

**Title:** Bus Service Improvement Plan - Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Approvals

**Portfolio:** Transport

**Report of:** Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport

## Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to ask the Chief Executive to approve and enter into Grant Funding Agreements for the following two Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) capital schemes:

- Durham county-wide Bus Stop Improvement Programme (Phase 2), totalling £2.51m
- Northumberland county-wide Bus Stop Improvement Programme, totalling £1.39m

Both schemes are fully funded through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) capital programme allocation of £40.468m, approved by the North East Combined Authority (North East CA) Cabinet on 30 July 2024, which also delegated authority to the Chief Executive to approve investments within the allocation and to enter into associated grant funding agreements.

Proposals within the BSIP Capital programme are required to go through scheme level assurance inclusive of detailed consultation and local approvals prior to sign off. These requirements have now been fulfilled for both the Durham County Wide Bus Stop Improvement Programme and the Northumberland County Wide Bus Stop Improvement Programme, and in line with thresholds set out in the Single Assurance Framework and the delegation provided to the Chief Executive agreed by Cabinet in July 2024, approval is sought to complete a Grant Funding Agreement with the respective county councils responsible for scheme delivery.

## Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to approve the completion of grant funding agreements for the following two schemes:

- BSIP – Durham County Wide Bus Stop Improvement Programme (Tranche 2) with a total BSIP capital funding allocation of £2,519,977.96
- BSIP – Northumberland County Wide Bus Stop Improvement Programme with a total funding allocation of £1,392,453.

### A. Summary of Investment Proposal (Context)

Project Outline	
<b>Funding Source</b>	Bus Service Improvement Plan Capital Programme
<b>Proposal Name</b>	Safe and Accessible Bus Stops
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Durham County Council
<b>Delivery Areas</b>	Durham
<b>Start Date</b>	February 2026
<b>Financial End Date</b>	March 2027
<b>Practical completion date (date by which all outputs will be achieved)</b>	March 2027
<b>Total Project Value</b>	£2,519,977.96
<b>Grant Amount Requested</b>	£2,519,977.96
<b>Budget Implications</b>	The requested grant can be met within the overall BSIP capital budget.
Project Outline	

<b>Funding Source</b>	Bus Service Improvement Plan Capital Programme
<b>Proposal Name</b>	Safe and Accessible Bus Stops
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Northumberland County Council
<b>Delivery Areas</b>	Northumberland
<b>Start Date</b>	March 2026
<b>Financial End Date</b>	December 2026
<b>Practical completion date (date by which all outputs will be achieved)</b>	March 2027
<b>Total Project Value</b>	£1,392,453
<b>Grant Amount Requested</b>	£1,392,453
<b>Budget Implications</b>	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 make bus travel faster, more affordable, and a more attractive offer to customers.
- 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. This confirmed funding allocations to enable BSIP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be delivered.
- 1.3 In July 2023, the JTC 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.
- 1.4 At the 30 July 2024, meeting of the North East CA Cabinet, Members re-confirmed the decisions previously made by the JTC and delegated authority to the Chief Executive (in consultation with the Mayor, relevant Cabinet Member, Monitoring Officer and Director of Finance and Investment) to enter into 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 the delegation agreed at July 2024 Cabinet, both the Durham County-wide Bus Stop Improvement Programme and the Northumberland County-wide Bus Stop Improvement Programme, has come forward for approval following successful assurance.

## 2. The Investment Proposal

### Durham County-wide Bus Stop Improvement Package (Tranche 2)

Durham's Safe and Accessible Bus Stop Programme will see the delivery of a range of measures to 154 bus stops within the County. Key interventions include:

- Removal of existing brick and glass shelters
- New shelters at all 154 locations which will be fully glazed for enhanced visibility and improved safety and access
- Enhanced footpaths and public realm upgrades in vicinity of bus stops
- Raised kerbs to enable easier access to buses
- Enhanced timetable and wayfinding provision

### Northumberland County-wide Bus Stop Improvement Package

Northumberland's Safe and Accessible Bus Stop Improvement Programme will see the delivery of a range of measures to 173 bus stops within the County. Working in a partnership with the town and parish councils, key interventions include:

- Removal of existing shelters
- New shelters and upgrades to existing shelters
- New seating

- Improvements to accessibility

Both proposals are part of the wider BSIP Safe and Accessibility Bus Stops Programme which aims to deliver a significant upgrade in accessibility, safety and comfort at bus waiting facilities across the region. Two project approvals have already been made within this programme: a first phase of improvements in County Durham, and programme of improvements in Tyne and Wear.

Assurance statements for both proposals have been submitted which confirm that the projects can be fully delivered by March 2027, meet the overarching objectives of the BSIP, the Mayor's Local Transport Plan, and the wider North East CA priorities outlined in the corporate plan. Assurance statements have been independently appraised by retained transport assurance consultants, who have recommended both projects for approval.

## 2.1 Outputs and Outcomes

The following outputs and outcomes apply:

### Durham County-wide Bus Stop Improvement Project

Outputs	26/27	Total
Removal and installation of new shelter	154	<b>154</b>
New bus stop flags	92	<b>92</b>
New raised kerbs	52	<b>52</b>

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)

### Northumberland County-wide Bus Stop Improvement Project

Outputs	26/27	Total
Removal and Installation replacement of existing Shelters	7	<b>7</b>
Upgrades to existing shelters	26	<b>26</b>
Installation of bus stop seating	78	<b>78</b>
Installation of new shelters	39	<b>39</b>
New bus stop flags	96	<b>96</b>

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	6 months post completion	Increase from baseline (identified

to bus stops / bus services.		in M&E)
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## 2.2 Timetable for Implementation

### Durham County-wide Bus Stop Project

Milestone	Forecast Date
Grant Funding Agreements	March 2026
Delivery Commences	March 2026
Delivery Completion	March 2027

### Northumberland County-wide Bus Stop Project

Milestone	Forecast Date
Grant Funding Agreements	March 2026
Delivery Commences	April 2026
Delivery Completion	December 2026

## 2.3 Evaluation

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

## 2.4 Appraisal

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

## 2.5 RAG Assessment

Both programme level business cases and assurance statements have 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
	<b>Overall rating</b>	<b>Green</b>

## 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 2027
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

The Mayor's Local Transport Plan (LTP) and its associated Delivery Plan are centred on delivering a fully integrated public transport system, inclusive of better travel planning to ensure smoother journeys and a key focus on safety and security for women and girls. The proposals included within this report directly contribute towards achieving the objectives of the LTP, and in turn, support the North East Combined Authority corporate objectives of delivering a Home of real opportunity and a North East we are proud to call home. The benefits that will be realised through the delivery of these BSIP funded schemes will improve the attractiveness, accessibility, safety and security 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 scheme promoters to defray BSIP capital expenditure within the overall BSIP programme timescales required by the Department for Transport (March 2027). Approval and agreement of the proposals outlined within this report aid in the delivery of interventions within the required timescales.

## D. Corporate Implications

### D1. Financial and other resources implications

The financial profile for the programme is outlined below:

<b>Scheme Name</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Durham County Wide Bus Stop Improvement Project</i>	£2,519,977.96	<b>£2,519,977.96</b>
<i>Northumberland County Wide Bus Stop Improvement Project</i>	£1,392,453	<b>£1,392,453</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,912,430.96</b>	<b>£3,912,430.96</b>

#### **Status of match funding:**

No match funding is required for BSIP.

#### **Funding availability:**

The funding which has been identified in this report is allocated to the schemes seeking approval through the Cabinet decision provided in July 2024 (C24/7/24).

### D2. Legal implications

The comments of the Monitoring Officer have been included in this report.

### D3. 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 distinct roles of the Combined Authority as an employer, a commissioner and deliverer of services, and a civic leader. Both proposals will improve the passenger journey experience through accessibility and safety enhancements to bus stop environment and waiting facilities.

### D4. Consultation and engagement

Both the wider BSIP programme and the Bus Stop Improvement Programme have been consulted on and considered by 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.

Both Durham and Northumberland have undertaken consultation and stakeholder engagement activities with each of the relevant parish and town councils, local ward members, the public and businesses in the development and assembly of delivery programmes.

**E. Appendices**

N/A

**F. Background papers**

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

**G. Contact officers.**

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**H. Glossary**

**North East CA:** North East Combined Authority  
**BSIP:** Bus Service Improvement Plan  
**JTC:** Joint Transport Committee  
**TOG:** Technical Officers Group  
**FIB:** Finance and Investment Board  
**DfT:** Department for Transport  
**GFA:** Grant Funding Agreement  
**CDM:** The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations  
**M&E:** Monitoring and Evaluation

**I. Consultee**

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