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Transport policy

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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 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 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.

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 apportions 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.

The council was successful in its [bid](#) to the government's National Productivity Investment Fund for resources to maintain further sections of the vital Yeadon Way highway. This success makes £3,350,000 available to spend on important repairs. It is intended that this work be carried out over the winter of 2019/20, the road reopening for the 2020 tourism season from Easter.

Government occasionally makes additional funding available to repair pot holes or respond to the damage that severe winter weather can cause. An additional highways maintenance allocation of £532,000 was made available in the October 2018 budget, which the council has incorporated into its programmes to keep highways assets to an acceptable standard.

The council has worked with Lancashire County Council to develop a Rights of Way Improvement Strategy. This runs between 2015 and 2025. The [strategy](#) is available here.

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 is working 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.

Church Street works were completed during 2017, with work on Cookson Street, Caunce Street and Dickson Road completed in the autumn of 2018. Trees were planted and additional street furniture installed early in 2019. The Talbot Road scheme phase has been integrated with the tramway extension scheme on the same corridor considerably improving the latter's appearance in preparation for the new tram service starting between the railway station, the [Blackpool Pleasure Beach](#) and Bispham.

The town centre quality corridors programme will finish in the spring of 2020 when works in Deansgate/Topping and Edward Street are finished, followed by any completion works. In addition to public realm, public artwork and highway surfacing improvements, this project also includes the [Blackpool Property Improvement Fund](#) intended to finance shop front improvements, subject to approval and a match funding contribution. At the time of writing, properties in Talbot Road, Topping Street and Deansgate have been improved, with more to come.

The council has worked with Lancashire County Council to develop a [fylde coast transport masterplan](#).

Supporting transport innovation

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. [The Blackpool Tramway Extension Scheme](#), connecting the tramway to Blackpool North railway station from the promenade, is on site at the time of writing. 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 an essential public transport link between the developing 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 [SINTROPHER](#) website.

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 has 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, particularly within the important Promenade public realm area. This came into operation early in 2018 and is anticipated to make a significant visitor economy contribution during its operation.

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.

The council is also working with the Transport for the North organisation in support of its [Integrated and Smart Travel](#) project, seeking to enhance public transport information and promote smart travel, including smart cards for rail.

Supporting local public transport

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 [Catch22 Bus](#). 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 is being implemented; phase 1 in Market Street is complete. Phase 2 in Corporation Street went on site in July 2019. On completion these works will allow buses to be removed from Clifton Street and be better focused in the transport hub area, making it easier to find the right bus.

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 recently re equipped with Euro 6 emissions standards compliant 'Palladium' branded vehicles, which offer a very high ride quality and passenger environment.

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 are brought into service over 2019/20.

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. The facilities' aesthetic appearance has been improved for the 2019 season, including the booking office. This office is run by the [Tanzo Go](#) organisation, which also supports local coach operators.

Coach parking locations are identified on an interactive [map](#) in the Parking Services section of this site.

The need for new and better coach facilities is kept under ongoing review. Given that parts of the railway network are often closed at the resort's peak bank holiday periods, coach can provide an alternative to trains 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 will increasingly be used to provide services. The York service will benefit from new diesel trains with far better facilities than those that have been used previously, which will come into service over 2019 and 2020.

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

Following completion of the North Fylde line's electrification, [Virgin Trains](#) restored three daily return journeys between London Euston and Blackpool North railway station from 21 May 2018. One train has been named 'Blackpool Belle'. These services joined the early morning service already in place. The resort also benefits from a one-way Saturday morning service from Birmingham. The franchise that Virgin Trains has operated under will be re awarded in June 2019. As Virgin Trains has been disqualified from the franchise process, a new incumbent will provide the Blackpool-London services that are specified. The council is monitoring the potential consequences of this and will make contact with the successful bidder after the franchise is let.

The [Grand Central](#) 'open access operator' is proposing to operate six daily electric train services from Blackpool to London from the spring of 2020, calling at Poulton-le-Fylde, Kirkham and Wesham, Preston, Nuneaton and Milton Keynes.

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.

Rail infrastructure operator, Network Rail, completed North Fylde Line electrification in the early part of 2018. A new timetable from May 2019, included restoration of the direct Blackpool-York service, which has been truncated at Preston requiring passengers to change. It is hoped that the situation will improve further from the December 2019 timetable change. There are currently direct service corridors to Manchester Airport, Hazel Grove, Liverpool, York, Colne and London Euston. These and intervening stops provide a wide range of interchange opportunities.

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](#).

Supporting equality

Transport policy promotes equality and helps people to participate in society. An LTP strategy equalities impact assessment has been

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