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Transport policy

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The council's long term aim has been to promote public transport use for the reasons stated below. Covid-19's advent has made this very difficult due to central government recommendations to only use public transport for essential trips, suggestions to use the car instead and the capacity loss that social distancing has entailed. The paragraphs below must therefore be read in this context.

It is hoped that the Covid-19 virus will be controlled soon and that people can return to using public transport freely and that more will do so. Continued home working and the virus's economic impact will have transport consequences that cannot be predicted.

Clearly a mass shift to car use together with a return to office working can have a significant congestion impact, which it might not be possible to accommodate. Impacts on train and coach travel affect Blackpool's tourist trade, both in deterring people from coming and transferring travel to cars for which there might be no parking at peak times. In view of the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19, how these factors will resolve in the future is impossible to predict.

Supporting Blackpool's economy

Blackpool Council aims to control congestion, improve the public realm, reduce pollution and decrease accidents on the town's roads by managing traffic effectively, working with local transport operators and agencies, making Blackpool better for residents and businesses. Effective transport systems are essential to the resort's economy and vital to its regeneration, particularly as new developments including the Winter Gardens [conference centre](#) and the [Blackpool Central](#) project come on stream.

Up to 18 million visits per year are made to enjoy the town's attractions, coming from from all over the country and beyond, for which reason the resort needs high quality access to national transport networks. On arrival, visitors must have excellent gateways to encourage repeat visits and investment.

A [local transport plan implementation strategy document \[PDF 292 KB\]](#) explains what the council's transport policies are. The current plan will be in force between 2018 and 2021. The strategy addresses the needs of all transport modes and their users. Also, the council has worked with Lancashire County Council to develop a [fylde coast transport masterplan \[PDF 2.08MB\]](#).

It is challenging to fit all the facilities that are needed - bus stops, taxi ranks, on-street parking, cycle parking, loading bays, pedestrian crossings etc - into what is a densely built-up place.

Maintaining highways assets

The Local Transport Plan programme (LTP) includes schemes to repair roads, footpaths and bridges to the value of resources available of around £1 million per annum. These have been insufficient to prevent decline in recent years. In response, a programme called Project 30 using prudential borrowing to fund repairs to roads and footpaths was delivered. The council continues to look for extra money to pay for repairs.

Traffic lights are managed under the Community Lighting Partnership. [Any faults with traffic lights or pedestrian/cycle crossings can be reported here](#). The Local Transport Plan apports resources to upgrade road junctions and traffic control systems.

A bid to the government's Local Highways Challenge Fund to repair the resort's bridges was successful. Together with Local Growth Deal money, controlled by the Lancashire Economic Partnership (LEP), this has enabled an [£11.365 million programme to bring seven strategic bridges to a good standard](#). While this programme has now been completed, efforts to secure resources for further work to secure the town's bridges continue and the Local Transport Plan programme has provision for ongoing repairs. Additionally, the council was successful in obtaining government National Productivity Investment Fund resources to maintain further sections of the vital Yeadon Way highway, making £3,350,000 available to spend on important repairs. Following these repairs, the road reopened for the 2020 tourism season. Again, Yeadon Way is recognised as an ongoing maintenance programme, together with the bridges and other major infrastructure elements.

Government occasionally makes additional funding available to repair pot holes or respond to the damage that severe winter weather can cause. £1,048k has been made available as challenge and pothole funding for the financial year 2020/21 with a further £667K for 2021/22 and this will be used to repair the classified and distributor road network.

The council has worked with Lancashire County Council to develop a [Rights of Way Improvement Plan \[PDF 880KB\]](#) . This runs between 2015 and 2025.

Encouraging sustainable development

Good transport links to the wider economy are crucial to encouraging inward investment in Blackpool. Residents and businesses need good access to workplaces, shops, schools, education, health care and roads or public transport services to neighbouring towns. When any large developments are proposed in Blackpool, the council assesses what transport arrangements will be made throughout the duration of the works and after they have finished.

Public realm improvement

The council has worked with the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership to implement the town centre quality corridors scheme, which has improved the town centre public realm. Church Street, Cookson Street, Dickson Road, Topping Street, Edward Street, Deansgate and Talbot Road were identified as priority areas for this investment of [Local Growth Deal](#) and LTP resources. This project is now being wound down on completion and evaluated.

This project also includes the [Blackpool Property Improvement Fund](#) intended to finance shop front improvements, subject to approval and a match funding contribution. Properties in Talbot Road, Topping Street, Edward Street and Deansgate have been improved.

Supporting transport innovation

The council has submitted an [expression of interest](#) (EoI) in the government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme, in partnership with Blackpool Transport Services, and has been successful in being asked to prepare a full business case. If government accepts this, Blackpool would be supported to provide a 115 strong state of the art electric bus fleet. Following approval the transition to electric buses would start from March 2022.

Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council have worked together to renew the tramway from Blackpool to nearby town Fleetwood, enabling a fleet of 18 modern 'Flexity 2' trams to help people travel between Fylde coast destinations.

[Heritage trams](#) continue to use the system, providing a service for tourists and enthusiasts and making a fine sight as they ply the promenade.

The two councils have collaborated to extend this system, benefiting the entire Fylde coast. At the time of writing, [The Blackpool](#)

[Tramway Extension Scheme](#), connecting the tramway to Blackpool North railway station from the promenade, awaits completion of the Central Business District 2 scheme following the former Wilkos store demolition. At the time of writing, new platforms within the site are being constructed for a 2022 opening. The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership has provided funding. This scheme will improve public transport access to Blackpool's seafront hotels and attractions, particularly the Pleasure Beach, and connect the North Fylde to the national rail network. It provides a public transport link between the Blackpool Central Business District and the wider area. The tramway extension will provide a valuable light rail complement to the bus network and can help reduce congestion and parking pressures on the town centre.

The Fylde coast councils have been partners within the SINTROPHER (Sustainable Integrated Tram-Based Transport Options for Peripheral European Regions) project, providing 7.2m Euro from the European Union Interreg IVB initiative to study ways in which the tramway might be extended. This concluded that a scheme to initially extend the tramway to Blackpool North railway station should be pursued and it has proved possible to do this.

A second phase SINTROPHER project headed by Lancashire County Council with Blackpool Council's support, has considered how the South Fylde Line (heavy rail) might be improved to best meet the Fylde Coast's regeneration needs. This single-track line provides a vital local rail service and brings many visitors to Blackpool from East Lancashire, to the extent that there has been over-crowding on the trains. The study's conclusions are available on the University of London's [SINTROPHER](#) website page. Options to improve the South Fylde Line are currently being considered with support from the Government's [Restoring Your Railway](#) fund

Considering road traffic, new traffic flow management technology can help to reduce congestion, pollution and accommodate the traffic growth that is likely to follow from economic regeneration, including growing town centre employment. In addition to rolling measures to improve and fine-tune existing traffic control systems, two integrated schemes have been implemented for which external funding has been awarded following successful council bids. Variable message signage is now directing drivers to the car park spaces that are available and Bluetooth technology to monitor and manage traffic flows is in use.

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership granted approval for Local Growth Deal resources to fund a Blackpool Integrated Traffic Management Scheme. This uses a sophisticated parking guidance system that operates variable message signing to reduce wasteful car park search trips and thus lessen network congestion.

The partner Department for Transport funded scheme has complemented the Integrated Traffic Management Scheme, enabling a state of the art traffic guidance and queue management systems to be installed, to reduce congestion across the resort. This project has been completed, its technology gathering information to be used to improve traffic flow around the town. The council is continuing to work within the government's Transport Technology Forum intent upon promoting digital traffic management technology, particularly SMART parking guidance. This is a continuing process to maximise technology's benefits to the Blackpool community and this is anticipated to play a growing role.

Supporting local public transport

In its Bus Back Better document, the government presented a National Bus Strategy intended to force the pace of improvement in bus services and increase people's use of this road congestion busting and 'green' transport mode. At a local level Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) will set out how this will be achieved, and local transport authorities (LTAs) including Blackpool Council have been asked to prepare these and send them in to the government before a 31 October 2021 deadline.

Blackpool residents are now able to view, read and comment on this plan using the transportpolicy@blackpool.gov.uk email. Government will give the council its views on the plan and subject to any amendments, it will then form the basis of an enhanced bus partnership, a formal agreement with operators to improve local bus services. Government has indicated that LTAs will get a share of a £3bn fund for bus improvement, including new services, improved bus shelters and bus priority measures, depending on what and the quality of what they propose. LTAs have been told to be ambitious as such programmes will be more successful.

[Blackpool Council's bus service improvement plan \[PDF 798KB\]](#)

Blackpool benefits from a high-quality bus network. The council's intention is to increase the number of residents and visitors using the bus, in line with the local transport plan. Services are provided by [Blackpool Transport Services](#), [Stagecoach Bus](#), [Coastal Coaches](#) and [Coastliner Buses](#). Timetables, useful smartphone apps and other information can be found on these companies' sites, including bus service real time information. Stagecoach Bus is now operating contactless card payments on its vehicles, removing the need for change.

The PlusBus system offers seamless interchange between rail and bus/tram services. Simply ask for the [Plus Bus](#) add on when you purchase your train ticket, or take up the prompt if buying on line or via an operator's app. This offer is for both bus and tram. Soon

the tramway will come right to the railway station's door and with PlusBus the passenger will be able to transfer smoothly from train to tram for their onward journey.

More people commuting by public transport means less congestion, less air pollution and an improved environment, including for cyclists and pedestrians. The vehicles, services and payment options are in place to make this happen. Together with more people cycling, this is becoming more important to combat air pollution.

The council always keeps town centre bus stop arrangements under review. A transport hub focused on Market and Corporation Street with good service information was completed late in 2019. These works have allowed buses to be removed from Clifton Street and be better focused in the transport hub area, making it easier to find the right bus. Further services use Abingdon Street stops.

The council recognises the important role taxis and private hire vehicles play in supporting the visitor and night-time economies. The role landaus play in providing promenade pleasure trips is also acknowledged. Regular dialogue occurs between representatives of the trade and council officers concerning network and ranking issues, ensuring that appropriate ranks are available. Taxis and private hire vehicles reduce the need for car ownership for the occasional car user. They provide an essential link between transport hubs, hotels and attractions.

Blackpool Transport Services has re equipped with Euro 6 emissions standards compliant 'Palladium' branded vehicles, which offer a very high ride quality and passenger environment. As noted above, it is intended electric buses replace these vehicles.

Public transport offers a real alternative to car for commuting purposes for many, particularly if discounted season products are used, which may be purchased using operators' smartphone apps. The council seeks to encourage further bus use as this would ease peak time town centre congestion and pressure on parking. As town centre employment grows and more people inevitably drive in, highway and parking resources will be managed carefully. Town centre focused employment means that rail may be a more viable commuting option for many, particularly as new and more spacious trains with wi fi connectivity have now been brought into service. Avanti trains offer direct services to London Euston and Birmingham New Street.

Supporting coach

The coach industry continues to bring many people to the resort and this is valued. Drop off and pick up facilities are provided at the [Central car park site](#), which also accommodates year round scheduled [National Express](#) services.

Coach parking locations are identified in the [parking services section of this site](#).

The need for new and better coach facilities is kept under ongoing review and is being addressed within the Blackpool Central project. Coach can provide an alternative arrival mode for visitors who do not drive and seek value for money travel to Blackpool's attractions.

The [VisitBlackpool](#) website provides advice to coach passengers and coach operators.

Supporting cycling

Blackpool has several cycle routes. Cycling on the Promenade is a popular activity, particularly using the Jubilee Cycleway to the North. This route and others are intended for leisure and commuting cycling at low speeds and not racing, training or other fast riding, particularly as pedestrians including children are also using this space. With recent sea wall works at Anchorsholme now complete, it is possible to cycle with care all the way between Starr Gate and Fleetwood on the Promenade.

Cycling is permitted in all town centre areas, with care and indicated by cycle symbol 'flags' let into the ground.

Minor works for cycling can be funded from the Local Transport Plan programme, including cycle parking. The council is working with Lancashire councils to establish cycling and walking plans in line with Government policy.

The council has worked with Northern Railway to provide cycle parking at Layton station. Northern Railway has provided excellent covered [cycle storage](#) at Blackpool North railway station.

Supporting rail

Around a million visitors arrive by train each year and summer services can be crowded. Following the North Fylde Line's electrification over the winter of 2017/18, electric trains now provide three of the four regular hourly services. The York service now benefits from the class 195 diesel train with its far superior facilities compared with its predecessors. The introduction of new electric and diesel train on Blackpool's rail routes was completed over the course of 2020.

Since April 2016, [Northern Railway](#) has provided services at Blackpool North and Blackpool South stations. These are direct to Manchester Airport, Manchester stations, Liverpool, York and Preston/Colne (South Fylde Line). This company's website provides all

timetable information. In September 2020 the Government announced that it would abolish the rail franchising system and replaced this with management contracts.

The [Avanti West Coast](#) company assumed the West Coast Partnership franchise from December 2019 and continued the three direct London services and early morning service that the former franchise holder had undertaken. This company has moved to develop its services, providing greater access to Birmingham as well as maintaining access to London.

Access to London, Scotland, the West Midlands and other large conurbations is recognised as a key consideration for those who might invest in Blackpool. The council is keen to see improvements to the Preston hub railway station, as so many people change trains there to come to the resort. It is also seeking direct trains to Scotland, which the resort has lost and are seen as economically very important.

The council lobbies the railway industry for more rail investment. It is a member of the [West Coast Rail 250](#) group, which has been instrumental in improving the vital West Coast Main-line, bringing visitors from Scotland, the south and connecting the resort's businesses to London. The council is a stakeholder in the [Transport for the North](#) organisation, which is looking at new strategic transport links for the entire north, together with technology based transport solutions.

The council supports the [South Fylde Line Community Rail Partnership](#). With support from local MPs, a proposal to make improvements to enable the line's frequency to be increased to two trains per hour, has been submitted to the Government's Restoring Your Railway Fund and is now being worked through. Although it is not in Blackpool, the council also supports the [Poulton and Fleetwood line reopening project](#), which has received money from the Restoring Your Railway fund for feasibility appraisal work.

Supporting equality

Transport policy promotes equality and helps people to participate in society. An LTP strategy equalities impact assessment has been prepared and is available to view on request.

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