

Cumbria LEP promotes the case for major transport investments

Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership is pressing for additional investment in key transport projects for the county, with the submission of evidence based business cases to national infrastructure planning bodies for road and rail improvements.

These include several large projects, notably upgrades to the Cumbrian coastal railway line, the proposed Whitehaven relief road, a Carlisle southern link road and another package of improvements along the A590.

Cumbria LEP is also supporting a Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council bid to the new Housing Infrastructure Fund to secure investment for the delivery of the Carlisle southern link road, which is needed to support the building of St Cuthbert's Garden Village with 10,000 new homes.

The LEP has progressed this work now as Network Rail, Highways England and Transport for the North will shortly start planning for their next round of investments in national transport infrastructure. It is therefore timely to provide strong evidence of the case for investments in Cumbria to boost economic growth across the county.

In a very competitive process, these organisations will decide which schemes go ahead around the country using a cost/benefit formula set by the government.

Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership lead board member for infrastructure Jim Jackson says: "Securing funding to deliver this new infrastructure is challenging and is set within a highly competitive environment. So it's vital we share economic evidence with key transport agencies as early as possible, and demonstrate the benefits and deliverability of proposals within Cumbria.

"We've produced a county-wide, integrated package of evidence based proposals, bigger than Cumbria has put on the table before. This has been done in partnership with major businesses in the county and statutory bodies including Network Rail, Transport for the North and Highways England.

"We recognise that we need to provide a robust evidence base for these projects in terms of their business potential, as well as placing greater emphasis on developing close working relationships.

"We think that the strategic outline business cases for roads, coupled with the capacity study for improvements to the Cumbrian coastal railway line, provide a compelling claim for investment.

"We expect to receive an indication by next spring if we are likely to secure the funding to move forward with these schemes, when transport organisations submit their plans for approval in the summer of 2018."

The next investment period for the Strategic Road Network will cover the period 2020-2025. The next rail investment period will cover the period 2019-2024. Both are being developed on a staged basis.

The latest set of transport proposals are in addition to the dualling of the A66 from Scotch Corner to Penrith and improvements to the A69 and A689, which are being taken forward by Highways England.

Mr Jackson adds: “The Cumbria Infrastructure Plan published in 2016 identified a number of priority infrastructure interventions needed to unlock the growth potential of the county. These business cases and the presentation of economic evidence are the next stage of the process, building on that plan and the 2016 West of M6 Strategic Connectivity Study which we produced.”

For further details about Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, go to www.cumbrialep.co.uk

Ends

For media information please contact Karen Gardner at Osprey Communications on 01539 442 436 or email karen@ospreycommunications.co.uk

Notes for editors

- Cumbria LEP provides a strategic lead for all activities contributing to the growth and vibrancy of the county’s economy and where appropriate takes positive action, using the skills, capability and networks of LEP partners.
- The LEP is keen to work with all partners and stakeholders (private and public) to undertake actions, secure funding and implement initiatives to support sustainability and growth of Cumbria’s economy.
- A copy of the Cumbria Strategic Economic Plan is available at: www.cumbrialep.co.uk/what-we-do/sep/