

Title: Bus Service Improvement Plan – Newcastle Safe and Accessible Bus Stop Project Approval
Report of: Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport
Portfolio: Transport

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to approve Newcastle's City Council's Safe and Accessible Bus Stop project, which is funded through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and has a total project value of £400,203.

The project sits within the BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Programme Business Case (PBC) which was approved in January 2025 by delegated decision and has a total value of £3.3 million.

Proposals within the Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Programme are required to complete scheme level assurance inclusive of detailed consultation, local approval and S151 sign off from the promoting Local Authority prior to approval. These requirements have now been fulfilled, and in line with thresholds set out in the Single Assurance Framework, approval is sought to complete a Grant Funding Agreement with Newcastle City Council to progress the delivery of the scheme.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to:

- a. Approve the Newcastle City Council Safe and Accessible Bus Stop project which has a total project value of £400,203.
- b. Agree to establish a Grant Funding Agreement with Newcastle City Council, enabling the payment of BSIP grant funding.

A. Summary of Investment Proposal (Context)

Project Outline	
Funding Source	Bus Service Improvement Plan Capital Programme
Proposal Name	Newcastle City Council Safe and Accessible Bus Stop Project
Lead Organisation	Newcastle City Council
Delivery Areas	Newcastle
Start Date	November 2025
Financial End Date	May 2026
Practical completion date (date by which all outputs will be achieved)	May 2026
Total Project Value	£400,203
Grant Amount Requested	£400,203
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 upgrade bus stations and stops to ensure that facilities are in line with modern standards, to increase safety and to ensure accessibility is of the highest standard.

- 1.2** At Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in March 2023, Members approved a funding award of £163.5m of BSIP funding, of which £73.75m was allocated for capital delivery. At the same meeting the JTC made the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme which set out through a statutory partnership, how Local Transport Authorities and local bus operators will work together to deliver BSIP outcomes which included encouraging a shift from private vehicles to public transport.
- 1.3** In July 2023, JTC Members approved £33.29m of BSIP capital funding for investment in Bus Priority Infrastructure and Intelligent Transport Systems. 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. This included an indicative allocation for a Safe and Accessible Stops sub-programme.
- 1.4** At the 30 July 2024 meeting of the North East Combined Authority (North East CA) Cabinet, Members re-confirmed the decisions previously made by JTC and delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and the Director of Finance and Investment and in consultation with the Mayor and the relevant Cabinet Member to enter into the relevant agreements for up to £40.468m of BSIP capital funding (Cabinet Decision C24/7/24 (9)).
- 1.5** In line with the Single Assurance Framework and in line with the delegation agreed at July 2024 Cabinet, Newcastle's City Council's Safe and Accessible Bus Stop project, has now come forward for approval following successful assurance.

2. The Investment Proposal

The project primarily involves accessibility and infrastructure enhancements to bus waiting facilities. The main improvements include:

- Raising kerbs at numerous bus shelters and bus poles to provide level boarding for passengers, particularly benefiting those passengers with mobility needs.
- Widening of footways to improve pedestrian access, relocation of existing bus shelters, and installing new facilities to optimise space and shelter capacity.
- In a small number of locations, shelters are being expanded (for example, to a six-bay configuration), and redundant bus stop poles are being removed to streamline layout.

Overall, the works aim to modernise bus stop infrastructure, improve safety and comfort for passengers, and enhance the overall accessibility and operational efficiency of facilities.

A fully compliant programme level business case with reserved matters was approved in January 2025, this has now been supplemented by a project specific assurance statement which confirms that the Newcastle Safe and Accessible Bus Stop 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 as detailed in the Corporate Plan.

2.1 Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs	25/26	Total
Accessibility improvements to bus stops	59	59
Upgraded shelters	2	2
New bus stop flags	19	19

Description of Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
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Improved customer satisfaction)	1 year post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in Monitoring and
Improved safety and security	1 year post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in Monitoring and Evaluation

2.2 Timetable for Implementation

Milestone	Forecast Date
Grant funding Agreements	November 2025
Delivery Commences	November 2025
Delivery Completion	May 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 in the Grant Funding Agreement.

2.4 Appraisal

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

2.5 RAG Assessment

The project's assurance statement 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 will be **subject to the following proposed funding conditions**:

No.	Condition
1.	All funding must be defrayed by March 2027
2.	All funding can only be spent on scheme deliverables set out in the Assurance statement

B. Potential Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

The LTP and its associated Delivery Plan place a key focus on delivering a fully integrated public transport system, better travel planning and ensuring smoother journeys. The proposal included

within this report directly contributes towards achieving these aims, and in turn, supports the North East Combined Authority's corporate objectives, in particular, delivering the Home of real opportunity and a North East we are proud to call home. The benefits that will be realised through the delivery of the BSIP funded scheme included in this report will improve the attractiveness, safety, accessibility, punctuality and reliability of public transport, leading to more people choosing to travel sustainably.

C. Key risks

The key risk associated with this report is the ability of the scheme promoter to defray BSIP capital expenditure within the overall BSIP programme timescales required by the Department for Transport (i.e. by March 2027). Approval and agreement of the proposal 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. All amounts are funded from the BSIP capital programme and the grant recipient is Newcastle City Council:

Funding source	2026/27	Total
BSIP Capital	£400,203	£400,203
Total (£)	£400,203	£400,203

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 with the Safe and Accessibility Bus Stop programme approved in January 2025.

Name of Programme/Scheme	Date of Approval Sought/agreed	Value £
Programme: BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stops	Delegated Decision in January 2025.	£3,307,379
BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stops- Schemes Approved	Via delegated decisions	£1,847,371
Approval Sought: Newcastle City Council's Safe and Accessible Bus Stops project.	Via this Delegated Decision	£400,203
Total BSIP Bus Priority Tranche 1 Programme Funding Remaining		£ 1,059,804

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

E. Legal implications

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

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. This project will improve bus

passengers journey experience through accessibility and safety enhancements to bus stop waiting facilities.

G. Consultation and engagement

Both the wider BSIP Safe and Accessibility Bus Stop programme and this project have been consulted on and considered through Heads of Transport of the LA7 constituent authorities. BSIP capital funding was allocated at the July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet.

Newcastle City Council have undertaken consultation and stakeholder engagement activities as part of scheme development, including with local residents and business.

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

N/A

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

CDM – The Construction (Design and Management) regulations

TCR- Transport for City Regions

GFA- Grant Funding Agreement

L. Consultee

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