

Title: Bus Service Improvement Plan- Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Approval: Durham County Council programme.
Report of: Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport
Portfolio: Transport

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of Durham's Safe and Accessible Bus Stop Programme which has a total project value of £1,847,371. This programme sits within the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Programme which has a total value of £3,307,379. In line with the delegation agreed at July 2024 Cabinet, the BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Programme Business Case (PBC) was endorsed by Technical Officers Group and Finance and Investment Board in December 2024 and approved by the Chief Executive on 8 January 2025, a list of individual schemes and notional allocation of funding against each of these was included within the report.

The assurance route for interventions within the PBC was also agreed, noting each intervention would be required to go through scheme level assurance inclusive of detailed consultation, local approval and S151 sign off from the sponsoring Local Authority prior to sign off. These requirements have now been fulfilled for the Durham Safe and Accessible Bus Stop Programme, and approval is sought to establish a Grant Funding Agreement with Durham County Council to progress delivery. The report was supported at the Technical Officers Group meeting on 14 April 2025 and the Finance and Investment Board via written procedure on 2 May 2025.

The recently published Mayor's Local Transport Plan centres around five key areas, including expanding the infrastructure and making it more resilient; and enhancing safety, especially for women and girls. This project supports these two areas by delivering key safety improvements to a significant number of stops and shelters within the region, as well as ensuring the infrastructure on the bus network is resilient.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to:

- i. approve £1,847,371.94 of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding for delivery of Durham's Safe and Accessible Bus Stops programme.

A. Summary of Investment Proposal (Context)

Project Outline	
Funding Source	Bus Service Improvement Plan Capital Programme
Proposal Name	Safe and Accessible Bus Stops
Lead Organisation	Durham County Council
Delivery Areas	Durham
Start Date	April 2025
Financial End Date	March 2026
Practical completion date (date by which all outputs will be achieved)	March 2026
Total Project Value	£1,847,371.94
Grant Amount Requested	£1,847,371.94
Budget Implications	The requested grant can be met within the overall BSIP capital budget.

1. Background

- 1.1** The North East's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is the region's response to the Government's National Bus Strategy for England which was initially published in March 2021 and has subsequently been refreshed on an annual basis. The BSIP set out a clear ambition to improve real time passenger information by moving to a next generation system.
- 1.2** At Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in March 2023, Members approved a funding award of £163.5m of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding, of which £73.75m was allocated for capital delivery. At the same meeting the JTC made the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EP) and Scheme which set out through a statutory partnership, how Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and local bus operators will work together to deliver BSIP outcomes which included improving information provision. This approval confirmed funding allocations to enable BSIP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be delivered.
- 1.3** In March 2024, JTC Members approved and allocated the remaining unallocated BSIP capital funding totalling £40.468m to several sub-programmes which align to the refreshed BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme.
- 1.4** At the July 2024, meeting of the North East CA Cabinet, Members re-confirmed the decisions previously made by JTC and delegated authority to the Chief Executive to enter into the relevant decisions in agreement with Monitoring Officer and the Director of Finance and Investment and in consultation with the Mayor and the relevant Cabinet Member.
- 1.5** In line with the Single Assurance Framework and in line with the delegation agreed at July 2024 Cabinet, the BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stops programme business case which has a total value of £3,307,379 was endorsed by Technical Officers Group and Finance and Investment Board in December 2024 and approved by the Chief Executive by delegated authority in January 2025. This approval has enabled individual assurance statements to be progressed which sets out final costings and designs for interventions included within the Safe and Accessible Bus Stops programme. Durham County Council have finalised their Assurance Statement including their list of interventions and are now in a position to commence delivery. Other schemes from across the region will come forward for approval in due course subject to finalisation of their Assurance Statement.

2. The Investment Proposal

Durham's Safe and Accessible Bus Stop Programme will see the delivery of a range of measures to 444 bus stops within the County. Key interventions include:

- New shelters and upgrades to existing shelters
- Enhanced information provision
- A range of accessibility improvements to surrounding public realm to support the local population in accessing bus stops. These improvements such as increased pavement width, raised kerbs, and dropped kerbs will fundamentally improve accessibility to bus stops for individuals with mobility impairments or disabilities who have the greatest difficulty in accessing services.

Procurement will be undertaken by Durham County Council, who have confirmed in their Assurance Statement that an existing framework will be utilised to call-off the necessary deliverables.

This project is part of the wider BSIP Safe and Accessibility Bus Stops Programme which involves improvements to bus stops and accessibility improvements to enable improved access to stops across the region. These are focused improvements to significantly improve the safety and security provision to passengers across the region.

An Assurance Statement has been produced which confirms that this project can be fully delivered by March 2026, and meets the overarching objectives of the BSIP, the Local Transport Plan, and the wider North East CA priorities.

2.1 Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs	24/25	25/26	Total
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Removal and Install New Shelter including enhanced signage and information	-	168	168
Remove and Install New Bus Stop Flag / Sign	-	444	444
Raised Kerb at Bus Stop to improve accessibility	-	50	50
Movement of Street Furniture to improve accessibility	-	11	11

Description of Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
Improved Customer satisfaction with bus stops.	6 months post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)
Improved perception of safety and security	6 months post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)
Increased modal shift to bus by removing perceived and actual barriers to bus stops / bus services.	6 months post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)

2.2 Timetable for Implementation

Milestone	Forecast Date
Grant funding Agreements	April 2025
Delivery Commences	April 2025
Delivery Completion	March 2026

2.3 Evaluation

Evaluation will be undertaken by the scheme promoter in partnership with the Enhanced Partnership Team; a monitoring and evaluation plan has been produced and will be embedded into the forthcoming Grant Funding Agreement.

2.4 Appraisal

Independent appraisal identified no fundamental issues to programme delivery or viability. This provides comfort that proposals are sufficiently developed and pose limited delivery risk.

2.5 RAG Assessment

The project's full business case has been assured by specialist independent appraisers who have provided the following summary:

Overall RAG assessment		
Risk Rating	Strategic case	Green
	Commercial case	Green
	Economic case	Green
	Financial case	Green
	Management case	Green
	Overall rating	Green

2.6 Recommended Conditions of Funding

The award of funding would be **subject to the following proposed funding conditions:**

No.	Condition
1.	All funding must be defrayed by March 2026
2.	All funding can only be spent on scheme deliverables set out in the project business case.

B. Potential Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

This project supports the strategic aspirations of the North East CA, as detailed in the Corporate Plan which aims is to increase opportunity, create more well-paid employment, improve transport connections, and build a greener North East.

Within the Mayor's manifesto, there is a commitment that the region's public transport network only works if it works for everyone, ensuring the elderly and those with disabilities are no longer excluded. This project fundamentally supports this ambition.

C. Key risks

The key risk associated with this report is the ability of scheme promoters to defray BSIP capital expenditure within the overall BSIP programme timescales required by the Department for Transport (March 2026). Approval and agreement of the proposals outlined within this report aid in the delivery of interventions within the required timescales.

D. Financial and other resources implications

The financial profile for the programme is outlined below:

Funding source- BSIP Capital	2025/26	Total
<i>Durham County Council</i>	£1,847,371.94	£1,847,371.94
Total	£1,847,371.94	£1,847,371.94

Status of match funding:

No match funding is required for BSIP.

Funding availability:

The funding which has been identified in this report is fully allocated and has previously been committed to this sub-programme by the Joint Transport Committee and was re-confirmed by North East CA Cabinet in July 2024. This allocation identified for Durham within the signed off business case in January 2025 has not deviated.

Name of Programme/Scheme	Date of approval sought / agreed	Value £
BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Programme Business Case Approval.	Delegated Decision approved in January 2025 (in line with Cabinet approval in July 2024)	£3,307,379
BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus stops – Durham’s programme approval	April 2025 at Technical Officers Group and Finance and Investment Board	£1,847,371.94
Total BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stop Programme Funding Remaining	-	£1,460,007.06

The remaining budget identified above is sufficient to fund all remaining schemes within the overall programme.

E. Legal implications

Grant Funding Agreements (GFA) are being developed, prepared, and will be approved by Newcastle City Council Legal for onwards agreement with scheme promoter. GFAs will minimise any legal risks and ensure the North East CAs obligations to the Department for Transport in regard to BSIP funding are met, these obligations will be appropriately transferred to each scheme promoter through the GFA. Clear roles and responsibilities have been established concerning the design and development of proposed infrastructure, including ensuring compliance with Health and Safety and CDM regulations.

F. Equalities implications

The North East CA follows the Public Sector Equality duty, and this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. In June 2024 the North East CA adopted equality objectives to reflect the different roles of the Combined Authority as an employer, a commissioner and deliverer of services, and a civic leader. Accessibility Improvements to the surrounding areas leading to and from bus stops will significantly improve access to those individuals and groups who experience mobility and accessibility difficulties.

G. Consultation and engagement

Both the wider BSIP Bus Priority Infrastructure programme and this project has been consulted on and considered through Heads of Transport of the LA7 constituent authorities and at the March 2024 meeting of the Joint Transport Committee. BSIP capital funding was approved and allocated at the July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet.

Durham County Council have undertaken consultation and stakeholder engagement activities with local ward members, the public and businesses to compile the delivery programme.

Within the GFA, several clauses are included relating to publicity and communications. In addition, scheme promoters are issued with the North East CA's communication guidelines which assists in the creation of impactful communications which represent the North East CA in relevant and relatable ways and fairly reflect our role as a funder.

H. Appendices

[Delegated Decision Report](#) - Bus Service Improvement Plan – Safe and Accessible Bus Stops SubProgramme – 8 January 2025.

I. Background papers

[North East Combined Authority Cabinet Meeting July 2024](#)

J. Contact officers.

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K. Glossary

North East CA: North East Combined Authority

BSIP: Bus Service Improvement Plan

JTC: Joint Transport Committee

DfT: Department for Transport

L. Consultee

Cabinet Member:	Director/Head of Service:	Director of Finance and Investment:	Monitoring Officer:
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

