshops to develop a list of prioritised strategic transport across Berkshire. The rationale behind the need for such a list was set out in the paper considered by BLTB at that meeting and is attached as Appendix 1 for ease of reference.

Update on the production of a list of prioritised strategic transport schemes in Berkshire

3. Immediately following the last BLTB the Berkshire Strategic Transport Members' Forum met to commence the process of building a consensus around the top Berkshire-wide strategic transport infrastructure priorities. A full list of schemes was considered, which had been drawn from the Transport for South East Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and the spreadsheet containing a local pipeline of transport aspirations, both of which were also shared with BLTB in November.
4. BSTF considered and discussed the list of schemes and agreed that transport officers, working with our external partners should take the initial feedback from the meeting and develop a long list of priorities. This should then be brought back to the BLTB and BSTF meetings in March to help Members make an informed decision on which schemes they wish to support. Furthermore, they request that this meeting be held in person and be interactive to enable a meaningful debate. BSTF also agreed that in advance of the March meetings an additional BSTF should be held online in February, for which officers should develop a portfolio of ideas and options for initial discussion. This timescale enables us to feed into the Government funding decision processes related to the next Spending Review later this year.
5. BSTF therefore reconvened, virtually, on 6th February to consider the additional work that officers have conducted developing the infrastructure schemes. Since the November meeting, officers had reviewed the pipeline of schemes with a particular focus on deliverability. They had also assessed them in very broad terms (high/medium/low) against the criteria the Berkshire LEP has used in the past to evaluate projects and make funding investment decisions. As well as deliverability, this focusses on sustainability, economic benefit to Berkshire, natural capital, and social value. Political priority had also been identified but not formally assessed as this was a key part of the discussion process.
6. Throughout this process Members have stressed that they are less concerned with where a particular scheme is located and more about what it might achieve for Berkshire. They also wish to

encourage cross boundary working, for the benefit of residents across a wide area. This approach was discussed and Members agreed that it would be helpful to look at three broad types of scheme:

- Those which whilst of significant importance to Berkshire are too large complex or geographically out of the area to be delivered by the LEP or local authorities, but they are nevertheless vital to the Berkshire economy. For these schemes we may want to advocate and support them, but we will not be funding and delivering them directly.
 - Those which are cover a number of local authority areas in Berkshire and which we can deliver together, working in partnership across boundaries.
 - Those which whilst they are important locally, are not necessarily strategic in their impact and which can be developed by individual authorities in their areas, but are not for the BLTB to focus on.
7. It was also agreed that it would be helpful if different weighting were considered, so that a number of prioritisation scenarios could be developed. Deliverability is clearly very important in the weighting process, as however much a scheme might align to strategic priorities, it must be deliverable. So different options have been developed based on a range of different weightings, which will be considered at the BSTF Meeting this immediately follows the BLTB to help produce a focused list that meets Members' priorities.
 8. Members also steered officers to pay close attention to what makes government and private funding more attractive, which at a strategic level is likely to be those schemes that produce economic growth. The priorities will also need to be flexible so that we can respond to different funding calls dependent on the focus of the request. They can also evolve to reflect political change.
 9. Members therefore asked that the next phase of the work focus on identifying priorities and key messages for both short and long terms schemes, with impactful short term schemes worked up alongside the longer term messages. This will form the basis of the discussion at the next BSTF Meeting and will enable us to provide a robust and well evidenced set of priorities for a formal decision to be made at the BLTB scheduled for July.